



February 3, 2026

Vancouver Community College Submission: Public Post-Secondary Sector Sustainability Review

Dear Mr. Avison,

Vancouver Community College (VCC) has been foundational in British Columbia's post-secondary system since its establishment in 1880. Throughout its history, the College has maintained an industry-informed, experiential approach to teaching and learning that responds directly to labour market needs with student-led services deeply integrated in surrounding communities. In recent years, VCC has proactively advanced strategic initiatives that extend beyond short-term institutional objectives, reflecting the difficult decisions required to maintain financial viability and protect access and service continuity within an increasingly constrained environment. These initiatives maximize community and industry impact for a more responsive and cohesive sector-wide reframing of post-secondary education delivery in the province.

From 2012/13 to 2024/25, VCC's financials illustrate a structural issue that extends beyond short-term budget pressures. Institutional costs have grown far more rapidly than sustainable public revenue sources. Over this period, base grants and domestic tuition rose modestly, while salary costs increased to accommodate the increased international student population. International tuition growth subsidized domestic student programs', indirect and overhead costs. With international enrolment and tuition revenue now declining, this model is no longer viable and exposes a fundamental imbalance between cost structures and reliable revenue.

This challenge points toward a set of system level solutions. While our data is VCC specific, the underlying dynamics are common across the Post-Secondary Institute (PSI) sector: overhead does not scale down easily in a declining enrolment environment, while public revenues remain structurally constrained. This suggests the sustainability challenge is not program efficiency alone,

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but the culmination of maintaining multiple parallel institutional infrastructures. In this context, greater coordination and consolidation—particularly around shared services, digital platforms, compliance, and strategic use of capital—offer a more financially sustainable way forward. At VCC, our campus plan is our long-term financial sustainability solution, leveraging transit-oriented land for housing and amenities that generate stable non-tuition revenue, improving the return on public capital, and advancing provincial housing and workforce objectives. Absent from structural change, institutions will increasingly be forced to reduce instruction to be financially sustainable. A combination of system level coordination, capital optimization, and strategic use of campus assets offers a more viable alternative that protects access, affordability, and regional labour market responsiveness.

Solution 1: Financial sustainability through campus redevelopment and land value capture

VCC is advancing a major redevelopment of its Broadway Campus to create a modern education hub integrated with a large, transit-oriented residential community. This redevelopment is designed as a self-funded financial model that combines academic renewal, Indigenous placemaking, housing delivery, and climate infrastructure. In parallel, further development of the Downtown Campus will generate a long-term financial endowment, positioning the College to remain financially sustainable well into the future without increasing reliance on provincial capital funding.

VCC is currently constructing the Centre for Clean Energy and Automotive Innovation (CCEAI), which is scheduled to be opened in 2027. Future phases of the Broadway Campus redevelopment include the construction of an additional academic building and approximately 2,000 housing units, comprising a mix of social, affordable, below-market, and market housing. Construction of these phases is expected to be completed by 2033. In addition to addressing urgent housing needs, this development will significantly increase density in a SkyTrain-adjacent location, supporting transit-oriented growth and long-term community stability without displacement of existing residents or disruptions to small businesses.



The CCEAI building's design is heavily informed by the pre-settlement history of the site, specifically the China Creek estuary, and stories shared by knowledge keepers from the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Key Indigenous design elements integrated into the CCEAI include Ground Blessing, Canoe Metaphor Building Silhouette, and Indigenous Spaces and Gatherings. The "Cultural Ribbon" is an emerging walkway along the Great Northern Way corridor that will showcase Coast Salish knowledge and culture through public art, signage, landscape design, and architecture. The CCEAI building is a catalyst project for this initiative that has since been incorporated into City of Vancouver policies, such as the Broadway Plan, which asks collaborators and developers in the area to contribute to this vision.

A key component of the Broadway Campus plan is the expansion of low-carbon thermal energy infrastructure in collaboration with the City of Vancouver's False Creek Neighbourhood Energy Utility (NEU). VCC has identified an opportunity to integrate the Broadway Campus into the regional low-carbon thermal energy network through waste-heat recovery from existing municipal infrastructure. Independent analysis confirms the technical feasibility of this approach, which could expand NEU capacity, support CleanBC emissions-reduction objectives, and create the potential for a sustainable, shared revenue stream for VCC and partners over time.

The financial viability of the Broadway Campus redevelopment is enabled through a land value capture model that leverages VCC land. The plan includes six residential towers, one of which is integrated directly into an academic building. Revenue generated through this development will fully fund the construction of academic infrastructure, including the proposed second academic building, without requiring direct provincial capital investment. Independent financial modeling conducted by Avison Young confirms the market viability of this approach. The total value of the project is estimated to exceed \$1.5 billion, inclusive of academic facilities.

