



CAN THE FUTURE LEARN IN SURREY AND IN THE SOUTH FRASER?

Post-Secondary Education in Surrey and the South Fraser Region

Greater investment in post-secondary education is urgently needed in Surrey and the South Fraser Region to ensure its economic viability, to meet the local market demand for an educated workforce, and to secure an adequate supply of entrepreneurs. The need for this investment is driven by the following socio-economic factors:

Access to Post-Secondary Education

The 940,000 people in Surrey and the South Fraser region – the largest and fastest-growing region of British Columbia – produce 22% of British Columbia’s high school graduates. However, our students have much less access to post-secondary institutions than students in the rest of British Columbia. Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Simon Fraser University-Surrey together offer only 12.7 post-secondary spaces for every hundred 18-24 year olds in the region. The rest of B.C. receives almost four times that level of access, with 48.7 spaces for every hundred of these young adults.

The region’s historically low levels of access to local post-secondary spaces – degrees, diplomas, and trades certifications – has led to an environment whereby many students commute north of the Fraser River for their post-secondary education. But the distance to these facilities and the cost of this commute is a significant barrier to access the lack of educational opportunities close to home makes access to post-secondary education particularly difficult for lower-income families.

As a result of the limited number of post-secondary spaces available in our region, more and more students are being turned away from the region’s post-secondary institutions. Simon Fraser University has had to raise its admissions criteria – for 2012, only applicants who have a high school GPA of 80% or higher can be admitted. Kwantlen Polytechnic University, while in theory an open-access institution, has long waits to enter various programs and has raised some program admissions criteria.

According to 2006 Census data, only 20% of Surrey’s adults have university degrees, compared to over 30% of the adults in Metro Vancouver. The low number of post-secondary seats in our region prevents the closing of this gap.

Increased Access to Post-Secondary Education is Essential

B.C.’s Labour Market Outlook for 2010 to 2020 estimates that 78% of the expected employment openings will require a university degree or some post-secondary education (including trades). But, in 2011, only 62% of Surrey’s workforce had any post-secondary education, compared to 71% in the rest of Metro Vancouver. Further education for a greater proportion of recent high school graduates and for the current workforce is of paramount importance for the people of Surrey and for Surrey’s economic and social development.

To help build a sustainable, livable, healthy community, Surrey’s Official Community Plan aims to balance the number of local jobs with the resident workforce, to provide local employment opportunities for residents and to reduce regional commuting. Surrey’s goal is to have one job in Surrey per resident in the workforce. Since the majority of these jobs will require post-secondary education, increased post-secondary access is vital.

The provincial government has begun to make the necessary additional investment to Surrey’s K-12 educational system. To realize the return on that investment (ROI), a similar phased-in capital expenditure plan focused on the South Fraser region’s post-secondary institutions is essential.

All aspects of post-secondary education in Surrey and its region must be expanded; three areas deserve special comment: (1) Literacy and English Language programs, (2) Trades training programs, and (3) Research and Professional programs.

1) Literacy and English Language Programs

An essential part of B.C.'s post-secondary system is its adult basic education and English Language programs. These programs give students the skills to succeed in further education, and to be capable entry-level employees.

- 148,000 of Surrey's 323,000 adults do not possess the level of literacy needed for success in today's economy; over 30,000 lack a high school diploma. Yet people in our region are offered only one-quarter of the access to adult basic education as the rest of the province.
- 128,000 Surrey residents don't speak English at home. Over 6,000 immigrants arrive in Surrey each year, of which more than 2,000 don't speak English (or French). Yet people in our region are offered only one-fifth the access to English Language programs as the rest of the province.

2) Trades Programs

Trades training is essential for the economic vitality of our region: According to the B.C. Trades Occupational Outlook, 2010-2020, approximately 11% of all jobs are and will be in the trades. The demand for trades employees is expected to outpace the supply by 2016. However, while our region has 20% of BC's population, only 4.4% of B.C.'s trades training is offered here.

3) Research and Professional Programs

Post secondary education includes studies in areas of high importance for Surrey's industries and sectors – for instance, in clean energy engineering and in health sciences, both priority areas for the city. However, research in the region's universities is severely limited by the lack of available program funding and facilities.

