

# NIC president makes colleges' case in Ottawa

## Post-secondary institutions need help, she argues

Lindsay Chung

Record Staff

Community colleges can play an important role in addressing skills shortages across Canada, but they need more support to do so.

That is the message North Island College (NIC) president Jan Lindsay helped the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) send during a recent visit to Parliament Hill.

There are three key areas of concern for ACCC around the importance of colleges and how they can deal with the anticipated skills shortages Canada will face, explained Lindsay.

The ACCC wants the government to increase federal research and development funding by five per cent, dedicating the additional amount to innovation, applied research, product development, technology transfer and commercialization projects of colleges with their private-sector partners.

"We do quite well in Canada in the area of discovery research and money that goes into it federally," said Lindsay. "That's going primarily to universities, and it's looking out to the future. What

we're facing in Canada and not doing well in is the implementation of applied research ... and these are the things that apply to the here and now."

Those are the kinds of things colleges are very good at, and there is a lot of infrastructure across the country, as there are 150 community colleges and more than 1,000 campuses, she explained.

"You've got the infrastructure that can be used if the funding is there to support industry-based research," she said.



JAN LINDSAY

out partnerships to increase the capacity for research in our community," said Belshaw.

There are many benefits to being able to do

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John Belshaw

NIC is involved in a lot of research in the health and sciences department, as well as research into converting biowaste into methane in Campbell River, research into teaching, and multi-level research into crime and fear of crime in the Comox Valley, explained John Belshaw, the college's associate vice-president of education.

The college is also engaged in community-based research, working with non-profit organizations.

"We're working

more of this research, he explained.

"I think the most exciting part about it is it engages students," he said. "There is a really strong educational advantage to it. Colleges can act as hothouses for innovation in their communi-

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ties. And we can be an agent for social change by doing research on food security, homelessness, supporting non-profits that are struggling to address their mandate."

Another area of concern for the ACCC is more funding for infrastructure.

The ACCC is recommending the government establish a college infrastructure and equipment fund adequate to secure the supply of advanced skills requirements of the economy.

Many institutions, including NIC, have benefited from the federal Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP), but the ACCC is calling for more money to increase the capacity to meet the requirements of employers across the country.

"Certainly, we want to make it known NIC in particular is very appreciative of the support we've gotten from KIP," said Lindsay, noting this funding is allowing the college's new trades training centre to go ahead, and the college received great support from MP John Duncan.

Expanded KIP fund-

ing could help NIC address needs such as more space and a new health sciences building, noted Lindsay.

The ACCC is also concerned about support for First Nations and Inuit students.

The ACCC is recommending the government increase funding for the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Post-Secondary Student Support Program to reflect the increasing number of First Nations and Inuit learners requiring financial support to enter post-secondary education.

"Going back to the fact we know there is a pending skills shortage, and we're already seeing it, colleges need to have support to build infrastructure so we can produce more

graduates, but another issue facing us is where do we get the young people to get into these programs," said Lindsay.

First Nations have one of the highest popu-

lations of young people, and colleges need the support to bring those First Nations and Inuit youth into post-secondary programming, she explained.

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