



**April 2009**



**Canada's Colleges and Institutes:**

## **Fostering Linguistic Duality**

**Submission to the House of Commons  
Standing Committee on  
Official Languages**



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



## **The Association of Canadian Community Colleges**

The Association of Canadian Community College (ACCC) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Official Languages as it reviews the federal government's support for post-secondary institutions and their efforts in promoting bilingualism in Canada. ACCC trusts that the Committee will envisage a more comprehensive role for Canadian colleges and institutes in the federal government's Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality.

ACCC is the national and international voice of Canada's 150 community colleges, cégeps, institutes of technology, university-colleges and polytechnics.<sup>1</sup> With campuses in 1,000 urban and rural communities, 1.5 million learners and 60,000 educators, these institutions play a pivotal role in ensuring Canada's economic, social and cultural vitality. They provide the advanced skills which keep the labour force robust, competent and competitive. Small and medium enterprises turn to them for applied research, product development and technology adaptation assistance. The education they provide draws students equally from all socio-economic quarters. They are learning institutions committed to fostering positive teaching environments that enable Canadians to acquire and enhance their French and/or English language abilities. They partner to showcase the cultural attributes of their local communities and the expertise and talents of others.

In addition to the points outlined in the Association's brief, the Committee has received further perspectives of ACCC francophone member institutions through the Fédération des Cégeps and the Réseau des cégeps et collèges francophones du Canada.

## **Fostering Linguistic Duality**

Colleges facilitate access to language training and emphasize the value of learning and living experiences in both English and French.

Canada's colleges were created or expanded through a partnership of the federal and provincial governments in the 1960's. The passing of the first Official Languages Act in 1969 and the subsequent collaboration of the federal government and the provinces/territories was an important milestone. The partnership enabled colleges to establish some of the earliest language programs in the country. Colleges enhanced their programs in the early 80's when the federal government and the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada signed the first Protocol for Agreements for Minority-Language Instruction. While the current protocol has recently expired, we understand the next five year agreement is imminent. In the meantime, the lack of the umbrella Protocol and the individual agreements with the provinces and territories is unsettling to our members and their communities. The BC agreement has been extended for one year, but the others have not at this time. Any further delay could undermine the excellent base in the participating institutions. Of particular concern is the funding for the francophone colleges outside of Quebec.

Through the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Minority Language Education, Second Official Language Instruction and the Enhancement of French Language Post Secondary Education,

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<sup>1</sup> This Brief will hereinafter refer to community colleges, institutes of technology, university colleges, polytechnics and cégeps as colleges or colleges and institutes of technology.

the Collège Boréal in Sudbury, Ontario and La Cité Collégiale in Ottawa, have developed strategies to widen the range of PSE programs in French, increased availability of distance learning and developed Centres of Excellence to promote bilingualism in their respective communities.

Colleges have also accessed the Protocol components administered by Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. Applications for support are substantially greater than the available resources.

“Explore”, the summer intensive language-learning program, is available in French at six colleges and in English at eight institutions.

“Destination Clic”, which includes both a language and a cultural component, is offered through the Centre Linguistique du Collège de Jonquière.

Forty-five colleges received “My Accent” funding which supports part-time work as language assistants to students studying outside their home province or territory. The language assistants lead classroom activities in an elementary, secondary or post-secondary setting.

In past years, support was available jointly from Canadian Heritage and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to enable colleges to establish Academic Mobility Partnerships between Anglophone and Francophone institutions in urban and rural contexts. While funds were small, the results were impressive. The most recent program ended two years ago.

The value placed on the mobility programs led two Quebec colleges, F.X. Garneau and Cégep de Lévis-Lauzon, to successfully approach their municipal governments to fund exchanges with colleges in Alberta and British Columbia.

In addition to programs supported through government investments, colleges offer evening and weekend courses on a user pay basis.

Colleges are the prime delivery agents for immigrant settlement and integration initiatives with extensive French and English as a Second Language and acculturation programs provided across the country. Such training strengthens community development and enables immigrants to contribute their talents and skills to Canada’s economy.

## **Responding to Employers’ Needs**

Canada’s colleges and institutes are integrally aligned with the needs of employers. Through Program Advisory Committees to solicit business and industry input, colleges are on the leading edge of advanced skills identification, economic trends and market shifts. Colleges encourage business formation and sustainability by growing the local talent pool, by re-skilling displaced employees, and by offering customized workplace training and applied research assistance. They provide members of the French and English minority language community with the opportunity to be educated in their own language.

