

POST SECONDARY SUBMISSION

DEAR COMMISSION:

I am a teacher of 25 years, my family and my wife's family have lived in this province for hundreds of years. We live in Saint John, the city with the highest poverty rate in N B and one of the highest in Canada. I see so many of my students who do not see the opportunity of post secondary education. They either do not have the family support, vision or financial support to pursue post secondary opportunities.. The scholarships touch such a small portion that they do not have a big effect on the total population. We have to find a way to go from high school to post secondary and keep support for the student. The sink or swim philosophy creates a lot of dropouts, so we end up with an uneducated population that is not productive. I find this especially true for boys, 20 years ago girls were falling behind [almost all educational research shows this]. We are not doing a good enough job of retaining our youth in our province and one of the reasons is we do not support them once they leave high school. Post Secondary institutions do not promote, support or retain the way they could. Most kids want to have a high school that helps them to be well rounded, they want sports, social events, cultural events, a good education etc.

Our post secondary institutions do not offer that well rounded life and if they do it is often only for the elite. We have great high school athletes yet many do not get a chance to play in post secondary, why? Most of the programs only appeal to the elite and it is often imported. Why can we not play all the sports in a small college league in the Maritimes? We do this in high school and it would help us retain our local kids, a market we do not pay enough attention to. We have so many kids who do not realize their athletic or academic potential because we only focus on the best. I spent part of my masters degree on development and I believe we walk away from kids at a critical time when they really need us the most. They then do not see their potential or they move away. We live longer lives today so what is the hurry, everything is relative we have more time to work with our kids. This lack of concern causes population decline but if reversed could make us the place for the 18 to 30 year group to move to.

In the 1950s only 15% of Canadians went to high school. We brought in mandatory high school and we created a better society. Not all of our kids are at the same place at 18 so we must figure out a way to keep them in education. Here in Saint John we must find a way to create a greater critical mass of students so we can be seen as a young persons community. The 18 to 30 demographic is where we lose our biggest population, this is at the same time that urban centers are growing, there is something wrong with this. We must be prepared to make radical change and be courageous, education can transform our culture and our society. We must develop the opportunity for education and well rounded students. I like the idea of amalgamating UNBSJ and NBCC, it creates new synergies and a greater critical mass of opportunity and young people. We could have more courses, more sports, more opportunities, thus more young people. We are too small to be divided, educational opportunities need to be created here at home.

Sincerely, Barry Ogden, teacher