Benefits for Business

Post-Secondary education is crucial to economic development. Educated people can more easily adapt to the changing nature of work and can better apply their knowledge and skills in different contexts. Research undertaken as part of advanced and graduate-level programs often leads to innovative start-up companies and to knowledge and technology transfer by which existing businesses can expand. And university graduates often settle in the area adjacent to their university, generating economic activity.

Social Benefits

As shown in previous reports by the Surrey Board of Trade and others, higher education levels significantly reduce social costs and provide social benefits such as increased employment, improved health, reduced homelessness and less criminal activity. The higher the education of the population, the greater their community participation. Education enables people to make a difference in their community and in their local economy.

Action Needed

It is imperative that the level of access to post-secondary education in Surrey and the South Fraser region be brought up to the level provided to the rest of B.C. Such an increase is crucial for the region's and the province's development.

The Surrey Board of Trade recognizes the current challenge of funding this initiative in light of fiscal restraint measures required to help balance the provincial budget.

We therefore urge the provincial government to Phase in a tripling of the number of post-secondary student spaces per resident in the South Fraser region from 2014 thru 2025.

To achieve this, the number of full-time equivalent student spaces (FTEs) per resident in this region must be increased from the current level of 12.6 FTEs per 1,000 residents to 37.8 FTEs per 1,000 region residents.

Since the region's population will also increase over this time period, this means that the actual number of post secondary student spaces offered in our region must be increased from the current number of 12,210 FTEs to 46,060 FTEs by 2025 – an increase of about 3,000 FTEs per year.

Without this action, B.C.'s most populous and fastest growing region may not be capable of harnessing its potential to become a social and economic powerhouse. The scarcity of skilled labour and research facilities in the local market will continue to significantly hinder the growth of Surrey's core business community. The region's need for capital expenditures targeting socio-economic problems will increase. The challenge for local businesses seeking to attract and retain skilled individuals – especially those seeking opportunities for advancement – will increase.

With this action, Surrey and the South Fraser region – and the province – will reap the many social and economic benefits mentioned above. In the short term, local businesses will benefit directly from the increased spending in the region from the universities' operating expenditures, by employees of the universities, and from the spending on capital expenditures needed for the expansion of campuses. More importantly, in the medium-to-long-term, businesses will gain from the region's improved competitive positioning. Lastly, fostering the growth of this region's businesses will likely lead to significant increases in tax revenue for the provincial government.

Attached are 3 graphs illustrating aspects of this situation:

Graph #1 shows the post-secondary FTEs currently funded for each region of the province, relative to the region's population of young adults.

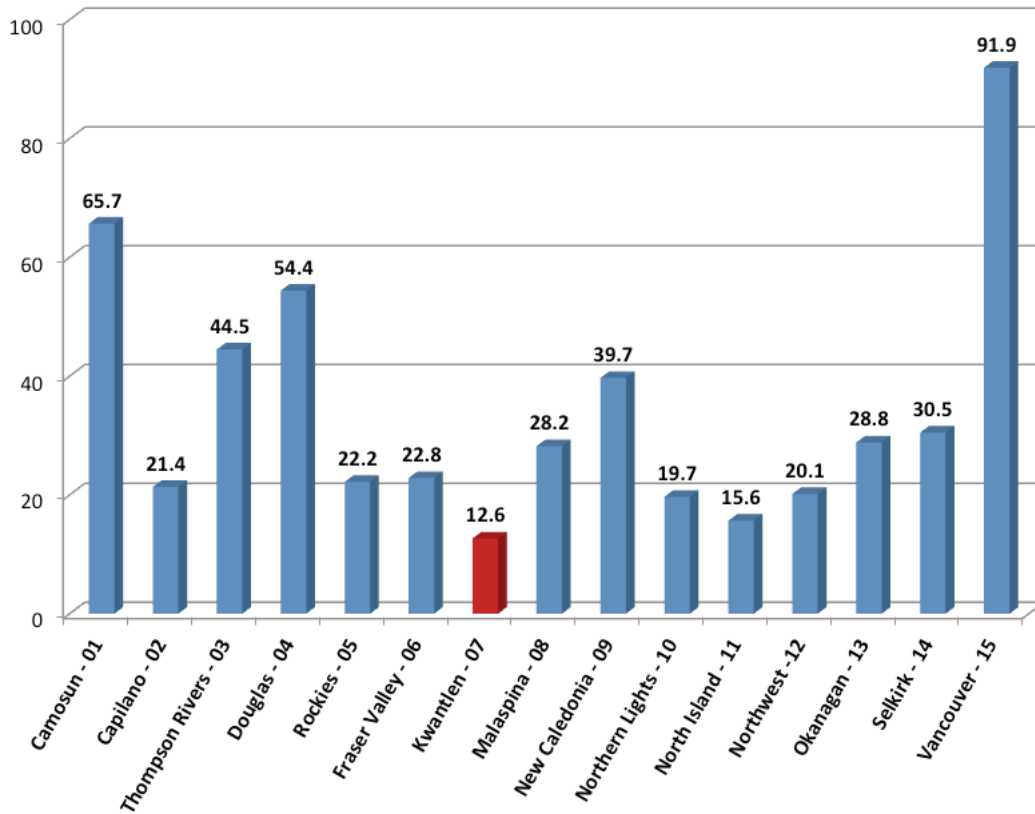
Graph #2 shows the rise in university applications at SFU-Surrey. Concurrently, due to SFU's lack of adequate capacity, the grade point average required for students entering first year has climbed 10 percentage points in only a few years.

