



MEDIA RELEASE

Association of Canadian Community Colleges

Serving Canada's colleges, institutes, cégeps, university colleges and polytechnics

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KEEP CANADA COMPETITIVE: SUPPORT COLLEGES, INSTITUTES AND POLYTECHNICS

Ottawa, November 17, 2009 – “Canada must quickly ramp up its support for colleges, institutes and polytechnics, if we are to keep pace with our international competitors,” says James Knight, president and chief executive officer of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC).

“Science and technology minister Goodyear said recently that Canada does very well at supporting ‘basic, discovery-oriented research’ but not so well ‘getting innovations out the door’. We agree, and one of the reasons for this is that Canada is not doing enough to support its colleges, institutes and polytechnics.”

Knight says Canada lags behind other countries when it comes to commercializing the fruits of research and developing the products, processes and materials that fuel companies and creates jobs.

Colleges, institutes and polytechnics are key contributors to Canada's innovation system. They help businesses start, develop and grow. They also lead in finding applications for scientific research and transferring technology to the marketplace. But the chronic shortage of funding limits their capacity to perform these crucial functions and meet the needs of Canada's economy.

ACCC gives full marks to the federal government for targeting post-secondary institutions for capital investment as part of its recession-fighting stimulus strategy, and investments under the Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP) have been important. But the two-year, \$600-million program (\$1.2 billion including the provincial component) falls short of the estimated \$7 billion needed to modernize and expand Canada's colleges, institutes and polytechnics.

“Our waiting lists were long before the recession,” said Knight. “They are growing longer now as people who have lost their jobs in the recession flock to colleges to re-skill. Our capacity crunch is keeping thousands of qualified applicants who want jobs from acquiring the advanced skills they need.”

The ACCC says two key issues require action: capital investment and support for industry-driven research partnerships.

To tackle the need for capital investment, the Association says the federal government should extend and expand KIP, and is calling for a five-year program would make \$2.5 billion available to leverage matching provincial, private sector and institutional investments.

Second, ACCC is calling on the government to increase its current research and development funding by five per cent, or approximately \$ 150 million and create an applied research and development fund foster new research and development synergies between industry and colleges, institutes, polytechnics, cégeps and university colleges.

“We understand the fiscal context that governments are in. But these are modest and realistic measures,” said Knight. “Only by fuelling our engines of innovation, skills-development and productivity growth can we continue to maintain the advanced, competitive economy needed to support a prosperous nation. From our perspective, inaction is not an option.”

For more information:

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