Georgian College in Barrie Ontario offers a bilingual Automotive Marketing diploma program through their Canadian Automotive Institute.

The Centre linguistique du Collège de Jonquière has for close to 40 years been a leader in providing second language training to major corporations in Canada. Building on their initial

Alcan engineer language training success, they currently train employees of Air Canada, Canadian National, Bombardier, and the Federal Government and other businesses.

### **Contributing to Minority Community Economic Development**

Community economic development is central to the college mandate. Colleges collaborate with business, governments and community agencies on economic development priorities. The communities they serve may be in close geographic proximity, within a region, another part of Canada or in another country. This partnership approach enables resources to be brought together to contribute to minority community economic development.

In Saskatchewan is L'entrepreneurship et la petite entreprise program offered by the Service Fransaskois de formation aux adultes (SEFFA) in collaboration with le Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB) – Dieppe, l'Université Sainte-Anne/College de l'Acadie and which is recognized by the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIASST).

The Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface received funding from Western Economic Diversification to lead a consortium of four institutions to increase access and improve content of on-line post-secondary education serving official language minority communities in Western Canada.

### **National Associations**

Our Association, like many bilingual national organizations, is committed to promoting bilingualism in Canada through its communication, activities and events. The high cost of written and simultaneous translation is however becoming prohibitive.

### **Federal Support for Post-Secondary Education and Research**

The Committee specifically asked us to address the area of federal investments in post-secondary education.

Notwithstanding the current economic context, Canada continues to face a crisis in advanced skills. Colleges were already under extreme pressure to meet demand. Current capacity falls far short of requirements. The system is characterized by long waiting-lists, aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance, antiquated teaching equipment, space shortages and an impending shortage of faculty.

The Government of Canada recognized the portending skills shortage crisis by committing to an increase for post-secondary education through the Canada Social Transfer beginning in fiscal 2008-09. While certainly a step in the right direction, it is neither possible to determine to what extent these funds will find their way to their intended use nor what proportion will be directed to colleges.

The Knowledge Infrastructure Program announced in the recent federal budget demonstrated the important role of colleges in Canada's economic future. While the announcements under

the initial competition are just being made, we anticipate excellent enhancements will be made to Canada's advanced skills infrastructure.

With respect to applied research, regrettably the government has only minimally recognized the essential role of colleges in Canada's productivity and competitiveness. Less than one percent of federal investment in research flows to colleges. We are working to have this increased to five percent as an initial goal. While discovery research undertaken in universities has great value, applied research undertaken by colleges in partnership with small and medium enterprises stimulates local economic activity and job creation. Moreover, these companies need college graduates experienced in applied research, product development and technology adaptation and access to the skills and expertise of college faculty to help solve problems or assist in developing new processes and commercial applications. Our argument is that Canada's research investments need to strike a better balance between pure research and applied research.

## **Opportunities for Federal Engagement**

A number of helpful measures are available to the Government of Canada, some falling within current federal programs, budgets and regulations including the following:

- A). Increase the breadth, depth and reach of Official Languages Programs across the country.
  - Renew and expand financial support for the Official Languages in Education Protocol (OLEP) with the provinces and territories.
  - Ensure support for bursary and official language monitor programs as envisaged in the Roadmap for Linguistic Duality.
  - Establish a college specific mobility program for faculty and student exchanges between Francophone and Anglophone institutions.
  - Reaffirm and expand opportunities for language to work programs where students participate in a learning program and then apply their learning in a work context.
  - Maintain and expand programs to support college research, curriculum development and educational technology applications with respect to official language and minority community initiatives.
  - Provide services for written and simultaneous interpretation to colleges serving minority language communities.
  - Provide financial support to national bilingual associations such as the Association of Canadian Community Colleges to enhance their active engagement of both Anglophone and Francophone members.
- B). With respect to the wider federal investment in post-secondary education and research the following are recommended:
  - Engage with provinces and territories to ensure the federal transfer payments earmarked by Parliament for post-secondary education are invested as intended, and that colleges receive a proportionate share.
  - Direct 5 percent of the federal investment in research to applied research, product development and commercialization carried out by colleges and their respective private sector partners.