



Modernizing the  
New Brunswick Community College

A Discussion Paper

February 2005

## I. FOREWORD/INTRODUCTION

The New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) was created in 1973 with a mandate for post-secondary non-university education throughout the Province. The College has remained faithful to its original mandate over the past 30 years. While the College will continue to act on this mandate, it should be recognized that the environment in which the college is operating has changed drastically since its inception.

In the 1970s, any post-secondary diploma was practically a guarantee that one would obtain employment easily. Moreover, a university or college-trained individual could expect a long tenure in his or her job and career. As the economy changed, so too did the unspoken long-term employment contract that people had previously counted on. Workers no longer expect a university or college education to guarantee them a job for life. In turn, employers no longer expect lifelong labour commitments from their employees.

The changing economy and nature of employment has placed greater demands on individuals for initial and ongoing education and training. This, in turn, pressures education and training institutions to change the way they do business. People are less likely to view post-secondary education and training as a once-in-a-lifetime requirement. Now, people want to be able to move in and out of the world of work and education seamlessly. They want education and training to meet their needs and schedules, not the other way around. Hence the demand for part-time, just-in-time, on-the-job, correspondence, e-learning and other distance-type training and education is on the rise. Furthermore, people do not want to waste their time training in areas in which they are already competent just to earn a paper credential, so processes like prior learning assessment are becoming a vital post-secondary service.

Demographically, we have an aging population with fewer people in the traditional post-secondary population age group of 18-24. This places pressure on the education and training system for operational and programming changes. Rather than focusing on one or two age cohorts, post-secondary education and training institutions must now consider the unique demands and needs of a variety of age groups. Issues such as child care, hours of operation, and support services are among those that must be considered when trying to attract the broader to post-secondary education and training.

The increasing push for higher educational attainment levels benefits more than just the economy. Certainly, higher education levels attract desirable enterprises, contribute to innovation, increase tax revenues and increase productivity. Just as important as the economic benefits of higher education levels are the increased social benefits. For instance, there is a positive correlation between increasing education and positive health status<sup>1</sup>. Greater education generally means greater citizen engagement. For instance, organizational involvement is strongly associated with education. Educational attainment is also associated with participation in political activities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Health Canada: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/phdd/determinants/>

<sup>2</sup> 2003 General Social Survey on Social Engagement

Similarly, volunteer rates and volunteer hours generally increase with level of education as does the likelihood of making financial donations.<sup>3</sup>

Simply put, education and training are good for individuals and have a positive impact on our economy and society. As a Government, we want to encourage people to pursue post-secondary education and training. Therefore, we want to ensure that publicly-funded institutions, such as the New Brunswick Community College can meet individuals' and employers' demands for education and training, and further contribute to our socioeconomic success through innovation and long-term vision.

## **II. STRUCTURE OF THE NEW BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

### **a. Where we've been**

When the New Brunswick Community College was created in 1973, it was a corporate body with a board of governors and a permanent chairman. Five citizen's advisory boards provided input to this board. In 1980, the College's corporate structure was replaced by a departmental one with the creation of the Department of Community Colleges. The regional advisory boards remained in place with this structural change. These boards were replaced with less formal advisory committees in the 1983 changes that resulted in the creation of the Department of Continuing Education.

In 1985, the Department of Advanced Education and Training was established, and the campus advisory committees were eliminated. The Departments of Advanced Education and Training and Labour were merged in 1991 becoming the Department of Advanced Education and Labour.

In 1993, the Commission on Excellence in Education recommended that the NBCC be removed from Part 1 of the public service and be established as a crown-owned corporation. In response to that recommendation, the NBCC was restructured as a Special Operating Agency (SOA) in 1996 specifically to provide the framework to operate in a more business-like manner. While still reporting to the Minister of Advanced Education and Labour, SOA status was intended to give the college more financial and administrative independence. As an SOA, the College's revenues accrue to the College itself rather than simply being folded into general government revenue. 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.

