



## BACKGROUND

**December 14, 2006**

### **GOVERNMENT'S POST-SECONDARY EXPANSION—25,000 SEATS BY 2010**

#### **Introduction**

In 2004, the Government of British Columbia announced its plan to expand the size of the public post-secondary education system by 25,000 student seats by 2010. Almost every public post-secondary institution in every region of the province was allocated a portion of the new student seats, and \$1 billion was committed to support the initiative (\$800 million in building construction and \$200 million in education service delivery).

#### ***Scope of Our Audit***

The audit focused on the role of the Ministry of Advanced Education as leader and manager of the initiative and on the role of the post-secondary education institutions as “implementers.” In selecting a sample of institutions for this audit, we considered several factors: the number of seats allocated to each institution; the magnitude of growth this allocation represented; geographic region; and type of institution. The following seven institutions we selected were allocated 58% of the 25,000 new post-secondary seats:

- British Columbia Institute of Technology
- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Malaspina University College
- Simon Fraser University
- University of British Columbia
- University of Northern British Columbia

We looked at activities undertaken in the first two fiscal years of the initiative: 2004/05 and 2005/06.

We did not review enrolment numbers for 2006/07 as the final, audited results will not be available until spring 2007.

We expected the ministry and the seven institutions to be managing the 25,000 seat initiative in keeping with principles of good business management: We expected to find:

- evidence of clear planning linked to government's goals and objectives for public post-secondary education;
- identification of risks and proactive strategies to address them;
- clear and ongoing communication, consultation and problem-solving between the ministry and institutions;
- careful allocation of resources to meet planned objectives;
- close monitoring and reporting of activities and results; and
- evidence of adjustments to ensure success in implementing the new student seats and achieving the 25,000 seat expansion objective.

### ***Key Findings and Recommendations***

*The 25,000 seat initiative is currently behind schedule*

**Recommendation 1:** The ministry and institutions should each introduce or strengthen formal risk identification and management practices across their organizations in order to support the successful achievement of results.

**Recommendation 2:** The ministry should lead and collaborate with all of British Columbia's public post-secondary institutions to develop a coordinated response for remediating combined risk factors that contribute to softening post-secondary student enrolments.

*More effective and transparent allocation of the funds provided would help achieve the 25,000 seat growth objective*

**Recommendation 3:** The ministry should fund public post-secondary institutions transparently, showing clearly how much funding is being provided to meet the 25,000 seat expansion plan and how much is covering inflationary pressures.

**Recommendation 4:** The ministry should establish a process to determine, and periodically review, the actual cost of delivering programs by institution, and then use this information to better inform its block funding decisions.

*Institutions are planning and managing for growth, but need better human resource succession plans*

**Recommendation 5:** All institutions should develop human resource succession plans so that resource needs for the future are better identified and managed.

*Continual improvement in performance reporting on the expansion initiative would enhance transparency and accountability*

**Recommendation 6:** The ministry should require that institutions present, in their service plan

reports, growth targets and actual results over time and explain variances.