

New Brunswick
Community College



Collège communautaire
du Nouveau-Brunswick

Excellence, Dynamism, Autonomy: College Education at the Service of Self-Sufficiency

NBCC-CCNB Brief Presented to the New Brunswick
Post-Secondary Education Commission

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I. Introduction

As the Self-Sufficiency Task Force aptly notes, investing in education and training and innovative equipment and processes, developing new businesses, attracting and retaining large corporations, stopping, even reversing population decline, focusing on key sectors where New Brunswick has a competitive advantage, building and maintaining strategic infrastructure –all are legitimate elements to consider in any strategy to help New Brunswick achieve self-sufficiency.

But, one of these elements stands above the others in terms of its potential to create revolutionary change: education and training.

Government, industry and individuals need to make strategic investments in education and training to establish a solid foundation upon which provincial economic growth can be built. One of the best investments is College education and training as it offers the best opportunity to train significant numbers of people in a short period of time for specific needs.

It is against that backdrop that the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC-CCNB) network wishes to present in this brief the main ingredients for optimizing the contribution of college education within the provincial post-secondary education system and to allow New Brunswick's citizens and businesses to reach their full potential. The discussion will focus on four main themes: the College's contribution to training, the strengthening of links within the post-secondary education and training system, the need for strategic investments, and the governance of the institution.

The NBCC-CCNB network currently includes six Anglophone campuses that make up the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) and five Francophone campuses that make up the Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB). It is based on the following operating principles:

- Two colleges – One network
- An equivalent and equitable treatment of NBCC-CCNB students independent of program or campus
- Autonomy at the College level in the development, approval, management and delivery of programs according to the standards in place
- Increased flexibility in the access to programs and services
- The search for administrative efficiencies

II. Contribution of College Education

NBCC-CCNB already contributes to the province's economy. According to a study the NBCC-CCNB commissioned in 2004 to assess the college's socioeconomic impact, NBCC-CCNB contributes more money to the provincial treasury than it receives from it. New Brunswick taxpayers receive a rate of return on their investment in the College of 9.8%. Students realize an 11.7% annual return on their investment of time and money. College operations spending and past student productivity effects accounted for \$597 million or 7.6% of all provincial earnings. And, proving what is known anecdotally, college education results in improvements in health and reductions in welfare, unemployment and crime, resulting in savings of \$17.5 million per year.¹

We can do more.

The province can build on NBCC-CCNB's strengths and make it an even stronger player in the self-sufficiency strategy. Our expertise lies in providing specific, targeted training. We don't train for training's sake. Rather, we provide strategic training aligned with the needs of the labour market. Our success in matching training to employment can be seen in our graduates' overall employment rates and specifically their rate of employment in fields related to their training. According to the *Survey of 2005 New Brunswick Community College Graduates*, the employment rate for NBCC-CCNB graduates one year following graduation was 90%. The percentage of related employment since graduation as a percentage of total employment was 80%.²

We can do more.

One of the key ingredients in our graduates' labour market success is our constant monitoring of the labour market and regular program adjustments. Though NBCC-CCNB has been successful in offering programs which are well-matched to the labour market, we feel there are areas for improvement. First, we, along with other government players need to help the public, particularly potential students, better understand the labour market. We find that distorted interpretations of the labour market mean that student demand for certain programs far outweighs the actual labour market demand. Conversely, some programs with good job prospects are under-subscribed because people are not aware of them.

We can do more.

¹ Robison, M.H. & Christopherson, K.A. (2004). *The Socioeconomic benefits generated by New Brunswick Community College*.

² Prepared for the Labour Market Analysis Branch. (2006). *Survey of 2005 New Brunswick Community College Graduates*. <http://www.gnb.ca/0349/GFU2006E.pdf>

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Along with training workers to help grow the New Brunswick economy through regular programming, NBCC-CCNB offers contract training tailored specifically to the clients' needs. We have the capability to design and mount customized training quickly and effectively. This capability has often been promoted to businesses considering locating in New Brunswick and is a valuable part of government's business attraction tool kit.

We can do more.

