

September, 2003

**Vancouver Community College Faculty Association  
Response to the Ministry of Advanced Education's Discussion Paper:**

**Mandates, Roles & Responsibilities in the Post-Secondary Education (PSE)  
System in BC**

We appreciate this first opportunity under the current administration for formal input into aspects of the post-secondary system. A longer timeline would have permitted us to have fuller discussions with our members, but nevertheless we have been able to circulate the discussion paper and believe the following is an appropriate representation of the views of our members.

We hope these opportunities for input will continue and increase in number. Unfortunately we have no indication that there will be a real opportunity for a fuller discussion amongst stakeholders, but we remain hopeful. It is only with the real involvement of stakeholders that the best decision-making is possible.

The VCCFA is the oldest post-secondary faculty union in BC. We have at any one time between 500 to 600 members. We represent faculty as instructors, nurses, librarians, and counselors at all campuses of Vancouver Community College. As you know, VCC has a place in BC's post-secondary system that sets it apart from other institutions. It offers very viable specialties in a wide variety of Trades Training, an expanding array of Health Professional training, first-rate Hospitality and Business programs, which include the most comprehensive culinary expertise, expanding programming in University-transfer courses, Music and Instructor-training, and leading programming in Adult Special Education, Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language. No other BC college has such a large percentage of the latter grouping of programmes.

The following comments follow the organization of the discussion paper.

**Executive Summary**

page i

*"...that attract high-calibre students ...."*

We worry that our definition of "high-calibre" may not conform to what might have been intended by this comment. We hope it does not mean only those who already have more education, more money, or the family background that predicts success. In our view, the college and the PSE system have to provide a place for all, to meet students at their level. In our view, through their very real commitment to pursue further education, our students have met the test of "high-calibre."

*"The challenge presently facing PSE stakeholders is to target and attract funding..."*

We are concerned that it should be everyone's challenge to target and attract funding, not just "PSE stakeholders." We are educators. Our work is an essential social function. Because of its social and economic value, the primary funding of our enterprise rightly comes from government, the steward of our society. Targeting and attracting funding have their place and indeed we have encouraged our College

and its Foundation to do a better job of that, but it must not detract from our primary purpose.

## **Introduction**

page 1

*"...all stakeholders must be committed to working together to meet the challenges and opportunities facing the PSE system."*

We accept that challenge. We have been committed to this for over fifty years. We only hope that we will have meaningful opportunities.

page 1

*(The 2001 Three-Year Service Plan included ...)*

*"increasing institutional autonomy,  
deregulating tuition fees,  
providing block funding,  
expanding authority to offer degree programs,  
strengthening accountability processes,  
developing new mechanisms for the delivery of industry training and apprenticeship,  
and clarifying the relationship between public and private PSE providers."*

That's a huge amount of change. It needs time to be digested and to have flaws worked on. It's not the time to continue in these directions, let alone throw new initiatives in, without some thorough and cautious reflection. Such reflection needs to include all constituencies and issues.

## **1. Overview of the System**

page 3

*"The Ministry provides leadership and direction..."*

If the trend towards greater institutional autonomy continues, the Ministry's "leadership and direction" levers will be lost. If the Ministry wishes to continue playing its historical role in post secondary education, then the greater autonomy trend must be thoroughly evaluated and reflected upon.

page 4

*"Federal agencies" are mentioned in terms of "EI clients...federal research granting councils (and the) Innovation Strategy..."*

We wonder at the omission of any comment on immigrant settlement and language services. Federal support for these services has allowed BC to provide a unique mix of federally-directed and provincially-directed training that better meets the needs of immigrant students.

## **2) Strategic Issues**

page 5

*"Today while the demand is as high, or higher, (as it was between the 60s and 90s) the emphasis has shifted to increased institutional autonomy, accountability and cost-efficiency." (as opposed to the 60s to 90s period when demand was met by) "expansion, diversification, new institutions and new mandates."*

This perspective begs the question of what is government's role in investing in the PSE system. We believe the college system, especially on the training side, is cost-

efficient for the most part, and has been for years. Further efforts to find cost-efficiencies will cause major damage to training.

