

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS
ON THE GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS OF
CHAMPLAIN REGIONAL COLLEGE**

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**Delivered to Minister H el ene David,
Minister Responsible for Higher Education**

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Mandate

Champlain Regional College is the only one of Québec's 48 Cegeps (collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel) to be comprised of three distant and distinct constituent campuses in three separate administrative regions, governed by a single and off-site central administration and a single Board of Governors. Those campuses are located in St. Lambert, St. Foy and Lennoxville. The closest comparison among Quebec Cegeps would be Collège régional de Lanaudière. It has three sites but within a much smaller geographical area and serving students and communities that are much more homogenous than those at Champlain.

The unique circumstances at Champlain create both challenges and opportunities. Incorporated in 1972 as a single entity delivering English-language instruction, Champlain has generally delivered above-average academic results, maintained a steady level of enrolment, balanced its annual finances and engendered the loyalty and support of the communities it has served. Its three campuses currently have a combined total enrolment of 5,671 students, with two of the three campuses counting less than 1,300 students each. Thus, the consolidation under one administrative structure has afforded Champlain with certain economies of scale.

That said, there are important challenges created by the need to reconcile three constituent campuses and communities under a single administrative structure. In recent years, the Minister Responsible for Higher Education has been solicited repeatedly by two of the three campus faculty associations who believe that the current structures and practices are compromising the college's capacity to address the needs of its students. The two associations have called for the transformation of Champlain Regional College into three independent Cegeps. Increasingly, English-speaking community leaders, particularly in Quebec City area and a number of current and former Champlain administrators from each of the three campuses have echoed concerns about the direction and future of the college, though only a few have proposed the dismantling of the current structure as the solution. Certain elected officials at the provincial, federal and municipal levels have also been solicited by Champlain stakeholders on these matters, and have indicated their interest in seeing that the college's future is assured.

After discussions with the administration of Champlain Regional College, the current Minister responsible for Higher Education assessed that it was pertinent to take the exceptional step of initiating a detailed enquiry to examine whether changes are necessary in order to ensure the future success and well-being of the college. With that in mind, and with the support of the Champlain Board of Governors, the Minister asked me in March 2017 to meet with constituent groups of Champlain with a view to producing a report and recommendations on how the governance and operations of the college might be improved. That mandate (Annex I) was not limited to the examination of any single scenario; rather, I was invited to examine any number of measures that might be undertaken by the college or by the Ministry itself. Those measures might include modifications to the college's by-laws and practices, legislative or regulatory modifications or other adjustments to strike a more effective and essential balance between centralized administration and campus autonomy. It was understood that this evaluation would be guided by a single and unconditional

consideration: how can Champlain Regional College and the Ministry best collaborate to enhance student welfare and success?

Methodology

Between March 1st and August 3rd, I conducted some 60 hours of meetings, in person, by phone or videoconference, with 40 individuals and groups currently or formerly associated with Champlain Regional College (Annex II). During each of those open-ended discussions, I offered a brief overview of my mandate and objectives and invited a frank exchange on what changes might be made by the college and/the Ministry to further the objective of enhancing student welfare and success. It was made absolutely clear at each meeting that our government respects the legislated principle of each Cegep's autonomy, that our enquiry in no way entails any pretensions of trusteeship; At the same time, I underlined that the enquiry is, nevertheless, predicated on our government's perception that the situation warrants particular attention. The discussions at each consultation focused on but were not limited to issues of governance. In each case, participants were invited to offer, at the meeting or in subsequent correspondence to me, concrete suggestions for improvement. Those suggestions could include measures our government might undertake in support of the college, or measures the college itself could undertake.

I reviewed a wide range of documentation in my preparations for this report, including the pertinent government laws and regulations, budget parameters and correspondence, Champlain Regional College by-laws, employee manuals and Board minutes, briefings and reports; exchanges and memos from the current and preceding directors general of Champlain as well as documents produced by various stakeholder groups. Furthermore, I reviewed a range of internal Ministry documents and directives relating to over-all college administration in Québec and Champlain in particular. I surveyed pertinent press coverage and historical reviews relating to Champlain from its inception in 1972. These activities were supplemented by a lengthy list of informal conversations with political colleagues and other community leaders with interest in and insight on the performance and the positioning of Champlain Regional College within the communities it serves.