Graph #3 shows the projected enrolment of grade 12 students in the Surrey School District, relative to the rest of B.C.

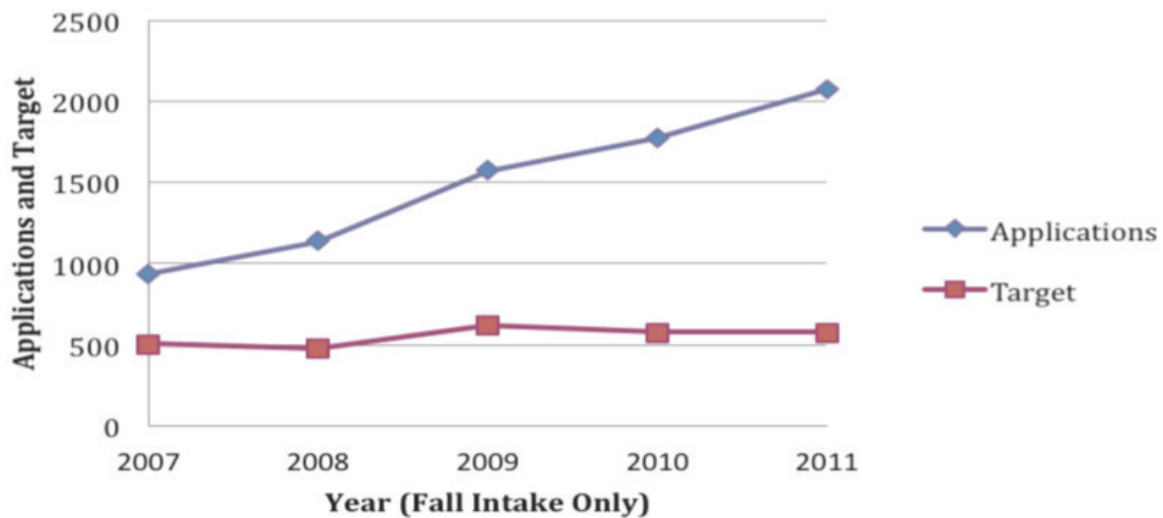
Graph #4 shows the region's population from the present to 2025 and the asked-for growth in post-secondary access, with the resulting growth in total post-secondary FTEs in the region.

¹ This accessibility ratio of 37.8 FTEs per 1,000 region residents is still 17% lower than the level of post-secondary access provided to the rest of the province: 45.7 FTEs per 1,000 residents.