## **2.1 Access and Programming**

### **Labour market needs**

page 5

*"The Ministry is currently acting on commitments to address skills shortages by adding student spaces in several key areas..."*

While it is commendable to add student spaces, when they are added without appropriate funding they force colleges to move resources from other programming. All too often this is done at the expense of community and student needs. It has become common knowledge that there will be shortages of skilled workers in BC. The resources and mechanisms for training or attracting people must be found. That responsibility cannot be shirked.

### **1 How can the public system best ensure that PSE programs respond to skills shortages and prepare the workforce for areas of labour market growth? How do we determine the right balance between programs aimed at meeting specific current and future labour market needs, and programs of general education?**

There has to be a better job of promoting trades and technical training in BC High Schools.

At the same time we need policies that will support long-term initiatives designed to support all people in society who need education. It's far too easy to play to the 'flavour of the month,' which generally ends up favouring those who already have advantages. Minorities and those without advantages need government to be there for them too.

BC will rely more and more on immigrants to spark and carry through economic growth. Roadblocks such as lack of spaces and crippling fees need to be removed. There has to be more focus on integrating trained immigrants into the workforce. VCC is experienced and well positioned to be at the center of such initiatives-- initiatives that support both immigrants' language and training needs and the needs of business and industry.

Such policies require investing now for long-term gains.

In order to ensure appropriate responses by Colleges, the Ministry must not devolve itself of its role in targeting certain outcomes in terms of student FTEs, the move to block funding has been too comprehensive.

An example of a way to respond to skill shortages would be to create favourable tax treatments or credits for students from Trades or Technical training who graduate and then actually go into industry for a significant period of time.

## **2 How can we maintain an appropriate balance between teaching and research activities?**

By continuing to value teaching and ensuring that research does not happen at the expense of teaching.

## **3 What steps can be taken to promote regional access to high-quality and relevant programs that respond to student demand and meet socio-economic objectives?**

The Ministry should continue to support comprehensiveness where it is appropriate, especially in rural institutions. There needs to be a valued place for institutions that specialize as well. Given the relative ease of transportation in the Lower Mainland, institutions that specialize can serve a large population. Programming in all regions has to be of high quality and completely transferable. The University-Colleges and rural colleges must be celebrated as regional cultural centres.

In addition the Ministry should ensure that research and innovation monies get to the regions in an equitable manner.

## **4 How do we better meet the needs of Aboriginal students and students from other under-represented groups?**

The change to block funding has put added pressures on student support systems that were already under stress. There needs to be clear direction given to colleges and institutes to ensure that such systems are maintained.

### First nations students

These students need support as citizens in all aspects of public policy: primary and secondary education, housing, health, and other social services. They also need to be supported as students. Throughout the province we need pro-active recruitment of First Nations faculty and welcoming classrooms.

First Nations students have the best answer for what they need. Obstacles to communication have to be removed.

Again, we need to meet students where they are at and value that place. If Aboriginal students need more peer and elder support, then we should ensure that it happens. Unfortunately at VCC, where we have a high number of urban aboriginal students, our First Nations Coordinator was let go in the very first round of cuts and surplus-building in 2001.

### ABE students

This topic was put under the heading "Student Support Mechanisms" (page 7). It's not just supporting these students when they get into classes, there has to be a welcoming place for them to help them make the commitment to attend. The government's shift to student fees as the only source for new money has resulted in a real drop in tuition-free ABE opportunities. Colleges seem to feel they cannot support a non-tuition producing area to the extent that they might have. This is an example where autonomy has led to market decisions which have hurt students. If students do get in the door, their options and the very vitality of their programme have been shrunk.

