

EXCELLENCE AND OPPORTUNITY



The Future of Post-Secondary
Education in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan!



Warren McCall
Chair, Post-Secondary Education
Accessibility and Affordability
Review

When Premier Calvert approached me in the Spring of 2006 to undertake a review of accessibility and affordability in Saskatchewan's post-secondary system, I viewed it as a tremendous opportunity to contribute to our province and our young people. Since then, I've met hundreds of people of diverse backgrounds from every corner of the province – people who

have provided invaluable insight into the unique needs of Saskatchewan learners. I have also had the benefit of excellent research on the issues facing our post-secondary education system and our learners. Now we can set a new course toward excellence and opportunity.

My report outlines how to ensure our post-secondary institutions are an integral part of making Saskatchewan a land of opportunity for all of our young people, and a source of highly skilled and educated workers for employers expanding their enterprise here.

Our Government's goal is to maintain excellence in our post-secondary system and to ensure access to under-represented groups such as Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, rural students and learners who are the first in their families to access post-secondary education. My review details how to meet that ambitious goal.

I recommend that the Government of Saskatchewan adopt the following vision for accessible and affordable post-secondary education in Saskatchewan:

Saskatchewan people have access to affordable and high-quality post-secondary education and training throughout their lives and careers that allows them to contribute to and benefit from an economically and socially prosperous province.

The key principles that should guide the development of the post-secondary system are Accessibility, Affordability and Excellence.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY PRIORITIES

Here are my key priorities for action to improve the accessibility, affordability and excellence of post-secondary education in Saskatchewan.



Warren McCall in Weyburn listening to a presentation from Southeast Regional College.

Tuition Fees and Quality

Extend the fully funded university tuition freeze for another year and, in addition, fully fund a tuition reduction of \$1,000 per academic year for undergraduate students at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. This tuition reduction will make Saskatchewan's average undergraduate tuition one of the lowest in Canada.

Begin discussions with the universities and students to formalize a tuition framework. It is important that tuition is affordable and increases are predictable to better help students and their families plan appropriately while allowing institutions to improve quality.

Training Opportunities

We will continue working with our post-secondary partners – SIAST, the Regional Colleges, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Dumont Technical Institute, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission – to further expand training opportunities. These increased training opportunities will be delivered provincewide in our training centres, through distance learning and, with our mobile training labs, to learners in small communities and at worksites.



Matched Scholarship Fund

Work with our post-secondary education institutions to establish a scholarship program that would use government funds to match private donations. Government should match private donations for a five-year campaign period. This design would leverage private donations and create a culture of giving to all post-secondary education institutions.

Early Intervention Initiative

In co-operation with school divisions, initiate a pilot project that would target Grades 9, 10 and 11 students from low socio-economic status neighbourhoods, providing incentives to encourage greater participation in post-secondary education of Aboriginal people, first-generation learners, rural students and persons with disabilities. This project would provide these students with financial incentives for post-secondary education if they graduate high school with a satisfactory academic average.

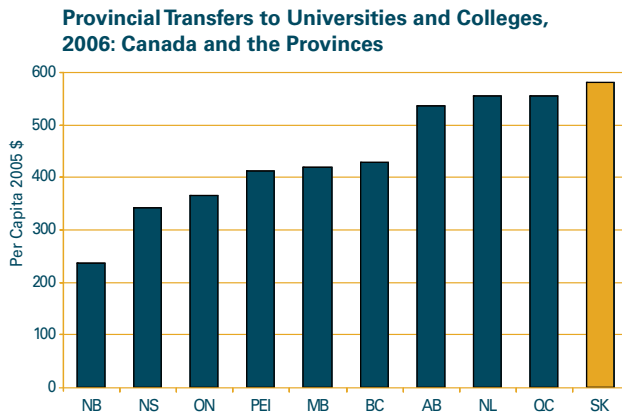
Centre of Aboriginal Training Excellence

Recognize the important role that the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies plays in our education and training system by providing increased support to allow the institution to establish itself as a Centre of Aboriginal Training Excellence.

Provide Assistance to First Nations Learners on Federal Waiting Lists for Post-Secondary Education Funding

Ensure First Nations students have access to non-repayable financial assistance for their education costs at public post-secondary education institutions. Work with our Aboriginal and institutional partners to ensure that more Aboriginal students are aware of and take advantage of the provincial government's Aboriginal Access Bursary.

Press the federal government to provide adequate funding to the Post-Secondary Student Support Program to meet the increased educational costs of our growing First Nations population, and eliminate waiting lists for funding.



Northern Centre of Learning

Support the creation of a Northern Centre of Learning by providing capital funding to construct a joint-use facility for post-secondary education. Such a centre would have one physical location, providing a hub for enhanced distance and satellite learning throughout the north.

Increase Provincial Student Loan Limits to Respond to Housing Issues

Raise the provincial loan limits to \$140 per week from \$110 per week. These additional funds will assist those students most in need to cover their housing and living costs.

Work with the federal government to evaluate the adequacy of the current assessment of housing costs and other costs of living in Saskatchewan for the federal portion of the Canada-Saskatchewan Integrated Student Loan Program.

Extend and Increase Provincial Training Allowance

Improve the adequacy of the Provincial Training Allowance to better assist students financially during their studies and their transition into post-secondary education. Both living allowances and, for rural students, transportation costs should be increased to cover increasing costs to attend studies. As well, to improve connections to the labour market for these students, the wage exemption should be increased to \$200, and an allowance be introduced for students moving into the labour market.

Encourage Adult Basic Education graduates to continue their education by extending their Provincial Training Allowance benefits to students transitioning into programs of one year or less in duration at public post-secondary education institutions.

Student Supports and Information

Enhance the career and education services and information available for youth and parents. Developing relevant services and information will require coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders.

Work with Saskatchewan’s training institutions to decrease barriers for people with disabilities through the provision of additional funds to support students, as well as work to enhance services at both the University of Regina and University of Saskatchewan for persons with disabilities and Aboriginal students.

Seamless Credit Transfer

Expand the initiatives under SaskCAT (Saskatchewan Council for Admissions and Transfer) to improve student mobility by facilitating relationships to recognize course equivalencies and credit transfer arrangements.

This greater mobility will improve the affordability of post-secondary education if students are able to get previous credits recognized when they pursue a program at a different institution.

Connect Students to Work

Work with employers and institutions to further support the development of experiential and workplace-based work-study opportunities for post-secondary education students.

I believe that implementing these key recommendations can and will have an immediate and positive effect on our post-secondary students and institutions, and ultimately on our economy.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in this process:

- At the 11 public consultation meetings we held throughout the province;
- At various meetings with post-secondary education, economic and policy stakeholders;
- Through public feedback following the release of my interim report.

Saskatchewan has a booming economy with more jobs than people and opportunities for everyone.

Saskatchewan has an excellent post-secondary system. It is open to all, and now it is up to us to ensure it is accessible and affordable for all citizens of the province.



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Chair, Post-Secondary Education Accessibility and Affordability Review

The full report is available on the website,
<http://www.aee.gov.sk.ca/aar>

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