NBCC-CCNB is highly accessible to learners and industry throughout the Province. Campuses and satellites are distributed across the Province. We offer training in a wide range of delivery formats. We are working to further improve this accessibility by converting to course-based training delivery, extending our delivery times and maximizing our distance education network. In terms of e-learning, although the entire NBCC-CCNB network now has broadband access at all of its main campus locations, the throughput capacity of this access is still not sufficient to enable "live" course delivery at low cost. We could greatly improve this capacity by joining the proposed Optical Regional Advanced Networks (ORAN) which will link educational institutions, research agencies, and other private sector concerns.

We can do more.

NBCC-CCNB also plays an important part in enhancing the skills of the under-employed and the unemployed. We could do more here by building on programs already offered such as academic upgrading, academic studies and other skills training. We could also offer, on a contract basis, skills training and upgrading to employees in the workplace.

We can do more.

In terms of lessening the impact of out-migration, it seems that college educated individuals are more likely to stay in the province after graduation than university graduates. While 68% of New Brunswick's 1999 university graduates who were originally from the province remained five years after graduation³, 89% of 1999-2000 college graduates were residing in New Brunswick three years after graduation.⁴ This college graduate retention rate remains high: the most recent three-year follow-up survey indicates that 88% of the graduating class of 2002-03 resided in New Brunswick at the time of contact.⁵ Whether this high retention of

³ MPHEC. (May 2006). *Five Years On: A Survey of Class of 1999 Maritime University Graduates*, http://www2.mphec.ca/english/pdfs/FiveYearsOn_GFU_2006En.pdf

⁴ Prepared for the Labour Market Analysis Branch (May 2003). *New Brunswick Community College Three-Year Graduate Follow-Up Survey 2003 Survey of 1999-2000 Graduates*, <http://www.gnb.ca/0343/3yrNBCC%20English%202003.pdf>

⁵ Prepared for the Labour Market Analysis Branch. (July 2006). *New Brunswick Community College Three-Year Graduate Follow-Up Survey 2006 Survey of 2002-03 Graduates*, <http://www.gnb.ca/0343/GFUE06.pdf>

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college graduates is due to the nature of the programs we offer and their match with the New Brunswick labour market or to the individuals themselves, one cannot say for sure, but it is worth exploring further.

The university follow-up survey itself notes that “mobility patterns are driven primarily by opportunities for employment: graduates are leaving in search of better employment opportunities, or to accept actual job offers.” More worrisome for the Self-Sufficiency Task Force and the Province is the report’s statement that “among those most likely to leave, and leave soon after graduation, are Engineering & Applied Sciences graduates, men, and younger graduates.”⁶

We feel that so long as we continue to work at matching our programming to the labour market and our graduates get decent jobs in the Province, we will continue to see high college graduate retention rates.

We can do more.

The NBCC-CCNB has been present on the international scene for many years now. In the early 1980s, the College was initiating its first international cooperation projects, and it has continued to be active at that level ever since. Every year, the network is involved in close to thirty projects in 15 to 20 countries, generating gross revenues of more than \$2.7 million.

Among the priorities chosen with a view to internationalizing its campuses, student mobility is at the forefront, including the recruitment of international students. The NBCC-CCNB invites these students to choose New Brunswick as a preferred destination for technical and vocational training. About one hundred international students register every year for various programs at one of the NBCC-CCNB campuses, in addition to a number who use the network’s e-learning services.

As indicated by the Self-Sufficiency Task Force: “Increasing the population is essential to creating a dynamic economy and reducing the per capita cost of public services.” The NBCC-CCNB can and wants to play a greater role in prior learning recognition for new immigrants, in upgrading their skills, their language training, and their certification.

III. Strengthen links within the Post secondary education and training system

There should be better flow among the different components of the post-secondary education system. As the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New

⁶ MPHEC. (May 2006). *Five Years On: A Survey of Class of 1999 Maritime University Graduates*, p. 55.

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Brunswick notes, “at the very least, the public has a right to expect its publicly supported post-secondary institutions, colleges and universities both, to behave as parts of a provincial system. We should expect that, to the maximum extent possible, a credit earned in one provincial institution, college or university, is recognized by the others.”⁷

More articulated programs, credit transfers, assessment and accreditation of prior learning are needed to ensure learners and taxpayers get the best value for money invested. Concerns about quality and academic standards have acted as a barrier to full and generous implementation of seamless movement among the different parts of the post-secondary system. Government has been reluctant to force this issue and has largely left it to institutions to reach bi-lateral (and multi-lateral) transfer agreements, articulated programs and their own prior learning assessment and valuing systems. Perhaps it is time for Government to become more active in this area on behalf of students and tax payers.