ESL students

There's been an overall drop of about 1000 ESL student FTEs in BC because of the actions of the VCC Board. How does that help *"ensure all learners have access to post-secondary education so they can pursue fulfilling careers and contribute to the social and cultural life of the province (page 7)?"*

On top of that drop in access, there's been a doubling of ESL tuition fees which obviously raises the affordability cutoff point for potential students. Those unable to pay the high tuition fees are going to increase the size of "under-represented groups." Is that what the government wants? If fees are not going to be rolled back, then ways have to be found to ensure grants such as ABESAP are sustained or the fullest potential of what these people could offer will be lost to us.

BC needs immigrants to maintain both our current and future population level. It's important that the federal government be held to its funding role and it's important that the provincial government maintain its funding as well. BC needs to be more attractive for immigrants than other regions of Canada, not just as attractive. A wide range of language training opportunities for the families of immigrants has to be part of the package.

A Key Facility for BC

VCC is by far the largest provider of ABE and ESL training. This should be regarded as a key facility for BC--one to be celebrated and supported. It could become a continental centre of training and research with programmes for unleashing human potential and become itself an attraction for immigrants. Unfortunately, given the events of the last two years, one can see that this potential has not been recognized. Indeed, some, including its own administrators, have viewed VCC as being disadvantaged by this expertise.

## **2.2. Capacity**

page 8

*"The provincial government has protected funding for post-secondary education..."*

While protection, but not inflation-protection, is relatively better than reduction, it is not enough, especially when the pressures which the paper itself outlines are facing us all. When there are not sufficient spaces for students, or when students cannot take the courses they want in a timely fashion, that calls for an increase in public funding, not some sort of downloading and deterioration in quality.

## **5 Given the demographic pressures affecting the system, how can we add capacity to the public post-secondary system in more cost-effective ways?**

Trying to add capacity by continuing the reliance on increased tuition will not give BC any competitive advantage over any other jurisdiction in North America; in fact we are already starting to see a leveling off of demand in some areas as students reach an 'affordability' crunch.

At VCC, the BC taxpayer is getting fewer student FTEs for its money than it did before "block funding." Just by simply saying "we want such and such number of student FTEs and here's the same amount of money for three years and charge students more if you need it" doesn't produce those FTEs. Many institutions will not meet their 2003-04 targets. We cannot do more with existing resources because our

Board and administration have decided to move current resources away from instruction.

A further unintended consequence of block funding has been the "cookie cutter" approach to offerings. When, for some unclear reasons, university-transfer (UT) offerings produce much greater numbers of student FTEs per dollar than do other types of training, unfettered administrations are naturally pushed towards replacing non-UT offerings with UT or moving all "new" money into UT.

While many faculty are ready and willing to experiment with different delivery modes that may allow students to complete programming in shorter overall time periods, it will not be at the expense of quality or their own health. It worries us that "reviewing course loads and class size" is mentioned in the paper. These are "penny-wise and pound-foolish" strategies, which will be resisted. The overall "productivity" of the system, when measured in terms of student FTEs delivered, has already increased over the last decade without a corresponding increase in the size of the faculty complement.

Thirty years ago demographic growth was met by increased investment, which has obviously paid off for all of us. Imagine the legacy of this current period if we do not do likewise.

Instead of interpreting capacity narrowly as economic or space-based capacity, more emphasis should be placed on what the PSE system at its best does best, and that is expand the capacities of its many communities and their people.

## **6 What incentives can the Ministry provide for efficient and cost-effective program delivery?**

Broaden the definition of "efficient" and "cost-effective"

Recognize that the value of many programs cannot be measured simply in "jobs started" or "credits earned." Developmental education; for example, can help students make huge progress in their ability to cope with the world and their preparedness for further education, without achieving either a "credit" or a "job" at the end of a particular class.

Remove disincentives.

