

NEWS RELEASE

August 30, 2021
For immediate release

Improved regulation of private post-secondary training institutions following the implementation of Ombudsperson recommendations

Victoria – Ombudsperson Jay Chalke released his final update report into the provincial government's oversight of private training institutions in the province today. The report highlights improvements to the regulatory regime resulting from the Ombudsperson's recommendations in a 2015 report.

"Our initial investigation found a number of shortcomings in the government's oversight of the private career training sector that were resulting in the unfair treatment of many students," said Chalke. "I am encouraged that the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training has implemented the vast majority of our recommendations resulting in much-needed improvements to benefit students."

In the Public Interest: Protecting Students Through Effective Oversight of Private Career Training Institutions was released by the Ombudsperson in 2015 and made 36 recommendations focusing on three key areas - the need for students to have more information about their rights, the need to strengthen complaints processes and the need to increase oversight and enforcement of institutions' compliance with regulatory requirements. All but two of these recommendations are now implemented, resulting in important changes including:

- Beginning September 1st, all institutions will be required by law to provide students with, and display at a visible location on campus, statements of students' rights. These documents will be translated into key languages and will emphasize students' rights to important information, including a written enrolment contract and information about tuition refund policies.
- Site inspections by the ministry before approving a program, improved public information about recent and upcoming site inspections, and a better process for notifying students about when inspections will take place.
- Strengthened processes to ensure that the ministry acts quickly to protect student interests when a program loses any approval by another provincial or federal regulatory body.
- Improved complaint processes including clear timelines and regulatory protection from retaliation when students bring a complaint forward.

"I am pleased to see these changes being implemented. Students should be informed about how private training institutions are regulated and of their rights when receiving an education," said Chalke.

Two of the 36 recommendations remain unimplemented. The Ombudsperson called for public reporting on student employment outcomes and related matters post-graduation with the intention that students could use this information to inform their decision about which institution to attend. The report also recommended that students who were arbitrarily misled or did not have access to the complaints process in 2009/10 and were not able to file a tuition refund be given compensation.

“While the ministry has implemented 34 of our 36 recommendations, I’m disappointed that they have not yet implemented our recommendation about student satisfaction and employment outcomes. Today I am calling on the government to continue to look for ways to provide such useful information for students and prospective students.”

There are currently more than 55,000 students attending 300 certified career training institutions in British Columbia. These institutions offer training programs for diverse careers, including licensed practical nurse, audio technician, pipefitter, commercial pilot, and heavy equipment operator.

The full update report can be found here: https://bcombudsperson.ca/investigative_report/in-the-public-interest-protecting-students-through-effective-oversight-of-private-career-training-institutions/.

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The Office of the Ombudsperson is an oversight office, independent of government, with jurisdiction over more than 1,000 provincial and local public bodies in British Columbia. It has a statutory mandate to receive and investigate complaints from the public when they feel they have been treated unfairly when receiving government services. The office also investigates allegations of serious wrongdoing in the workplace under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

The office's services are free, confidential and impartial. For more information visit

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