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<sup>3</sup> Caring Canadians, involved Canadians: highlights from the 2000 National Survey of Giving , Volunteering and Participating

Labour became a separate department once again in 1998 and the advanced education components of the former Advanced Education and Labour were folded into the Department of Education.

In 2000, responsibility for the New Brunswick Community College Network was recombined with Department of Labour responsibilities to form the Department of Training and Employment Development.

**b. Where we are today**

The majority of these changes were structural and administrative in nature, not educational. Although the Community College's general purpose has remained the same throughout these structural changes, the College has evolved over time from a pure trades' school to an institution that provides technology and other professional and occupational training as well.

The New Brunswick Community College/Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (NBCC/CCNB) exercises this mandate through a network of 11 separate campuses – the NBCC with six Anglophone campuses and the CCNB with five Francophone campuses. One central branch supports these campuses including the operations of a central admissions unit.

The College provides more than 6,000 seats in over 120 different trade and technology programs. In addition to its regular program offerings, the NBCC/CCNB network offers training to over 18,000 “non-regular” clients through contract training, night school, short courses, distance deliveries, etc. The College has more than 690 co-operative education seats and hundreds more include some sort of practical, job-site work practicum.

In 2002-03, 82% of regular students graduated and a full 87% of these graduates found employment within one year of graduation. Furthermore, nearly 80% of these graduates found employment in areas related to their training and 91% of the employed graduates were working in New Brunswick.

The eleven campuses are involved in 31 international projects in 2003-04, largely funded by external sources, with 16 countries. These projects generate a small surplus and above all broaden the perspectives of staff and students alike.

The Community College makes a significant contribution to New Brunswick's economy and society. For instance, the college contributes more money to the provincial treasury than it takes out and the taxpayer receives a rate of return on investment 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.<sup>4</sup>

### III. WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE?

As the previous information demonstrates, the New Brunswick Community College has done an excellent job in fulfilling its mandate to provide trades and technology training. However, changes in labour market demands mean that the College has reached a point in its history where significant decisions must be made to build on its past successes and to meet the challenges of the future. The College must become the kind of adaptable and flexible institution that is able to stay ahead of the curve.

For instance, it is estimated that New Brunswick will have a labour force deficit of 1,900 to 8,800 university graduates and 12,600 to 19,400 college graduates by 2011 if current graduation levels continue according to our projections. More than eighty percent (80%) of new jobs created will require post-secondary education divided almost equally between university and college education. The Province simply cannot meet its economic growth targets with this deficit of post-secondary graduates.

The simple solution is to increase the number of post-secondary graduates dramatically. While there is certainly room for growth, we cannot meet labour market demands for more post-secondary educated and trained individuals simply by ensuring more high school graduates pursue post-secondary learning. Of the 8,574 individuals who graduated from high school in June 2002, 74% attend a post-secondary education institution at some time during the following year. Of those individuals, a relatively small 26% chose community college. Considering that Grade 12 enrolments are projected to slip from 9,633 in 2002-03 to 9,062 by 2009 and that not all those enrolled in September graduate, we can expect the number of high school graduates going on to community college to further decrease if no corrective action is taken.<sup>5</sup> And, more importantly, even if we dramatically increase the number of high school graduates who go on to community college, we will still not meet projected labour market demands for college-trained graduates.

Clearly, we have to upgrade the skills, training and education levels of the existing workforce as well. Given that 70% of the workforce of 2011 is already working, this is no small feat.

With this reality in mind, we recognize that it is time for significant change in the post-secondary training system.

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<sup>4</sup> Robison, M.H. & Christopherson, K.A. (2004). *The Socioeconomic benefits generated by New Brunswick Community College*.

<sup>5</sup> **New Brunswick Enrolment Projections by Grade for Selected Years** in *Education Outline 2003-2004*. <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/polplan/education-outline2004.pdf>

As a first step, Government committed to restructure the New Brunswick Community College System in its 2003 election platform to ensure it is better able to meet the growing demands for skilled and trained employees.