Until block funding and the decisions of the current Board and administration, VCC had for years overproduced, used its facilities from dawn till late evening, and stayed open twelve months a year. Please recognize that, for the most part, program delivery now is efficient and cost-effective in terms of financial costs. There are limits beyond which the Ministry should not want its programs to be pushed. Where would be the advantage in that?

However, there may be times when administrations use government funding intended for programming for other purposes. This is even more true now under the "block funding" system. It has often been said that institutions will suffer consequences when FTE targets are not met. If there are not demonstrable social, demographic or economic reasons why targets are not being met, then the responsibility for not meeting the target should fall on administrations. It should not be prospective students or employees who suffer but those administrations themselves.

#### Remove unfair funding

The switch from formula-funding to block funding has exacerbated funding unfairness. In theory, with line-by-line funding, dollars were allotted to programming on a roughly pro-rata basis where the most expensive programs in terms of cost per student FTE were given higher proportional shares of funding. The switch to block funding was based on total grants to colleges in 2000-01. These had been produced by line-by-line allocations. That "block" is roughly what institutions have been getting in 01-02, 02-03 and 03-04. The anomaly is that the student FTEs are still calculated on the old line-by-line formulae, with the result that "expensive" programs require proportionally more of the static block than they used to. This situation creates another disincentive for non-UT programming.

#### Reduce attrition

When students are better prepared and support systems are in place, there is less attrition and better completion rates.

### **7 How can we best expand the system's capacity to support research and graduate programs that help drive innovation and economic development?**

Get industry and business to recognize that they are among the prime beneficiaries of research in the PSE. Get them to contribute to funds. Keep them out of the final decision-making on what gets researched. Research has to be free of corporate control. Give them partial rebates on those contributions through tax credits, which could get larger if they hired BC graduates and/or invested even more in BC.

### **8 How can administrative, management and other services be shared among institutions to reduce overlap and duplication, in order to lower costs?**

Encourage further supply efficiencies such as those which are currently being achieved at least among the Lower Mainland colleges. Further efficiencies amongst management levels should also be tried.

Administrative functions should not be allowed to expand at the expense of programming. The onus should be on institutions to demonstrate why they need more than a certain quota of FTE administrative salaries which are compensated at or above 95% of that of senior faculty salaries; i.e., approximately \$70,000 at current rates. Administration FTEs in excess of the quota should be removed.

### **9 What more can be done to help students move smoothly through their education and training?**

Insure adequate support services exist in the form of Learning Centres, Libraries, Counselling and Technological support.

Ensure that institutions are adequately resourced with training equipment that meets current industry standards. This is especially important in Trades programs.

#### Articulation

BCCAT has been doing an excellent job. It needs to continue to have a strong faculty presence through its articulation committees and through its centralized mechanisms to ensure that the system is continually improved.

### Private Institutions and Articulation

The current proposals to make private institutions more self-governing and self-regulating are worrisome. This issue connects to public institutions since they are under increasing pressure to articulate with private institutions. There has been good work done by The Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology its 1997 *Report of the Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements*. That work should be widely circulated again. All stakeholders should recognize and value the critical role of informed and empowered Education Councils in ensuring that appropriate standards are being met. Students need to know they are getting real value when they make the choices they do. If private institutions want to articulate with public institutions they have to yield a measure of control to the public. Once lost, credibility and reputation are hard to re-establish.

### Trades Training

The government and Ministry have taken a huge risk in ending ITAC and replacing it with a business-centred "Industry Board."

Those who've devoted years to developing training need a formal mechanism for their wisdom and experience to be heard. If they are not put on the Board, then the Ministry should ensure that an advisory group made up of faculty and unions is created and resourced.

### Immigrants

Something really serious has to be done to integrate immigrants more efficiently. Innovative programming should be encouraged, not disadvantaged. As an example of such programming, VCC has a long history of "combined skills" approaches where ESL and skills training work together. We are now developing innovative language support programs for professionally trained immigrants. These are a little more expensive at the front end but the payoff is huge. Block funding makes them more vulnerable to cuts and less likely to attract new money. High tuition for such courses kills them.