Other jurisdictions have entered the field to varying degrees. For example, Alberta established the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) in 1974. It is an independent body through which “stakeholders work co-operatively to ensure effective transferability of courses and programs for the benefits of students.”⁸

Ireland’s National Qualifications System claims to shift the focus “from the maintenance of existing systems and structures to meeting the needs of learners.” Perhaps if we could follow Ireland’s lead and base credits on “learning outcomes’ defined in terms of standards of knowledge, skill and competence”... rather than “inputs, or on time spent in programmes,” we could make some headway on this file.⁹

In its discussion paper, the Commission on Post-Secondary Education asks what the relationship should be between the community colleges and the universities. It also provides an answer of sorts by indicating the following under the heading Collaboration and Differentiation:

“We do not think greater standardization, either of programs or of institutions, is what the new global reality requires. Standardization so often paves the road to mediocrity. We need a more creative, innovative post-secondary system, and that can best be achieved by encouraging differentiation among and within institutions.

⁷ Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick. (2007). Discussion Paper

⁸ <http://www.acat.gov.ab.ca/>

⁹ <http://www.nfq.ie>

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They must decide where they can excel and they must have the freedom to pursue that goal with vigour. But differentiation must be attended by collaboration. Otherwise, we invite the very silo mentality we see too much of in the world already. The ideal for which we must aim must be to promote collaboration with differentiation.”¹⁰

We could not agree more with this statement. In New Brunswick, as in the other jurisdictions in North America, there is a place for college-level education, just as there is for university education; the activities of both types of institutions complement one another. What makes cooperation between them more complex is that the discussions and collaboration efforts cannot be done on equal footing. The university must negotiate with a governmental body that is part of the department responsible for funding and managing its affairs.

Nonetheless, there are plenty of wonderful examples of collaboration. Several programs have been articulated between a college and a university; many credits are recognized between institutions, and just recently, UNB Saint John introduced a Bachelor of Applied Management program for which the two years of a college diploma are recognized. Unfortunately, for other programs, it is necessary to go to an institution in another province for college credits to be recognized.

Many Canadian colleges offer applied bachelor’s degrees. So far, the NBCC-CCNB has not promoted this concept in New Brunswick, since, given the size of the province, it is preferable to target the articulation of programs between the College and the universities, thus optimizing the resources vested in post-secondary education. However, in the event that the articulation approach did not provide for an applied bachelor’s degree program in the fields in demand on the province’s labour market, the college system should be considered.

IV. Make Strategic Investments in NBCC-CCNB

a. Invest in Increased Access

To become self-sufficient, we have to be competitive with surrounding jurisdictions. Our neighbours, Nova Scotia and Maine have recognized the importance of community college education and made significant investments in order double their enrolments over a five to ten year period. Both have reached the half-way mark of their goals. Here, NBCC-CCNB’s capacity, enrolments and operating budget have stagnated. The college’s budget has

¹⁰ Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick, (2007), Discussion Paper, p. 9

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essentially remained unchanged over the past five years, despite inflationary pressures and the calls for increased access.

Charter for Change committed to a significant increase in the capacity of the New Brunswick Community College system.

Though the network has been concerned with increasing capacity for a number of years, the increases we have made are small in comparison to the 12,000 spaces proposed by the *Charter*. By way of comparison, since 2004-05, it has increased its capacity by 347 seats. The last major seat increase occurred over the four-year period between 1996 and 1999 in response to the Commission on Excellence in Education's recommendations that we increase access and develop a more realistic tuition fee policy. During that time frame, we added 1,000 seats to our capacity. This increase in capacity coincided with annual tuition increases of \$400.

Since its 2005 discussion paper, *Modernizing the New Brunswick Community College*, NBCC-CCNB has acknowledged publicly that its capacity needs to increase in order to meet the Province's labour market demands. Along with increasing capacity, it is concerned with increasing the number of graduates.

