

Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology

Briefing Notes

- Title:** Response to the *'Policy Accord on Government Training Expenditures'*
- Issue:** The Accord has created an environment of uncertainty as to the on-going protection and viability of training alternatives through the not-for-profit, community-based agency system. While the Accord makes a marginal attempt to 'recognize the significant role' of these agencies and states that the Parties to the Accord are 'committed to respecting that role', there has been no attempt to articulate that significance or identify how it would be protected.
- Background:** Not-for-profit, community-based agencies involved in the delivery of settlement and multiculturalism services to immigrants and refugees in the Province of British Columbia have evolved over the past 25 years into a holistic, integrated professional service. Approximately 80 agencies will collectively administer a total training budget in excess of \$19 million dollars and provide training services to an estimated 32,000 clients during the 98/99 fiscal year.

Recommendations:

Not-for-profit, community-based agencies from the settlement and multicultural sector recommend:

1. That the Accord include an attached appendix that would clearly define the *'significant role'* of community-based, not-for-profit training agencies
2. That the term *'certain types of training'* be clarified with respect to services delivered through not-for-profit, community-based agencies
3. That the aforementioned appendix clearly articulate *how that role is to be respected* at both a policy and operational level
4. That the term *'...where appropriate'* be clarified with respect to the Government's responsibility to raise training and education standards by requiring that non-public providers be accredited
5. That other accreditation models be explored for use by multi-service, community-based, not-for-profit organizations and that respective government ministries provide a contribution to cover expenses incurred in the accreditation process
6. That the principle of *'first consideration'* and the conditions relating to the College's ability to *'meet or exceed other submissions'* (quality, cost effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability) be further clarified
7. That a special reference group comprised of not-for-profit, community-based agency representatives be formed to inform and advise the Parties to the Accord in the creation of the aforementioned appendix and to address any additional concerns/recommendations
8. That the expertise of community-based, not-for-profit agencies within the settlement and multiculturalism sector of Community Social Services be clearly recognized as a viable option in the delivery of government service-wide training relating to cultural competency, organizational change and diversity
9. That all relevant Government Ministries (including the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology) actively commit to the Contract Reform process and support *Continuing Agreements* with contracted service providers in the community-based, not-for-profit sector

The Immigrant & Multiculturalism Sector's Response to the 'Policy Accord on Government Training Expenditures'

The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia (AMSSA) is a coalition of 80 agencies that provide services to immigrants and multicultural education throughout the Province of British Columbia.

AMSSA's Immigrant Integration Coordinating Committee (IICC) represents over 30 immigrant serving agencies and community-based associations that provide an array of direct services and indirect supports that address the unique needs of immigrants, refugees and refugee claimants. These agencies will collectively administer a total training budget in excess of \$19 million dollars and provide training services to an estimated 32,000 clients during the 98/99 fiscal year. See appendix A.

AMSSA's Collaborative Committee on Multiculturalism (CCM) represents over 30 multicultural agencies and community-based associations providing institutional and organizational training to various levels of government, corporations and the community in an effort to ensure services and policies are responsive to the unique needs within a culturally diverse population.

Historically, our agencies have been recognized by federal, provincial and municipal levels of government as a viable, cost-effective community-based training alternative to the existing Public Post-Secondary College, Institute and Agency system or to the Private Training Institution system.

Immigrants, refugees and refugee claimants have benefited from programs that combine skills development with English language acquisition settlement assistance, Canadian work experience, crisis intervention counseling, cross-cultural sensitivity, and other related supports. This holistic, integrated approach to professional service delivery has evolved in the Province of British Columbia over the past 25 years.

Employment training practitioners, familiar with the needs of immigrants, refugees and refugee claimants; supported by an infrastructure that is committed to the unique requirements facing a multi-barriered client group; are well-equipped to enable individuals involved in the process of labour force attachment. This alternative is high quality, cost-effective, and responsive to these needs.

In addition, the staff and contracted services of federal, provincial and municipal governments, as well as other types of institutions, have personally benefited from training provided through our agencies aimed at addressing cultural competency, organizational change, and diversity issues.

In the opinion of our agencies the *'Policy Accord on Government Training Expenditures'* creates an environment of uncertainty as to the on-going protection and viability of these critical training alternatives. While the Accord makes a marginal attempt to *'recognize the significant role of community-based, not-for-profit training agencies'* and states the parties to the Accord are *'committed to respecting that role'*, there has been no attempt to specifically articulate that significance nor

identify how it would be protected. This lack of clarity is unfortunate and contributes to an unnecessary climate of uncertainty.