There should be easier and cheaper credentialing of overseas degrees, more Prior Learning Assessment, more co-op programs and co-op programs for overseas-qualified immigrants. In order to help facilitate this work, the Ministry should be bringing together immigrant service organizations and the PSE system.

## **2.3 Mandates**

(Page 11)

*"...At the same time, institutions are well placed to assess and respond to the needs of their communities and should have the freedom to do so."*

While institutions literally may be "well placed," that does not mean they are "assessing and responding to the needs of their communities." Just saying it does, does not make it so.

There are few mechanisms to ensure that "assessing and responding" actually happen. It currently depends upon the individual President or Board member or Program Advisory Council members at a particular institution. The current College governance system does not ensure that the community has a clear path to the college or that Boards feel a responsibility to open up to their communities.

VCC, for example, surely was not responding to the needs of its communities when it made the cuts it did. It made a purely business decision based upon the skills of private business leaders on its Board who wanted to cut costs (while anticipating continued income) in order to build up budgeting surpluses, hardly an education agenda.

**10 Given the existing mandates and the aspirations of the different PSE institutions in BC, what changes would help to reinforce an effective balance and distribution of roles and activities within the system?**

Anarchy and Sameness

The current "buzz" seems to be that every PSE institution should be degree-granting with additional focuses on those programs which are likely to make a buck or be popular. This will ironically result in sameness and boredom. Should every place have an MBA cloning programme to join the thousands that already exist? The Ministry must have noticed how quickly many places reduced their ABE programs when it became clear that they would be tuition-free. How does that help society? The market can only function where there's profit to be made. PSE should not be regarded as a profit centre. It functions broadly for the betterment of all.

The Ministry as the steward of society has to intervene in areas where the need for programming is present but not the incentive to provide it.

The Ministry has to enforce some order in order to preserve diversity. It is the only vehicle we have to enforce some semblance of democratic accountability. PSE institutions have an inflated sense of independence. None of them would be there without taxpayer support. They, therefore, have no right to reshape PSE to their multiple visions without democratic input and decision-making.

University-Colleges

BC is lucky to have five University-Colleges. They should be celebrated as unique regional centres. They should simultaneously have a wider mandate than undergraduate universities do and more scope than colleges or institutes, but not at the expense of their original "college" mandate; nor at the expense of any non university-college in the system.

Not another penny of taxpayers' money should be wasted on misguided efforts to turn university-colleges into "universities" for the sake of status and naming rights. That sector is already crowded enough with every member competing madly for limited resources.

University-Colleges should be looked upon as tremendous centres for regional cultural growth, research and practical, "what's needed" training. Make them unique and envied. Resource them properly. Give local industries and local governments ways and means to be real partners as well.

Provincial Institutions

BCIT's various mandates overlap with those of many colleges. Many of those have developed their offerings in different ways than BCIT or in ways that particularly address the needs of their regions. It is altogether appropriate that they have done so.

In the same way that UT programs take on different flavours at non-university institutions--while remaining completely transferable--it adds to the creativity and cross-filtering of the discipline when trades and technology programming is not all under one mandate. It would help though if the playing field were more equitable. Funding for the same program should not be substantially more advantageous at BCIT than it is elsewhere. We believe this is the case now.

Additionally, where unique specialties or a very high proportion of a discipline have developed or been maintained at institutions, they could benefit from provincial designation that would assist them with extra capital, marketing or other support funding. VCC has the potential for several such programs.

**11 Which approach will generate the best results from investments in research:**

**extending a broader research mandate to many institutions, or  
concentrating research activity and infrastructure in a few institutions?**

Perhaps the definition of research has to be broadened. There are many aspects of the teaching-centred work of colleges that are not recognized for research investments and which would not require large levels of investment.

