



Opening Remarks

- Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's pre-budget consultation process.
- I'm Jim Reed, President of BC Colleges. BC Colleges is a consortium of 11 community colleges, serving more than 250,000 students annually in close to 60 communities throughout the province. You have already heard from several of our member colleges. Today I will provide you with a provincial perspective.
- Joining me today is Peter Legg, Interim President from Vancouver Community College, the province's oldest and largest community college.
- Let me begin by saying that BC Colleges recognize and are sensitive to the fiscal challenges currently facing the province.
- The government is to be commended for giving British Columbians a voice in shaping the 2010/11 provincial budget and for committing to protect vital services such as health and education despite falling provincial revenues.
- Like the province, we recognize the importance of sound fiscal management. For the last few years, through necessity, we have worked hard as a consortium to contain our costs through collaboration and partnership.
- We continue to look for innovative ways to keep our costs down while fulfilling our mandate to prepare a well-educated, highly skilled, job-ready workforce.
- BC Colleges recognize their critical role as frontline educators and service providers for people and communities affected by the economic downturn and we will be a key driver in the economic and social recovery of BC.
- As the recession drives more people to colleges for education and training, the college system faces both physical and financial capacity issues that, if not addressed, will limit our future ability to properly serve British Columbians.
- Together with **Peter**, I would like to take this opportunity to talk to you about BC Colleges and the role we play in building a stronger British Columbia.

1. Increased student demand is straining capacity at our 11 community colleges

- BC is facing difficult economic challenges. The impact is being felt in all communities throughout the province.
- The provincial unemployment rate reached a high in August of 8% (source: Stats Canada) with unemployment rates even higher amongst aboriginal and immigrant workers.
- This has resulted in many more people turning to BC Colleges for education, training and retraining.
- Unlike the K-12 system (with decreasing numbers of students), our colleges and the rest of the post secondary system are experiencing significant increases in student demand.
- This Fall, total enrollment for BC Colleges is up approximately **10%** from 2008. Every one of our 11 colleges is experiencing increased demand, with increases ranging from **3% to 15%**.
- This increase in demand is across the board, from high school graduates, aboriginal learners, immigrants, workers and the recently unemployed requiring training.
- There is increased demand for U.T., career/technical, developmental or adult literacy and trades. This increased demand is creating both physical and financial capacity challenges that strain our ability to effectively respond to the needs of industry and communities throughout BC.
- Colleges throughout the Province are working with local government, industry, and community organizations to address the increasing requirements of their communities.
- Inevitably, all of our colleges have waitlists. We have significant waitlists in the health sciences, including nursing; several trades areas (welding, carpentry, electrical, heavy duty mechanic, etc.), the technologies, business, etc.

2. Cost savings initiatives and partnerships undertaken by BC Colleges have resulted in increased efficiencies and administrative savings

- The tendency in tough economic times is to cut capital and equipment funding. While this may be considered discretionary, it is critical that we properly equip our learners with the technology or equipment used by industry. Many of our students are learning with outdated equipment and technology which makes providing a skilled, job-ready workforce challenging.
- We are cognizant of the need for efficiency; for some time we have looked for innovative ways to stretch our dollars so we can continue to offer our communities those programs and services that are needed most.
- We are stretching our capacity to respond to the increased demand by double or triple shifting, overloading classrooms, running late night or weekend classes. We're not complaining, it's a fact of life – we are doing what we need to do to provide the education and services to our communities.

- Of the \$22M of targeted administrative savings for the entire post secondary system (contained in the 2009 budget) colleges have introduced innovative savings amounting to \$10M. These savings have been redirected to other programs or services in high demand.
- In the past year our colleges have collaborated on innovative cost savings initiatives to reduce costs and improve efficiencies. Post-secondary institutions from around the province along with the K-12 school system worked collaboratively in a purchasing cooperative with a collective tendering process for select goods and services. This cooperative provides impressive purchasing power and significant savings.
- Several colleges have formed partnerships that commit to joint planning and collaborative programming; we have the Vancouver Island Accord (Camosun, NIC and VIU); the Northern Collaborative (NWCC, NLC, CNC, UNBC), the Okanagan/Kootenay Agreement (OC, Selkirk and CotR). All these partnerships are intended to add more efficiencies and greater effectiveness in delivering education and training.
- In order to deliver more cost efficiencies we need to continue to modernize our college facilities and upgrade our systems. An example of the efficiencies that can be achieved is demonstrated by Vancouver Community College. VCC has implemented new digital controls and energy-efficient lighting. This enhanced technology allows the college to more effectively manage their building systems. These upgrades including; heating, cooling, hot water and high-efficiency lighting are yielding solid savings. Other colleges have introduced similar upgrades to their systems.
- We have formed a consortium of all trades training institutions (14) called, *Trades Training BC* and a consortium of 15 institutions, *The Labour Market Consortium*. These consortiums enable better coordination, collaboration of programs and services for trades and labour market programs – each of these areas are critical to BC’s economic recovery.
- Is there more we can do? Yes, there is and we are committed to making improvements. BC Colleges’ Strategic Plan includes strategies to achieve more efficient and effective education planning throughout the college system by leveraging our resources through collaboration and partnership and to implement a set of performance measures, that measure the colleges’ value-add to the Province as well as measure student and institutional success.