While redistributing programs to fill vacant seats will help us increase access and the number of graduates for relatively low cost, it does not go far enough. Increasing the number of part-time and distance education students and making further changes to the delivery model are other low-cost ways to increase access. Still, we estimate that these moves will only result in another 800 or so spaces. In order to add more spaces, we estimate there will be an annual cost of about \$10,000 per seat plus one-time infrastructure costs.

b. Invest in Up-to-date Infrastructure

We believe that the NBCC-CCNB is a key part of the Province's strategic infrastructure and every bit as important as the other types of infrastructure highlighted in the Task Force's reports. Though we *can* do more within existing resources, we require investments to convert our 1960's and 70's-era 'trade schools' into state-of-the-art facilities with up-to-date equipment. As the Task Force notes, designing policies to help companies adopt state-of-the-art technology is meaningless if companies can't find employees who can use the technology. This requires that potential employees are trained on such technologies. Right now, the NBCC-CCNB often has to train on out-dated technologies compared to what is in use in modern workplaces.

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We also have to acquire the next generation of broadband communication technology in order to deliver multi-site training more efficiently. Despite the fact that the entire NBCC-CCNB network now has broadband access at all of its main campus locations, the throughput capacity of this access is insufficient to enable “live” course delivery at low cost. CANARIE’s CaNet4 dark wire network offers the promise of such capacity and the added potential to enhance research and innovation activities. The proposed Optical Regional Advanced Networks (ORAN) will link educational institutions, research agencies, and other private sector concerns in such a manner as to facilitate this type of activity. The NBCC-CCNB network should not be left behind in such critical developments.

By having cutting edge technologies and a well trained faculty, we can play a significant role in applied research. We are well-positioned to help business adopt new technologies, develop and test new products, and increase productivity. For example, NBCC-CCNB has provided expertise to businesses in terms of prototyping (experimenting with underutilized wood species in building materials), product improvements (metal moulds) and process improvement (experimenting with converting waste into biofuel).

c. Implement incentives for non-government investments in education and training

i. Employer-supported Training

“Investment in human capital, such as education and skills training, is three times as important to economic growth over the long run as investment in physical capital.”¹¹ As suggested by the Task Force itself, due to reasons such as a sustained labour surplus, industry has failed to make adequate investments in training.

Even though there is a growing understanding that training is critical to our economy, the corresponding investments are slow-coming. “Between 1997 and 2002, participation rates in employer-supported training increased only slightly, if at all, for workers in most age and educational groups.” In fact, “the role of the employer relative to that of the individual worker in supporting training shifted over the 1997-2002 period, with an increasing proportion of workers undertaking job-related training that was not employer-supported.”¹²

¹¹ Statistics Canada The Daily, June 22nd 2004, *Literacy scores, human capital and growth*

¹² Peters, Valerie. (2004). *Working and training: First results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey*, p. 16. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/81-595-MIE/81-595-MIE2004015.pdf>

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In New Brunswick, participation in employer-supported training rose from 19% in 1997 to 26% in 2002. In terms of the mean annual number of hours of formal job-related training per participant, New Brunswick was in line with the corresponding Canadian figure.

While New Brunswick's figures seem reasonable in the Canadian context, it should be noted that "the rate of participation in job-related training in Canada is only average compared to other countries, and is below that of some of our competitors. Less than 30 percent of adult workers in Canada participate in job-related education and training, compared to almost 35 percent in the UK and nearly 45 percent in the US, for example. As a percentage of their overall payroll, US firms spend about 50 percent more on training than Canadian firms."¹³

The AETS showed that in 2002, as in previous years, workers employed in professional and managerial occupations had the highest rate of participation in employer-supported job-related training (35%), followed by white collar workers in clerical, sales and service occupations (20%), and blue collar workers (16%).

According to the author of *Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada*, while overall participation in adult training *is* increasing in Canada, this masks a number of issues of concern:

- Employer-sponsored training in Canada has been stagnant. Participation rates in employer-sponsored training and firms' spending per employee have remained virtually the same in recent years.
- Worker training is highly concentrated in Canada, among younger workers, those with higher education and skill levels, and workers in larger firms.¹⁴

The 2003 AETS finding that the lowest rates of participation in employer-supported job-related training continue to be found among the smallest firms¹⁵ is important for New Brunswick. The majority of our businesses are small or medium-sized. More than 95% of New Brunswick businesses employ fewer than 50 people. 87% have less than 20 employees and over 58% employ fewer

¹³ Goldenberg, Mark. (2006). *Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada*. A report by the CPRN for CCL, p. 5 <http://www.cprn.org/en/doc.cfm?doc=1529>

¹⁴ Goldenberg, Mark. (2006). *Employer Investment in Workplace Learning in Canada*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Peters, Valerie. (2004). In the AETS, an employer is considered to have sponsored (or supported) a training activity if they have done any of a range of activities, including such things as providing the training, paying for the training (either directly or by reimbursing an employee), allowing the trainee to work a flexible schedule to accommodate training, or providing transportation to or from the training location.