Further financial sustainability is created through development opportunities at VCC's Downtown Campus. The site has the potential to accommodate up to 800,000 square feet of commercial space, which is projected to generate an endowment in the order of \$300 million. Together, the Broadway and Downtown Campus initiatives demonstrate how public post-secondary land can be

leveraged to deliver housing, climate infrastructure, and modern learning facilities while securing long-term financial stability for the institution.

Recommendation:

Enable and support post-secondary institutions to leverage public land and capital assets through clear provincial policy, aligned regulatory frameworks and legislation, and cross-government coordination, allowing land value capture and campus redevelopment to operate as sustainability tools that strengthen long-term financial resilience across institutions and the sector, where land and market conditions allow.

Solution 2: Innovation in programming and delivery

VCC continues to lead through innovation, developing new models of training, and modernized pathways, that respond to industry demand and support student success. These solutions are examples that highlight VCC's commitment to advancing educational excellence. They are scalable models that could be used to drive the sustainability of BC's broader post-secondary sector.

1. **Rapid Program Development:** VCC piloted a process that achieved a 50% reduction in the time required to bring a program to life. This approach allows the college to respond more quickly to labour market needs while maintaining the quality and integrity of program development.
2. **E-pprenticeship:** This delivery method offers a flexible, work-integrated learning model which allows learners to complete theoretical components online while continuing to gain hands-on experience in the workplace. All E-pprentice curriculum is created and delivered by VCC faculty who actively work with industry, SkilledTradesBC, unions, and employers. Employers get less downtime, stronger retention, and apprentices who can immediately apply theory on the job. Apprentices gain structured support, instructor access, digital tools, and clear benchmarks - leading to stronger exam outcomes and smoother

progression toward certification.

3. **Modernized Apprenticeship Pathway (MAP):** VCC is piloting an approach which will be a first in Canada's post-secondary system, streamlining the education journey for students to become Red Seal Electricians within just three years - significantly faster than the traditional four- to five-year route. It combines the 24-week certificate with two additional years of apprenticeship training. The program focuses on job-ready skills through 20% classroom instruction and 80% work-based learning. Throughout their workplace training, students stay connected with VCC through regular touchpoints to monitor progress and ensure success. This is not a fast-track model, rather an intentional, competency based, modernized approach to completion.
4. **Micro-credentials:** VCC has played an active role in shaping best practices and conversations around micro-credential development in consultation with industry to ensure that the training aligns with current and emerging training needs. VCC currently offers 17 micro-credentials and is piloting AI-assisted competency matching which will improve the accessibility of micro-credentials for working adults through streamlined recognition of prior learning.
5. **Virtual reality (VR) simulation strategies:** VCC is using VR in our program deployment as an effective simulation tool in training our students. A few examples include:
 - Nursing programs (BSN, PN, and HCA) integrate VR as a simulation modality to strengthen clinical reasoning and decision-making skills.
 - Dental Hygiene and Dental Assisting programs use custom VR experiences, combined with haptic simulation technologies to train students.
 - The Automotive Service Technician department collaborated with the Centre for Digital Media (CDM) to develop a VR simulation to teach our students how to safely remove and install high voltage batteries.
 - The School of Trades, Technology and Design collaborated with CDM to develop a VR industrial sandblasting simulation.

VCC's ability to advance these innovations has been enabled through a combination of targeted provincial and federal funding, time-limited project investments, and net revenue generated through international enrolment that has historically supported program development and modernization. While these funding sources have allowed VCC to pilot and demonstrate new models of delivery, they are project-based, time-limited, and uneven across the sector. A more sustainable post-secondary system would embed innovation through deliberate policy design rather than reliance on institutional risk tolerance, enabling predictable, multi-year, system-level investments in program innovation, modernized apprenticeship delivery, digital infrastructure, and curriculum renewal. Aligned approval and funding would shift innovation from limited pilots to system-wide practice while reducing reliance on cross-subsidization.

Recommendation:

Shift from time-limited, project-based innovation funding toward predictable, multi-year, system-level investments that enable proven program, apprenticeship, and digital delivery innovations to scale across the post-secondary system, ensuring success is driven by policy design rather than institutional risk tolerance.

Solution 3: Shared curriculum amongst PSI's creating operational efficiencies

VCC led the collaborative development of a framework for incentivized content-sharing, for the province to efficiently leverage the value of micro-credentials. The Collaboration Framework is a multi-year pilot initiative funded by the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSEFS). Its purpose is to systematize, incentivize, and streamline the sharing of micro-credential curriculum across institutions and regions, generating efficiencies in curriculum development and deployment throughout British Columbia.