In addition to the existing Provincially-funded training programs delivered within the settlement and multiculturalism sector, the recently signed Settlement Accord between the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia commits the transfer of \$21 million annually for English as a Second Language training and Job Finding Clubs. Furthermore, an estimated \$256 million annually may be transferred to the Province pending the successful negotiation of the Labour Market Development Agreement. We believe that the training programs supported through these two initiatives may also be impacted by this new Accord.

While the current government has attempted to recognize the contributions of community-based, not-for-profit agencies through the creation of a unique Ministry portfolio aimed at supporting the voluntary sector and by embarking on a contract reform process that is intended to lead to a more stable environment for contracted service providers, critical 'gaps' in commitment remain. For example, to our knowledge the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology has not been an active participant in the *Contract Reform* and *Continuing Agreements* initiative. Such inconsistencies create an environment where Community Colleges, University Colleges, Institutes and Agencies, Private Training Institutions, and Not-for-Profit Training Institutes are compelled to compete against each other to secure government funding for training programs. It is against this backdrop that *'Policy Accord on Government Training Expenditures'* emerges. In our opinion, without clarifying what the *'significant role'* of community-based, not-for-profit training agencies is, an unfair advantage is afforded to the public training domain as a signatory to the Accord.

Furthermore, the Accord suggests that *'Government will raise training and education standards by requiring that non-public providers be accredited where appropriate'*. The implementation of this particular policy would have ramifications on community-based, not-for-profit institutions. Currently only one mechanism exists for the accreditation of non-public training services in the Province of British Columbia. The Private Post Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC) is responsible for coordinating this process. Unfortunately the model was created primarily for private institutions involved exclusively in training and does not take into consideration the complexity of a multi-service, community-based, not-for-profit agency. The model follows a needlessly complex and expensive process that, in our opinion, does not necessarily achieve the desired outcomes of accreditation. AMSSA and its member agencies have participated in discussions with PPSEC in this regard but to date they have not adequately addressed our concerns.

In order to obtain support for the *'Policy Accord on Government Training Expenditures'* and in order to achieve on-going stability within the voluntary sector we propose nine recommendations for the Minister and the Parties to the Accord to consider:

- 1. That the Accord include an attached appendix that would clearly define the *'significant role'* of community-based, not-for-profit training agencies**
- 2. That the term *'certain types of training'* be clarified with respect to services delivered through not-for-profit, community-based agencies.**
- 3. That the aforementioned appendix clearly articulate *how that role is to be respected* at both a policy and operational level**
- 4. That the term *'...where appropriate'* be clarified with respect to the Government's responsibility to raise training and education standards by requiring that non-public providers be accredited.**

5. That other accreditation models be explored for use by multi-service, community-based, not-for-profit organizations and that respective government ministries provide a contribution to cover expenses incurred in the accreditation process. It is understood that other initiatives currently underway within the sector would most likely achieve the desired outcomes of the current Private Post-Secondary Education Commission accreditation process in a more relevant, cost-effective manner. (i.e. the Performance Measurements process currently being implemented through cooperation between various Provincial Ministries and contracted services across the Province.)
6. That the principle of *'first consideration'* and the conditions relating to the College's ability to *'meet or exceed other submissions'* (quality, cost effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability) be further clarified within the Accord.
7. That a special reference group comprised of not-for-profit, community-based agency representatives be formed to inform and advise the Parties to the Accord in the creation of the aforementioned appendix and to address any additional concerns/recommendations.
8. That the expertise of community-based, not-for-profit agencies within the settlement and multiculturalism sector of Community Social Services be clearly recognized as a viable option in the delivery of government service-wide training relating to cultural competency, organizational change and diversity, and
9. That all relevant Government Ministries (including the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology) actively commit to the Contract Reform process and support *Continuing Agreements* with contracted service providers in the community-based, not-for-profit sector.

The Parties to the Accord correctly recognized the need for transitional provisions including the necessity to consider the *'impact of this accord on other interests'*. It is our sincere hope that opportunity will be afforded to discuss these recommendations further.

Our member agencies have enjoyed a positive relationship with the current Provincial Government through programs currently funded through various Ministries. We have also experienced a growing appreciation for the Public Post-Secondary College, Institute and Agency System as well as their respective Unions through the work to define *Occupational Competencies within the Community Social Services Sector* and the efforts of the Multilateral Task Force on Training, Career Pathing and Labour Mobility. An on-going commitment to address the concerns of our sector will only further enhance those relationships and mutually benefit all stakeholders involved.