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than 5 people. These businesses account for 33% of all employment in New Brunswick.¹⁶ In response to a 2002 CFIB survey thirteen percent (13%) of SME's in NB reported they did not offer any form of workplace training. Half (51%) of the businesses surveyed reported using informal approaches to training.¹⁷

Despite the evidence that show employer investments in training increase productivity, innovation and firm success, employers remain unconvinced about the benefit of training. Some studies suggest that the benefit to firms in terms of productivity growth considerably outweigh the benefit to workers in terms of wages.¹⁸

Back in the mid-nineties, one of the then Department of Advanced Education and Labour's commitments in response to the Commission on Excellence in Education was to study options to increase incentives for private sector investment in training. Given the economic situation at the time, though, little progress was made toward encouraging such investment. Perhaps the time is right to try again.

It is crucial to design incentives that encourage businesses of all sizes to invest in training as the Task Force suggests. The NBCC-CCNB can be a great asset to businesses who wish to invest in their employees' training. We have the flexibility to tailor training to specific needs, to offer it on-campus or on-the-job site, as the company wishes. We can help businesses minimize downtime by offering evening and weekend training specific to their needs. And, we can give employees an incentive for training by making sure that any training they undertake is worth credit toward larger college programs or certificates.

Despite the kind of support we can offer, not all New Brunswick businesses are equally able to invest in their employees' training. Government should make strategic investments to help selected industries and businesses pay for training where the cost-benefit analysis warrants doing so. In order to do this fairly and transparently, Government will have to design a training investment framework that outlines the criteria upon which these strategic investments will be based.

ii. Support for Philanthropy

The NBCC-CCNB has a large student clientele that is competent and satisfied...but also in debt. It is up to the NBCC-CCNB to do everything it can

¹⁶ Statistics Canada Business Register 2005

¹⁷ 2002 Canadian Federation of Independent Business Survey

¹⁸ Goldenberg, Mark. (2006).

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to ensure that the students' training and learning environment is optimal. This preoccupation may extend to include the material circumstances that the students are expected to cope with. Getting an education costs money. In fact, expenses continue to rise.

Some government loan and bursary programs do exist. However, the very financial assistance services that help them are producing 'worrisome' statistics that are causing managers to recognize the reality that community college students are facing: at the NBCC-CCNB, 1,876 students (37.5 % of those registered) have debts totalling close to \$23 million, which is equivalent to an average of about \$12,250 per individual in debt upon program completion. Of those, close to 300 students are in debt by more than \$20,000 by the end of their time at the College. The recent initiative to withdraw parental and spousal income from New Brunswick's student loan calculation will help to improve access to education, but could also result in more students with loans and an increase in the level of indebtedness at the end of their studies.

This is a situation that we cannot ignore. It was in this context of reflection that the New Brunswick Community College Foundation was established and that a major fundraising campaign was launched. The donations received are placed in a trust fund from which the interest is used to offer scholarships and bursaries to students with the most need. Through the New Brunswick Community College Opportunities Fund, the Government of New Brunswick gives 50¢ for every dollar received up to a maximum of \$250,000 per year.

The fundraising campaign has shown how generous New Brunswick's benefactors are toward NBCC-CCNB students. In fact, private contributions are so large that the annual budget is insufficient to provide the government's matching contribution for all of the monies collected.

A \$2,000 benefit is offered by the provincial government to all students enrolled for the first time in a provincially funded New Brunswick university. Another approach would have been to increase incentives in favour of donations to scholarship funds for students with greater financial need. Since NBCC-CCNB students do not have access to the \$2,000 benefit, the government should consider an increase in the budget for matching private contributions and/or increase the percentage of its contribution.