This discussion paper outlines a vision for the college system of the future, some of the issues facing the New Brunswick Community College system today and possible ways for us to move from where we are to where we need to be fuel the Province's drive for prosperity.

We welcome all ideas on the direction and structure our Community College should take.

*You can participate by:*

- 1) *Talking to us at one of the stakeholder meetings*
- 2) *Sending a written submission by mail at:*  
*NBCC – Consultation*  
*500 Beaverbrook Court, Suite 500*  
*Fredericton, N.-B.*  
*E3B 5X4*
- 3) *Sending a written submission by email at:*  
[\*Ccnb.consultation@gnb.ca\*](mailto:Ccnb.consultation@gnb.ca)

*Written submissions should be received by March 11, 2005*

#### **IV. WHERE WE WANT TO GO**

We know we cannot meet the coming labour market demands by standing still. We know we need to change, but not just to meet these demands. We aspire to be a vibrant, dynamic institution epitomizing excellence. We want our graduates, the employers who hire them, other institutions, our Province and other jurisdictions to hold an NBCC/CCNB diploma in the highest esteem.

We have a vision of a college system of the future that will provide quality skills development training to adult learners to support their lifelong participation in the labour market. As a reputable post-secondary institution, it will contribute to the prosperity of New Brunswick by meeting the occupational training requirements of the population and of the labour market. To achieve this, the college system will be significantly more cost effective in service delivery and will dramatically increase the capacity for enrolment by utilizing various traditional and non-traditional instructional methods.

It will be a well-equipped, affordable, responsive, dynamic and growing system of higher learning with an aggressive business orientation and aggressive sales and fund raising strategies.

We think that by concentrating on certain key values, we can make this vision a reality. We value:

- **Learner-centeredness** – We focus on providing learners with the skills, training and support they need for labour market success.
- **Responsiveness** – We respond quickly to changing environments and demands.
- **Accessibility** – We are accessible to all interested individuals.
- **Accountability** – We are accountable to the public for the funding we receive. We are accountable to learners and employers for the training we offer.
- **Innovation** – We promote and support innovation by our students, staff, employers, industry and the greater community.
- **Efficiency** – We will use our resources to their fullest capacity.
- **Flexibility** – We provide training when and where New Brunswickers need it.

Questions for discussion:

*What do you think of Where we want to go??*

*What other values are important to you?*

## V. WHAT DO WE NEED TO CHANGE TO GET THERE?

By 2011, we need to increase the number of college graduate by approximately 80% to meet projected labour market needs. To realize our aspirations, the New Brunswick Community College has to address a number of structural, financial and administrative issues and challenges.

### a. Capacity/Accessibility

**Current Situation:** Some campuses are overstretched for space, while other campuses are not full. With more than two applications per seat, not all qualified students can access NBCC/CCNB. At the same time, each year a number of seats in high demand occupational areas go unfilled for reasons including lack of awareness about these programs and their job potential, among others.

**Proposed Action:** Enrolments need to rise to meet labour market demands. We must greatly increase our capacity to train students, especially in high demand trades and technologies, by:

- Optimizing the use of our existing facilities;
- Increasing access and removing artificial barriers such as outdated entry requirements, inflexible schedules, location, etc.;
- Redesigning our delivery methods and training smarter – For instance rather than offering several instalments of courses common to more than one program at different times, we need to offer these common courses at one time, and/or through alternative delivery methods such as part-time and online training, for example;
- Better promoting of undersubscribed training areas where there are good employment prospects; and
- Promoting college education and training as a valuable workplace credential.

### **b. Infrastructure and equipment**

**Current Status:** Millions of dollars are needed for repair and renovations of campuses, plus equipment/labs need to be upgraded to keep pace with the technological advances in the workplace for which we are training.

