



**Presentation to Select Standing Committee  
On Finance and Government Services  
Kwantlen Polytechnic University**

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I wish to thank the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services for this opportunity to speak today on behalf of Kwantlen Polytechnic University. As I suspect you all know, Kwantlen is one of British Columbia's newest universities, having only two weeks ago celebrated its inaugural Convocation as a university. Kwantlen is defined in the University Act as a teaching-led, essentially undergraduate institution. As a university, Kwantlen has retained its dual sector role, offering programs in trades and technology, one and two year career-focused programs, and four-year undergraduate degrees. We are defined by a flexibility that allows students to ladder from one program to another; our emphasis is on accessibility.

Today I would like to focus my comments on questions 2 through 4 of those suggested in the Budget Consultation Paper, and, specifically, on choices for priority investment, and for investing the savings from lower interest payments resulting from the reduced operating debt. Not unexpectedly, my advice, given my role as President of one of British Columbia's newest universities, is to invest in higher education. I will speak briefly about our ambitions in three areas: 1. the need to increase access to post-secondary education in the south Fraser region, particularly for non-traditional students; 2. the need to provide programs that respond to market demand; and 3. the need to respond to the particular shortage of health care professionals in Surrey.

Some background is necessary here. For some time we have been aware of the poor participation rates in higher education in the Surrey region. At present, Surrey is Canada's twelfth largest city, and will surpass Vancouver soon. Disturbing, though, is that only 18% of Surrey residents over 25 hold university degrees compared to 36% of Vancouver residents—if these numbers persist, the competitive position of Surrey and the South Fraser is indeed worrisome. Equally troubling is that, at present, the south Fraser has fewer than 100 university and college seats per 1000 18 – 29 year olds compared to the average of 245 per 1000 provincially.

My first point, then, relates to Kwantlen's commitment to open access, and to providing opportunities for post secondary education to groups of students who might not otherwise consider studying at university and college. In addressing access, we have understood that increasing the number of student places at Kwantlen will not in itself improve access. The more fundamental issue is one of increasing participation, which in turn demands that we work to change attitudes, to affect transition from high school to university, and to provide an environment that supports learners who might be at risk.

In this context, I bring to your attention Kwantlen's Spark Program, which has enjoyed spectacular success over four years of operation, but which itself is at risk without the continuing support of the British Columbia Government. Of the approximately 200 students who have participated in this program, all from the Indo-Canadian community, and all of whom were identified as at-risk learners, over 90% have gone on to post-secondary education.

There are many reasons for the program's success: it is a unique partnership that brings high schools, the Indo-Canadian community, and Kwantlen together, it begins working with students in Grade 11, and allows them access to university-level courses, it provides substantial academic and non-academic support to students, and it focuses on student success rather than obsessing about student failure.

The program itself is jointly funded through the Spark Foundation, which has raised approximately \$400,000 and matched by a generous government grant of \$400,000. We are currently in the last year of the current funding envelope, and we wish very much to continue the program, and indeed to expand it (it has just admitted its first First Nations class). We are therefore looking for bridge funding for next year, with the expectation that we would develop a comprehensive proposal to expand the program into other schools both in Surrey and elsewhere. We believe this type of programming—one that increases participation and expands British Columbia's pool of skilled, educated workers, is critical to the economy south of the Fraser.

My second point deals with the need to provide more programming in this region that will genuinely attract students. We know that we cannot simply build something and assume that students will arrive. Several months ago, the Ministry of Advanced Education requested that we submit a joint proposal, with Simon Fraser University, that would address the shortage in Surrey. This we have done, and we have called it the Surrey Solution, copies of which I am pleased to leave with you. The major elements of our proposal are as follows:

1. Kwantlen will provide 1,200 new student places in Surrey.
2. of these 1,200 student places, Kwantlen will reallocate internally to cover the cost of 500 of these students.
3. these places will be in high demand programs such as nursing, psychiatric nursing, health studies, business, technology, and the trades (significantly,

Kwantlen has just opened up new programs in Plumbing and Electrical at its Cloverdale Campus).

4. Kwantlen is requesting that the Government fund 700 new student places for Surrey students.

We are aware as an institution that Kwantlen must be a good steward of its resources—that we must use the resources we have in the most effective way possible. We are therefore committed to reallocating resources internally into high demand areas. We know, too, that programs must be in areas of need, both from individual students, and by the province generally. It is with this in mind that we have specifically earmarked particular areas for development.

This, then, brings me to my third point. We have specifically targeted Nursing and Psychiatric Nursing for the majority of our growth. Over the next five years, 2,100 nurses will retire from the South Fraser Health District. As well, there will be a need for approximately 600 new nurses. Kwantlen is committed to developing foreshortened programs in both Nursing and Psychiatric Nursing that will allow students to move through the system faster (in three years rather than four) , as well as a post-degree Nursing program that will allow students already possessing a university degree to acquire expeditiously a Nursing credential. Also important is that Kwantlen was recently awarded the provincial contract for the evaluation and upgrading of foreign-trained nurses.

Our major challenge related to this initiative is space. The nursing education facilities at our Surrey campus are already stretched, and there is simply no way that they can accommodate the kind of growth envisioned in this proposal. We are therefore suggesting a collaborative project that allows for a new facility to be built on Simon Fraser's Whalley site that would accommodate both SFU's future growth in science and Kwantlen's growth in nursing and health science.

Since we submitted the Surrey Solution document, we have entered into discussions with the Fraser Health Authority to develop a closer collaborative agreement that would have virtually all Kwantlen's nursing students pursuing their practice in the Fraser Health district. It is hoped that this would increase the number of Kwantlen students staying in the region as professional nurses. We know from experience that students tend to take their first job in the place they did their last practicum placement.

We are suggesting that there may well be a place for a truly collaborative venture between Fraser Health, SFU, Kwantlen, and perhaps other institutions of higher education that would allow for the construction of a teaching facility for medicine, nursing, and other allied health sciences, in conjunction with any new hospital constructed in the Surrey region. We appreciate that this is an audacious proposal, but we are also aware that the shortage of health professionals in Surrey has gone well beyond the point of grave concern.

I thank the committee for the opportunity to speak today. I ask that you give our proposals your consideration. In closing, I wish to reassure the Committee of Kwantlen's absolute commitment to being a new, creative kind of university that will confirm the wisdom of allowing Kwantlen to go from a university college to a university in the first place.