

Brief submitted to the Postsecondary Review

By the

Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)



Regarding French-Language Colleges

November 16, 2004

French- language Colleges

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) represents over 100,000 members in the public sector, 15,000 of whom are in the education sector. Within that sector, we represent members in 22 English-speaking colleges and 2 French – speaking colleges.

It is well recognized that minorities, including Francophone communities, have less access to higher education in their own language than the English majority has and that the responsibility rests on the provincial and federal governments to change that reality. Only two French-language colleges, La Cité collégiale and le collège Boréal, have the mandate and the responsibility to assure access to college postsecondary education across the province to a francophone population of over half a million.

In addition to the mandate inherent to a community college to provide quality education and training, La Cité collégiale and le collège Boréal also have the responsibility to promote the social, cultural and economic development of the francophone communities spread over the province. Often, the challenge for the French colleges is to achieve a minimum enrolment threshold for the program to be financially viable. The student population is dispersed throughout the various programs offered. Therefore, it is well understood that a number of courses end up with very small class sizes, resulting in a much higher per-student cost than the large urban colleges.

It is necessary for the Ontario and the Federal governments to officially recognize and acknowledge the distinctive status of the two French-language colleges. They have the dual mandate to ensure the survival, the development and advancement of the Franco-Ontarian population while providing access to relevant quality education to their students and learners. This must be recognized by the governments by assuring stable funding through a revised formula that will allow the French colleges to better plan their development, to provide a sufficient number of quality postsecondary programs and a broad variety of highly specialized programs in order to meet the demands of all their prospective clients and to meet the demands of today's market.

Finally, it is necessary for the provincial government to articulate a provincial vision for the delivery of college programs and services in French, these programs and services to be entrenched in the Ministry's policies, priorities, programs and services.