**Proposed Action:** We must augment the \$2 million provincial government budgets for these improvements annually through access to other sources of funding. We must increase the number of partnerships and equipment-sharing arrangements that we have with other private and public institutions. By conducting more on-the-job training, we can ensure that students make use of the latest equipment employed in various industries.

### **c. Funding**

**Current Status:** There are four potential revenue/income sources for Community Colleges in Canada: the federal government, provincial government, the private sector and individuals. Being considered part of a provincial government department makes it difficult for the NBCC/CCNB to maximize access to these funding sources. Provincial government fiscal constraints have resulted in the NBCC/CCNB having restricted access to surpluses that it generates. While common in the context of universities, donations to the NBCC, either from individual graduates or the private sector, tend to be viewed as a payment to government, and consequently, are rare. Many federal government programs and contracts are not open directly to provincial government departments.

**Proposed Action:** While maintaining the annual grant from the Provincial government, we must create the environment in which we can easily tap into all existing funding sources in a short time span.



We need to ensure the NBCC/CCNB has access to any surpluses it earns as a means to further encourage innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit in the system.

#### **d. Red tape**

**Current Status:** The New Brunswick Community College system follows the same human resource, purchasing, conflict of interest and private-public partnership policies as regular government departments, rather than policies designed specifically for an educational institution. The Community College is a unique post-secondary education and training deliverer. We are often required to design and deliver educationally-sound programs and courses in response to challenging market demands in very short time frames. As such, our ability to respond quickly is closely tied to our success or failure as a training provider.

**Proposed Action:** Like any publicly funded institution, the New Brunswick Community College requires transparent policies in the areas of human resources, purchasing, etc. However, these policies must be tailored to fit more appropriately with the workings of a market-driven educational institution if the NBCC/CCNB is to operate with the speed, flexibility and quality required to become a first class training organization. We will create appropriate policies that suit an educational institution as well as fulfill our obligation to account to the public for expenditure of their resources.

#### **e. Administrative structure**

**Current Status:** Administratively, the New Brunswick Community College is now organized as 11 separate campuses each having its own administrative staff complements.

**Proposed Action:** We should always aim to greater efficiency in using our resources. 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.

#### **f. Training delivery model**

**Current Status:** Training at the NBCC/CCNB is generally program-based, rather than course-based and delivered in conventional ways (i.e. classroom or worksite-based face-to-face instruction), limiting flexibility for students and the institution. The college's academic year generally runs from September to June, with program start-ups in September.

**Proposed Action:** We are in the process of changing this model to one more similar to other colleges across Canada. By breaking our programs into smaller pieces, students can get only what they need, when they need it. We must rationalize our delivery methods so that courses common to a number of programs are not offered repeatedly on a program-by-program basis.

Rather than offering five similar math courses for five different programs, resources would be used more effectively by offering one course in more than one time slot and through different means including classroom and distance education delivery. These changes will give students more flexibility. Students will be able to combine elements that may not have previously been included in the stricter program format. Students may be able to finish programs more quickly than is presently the case. At the same time, changing to a course-based rather than a program-based format will allow more students to study part-time and to combine work and study.

Consistent with the switch to a course-based format, we must adopt an academic year that allows numerous intakes. This change will meet student and employer demands for just-in-time year-round training. It will also enable students to transfer credits in and out of NBCC/CCNB more easily.

#### **g. Credit transfer and recognition and Prior learning assessment**

**Current Status:** Presently, each of the eleven campuses of the New Brunswick Community College has its own approach to recognizing credits from other institutions or from prior learning. There is no consistent network-wide approach to credit transfer. Furthermore, an individual must already be accepted to a program before he or she can apply to have his or her prior learning assessed. This approach is cumbersome for students and college staff alike and could potentially leave some students outside our gates.