The initiative was developed to alleviate barriers to curriculum sharing and was designed to create a clear, practical mechanism for institutional participation. Central to this approach is an accessible, equitable, scalable, and values-driven licensing model that directly incentivizes institutions to share developed curriculum for delivery by peers. By establishing a clearly defined



licensing framework, the Collaboration Framework reduces development costs and associated risks, minimizes duplication across the sector, improves transparency, and expands access to British Columbian expertise for communities regardless of geographic location.

Over the past two years, the project team—comprised of employees from VCC developed and refined a common licensing agreement that provides equitable access for all public post-secondary institutions. The project team secured blanket approval of the agreement's terms from the Risk Management Branch, significantly streamlining administrative requirements and reducing legal review burdens for participating institutions. To date, eight public post-secondary institutions have signed the agreement, representing more than 30% of eligible institutions in the province.

In parallel, the project team partnered with the BC Electronic Library Network to design and implement a secure curriculum repository, accessible through a public-facing website. The repository currently hosts an initial set of micro-credentials and provides the technical infrastructure required to support curriculum sharing under the Collaboration Framework.

The Collaboration Framework provides a ready-made solution for shared curriculum delivery; the primary constraint is the absence of sustained provincial funding and formal system enablement. With targeted, system-level investment, the Framework could reduce duplication, expand access, and embed shared curriculum as a core function of a sustainable post-secondary system.

Recommendation:

Provide sustained provincial funding and formal system enablement for the Collaboration Framework, enabling shared curriculum and micro-credential delivery that reduces duplication, expands access, and scales proven models across institutions.

Solution 4: Expansion of dual credit pathways

VCC has a long and successful history in dual credit delivery, filling more than 300 seats annually in partnership with school districts across the Lower Mainland and beyond. VCC offers both on



campus and in community models, enabling partners to select formats that best meet local needs. The college's strongest dual credit presence is in high demand trades programs—particularly Professional Cook 1 and Hairstyling—while also offering Health programs in specific districts and culturally responsive programs through ACCESS for Indigenous learners. VCC's flexibility in scheduling, its ability to align with both semester and linear high school systems, and its willingness to tailor delivery models have made it a highly valued partner. These strengths, combined with deep relationships across numerous school districts, have enabled VCC to provide one of the largest dual credit footprints in the province.

VCC and its school district partners see significant opportunity to expand and enrich dual credit pathways by working together through a more coordinated regional approach. A shared structure—with dedicated coordination and strengthened communication—would make it easier to explore new program models, increase student awareness, and remove barriers such as transportation, equipment needs, and access challenges faced by Indigenous learners and students with diverse abilities.

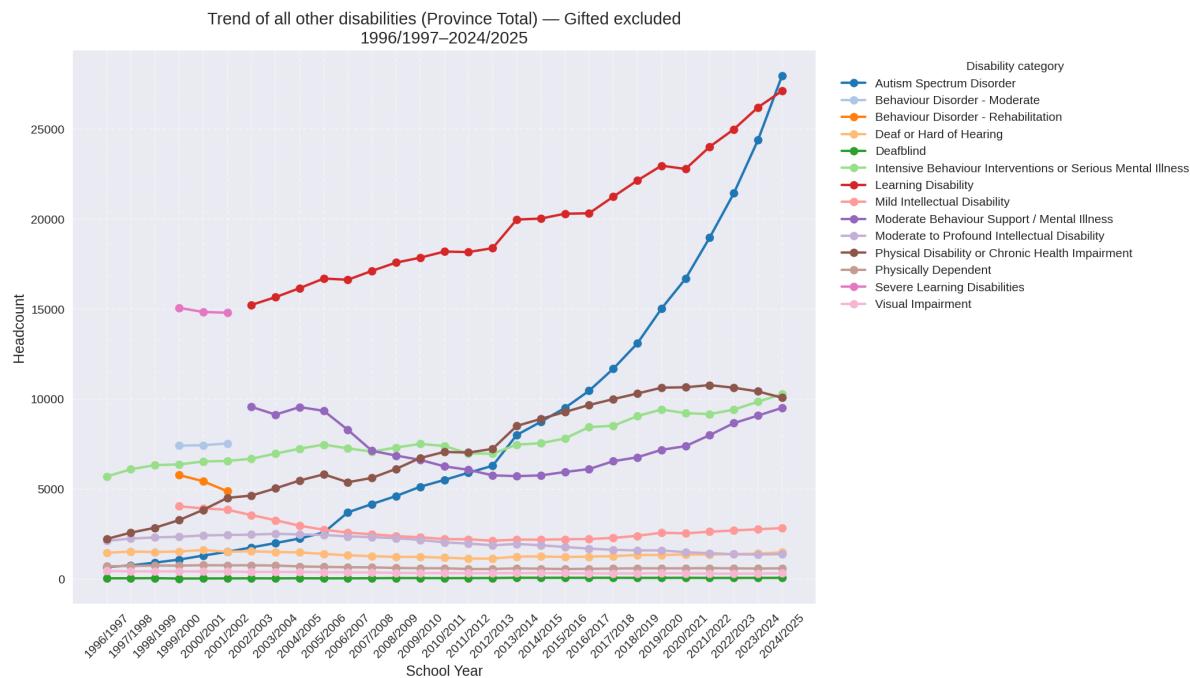
With partners aligned around a common vision, VCC can build on its strong foundation to broaden offerings while also developing more flexible delivery options, including community based and satellite models. By deepening collaboration and designing inclusive, sustainable pathways, the partnership can create a more vibrant, accessible dual credit ecosystem that opens meaningful opportunities for students across the region.