**12 What policies and incentives will ensure that research contributes to regional economic development? What should be the roles of industry and economic development organizations?**

This cannot be "ensured." Research has to be free, free to go down paths which may not contribute to "economic development." Obviously, everyone hopes for spin-offs but they cannot be guaranteed.

Create broad-based regional agencies to stimulate research outside of the Lower Mainland. They shouldn't be either business or college dominated so that the parties would need to work together in order to function. But if the one-sided trend of recent bodies is to be continued, do not create another one. Faculty voices have to be represented and faculty need to have real decision-making ability.

**13 How should institutions' roles with respect to community education, contract training, and international education be reflected in their mandates?**

Community Education

BC Colleges are uniquely placed to respond to community needs. There need to be better ways for those needs to be articulated and effected. There should not be a pre-judgment that a community needs a certain type of programming, say primarily university-transfer, to the exclusion of almost all other. Colleges must also continue their unique role as providers of continuing education and forums for community discourse.

International Education

VCC is playing a leading role in International Education in Vancouver. This is a valuable service for Canada, BC, Vancouver, the college, and for the students. Nevertheless, this programming should remain as less of a priority than the college's service to citizens, immigrants and the people of its immediate community.

### Contract Training

Where this capacity exists, it also can allow colleges to play important roles vis-à-vis those who wish to contract services. Recent experience shows that colleges can compete and excel in providing quality assurance and quality programming. Again, this programming should remain as less of a priority than the college's service to citizens, immigrants and the people of its immediate community.

### **14 Given the need to balance cooperation and competition, which areas of activity could be undertaken through partnerships and system initiatives; and which are best left to the discretion of individual institutions?**

The former Contract Training Marketing Society showed that the PSE sector could attract monies by providing efficient services to those desiring training. An important opportunity to market the critical mass of BC institutions has been lost.

The BC Campus initiative may allow for an efficient marshalling of Instructional Technology resources, but there needs to be real faculty participation in its governance structure. It could have the desirable effect of limiting wasteful competition while also forcing a more equitable sharing of IT resources.

International Education is another area where more co-operation can create a way to market the critical mass of BC institutions.

Competition and partnering with business have to be measured and considered. Too much detracts from education.

## **2.4 Governance**

### **15 What governance structure or structures would best enable individual institutions and the PSE system as a whole, to respond to current and future challenges?**

#### Governing administrations

The full report presumes that individual PSE institutions are "*best able to make decisions on internal administration and operations, staffing, student admissions and evaluation, program development and other academic matters.*" (page 16)"

It is with regard to "administration" that society needs a check and balance. Currently, only College Boards can fulfill a role of governing administration, but given the current appointment, training and operational procedures of most College Boards, their dependence upon administrations does not inspire confidence in their empowered independence.

VCC is a case in point. Administration, when defined as that group of excluded employees earning about or more than top-step faculty, now is larger than it was 6 years ago. This is after cutting its offerings by about one-sixth and laying off many faculty and some staff and eliminating many well-functioning programs. An independent, well-functioning Board would have at the very least insisted upon an independent review of administrative functions.

#### Autonomy versus Accountability

On page 16 the Report states that the Boards of PSE institutions "*are accountable to government and to their communities for the management of their institutions.*" If

the Ministry is going to allow more autonomy, who is going to ensure more accountability?

There seems to be little evidence to support the statement above outside of the narrow fiscal accountability window. The Ministry has not articulated system goals nor has it created mechanisms for ensuring goals can be met.

Moreover, there are no formal mechanisms for communities to enforce accountability. It's a system largely dependent upon the personal energies, interests and influence of appointed Board members, who often have little connection to the institution they've been appointed to. Should accountability be a matter of chance?

Unfortunately, at VCC, the Board is operating increasingly under the cloak of in-camera sessions with less transparency than at any time before the shared governance changes were made. We hope this is not the case at other colleges.