**Proposed Action:** All potential students are welcomed into the college system, and we strive at removing artificial barriers in their paths. We want to treat and respect our students as a diverse group of individuals coming from a variety of experiences. We need to get beyond a course-by-course approach to credit recognition and prior learning assessment. Without sacrificing academic rigour, we must institute policies and practices that allow us to recognize individuals' learning much more quickly and efficiently than we currently do. Learners should not have to repeat credits they have completed elsewhere. Nor should they have to relearn things in which they have already proven they are competent. The New Brunswick Community College must implement a consistent approach to credit recognition and assessment of prior learning. We must be able to assess individual applicants' competencies through a variety of means including portfolio review, paper tests and demonstrations of their learning.

#### **h. The New Brunswick Community College's reputation**

**Current Status:** Sometimes a college education is viewed as a poor cousin to a university education. The College has not always done a stellar job in promoting its strengths and the benefits of college-based education and training. For example, nearly all of our graduates obtain employment in fields related to their program of study in a very short time span.

Prospective students may not have adequate labour market information about the trades and technologies the college specializes in before they make their decisions about post-secondary education and training. Prospective students need to see NBCC/CCNB as an attractive choice for post-secondary education and training if enrolments are to rise sufficiently to meet labour market demands.

**Proposed Action:** The New Brunswick Community College must be recognized more broadly as a credible and valued component of the post-secondary education and training system. The College must put more emphasis on the high value it adds to our economy and society. Then, the College must do a better job communicating with the general public and other educational institutions about the benefits of applied education and training. The College will work to make sure accurate and relevant information is available and adequately disseminated to help individuals make sound choices about post-secondary education and training and subsequent career paths.

#### **i. Language**

**Current Status:** The New Brunswick Community College has six English and five French campuses.

**Proposed Action:** The management and operations of the college system must respect the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Official Languages Act*.

#### **j. Accountability**

**Current Status:** Currently the New Brunswick Community College is accountable to taxpayers for the money they invest in its operations through regular government accountability procedures. We feel it is essential to be accountable to citizens for the tax dollars they invest in the College. In addition, we feel it is important to be accountable to our students and the business community.

**Proposed Action:** We will continue to build on the accountability measures in our business plan process with a view to ensuring we are not only accountable to tax payers, but directly to our clients as well.

#### **k. The Governance of New Brunswick Community College**

**Current Status:** New Brunswick's approach of direct government control of its community college network is unique in North America. Recommendations about changing the community college's structure and reporting relationship to government have been made in the past, yet only incremental steps have been taken to address these concerns.

**Proposed Action:** We must adopt a governance structure that positions the college network to become a more flexible, dynamic and responsive organization.

The new structure must also recognize that the community college system is public, funded largely by government and has adequate accountability measures to ensure it operates in the public interest. For example, through the budget process, the government could sanction the tuition fee policy. The ideas for structural change include the following options:

- 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.

This option maintains direct accountability by government for resources allocated to the college system and would help implement a more flexible training delivery model. Although the creation of a Special Operating Agency in 1996 was to allow a reduction in red tape and in administrative structure, it has had only a minimal impact. Under this option, the perception would still be that NBCC/CCNB is part of a government department and would not improve access to outside funding. The college system is managed by government officials through directions and budgets provided by Cabinet and the Legislative Assembly.

- ii. The New Brunswick Community College becomes a Crown Corporation. 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.

This option provides more flexibility to the college system in its operations and in its training delivery. It also provides easier access to other sources of funding. Board Members represent the broad interests of stakeholders. As a Crown Corporation, the NBCC/CCNB could continue to be impacted by government's fiscal constraints in accessing surplus carried from to year.

- iii. The New Brunswick Community College becomes a publicly funded non-government institution, similar to a university. Government would exercise control through the annual budgeting process.

Under this option, the new entity would have more autonomy in its management, including carrying surpluses. It would have to set up its own financial and management systems at a significant cost. It provides less control to government on the use of taxpayers' dollars. Interests of stakeholders are represented by Board Members.

Questions for discussion:

*What do think of the suggested road map to get us where we want to go?*

*Which of these governance options do you prefer and why?*

*Are there other governance options you would like to see explored?*