V. Governance of the Community College in New Brunswick

a. Increase flexibility and minimize red tape

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While NBCC-CCNB has been doing a decent job, we recognize that we can do more and we can do better. Although the easiest thing to say is invest more resources in training, there are other actions that can be taken along with adding more resources to college training that would improve the system and outcomes. The NBCC-CCNB network believes that increased flexibility in terms of programming and utilizing our resources would enable us to significantly increase access and more importantly, the number of graduates.

i. Flexibility in Programming

Currently, close to one thousand seats out of our 6,500-seat capacity sit vacant, despite the calls for skilled, trained workers that we have been hearing for a number of years. Part of the reason for this unacceptably high vacancy rate is that some of our programs are mis-located. In campuses where we have struck the right program mix, vacancy rates are small, around 14%. At the other end of the spectrum, some campuses have vacancy rates as high as 24%.¹⁹ The overall vacancy rate has stayed about the same over past few years.

Flexibility is essential when it comes to changing the locations where certain programs are offered and establishing the right combination and length of programs. By establishing multi-year planning, we will be able to revitalize campuses by clarifying and better defining the mission, mandate, and areas of responsibility.

In terms of administration, each of the eleven campuses has its own complement of administrative staff. In the past we have contended that common operations and appropriate services should be streamlined in order to gain administrative efficiencies. Any financial dividends derived from this change should be redirected to increasing educational resources for the benefit of students.

ii. Flexibility in using our resources

While government intended to give NBCC-CCNB greater financial and administrative independence when it gave it Special Operating Agency (SOA) status in 1996, the reality is that all of the flexibilities we were granted have not been consistently available to us and the flexibilities mentioned in the previous section need to be added. The flexibilities committed to by government in 1996 were:

- The College's revenues accrue to the College itself rather than being folded into general government revenue.

¹⁹ Derived from NBCC-CCNB Annual Report 2005-06.

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- The College is exempt from the cap on full-time equivalent staff which allows it to hire as needed.
- Finally, the formation of the SOA allowed the College to accumulate a surplus and reinvest this money back into its operations.

The College has been unable to take full advantage of this latter feature due to constrained fiscal circumstances and because mechanisms have yet to be developed to allow us to exercise this benefit without affecting the Province's bottom line.

In short, as part of a government department, we face certain rigidities and red tape that other education institutions do not. NBCC-CCNB is unique in Canada on that front. As a leading expert in community colleges notes,

More than anything else, the college [as an entity] was an intentional creation of government and educational leaders to meet particular societal needs and address particular social problems. The forms that the institution took reflected society's needs and problems as ... perceived at the time the colleges were established. Perceptions ... change over time, and the most fundamental characteristic of the community college may be its capacity to reinvent itself as the needs and problems that it is asked to address change. Such plasticity is very difficult for any human organization to achieve, and at every point in the evolution of the community college there have been strong voices declaring that the final destination has been reached and further change would destroy it. Yet the evolution goes on, because that is the essence of the institution.”²⁰

Perhaps, as Skolnik's statement suggests, New Brunswick's changing needs and problems signal it is time for the NBCC-CCNB and its role to be re-imagined.

b. Activities to Date

Government first signalled its intent to modernize and improve the governance structure of the Community College network in its November 2002 Speech from the Throne. Additional details about the Government of the day

²⁰ Michael L. Skolnik. Inaugural lecture, "The Relationship of the Community College to the University and Other Providers of Postsecondary and Adult Education in Canada". Human Resources Development Canada. December 8, 2003, <http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~mskolnik/HRDC2.htm>.

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intentions were added in its 2003 election platform and most recently in the 2005 Speech from the Throne. Specifically, Government committed to introduce new legislation to modernize the governance of the New Brunswick Community College network. Government's stated intention is to ensure that the College

- has significantly increased capacity;
- operates in a cost-effective manner, with less red tape and more flexible and efficient use of instructional resources, such as e-learning;
- operates in full compliance with the *Official Languages Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*;
- has greater opportunity to create strategic partnerships with organizations, educational institutions, industry and governments;
- is better able to access private and federal funds to help with infrastructure and equipment costs; and
- is in a position to carry out innovative research and development projects.

