I’m pleased to be here among people who understand the importance of post-secondary education to BC’s prosperity.

Especially at a time when BC is suffering a serious educational deficit – a deficit that is denying young British Columbians the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their potential ... denying employers the talent they need to grow ... and denying the province the human capital it needs to thrive in a competitive global economy.

It’s an educational deficit that, according to the Conference Board of Canada, is costing BC’s economy $7.9 billion in lost GDP and denying governments $1.8 billion in foregone tax revenues. With this in mind, I encourage you to respond positively and urgently to the system needs identified in the recent submission of the Research Universities Council of BC.

Today, however, I want to highlight some pressing issues – and transformative opportunities – at my own institution.

**SFU PRIORITIES: SURREY CAMPUS**

BC’s Labour Market Outlook estimates that this province needs more than 900,000 new workers over the next decade, 77 per cent of whom will require post-secondary education.

- The greatest areas of demand include “Health Care” and “Technical Services.”

Where will we get the skilled workers to address this demand?

- A large part of the answer can be found right here in Surrey and other communities south of the Fraser.
- These communities have the youngest and fastest growing populations in BC.
- They also have fewer post-secondary spaces and lower levels of educational attainment per capita than other regions.

Recognizing this, the Province in 2006 signed an MOU committing to double the size of SFU’s Surrey campus – from 2500 to 5000 domestic student spaces – by 2015. SFU responded by developing a three-phase expansion plan to prepare students for careers in high demand areas.
• Yet 2015 came and went without provincial investment, while Surrey’s population has increased by 35% – almost 144,000 residents.
• As a result, high school GPAs required to get into high-demand SFU programs like Health Sciences and Mechatronics have risen to over 90%

**Sustainable Energy Engineering**

Last year we were delighted when the Province funded the first phase of expansion – a cutting-edge program that will advance BC’s leadership in clean-tech and sustainable energy.

• It’s an important step, creating 440 of the promised 2500 new seats.

**Health Innovation and Creative Technologies**

SFU remains ready to follow through on the next two phases:

• First, leveraging the strengths of our Faculty of Health Sciences, we are prepared to offer programs that equip students to enhance the quality, efficiency and sustainability of BC’s healthcare system.
• Second, we are set to deliver new programs in creative technologies, to prepare students to answer the growing need for technological advancements in all sectors of the economy.

At the same time, we can address the general seat shortage south-of-the-Fraser by adding 1,000 entry spaces that offer options for work experience and entrepreneurship training.

**Our request of this committee, therefore, is to recommend that the Province recommit to its 2006 goal and grow SFU’s Surrey campus to 5,000 student seats by 2023.**

**SFU PRIORITIES: BURNABY CAMPUS**

If Surrey expansion represents our best opportunity, aging infrastructure on our 53-year old Burnaby campus represents our most pressing need.

While we value the Province’s support for routine maintenance, some Burnaby buildings are beyond repair.

• Our most urgent need is for Life Sciences building to replace our crumbling biology facility.
• We are also seeking provincial financing to expand student housing – looking to build a new Burnaby residence to accommodate 360 undergraduate students.

**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION**

Finally, our three-campus university faces serious transportation challenges, especially getting students, faculty and staff up and down Burnaby Mountain. Recognizing this, TransLink recently updated its feasibility
study for an urban gondola system to liberate the 25,000 commuters currently trapped on one of the worst-performing bus routes in the region.

With 75 per cent of these commuters coming from beyond Burnaby, this project is listed as a regional planning priority in the Mayors’ Ten Year Plan.

TransLink calculates the gondola’s benefit-cost ratio to be 1.8 – an extraordinarily positive rating for a public transit project. It would:

- provide alternative access to and from the mountain in the event of emergencies;
- serve residents of the growing UniverCity community;
- free 26 articulated buses for use elsewhere in the region; and
- reduce carbon emissions.

With federal green infrastructure funding, this would be the most cost-effective and innovative transit investment in the country.

We are therefore requesting the Province to commit to this project in 2019.

CONCLUSION

SFU is proud of what we, as Canada’s engaged university, have accomplished with for your support. And we look forward to what more we can accomplish together in the years ahead.