

Presentation to B.C Legislative Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

5:05 pm October 14, 2009 Prince George (Ramada Hotel)

Good afternoon. My name is John Bowman. I am the President of the College of New Caledonia and with me is Bruce Sutherland, the Chair of the CNC Board of Governors.

To begin, we want to thank the Committee for coming to Prince George.

We appreciate this opportunity to share with you our thoughts regarding the 2010/11 budget and government funding and policy for the post-secondary education system

During the next few minutes we would like to do three things. . .

Provincial Funding for Colleges

The College of New Caledonia has celebrated our 40th Anniversary this year, and 2009 has been a banner year for our institution.

In April, the provincial and federal governments announced funding for CNC under the "Knowledge Infrastructure Program" totaling nearly \$30 Million for the construction of a new Technical Education Centre Building here in Prince George (at a cost of \$19.6 million) and for the completion of the Phase II expansion of the North Cariboo Community Campus in Quesnel (for \$9.8 million).

These new and expanded facilities will greatly enhance CNC's capacity to deliver high priority programming.

For the 2009/10 fiscal year, the operating grant funding provided to CNC by the Ministry of Advanced Education increased by a total of \$1.6 million (or + 5.8%) and the funding received from the ITA has been increased by \$764,000 (+18%) to enable additional apprenticeship and trades foundations classes to be delivered.

So year over year, CNC has benefited from an increase in provincial funding support totaling approximately \$2.4 million. These additional resources have been greatly needed and are being put to very good use.

This year we have experienced a dramatic increase in application levels for most programming areas. In September, our Prince George Campus recorded an 11.4 percent increase in student headcount enrolments

In 2009/10, CNC's full-time equivalent enrolments for the year will grow by 12-15 percent and will exceed 4,000 FTE across all campuses for the first time in our history.

We want to note, that while there have been some provincial funding reductions in certain areas (most significantly in the Annual Capital Allowance funds for building maintenance and small facilities projects), the overall base operating funding level set in the February budget has been preserved in the September Update.

We are happy that the provincial government has recognized the importance of continuing to provide stable investment in the base operations of colleges in 2009/10.

We recognize the constraints that the government faces given the economic downturn.

Over the next year, CNC looks forward to working closely with local and provincial stakeholders to ensure that the important education and training role we play in this region continues to be recognized and that the necessary programs and services are available to residents in the Central Interior and North of the province.

Recommendations

1. Maintaining the investment in provincial colleges for 2010/11 and beyond will be critical for the Province to have the highly skilled workforce to meet both current and future economic and labour needs.

We therefore urge this Committee and the Provincial Government to continue to preserve and enhance funding provided to the BC College system in the 2010/11 budget. Any reductions to colleges' funding will have a negative impact on access to programs and services and our ability to support the economic recovery.

2. We recommend that a review of the provincial government's "Tuition Limit Policy" be completed by March 1, 2010 in order that it may allow for greater equity across the province - among and within types of institutions and by program types.

The extent to which smaller rural institutions are heavily dependent on provincial funding for a majority of their operating revenues should also be reflected in a revised