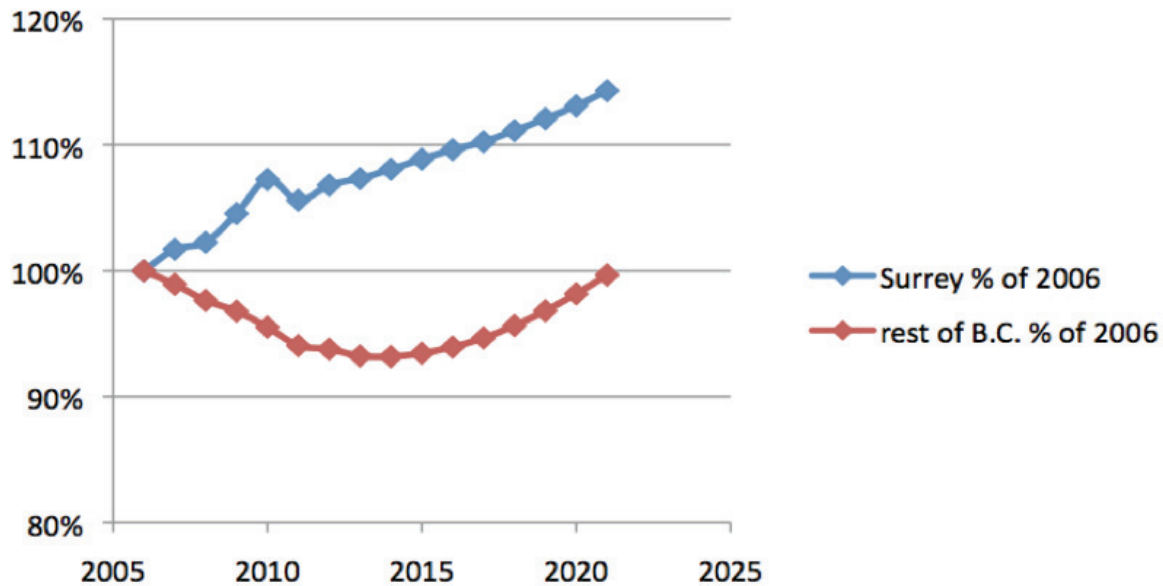
Graph #1: Access to Post-Secondary Education by Region
 Post-Secondary FTEs currently provided per hundred 18-24-year-olds



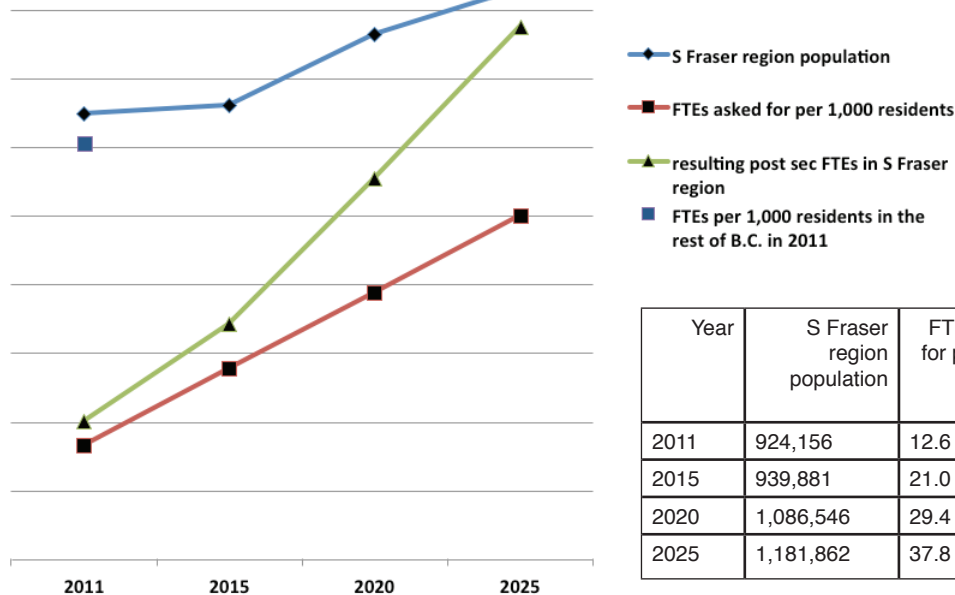
Graph #2: SFU Surrey Undergraduate Program Applications and Target for Fall 2007- Fall 2011



Graph #3: Projected enrolment of grade 12 student in the Surrey School District, relative to the rest of B.C.



Graph #4: South Fraser region population growth and asked-for growth in post-secondary access, with resulting growth in total post-secondary FTEs in the region.



Year	S Fraser region population	FTEs asked for per 1,000 residents	Resulting post sec FTEs in S Fraser region
2011	924,156	12.6	11,630
2015	939,881	21.0	19,713
2020	1,086,546	29.4	31,905
2025	1,181,862	37.8	44,619

FTEs per 1,000 residents in the rest of B.C. in 2011: 45.7