Recommendation:

Establish a provincially supported regional coordination framework for dual credit delivery, with dedicated funding and shared capacity, to reduce access barriers and enable consistent, equitable expansion of dual credit pathways across school districts and post-secondary institutions.

Solution 5: Disability funding past K-12

In BC K-12 education there has been an increase of \$318.5 million¹ in funding over the last three years for students with disabilities. This has been responsive to the increased need over time of students with autism spectrum disorder and/or disabilities².



The post-secondary sector in comparison has not received a funding increase, despite the spike in students graduating from Grade 12 with increased needs. Funding to institutions was capped in 2006 and rolled into block funding. VCC at that time received \$600,000.

VCC occupies a distinct role in British Columbia's post-secondary system as a low-barrier vocational institution with established access and pathway programming for students with disabilities, including Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and Hard of Hearing learners. At present, it is the only

¹ [K-12 Funding – 2023/24, 2024/25, and 2025/26 Operating Grants](#) (Government of British Columbia – Ministry of Education and Child Care)

² [Student Headcount by Disabilities and Diverse Abilities 1996/97 to 2024/25](#) (Open Government Canada – Open Data, 2025)

public post-secondary institution west of Ontario providing this level of dedicated programming for this population.

The duty to accommodate students with disabilities is both a legal requirement and a core public value. In the absence of a dedicated and responsive funding model, however, VCC has been subsidizing these accommodations through its operating budget, at a scale that is disproportionately large relative to peer institutions, reflecting the size and complexity of the student population it serves. This structural pressure has intensified following recent federal policy changes, which have reduced international enrolment and constrained a revenue source that institutions have historically relied upon to absorb under-funded accessibility costs.

Evidence consistently shows that post-secondary credential attainment significantly improves employment outcomes for people with disabilities, yet participation remains lower than those without disabilities. When funding and structured pathways end at K-12, the continuity of public investment is disrupted at a critical transition point, with implications for labour-market participation and long-term public expenditures.

Ontario has addressed this challenge through centralized, government-funded shared services for specialized accessibility supports, including ASL interpretation, enabling more consistent and cost-effective delivery at scale. British Columbia currently lacks a comparable system.

Strengthening continuity between K-12 and post-secondary education would improve labour-market outcomes, protect the integrity of the duty to accommodate, and align public investment with intended economic and social returns.

Recommendations:

- *Introduce a responsive post-secondary funding model that reflects both enrolment growth and the service intensity required to support students with disabilities transitioning from K-12.*



- *Establish government-funded shared services for specialized accessibility supports, modelled on Ontario's approach, to improve efficiency, consistency, and system-wide capacity.*

Summary

In closing, VCC's experience demonstrates that the sustainability challenges facing British Columbia's post-secondary system cannot be addressed through short-term efficiencies alone. The solutions outlined in this submission - land value capture and campus redevelopment, program and delivery innovation, shared curriculum infrastructure, expanded dual credit pathways, and responsive disability funding - reflect practical, evidence-based approaches that protect access, resourcing and labour market responsiveness while strengthening long-term financial stability. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important review and would be pleased to respond to any requests for additional data, detail, or context regarding the recommendations shared, as well as to meet in person to support continued dialogue on how system-level coordination, policy alignment, and the strategic use of public assets can ensure a resilient and equitable post-secondary system for British Columbia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajay Patel".

Ajay Patel, President & CEO
Vancouver Community College