3. How we are vital in preparing BC’s work force

- Our colleges support and strengthen every community in BC by providing well-educated, highly skilled, job-ready graduates.
- The province’s system of community colleges enables the education and training of workers close to their homes and thereby contributes to a vital economy and healthier communities throughout the province. Students receive a better education at a more affordable price and remain in their community to work.
- In addition, the colleges play a key role in educating and training the workforce with specific strategies targeting traditionally under represented groups such as new immigrants, aboriginals, disabled and the functionally illiterate. This education and training and getting these groups into the workforce is critical to the economic recovery of BC.

- As noted earlier, our enrolment is up by 10%; we are experiencing increases across the board.
- In 2009 BC Colleges graduated **thousands of** job-ready graduates.
- Provincially, we have **thousands** of students enrolled in retraining programs; we have increased numbers of students because of the downturn in the economy (e.g. resourced based industries that have downsized or closed). These workers are being retrained in programs such as computer technology, various trades (from carpentry, electrical, welding, plumbing), nursing, environmental technology, etc.
- Remember, it wasn't too long ago labour market forecasts projected a 400,000 – 500,000 shortage of skilled workers. An estimated 42 % of anticipated skilled shortages are in occupations requiring a college education. We cannot afford to take our eye off the ball, we will face the same shortage and the speed of BC's recovery and the growth of the economy will depend upon whether we have the required numbers of well educated and highly skilled workers ready to enter the workforce.
- By having the physical and financial capacity to serve students, BC Colleges can ensure that future labour market requirements are met thus avoiding another skills gap in the province. Despite our current economic challenges, we must find ways to invest in our colleges.

4. How we are responding to change

- Hello, I'm Peter Legg, Interim President Vancouver Community College. I would like to address how colleges, and VCC specifically, are responding to the changing needs of our students and our communities.
- At VCC we work closely with local high schools to prepare students for careers in trades. One of our key initiatives is the ACE-IT program. ACE-IT stands for Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training. This program lets students earn high school credits and valuable VCC trades training credentials at the same time.
- Additionally, VCC is an innovator in developing programming for typically under represented groups including aboriginals and immigrants.
- We offer a specialized aboriginal music camp and Canada's first aboriginal culinary arts program. This culinary arts program was developed in collaboration with the Four Host First Nations and will graduate its first class next month.
- VCC serves immigrants at nearly three times the rate of the rest of the province's post-secondary system. Accordingly we offer a wide variety of programs targeted specifically at immigrant learners.
- For example, World Beat is a partnership with SUCCESS and the YWCA offering learning in music, literacy, language and essential workplace skills to marginalized immigrant youth.
- The Canadian Immigration Integration Project is a program where VCC connects online to new immigrants with details on settlement and integration services, career planning, professional licensing and skills and language.

- At VCC we are constantly looking for programs to meet the ever-evolving needs of the communities we serve.
- We are a partner with the Salvation Army at its Harbour Light Mission on the Downtown Eastside. Together we provide a referral program providing literacy skills and academic upgrading for career entry for people recovering from addiction.
- We also realize the importance of partnering with the business community. VCC and Capilano University are the lead agencies in LinkBC, which works to connect the resources and expertise of 20 colleges and universities to promote, strengthen and support British Columbia's tourism and hospitality sectors.
- All of the programs mentioned above are not only relevant to the communities we serve but, importantly, we have been able to implement these programs in a timely manner to quickly meet the changing needs of our communities.
- I'm now going to turn the presentation back to Jim.

5. How we are helping BC's economy & Investing in BC's future

- As I've mentioned before, BC Colleges provide communities with a well-educated, highly skilled, job-ready workforce.
- The graduates of our colleges are an important means of deploying and applying new knowledge in the provincial economy.
- 86% of former students are employed.
- 96% of BC College graduates stay and work in BC.
- Colleges and their past graduates contribute \$7.7 billion to the provincial economy and provide a 14% return on investment.
- BC Colleges return \$3.80 to the provincial economy for every dollar of taxpayer support.
- This makes BC Colleges one of the best investments, one that pays dividends in healthier communities throughout the province.

6. BC Colleges' requirements from Government

- 1st. In order to continue to provide a highly skilled, job-ready work force we require an increase in base operating funding for 2010/11 to support the increased demand for our programs and services.
- 2nd. We require a restoration of the Annual Capital Allowance funding to provide equipment and technology to meet the education and training needs of our students and their future employers. As well as to provide continued operational efficiencies for our facilities.
- 3rd. We require funding for programs and services to address training for people traditionally under-represented such as adults requiring increased literacy, our aboriginal population (which is the fastest growing adult population in BC), new immigrants and the disabled. These groups have been identified as being critical to advancing BC's labour force and ultimately the Province's economic recovery.

Conclusion

- BC Colleges play an important role in building a stronger British Columbia and are critical to the economic recovery of the province.
- BC Colleges are a great investment.
- BC Colleges provide responsive education and training close to home and are at the frontline for people and communities affected by the economic downturn.
- BC Colleges are committed to working together with our 11 members and their communities to further the economic recovery by providing a skilled, job-ready workforce, helping to build a stronger British Columbia.
- Thank you for your time. We would be pleased to respond to any questions you may have.