



Submission to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

From the Langara Faculty Association

October 16, 2017

Vancouver, BC

Restore funding to BC's public post-secondary education

The Langara Faculty Association (LFA) calls on the Government to address the crisis in BC post-secondary education by restoring funding to BC's public post-secondary institutions.

The Government has made a commendable start in 2017 by restoring funding for tuition-free Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning. However, other areas of the post-secondary education system remain in dire need after the ongoing erosion in government funding over the past sixteen years. This is a province-wide problem that has grown to crisis proportions. Declining institutional grants are having a serious impact on the quality, affordability and accessibility of public higher education in BC.

This should be a Government funding priority for 2018 because a robust, affordable and accessible public post-secondary education system is key to future growth and prosperity across the province. The Government itself estimates that more than three quarters of job openings to 2025 will require post-secondary training, with 36% requiring a bachelor's, graduate or first professional degree.¹ An investment in public post-secondary education is an investment in future growth and prosperity for all British Columbians.

The situation at Langara College illustrates the nature of the ongoing post-secondary funding crisis in BC.

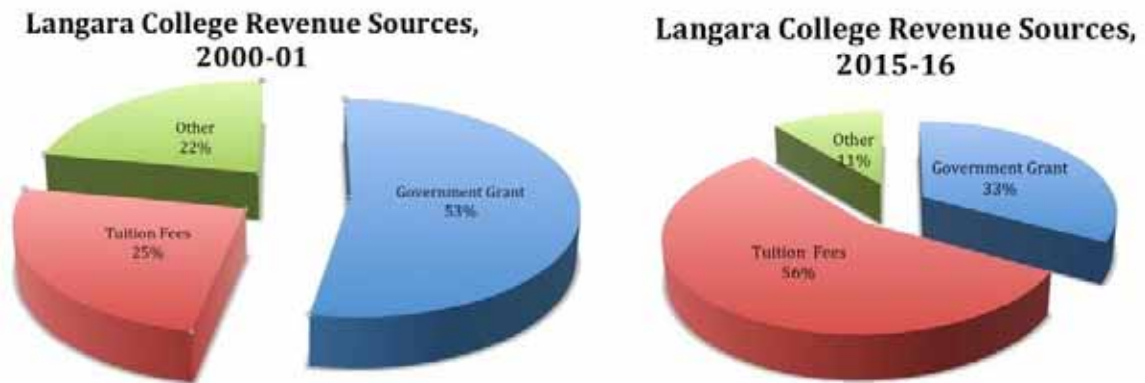
- *Langara College has the lowest level of per-student funding in the sector*
In addition to restored funding for all institutions, a revamp of the funding model to provide equity in the sector would be welcome.
- *Declining per-student funding at Langara from 2001-2016*
Once both inflation and student numbers are taken into account, Government per-student funding at Langara College has actually *decreased* by 20 per cent over the past 16 years. This significant decline in funding has had a real and deleterious impact on students, their families and the province's future.

¹ WorkBC, *British Columbia 2025 Labour Market Outlook*, 2016, <https://www.workbc.ca/getmedia/00de3b15-0551-4f70-9e6b-23ffb6c9cb86/LabourMarketOutlook.aspx>.

- Financially-stressed students*

Declining institutional grants have increasingly shifted the financial burden to students, many of whom work full or part-time and are struggling financially. Higher education is no longer affordable for many students: in 2016, the College’s “unmet” student financial aid requests totalled \$1.4 million. In a shocking development, Langara College recently opened a food bank on campus for students in need.
- Increased funding risk and institutional reliance on tuition revenue*

Langara College is required by law to balance its budget. With shrinking funding grants from the Government, it has scrambled to raise money elsewhere. Like other colleges and universities, Langara has had to increase domestic tuition fees annually, and to increasingly recruit and rely on fees from international students (who pay up to six times more than domestic students). The College has also developed new offerings that are exempt from tuition price caps, so these students are charged significantly higher fees.



The Government grant now covers only one third of Langara’s operating budget, a significant decrease since 2001. Not only is this a risky way to fund public post-secondary, it amounts to an inadvertent (or an intended?) privatization of public education. The “public” in public higher education is rapidly becoming more fiction than fact.

The Solution

The LFA urges to Government to increase funding for post-secondary institutional grants in the 2018 budget. The LFA also urges the Government to restore a funding model for a high-quality public post-secondary education system that is affordable and accessible for all British Columbians. While it may be difficult to restore sixteen years of cuts in one budget, the LFA urges the Government to commit to a long-term strategy of re-investing in this essential sector.

Respectfully yours,

Board of Directors
Langara Faculty Association