

February 9, 2005

Hon. Gordon Campbell
Vancouver-Point Grey
3615 West 4th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V6R 1P2

Dear Mr. Campbell,

As educators in the post secondary education system we see every day how the elimination of targeted funding and the loss of support programs and services has negatively affected our Developmental Education students. Post-secondary institutions have always been proud to offer courses that enable adults to upgrade their education in order to qualify for training, better employment or further education. Our programs also help immigrants to improve their proficiency in English and their ability to function in a new country; and meet the special education and programming needs of some students. The programs and services offered through Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language and Adult Special Education help people improve opportunities for themselves and their families and contribute to their communities.

The Minister of Advanced Education's decision to eliminate targeted program funding and replace it with block funding for colleges, university colleges and institutes is resulting in a focus on meeting and exceeding enrolment and spending targets, to the detriment of Developmental Education courses and services. One of the most unfortunate developments is the introduction of tuition fees in the past few years for many ABE students in the BC post-secondary system.

Programs such as Institution Based Training (IBT), Training Allowance Benefits (TAB), Expanded Capacity (EC) and Skills for Employment (SEP) were effectively used by institutions to increase both access and success for Developmental Education students. Such programs supported services such as assessment, individualized program planning, advocacy and counseling, academic support, work experience, and liaison with community agencies and provincial and federal staff. These programs also assisted low income and income assistance students with expenses such as transportation, books and child care.

The elimination of these programs and services, combined with the loss of targeted funding is having a devastating effect on the most vulnerable segment of our student population. Developmental Education students return to the education system with multiple barriers that they must overcome in order to succeed. Their courage and determination and willingness to work must be matched with appropriate courses and services that enable them to progress.

Those courses and programs were in place and Developmental Education students were succeeding. But what educators are seeing on campus now is disheartening:

- Enrolment has dropped substantially in ABE and other developmental programs.
- Some programs are running under capacity
- Traditional Developmental Education student populations, such as single parent mothers and disadvantaged mature students are disappearing.
- Students who must travel a distance to college are no longer able to afford transportation.
- Even though we know the need remains, fewer of the most disadvantaged students needing the most fundamental literacy and life skills training are getting access to our programs.
- Deprived of counseling services, ABE students are often enrolled in inappropriate courses and programs.
- ESL instructors see that immigrant students who need language training are being displaced by predominantly revenue-producing international students.
- Students who are forced to take multiple low-wage jobs in order to afford school are too exhausted to study.

We believe that the combination of policy and program decisions taken in a number of ministries have combined to seriously jeopardize some of the most needy and vulnerable students. The cost of **not** helping people become self-reliant, contributing members of our communities is enormous. Without literacy and life skills, without education and training, the most vulnerable members of our society have little chance to break the cycle of poverty and dependence.

We are requesting a meeting with you to discuss the erosion of Developmental Education in our institution and the need for measures to address the situation. Please contact the writer at 604.688.6210 to make arrangements.

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future and thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

VCC Faculty Association

Lizz Lindsay
President