

NEWS RELEASE

September 26th
For Immediate Release

Investigative Update

Students attending private training institutions in B.C. have access to more transparent information, following B.C. Ombudsperson's recommendations

Victoria – B.C.'s Ombudsperson Jay Chalke released an investigative update today highlighting the progress the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training has made on implementing recommendations aimed at improving the oversight of B.C.'s private training institutions.

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 increasing information available to students attending private career institutions including strengthening the ministry's monitoring of the quality of institutions by conducting regular site visits, adding more rigour in relation to program approval, improving the student complaints process and enforcement actions.

"As students head back to school, we continue to encourage the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training to ensure B.C.'s private career training institutions have adequate oversight to ensure they are offering the best quality of education possible," said Ombudsperson Jay Chalke, adding 51,000 students attend private training institutions in B.C. Students take a range of programs from licenced practical nursing to heavy equipment operation.

"Students often pay a significant amount of money to attend these institutions, sometimes more than students pay to attend B.C.'s leading universities. Twenty percent of these students are coming from overseas," said Chalke. "They are training for important and sometimes dangerous jobs so the stakes here are high," said Chalke. "We want to make sure government tightens any gaps to make sure students have the level of training they need to do these jobs effectively and that B.C. continues to have a reputation of providing exemplary education in both public and private systems."

To date 19 of the Ombudsperson's recommendations have been implemented by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training including regulatory enhancements to the complaints process, external, independent review of proposed programs, and increased transparency around tuition fees.

This month the Ministry also enhanced its online directory of institutions in response to the Ombudsperson's initial recommendations. There is now a searchable database of enforcement decisions and more information about specific programs.

While the Ministry continues to make progress on a number of outstanding recommendations, the Ombudsperson is calling for implementation of these key priorities:

- Publishing inspection information on the Private Training Institutions Branch website



- Improving the information available for current and prospective students about the student complaints process, tuition refunds and quality assurance standards
- Broadening the accessibility of this information by translating it into languages commonly spoken by students at private training institutions

“The government is making progress on a number of the areas highlighted in our 2015 report,” said Chalke. “However, there is still room for improvement to build in the rigour that our initial report recommended.”

The Ombudsperson will continue to monitor progress on these recommendations and report publicly. View the Investigative Update at <https://bcombudsperson.ca/documents/public-interest-protecting-students-through-effective-oversight-private-career-training>.

Media Contact: Sara Darling | Communications Lead | B.C. Office of the Ombudsperson | 778-679-2588

-30-

About the Office of the Ombudsperson

The Office of the Ombudsperson receives enquiries and complaints about the practices and services of public agencies within its jurisdiction. Its role is to independently and impartially investigate these complaints to determine whether public agencies have acted fairly and reasonably, and whether their actions and decisions were consistent with relevant legislation, policies and procedures. In addition to investigating individual complaints, the Ombudsperson also conducts systemic investigations into complex issues. The Ombudsperson has jurisdiction over a wide range of public agencies, including provincial government ministries, crown corporations, government boards, schools, universities and colleges, local governments and self-regulating professions.