**16 Are there lessons to be learned from other jurisdictions regarding governance structures that would be particularly relevant to BC?**

While we can always learn from other jurisdictions, we must be cautious and not throw any babies out with the bath water. BC has many lessons for others to learn as well. BC has created a sophisticated model of provincial system leadership through the Ministry and local control through mandated College Boards. It is a model that needs more openness, improved resources, and constant review mechanisms, not more wholesale change.

**17 Given the shift towards increased institutional autonomy and accountability, are the present roles, responsibilities, and composition of each of the following still appropriate: Boards of Governors, Senates, Academic Councils, and Education Councils? If not, how should they be modified?**

The decade-old changes to governance, which have brought a measure of shared responsibility for faculty, staff and students, have also brought a measure of openness and transparency to college governance. No one familiar with the pre-existing structures could deny that reality. Its prime mechanism for that has been by allowing more voices, voices with expertise and commitment, to the Board and Education Council tables.

However, the report states that when it comes to Education Councils unnamed stakeholders *"are concerned about duplication and overlaps with the responsibilities of Boards of Governors"* and that others, also unnamed, have proposed that *"Education Councils be limited to a strictly advisory function."*

The only stakeholders who could have made such a claim are administrators, or Board members after being influenced by administrators. It is a claim consistent with one made by some in the Advanced Education Council of BC in the months leading up to the 1994 legislation which brought in shared governance. Some in that group have apparently not given up the fight to regain their greater control over educational matters in the PSE system.

We categorically reject this premise.

Some "overlap" on the issues within Education Councils' purview is not a bad thing. It provides a check and balance mechanism. In the very rare case of disagreement, it forces discussion and compromise.

If "overlap" was completely removed, then where should issues such as *"education policy...curriculum....evaluation of student performance....academic standards and awards"* (page 16) go but to the experts, to faculty? It would not make sense for it to go solely to the Board and it is obviously not appropriate for it to go to administrations.

To do so would revert to the pre-1995 situation, which gave an inordinate amount of power to administration. This would be even more true in 2003 than it was prior to 1995 because in the current environment there is no AECBC to "systematize" (in the best sense) Board appointees and currently the Ministry itself has shed some of its system functions. Those were two checks and balances on administrative power that are either no longer there or are now sadly wanting.

If one governance body is to receive attention as to their roles and responsibilities in the near term it should be the Boards. The following points need immediate attention:

- ❑ their haphazard appointment process
- ❑ their often non-existent links to local government and community
- ❑ their lack of resources and professional development
- ❑ their lack of training opportunities outside of that provided by the local administration
- ❑ their inability, through a lack of opportunity, to see themselves as part of the BC PSE system

### **18 What changes to the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry would best enable individual institutions, and the PSE system as a whole, to respond to current challenges?**

The paper states on page 16, *"many post-secondary institutions seek increased autonomy in order to define and capitalize on particular niches in the design and delivery of post-secondary programs."* Is just the fact that they "seek" it enough to justify giving them even more autonomy? Especially when they are still digesting the largest amount of fiscal autonomy, block funding, that they have ever had.

The recent changes towards local autonomy have been huge. The system needs time to absorb them and where possible ameliorate their worst effects. They have already created inequities and suffering that are crying out for checks and balances.

It would seem that under the current model of governance, Colleges have been able to develop any number of niches. They have been able to do that without a major change in role or responsibility.

It is one thing for the Ministry to free institutions from some former bonds but without mechanisms to tie them closer to their communities we risk having what would amount to administrative takeovers. Presidents would have too much of a free hand.

As long as Boards remain appointed and resourced as they are currently, then administrations will wield inordinate influence over their decisions. If, through funding mechanisms, the Ministry does not maintain its levers of influence and control then another level of balance will have been lost.

Society will have lost much of its influence over a hugely important mechanism for ensuring the best possible development of its citizens and immigrants.

Lizz Lindsay  
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September, 2003