

May 20, 2022

To Key Sector Partners:

Re: Public Post-Secondary Funding Review

I am writing to you regarding the Public Post-Secondary Funding Review announced by Minister Anne Kang on March 31, 2022. I wanted to share with you how we intend to engage with the wider post-secondary education sector and other interested stakeholders and ask you to start thinking about how your organization will participate in that engagement.

As context, government provides a grant each year to the 25 public post-secondary institutions – a total of approximately \$2.3 billion. Over the years, the method of calculating the grants has become somewhat ad hoc, and less connected to the different and costs and outcomes that are relevant to each institution. This review will be principles-based and will aim to:

1. Establish a funding model that fairly and impartially distributes provincial financial resources across the public post-secondary sector.
2. Align provincial funding with the education and skills training needs of British Columbians and the communities served by the 25 public post-secondary institutions.
3. Support student success by ensuring access to affordable, high-quality post-secondary education and expanding key student supports.

I do not come to this review with any pre-set notions of how the funding formula should be changed. I want to explore and discover together with you what the options might be. My approach will be one of “appreciative inquiry,” and it will be iterative.

I recognize that there are many, varied interests at play and that it will be challenging to satisfy the expectations of all interested groups. I will do my best to ensure your voices are heard as part of this review.

Engagement will be a combination of targeted sessions and round-table discussions. These sessions will be in-person, virtual or hybrid, as logistics allow. We will be reaching out in the coming weeks with invitations to engagement opportunities.

You are also invited to provide me with written submissions by July 15. To repeat, this process will be iterative, so you should not worry that this will be your “last chance” to get your advice into the process. But I would like to get an early sense of the how the public post-secondary education system in BC affects your organizations, or those you represent. You can submit on behalf of your organization or, if you prefer, you could be part of a larger group submission. Submissions may be sent by email to aestfundingformulareview@gov.bc.ca.

I do not want to narrow the range of issues you raise in your submissions, and I fully expect that I will receive many suggestions and avenues for consideration that I would not have anticipated beforehand. I would, however, ask that, at a minimum, you answer each of the questions in the attachment to this letter.

I have also invited submissions from each public post secondary institution.

The Ministry will be establishing a website which will be accessible to the public. In the interest of transparency, we will be posting submissions received in this process. In addition, we will be posting discussion papers to elicit discussion of various issues regarding BC's post-secondary system.

I will close off with a few observations about BC's Public Post-Secondary Education System. I have personally benefited from our system as a student. I had the privilege of being president of one of the institutions of that system. I had the opportunity to think about the system when I was the deputy minister of the ministry that, at the time, had responsibility for both the K-12 system and the PSE system. I had the opportunity to think about the system's role in the overall economic, social, and environmental health of British Columbia when I was head of the public service from 2017-20. My views are informed by all those experiences.

I sincerely believe that British Columbia's PSE system compares very favourably to other systems in North America. It truly is a system. It is a system that is appropriately differentiated. Institutions provide different types of education and services, reflecting different interests and plans of individuals, different needs of employers for skilled and knowledgeable employees, different needs of communities across the province, and different approaches to solving the province's challenges.

This differentiation is complemented by a well-articulated system. Collaboration across the different institutions is well-developed. I am not aware of any other jurisdiction in North America that has a transfer system that is as fully developed as the one administered by the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT). The flexibility and optionality provided by the transfer system is of significant value to BC students - each year more than 50,000 students transfer from one institution to another.

To some extent the scope and coherence of our system was by design, starting with UBC President John B. Macdonald's 1962 report *Higher Education in British Columbia and a Plan for the Future*, which outlined the basic framework for the system we have now.¹ Macdonald's plan has been supplemented with additional institutions, and modifications of the mandates of existing institutions over the past sixty years.

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¹ This report can be accessed at: <https://www.bccat.ca/Media/NEWBCCAT/pubs/HighEdBCPlan.pdf>
It is still worth a read, sixty years later.

Macdonald's design, and the fact that provincial governments followed through on his recommendations, is a testament to the power of far-sighted vision and commitment. We should recognize, however, that systems also evolve naturally, without being consciously designed or engineered from the centre. That natural evolution sometimes resulted from the actions of individual or informal groups of institutions, sometimes from the actions of small groups of individuals, responding to changing needs, new opportunities, or new technologies.

Any changes in the funding formula must maintain the coherence of the PSE system, but also provide appropriate incentives to respond to changing circumstances and to collaboration across the system in how those responses are provided.

I look forward to working with you over the coming months in exploring how the funding formula can be modified to ensure that BC's public post-secondary system continues to provide the best possible returns for the public funds invested in it.

Sincerely,



Don Wright, Engagement Lead
Post-Secondary Funding Formula Review

Attachment

pc: Shannon Baskerville, Deputy Minister
Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training

Rachel Franklin, Executive Director
Funding Formula Review Project Office
Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training

Attachment

1. What are the most important contributions the PSE system makes to the economic, social, and environmental health of BC?
2. What could the system be doing differently to enhance its contributions to the economic, social, and environmental health of BC?
3. 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?
4. How do you think the PSE system needs to evolve in response to those trends?
5. What modifications to the funding formula would you recommend considering the above?