Government released the discussion paper entitled *Modernizing the New Brunswick Community College* in February, 2005. The document described the evolution of the NBCC-CCNB and the current situation. It explained why the NBCC-CCNB needs to change and listed some issues that hinder the college from reaching its full potential.

The document also presented three examples of governance models to generate discussion:

- i. The New Brunswick Community College remains under direct government control. However, more flexibility is granted to the college system. Regular governmental policies and practices in areas such as human resources and purchasing are adapted to be more suitable to an academic institution.
- ii. A Crown Corporation where government maintains control over the broad directions of the College and budget allocations, but day-to-day decision-making and operations are managed through Board Governance.
- iii. A publicly funded non-government institution, similar to a university. Government would exercise control through the annual budgeting process.

The consultative process involved just over 1000 individuals including members of the general public, stakeholders such as employers, business organizations and unions, students and college employees.²¹ Participants

²¹ 900 staff, 96 stakeholders and 24 students.

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provided feedback through 20 focus groups and 50 written submissions. The process sought views, not consensus.

Participants generally agreed that the NBCC-CCNB must be modernized to better meet the occupational training requirements of the population and of the labour market. In order to meet this objective, the College must address the issues and challenges outlined in previous Executive Council submissions and the public discussion paper; it must have the necessary autonomy and flexibility to maximize resources. Participants noted that while a number of the challenges identified in the document could be tackled under the current governance model, it would be very difficult to address others such as funding.

Participants who expressed an opinion on governance chose the Crown Corporation model most frequently out of the three models offered as examples. Participants' concerns about adopting a new structure had to do with the potential impact on inclusiveness, employees (salaries, benefits, pensions, working conditions, and collective agreements), and on the level of provincial funding and tuition fees.

c. Choices to Make

In Canada, public education from kindergarten to the end of high school, community colleges, and universities have their own specific governance models. Linguistically speaking, the vast majority of institutions are designated as either Francophone or Anglophone. New Brunswick remains distinct, with a bilingual community college within a departmental structure. It is time to fall into line with what is done elsewhere, since the current structure does not show any marked advantages over what is generally in place in the other jurisdictions.

The future of the college network goes through the formula of a Crown corporation because it provides a balance between greater autonomy and flexibility for the College and the need for the government to dictate the general context of post-secondary education and training and to be accountable to taxpayers.

Since New Brunswick is the only officially bilingual province and other provinces have already recognized the need for distinct colleges, it would be to our advantage to create two Crown corporations, one for the Francophone campuses and another for the Anglophone campuses. The establishment of two corporations instead of one will give each of the linguistic communities direct control over the development of its own college.

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Each corporation will have the necessary autonomy to flourish within the context of Government's overall policy framework for quality post-secondary education and training. Accountability of the corporations will be realized through the reporting requirements established by the enabling legislation.

The main benefits of moving to a Crown Corporation model include:

- Greater access to funding sources outside the Provincial government, particularly Federal resources (direct funding as well as contracts) which should help the college to increase capacity and improve its infrastructure;
- Easier to establish partnerships and agreements (including naming rights);
- Greater and broader stakeholder and public involvement through Boards and subcommittees;
- Ability of Boards to establish college-specific policies in areas such as human resources, purchasing, conflict of interest, intellectual property and others;
- Ability of Boards to rationalize any unnecessary duplication of services, structures, courses, etc.; and
- Power of Government to establish the overall quality learning agenda and the accountability framework for the two corporations.

d. The Proposed Model

This section lists key attributes of the proposed governance model and is based on laws governing community colleges in provinces, notably Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

i. Mandate

As post-secondary institutions, the two College corporations would primarily be responsible for addressing the occupational training requirements of the population and the New Brunswick labour market. These requirements and the training the Colleges offer would be situated within a broader international context. Along with being knowledge and training deliverers, each College could also be knowledge generators by engaging in research and development.

ii. Structure

The Act would create two separate Crown Corporations, one for each of the official linguistic communities. The college designated as English would be named the *New Brunswick Community College (NBCC)* and the one designated as French would be named the *Collège communautaire du*

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*Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB).*²² Each corporation should have its own 10 to 12-member Board of Governors, appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. Members will include one representative each from the employees, the students and the Department. Other criteria for selecting members could be specified in the Regulations. The Boards would report to the Minister of Postsecondary Education, Training and Labour. The two college corporations' finances would be subject to review by the Public Accounts Committee on Crown Corporations.

iii. Minister

The Minister would have powers to ensure that the college operates in the public interest. He would establish standards for training activities and in doing so would ensure equitable treatment of students regardless of the College or program they are enrolled in. The Minister would approve, or, in consultation with a Board, would amend the College' annual business plan and budget. With this power, the Minister would ensure the efficient use of public resources and discourage unnecessary overlap and duplication between the two colleges.

