



July 12, 2022

Don Wright
Engagement Lead
Post-Secondary Funding Formula Review

Dear Mr. Wright,

Re: Public Post-Secondary Funding Review

The Surrey Board of Trade is pleased to be a stakeholder for the public post-secondary funding review process initiated by the BC Government.

The Surrey Board of Trade is one of the top 10 largest chambers of commerce/boards of trade in Canada (There are 430 of us in Canada). Surrey is going to be the largest city in BC very soon. Education and transportation investments in Surrey and in the South Fraser economic region are integral to our growing population and our diverse industry base, with their respective workforces needing to get to and from work in an efficient and effective pathway.

What are the most important contributions the PSE system makes to the economic, social, and environmental health of BC?

Benefits for Business

Post-Secondary education is crucial to economic development. Educated people can more easily adapt to the changing nature of work and can better apply their knowledge and skills in different contexts. Research undertaken as part of advanced and graduate-level programs often leads to innovative start-up companies and to knowledge and technology transfer by which existing businesses can expand. University graduates often settle in the area adjacent to their school, generating economic activity.

A better educated population gives businesses a larger skilled talent pool. If an individual has to travel to a designated school for adult education, they must sacrifice time at the workplace, at home, and doing other activities. Enabling individuals to gain more education through e-learning will diminish the time spent away from the workplace and home.

Social Benefits

As shown in previous reports by the Surrey Board of Trade, higher education levels significantly reduce social costs and provide social benefits such as increased employment, improved health, reduced homelessness and less criminal activity. The higher the education of the population, the greater their community participation. Education enables people to make a difference in their community and in their local economy.

What do you see as the key economic, demographic, social and technological trends that will impact post-secondary education in BC over the next 30 years?

The jobs of the future are increasingly digital. However, we still need additional trades training to ensure that infrastructure can be built and improved. Both assets need to be balanced and it starts with greater investments into the region that is growing exponentially faster than any other – the South Fraser



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Economic Region. While it is important to note that the current system is providing these investments and also balancing digital and trades-oriented education, it needs to be accelerated. As such, the following areas of study need expanding:

- Coding and tech
- Arts and Culture including production, music, and writing
- Medical programs
- Mathematics
- Accounting
- Law
- Nursing
- Life sciences
- Master's in psychology
- Getting products from R&D to commercialization

Infrastructure at post-secondary institutions is also in need of investment. Specifically, the system should prioritize:

- Entertainment hubs
- Medical hubs
- Internet of Things centres of excellence
- Wet lab spaces
- Collaborative spaces for students, researchers, and industry to collaborate
- Community engagement centre
- Arts theatres
- Athletic spaces
- International trade centres
- Music practice rooms

Transportation infrastructure needs to keep up with growing regional population. When post-secondary institutions emerge or expand to other parts of the province, the transportation network in that area must be able to handle increased demand. To do so, we recommend that the system ensure it has funding and buy-in from the provincial government to make the necessary investments such as:

- Expand public transit, make it accessible, safer, more frequent, and reliable.
- Ensure adequate stops are placed where the UBC campus will be built
- Improve car and bike share programs
- Rapid transit along King George Boulevard and Fraser Highway

Greater investment in post-secondary education is urgently needed in Surrey and the South Fraser Region to ensure its economic viability, to meet the local market demand for an educated workforce, and to secure an adequate supply of entrepreneurs. The need for this investment is driven by the following socio-economic factors:

The 983,000 people in Surrey and the South Fraser region – the largest and fastest-growing region of British Columbia – produce 19.2% of British Columbia's high school graduates. However, our students have much less access to post-secondary institutions than students in the rest of British Columbia. Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Simon Fraser University-Surrey together offer only 12.7 post-secondary spaces for every hundred 18–24-year-olds in the region. The rest of B.C. receives almost four times that level of access, with 48.7 spaces for every hundred of these young adults.



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The region's historically low levels of access to local post-secondary spaces – degrees, diplomas, and trades certifications – has led to an environment whereby many students commute north of the Fraser River for their post-secondary education. But the distance to these facilities and the cost of this commute is a significant barrier to access the lack of educational opportunities close to home makes access to post-secondary education particularly difficult for lower-income families.

As a result of the limited number of post-secondary spaces available in our region, more and more students are being turned away from the region's post-secondary institutions. Kwantlen Polytechnic University, while in theory an open-access institution, has long waits to enter various programs and has raised some program admissions criteria.

B.C.'s Labour Market Outlook for 2018 to 2028 estimates that 77% of the expected employment openings will require a university degree or some post-secondary education (including trades). But, in 2016, only 52% of Surrey's workforce had any post-secondary certification, compared to 71% in the rest of Metro Vancouver in 2011. Further education for a greater proportion of recent high school graduates and for the current workforce is of paramount importance for the people of Surrey and for Surrey's economic and social development.

To help build a sustainable, livable, healthy community, Surrey's Official Community Plan aims to balance the number of local jobs with the resident workforce, to provide local employment opportunities for residents and to reduce regional commuting. Surrey's goal is to have one job in Surrey per resident in the workforce. Since the majority of these jobs will require post-secondary education, increased post-secondary access is vital.

1) Literacy and English Language Programs

An essential part of B.C.'s post-secondary system is its adult basic education and English Language programs. These programs give students the skills to succeed in further education, and to be capable entry-level employees.

- 213,980 of Surrey's 352,250 adults do not possess the level of literacy needed for success in today's economy; over 78,070 lack a high school diploma.
- 56% of Surrey residents don't speak English at home. An increase of over 17% in immigrants was observed between 2011-2016. Yet people in our region are offered only one-fifth the access to English Language programs as the rest of the province.

2) Trades Programs

Trades training is essential for the economic vitality of our region: According to the BC Labour Market Outlook, 2018-2028, approximately 11% of all job openings will be in the trades. The demand for trades employees has outpaced the supply. However, while our region has 20% of BC's population, only 4.4% of B.C.'s trades training is offered here.

What modifications to the funding formula would you recommend considering the above?

It is imperative that the level of access to post-secondary education in Surrey and the South Fraser region be brought up to the level provided to the rest of B.C. Such an increase is crucial for the regions and the province's development.



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The Surrey Board of Trade recognizes the current challenge of funding this initiative considering fiscal restraint measures required to help balance the provincial budget.

We therefore urge the provincial government to Phase in a tripling of the number of post- secondary student spaces per resident in the South Fraser region from 2023 thru 2033.

Without this action, B.C.'s most populous and fastest growing region may not be capable of harnessing its potential to become a social and economic powerhouse. The scarcity of skilled labour and research facilities in the local market will continue to significantly hinder the growth of Surrey's core business community. The region's need for capital expenditures targeting socio-economic problems

will increase. The challenge for local businesses seeking to attract and retain skilled individuals – especially those seeking opportunities for advancement – will increase.

With this action, Surrey and the South Fraser region – and the province – will reap the many social and economic benefits mentioned above. In the short term, local businesses will benefit directly from the increased spending in the region from the universities' operating expenditures, by employees of the universities, and from the spending on capital expenditures needed for the expansion of campuses.

More importantly, in the medium-to-long-term, businesses will gain from the region's improved competitive positioning. Lastly, fostering the growth of this region's businesses will likely lead to significant increases in tax revenue for the provincial government.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me at 604-634-0342 or at email: anita@businessinsurrey.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Huberman', written in a cursive style.

H. Captain (Navy) Anita Huberman
President & CEO, Surrey Board of Trade