The Minister would recommend for the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council the appointment of members of the Boards of Governors as well as the appointment or removal of a college's President.

iv. Board of Governors

Each Board of Governors would manage the business and affairs of its College and would ensure that they are conducted in accordance with the laws of the Province. The Board would adopt general policies with respect to the organization, administration, operation and programs of study of the College. It would be responsible to establish policies and guidelines pertaining to public tender and procurement, fair hiring, performance evaluation of employees, the prevention of harassment and discrimination of students and employees as well as conflict of interest for members of the Board and for employees. These policies would reflect the spirit of similar policies in the public sector, but would be tailored to an educational institution.

The Board of Governors would have the power to provide programs and services consistent with the mandate of the college, to grant certificates and diplomas, to set tuition²³ and other fees, to take disciplinary actions against

²² The name of a College could be changed by Lieutenant-Governor in Council following a written request from its Board of Governors to the Minister responsible.

²³ Subject to the approval of the Minister.

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students or staff, to facilitate the awarding of scholarships and bursaries and to authorize the use of its name by charitable foundations. The Board would also have the powers to enter into agreements, to manage real properties and to do any other thing considered necessary or advisable to carry out the mandate of the College.

v. President

The President of a College would be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council for a fix term that could be renewed. As the chief executive officer of the College, the President would be responsible for the general management of the institution under the direction of the Board.

vi. Financial Matters

Prior to the beginning of each fiscal year (April 1 to March 31), the Boards would have to submit a business plan and budget to the Minister. The Minister would determine the form and date of the submissions and could approve them as presented or in an amended version. Describing each College's financial, operational and academic plans for the coming year, these comprehensive submissions would have to include all sources of revenues (including tuition and other fees) and planned expenditures.

By a date determined by the Minister, the Boards would submit an Annual Report for the previous fiscal year, which would include audited financial statements. The Annual Report would be tabled in the Legislative Assembly by the Minister.

The Minister could provide a grant to each College out of money appropriated by the Legislative Assembly. Payments by the Minister to the Colleges would be subject to audit by the Auditor General. The Boards could establish bank accounts in financial institutions.

vii. Student Government

Each College could have a student association at each campus and a Provincial association to provide for the administration of student affairs. The association would set student activity fees which would be collected by its respective College. Those fees would be transferred to the association to be applied to social, educational and recreational activities and services for the benefit of students.

viii. Employees

Employees would become employees of a College. Terms and conditions for salary and benefits established in current collective agreements or contract

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would continue to be in effect until changed by new agreements. Bargaining units would be established accordingly for each College.

Each College would recognize the period of employment with the Province of New Brunswick prior to its creation. Employees' accumulated benefits would be transferred to the new corporations.

VI. Conclusion

Time is of the essence. New Brunswick has decided to move toward self-sufficiency. On this road, the preferred vehicle is a college that is focused on dynamism, excellence, and developing the full potential of citizens and businesses. Our neighbours are already equipped with these high-performance vehicles. In the race to attract investments, New Brunswick is in danger of being left behind if it cannot guarantee entrepreneurs a highly skilled workforce. Naturally, an independent college, which is agile and flexible, must be driven by outstanding personnel, ultramodern facilities, and strategic investments.

As indicated in this document, the issue of governance has generated quite a lot of debates, expectations, and concerns over the past five years. The recommendation of the Commission in this regard, as well as the government's eventual response, must be decisive and clear. The time of temporary structures is past. The NBCC-CCNB must now find a way to optimize its contribution based on a form of governance that is well established and well understood.

The New Brunswick Community College has proven itself in the areas of vocational and technical training, customized training, distance education, support for economic and community development, applied research, and international cooperation. It can and must do more as long as a major investment is made in its operations, equipment, and facilities. It can and must do more provided it is given increased autonomy.