Findings

While there was a great diversity of feedback offered during my extensive consultations with the Board, senior management, employee groups, students and past stakeholders of Champlain, a number of key and sometimes paradoxical messages were delivered by almost every group, namely:

- A deep and heart-felt loyalty to and pride in Champlain Regional College, and the individual or group's particular contributions to the college's legacy and achievements. (That attachment is well-illustrated by the fact that many former students have returned to work for Champlain; a high proportion of the Champlain workforce has remained with the college for 15 or more years.)

- A general perception that the central administration and the Board of Governors are not sufficiently sensitive to the diverse needs and character of each campus
- A widely expressed sense of growing mistrust and miscommunication between head office and campus administration, between the Board of Governors and all Champlain stakeholders; a lack of a shared vision and clearly communicated values and objectives
- Few examples of concrete and positive collaboration or interaction involving the different campuses or the campuses and the centralized administrative offices
- A strong appreciation for well-established and nurturing relationships between students and faculty, professionals and support staff
- Strong potential, but only sometimes realized, for meaningful and productive relationships with local communities, industries and social organizations
- An increasing, though poorly explained and not clearly supported central administrative tendency towards greater centralization of services and decision-making, undertaken without transparent debate or explicit endorsement by the Board of Directors
- A recognition on each campus that academic results, demands for admission to the college and financial performance are all being maintained at positive levels, despite the above-expressed concerns
- A generalized and strongly expressed concern, though non-specific, that the college is heading towards crisis if visible changes are not instituted
- A concerted belief that government policies and parameters for all 48 Cegeps do not adequately account for or support Champlain's unique position as a Cegep with three geographically distinct campuses; a concerted belief that, over-all, the Cegep network is being underfunded
- A generalized lack of understanding of and access to information on how the government funds Champlain Regional College and how the college manages those finances.

Pursuant to these observations and my consultations, briefings and review of pertinent documents, I would identify a number of important issues and potential obstacles that are putting at some risk the capacity of Champlain Regional College to serve the future welfare and success of its students. It must be noted that the key indicators for success – academic success, student demand for admissions at each campus, financial stability – continue to be stable and positive. I stress that there are nevertheless compelling reasons to believe that such success is in peril if the current atmosphere of uncertainty, conflict and mistrust is not addressed.

First, it is important to situate in proper context the persistent, if circumscribed movement calling for the three campuses to each become independent colleges. Driven most directly by the Faculty Association at the St. Lawrence Campus in Québec City, supported by its parent union, the CSN, and its colleague faculty association at the St. Lambert Campus, the successive interventions calling for this change have been backed by others, particularly in the Québec City area, and supported by a feasibility study produced for the CSN in January 2016. Those interventions to the Ministry calling for this option have been rejected or deferred over the years. The diagnosis of difficulties behind the call for three independent colleges – lack of local decision-making authority, absence of latitude to develop distinct programs and community outreach -- does not lead automatically to the prescription for independence, however.

The Ministry's own analysis suggests that a demerger of the campuses would entail substantial increases in expenditures without necessarily enhancing services to students. Two of the three campuses do not have the critical mass of students best suited for the optimal operation of independent establishments. The widely identified concerns expressed during my consultations about increasing centralization at the expense of campus autonomy could be palliated by a range of solutions that do not necessarily include the dismantling of the Champlain Regional College model.

Recommendation 1:

The option of transforming the three constituent campuses of Champlain into independent Cegeps should not be pursued. First, there is not compelling evidence to guarantee that the objective of enhanced student welfare and success would be better served by this solution. Second, the Ministry's analysis of the cost benefits, including its careful review of the feasibility study sponsored by the CSN, points to substantially increased costs and unconvincing evidence of ensuing positive impact on academic program offer or available human resources at each site. Finally, there has been no request from the Champlain Board of Governors for the exploration of this option, as would be prescribed by the *Loi sur les collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel*. With a view to moving forward, and as a demonstration of respect towards the groups and individuals who have invested in advocating for this option, it is important that the Minister's response on this question be a clear and binding one.

While I have noted the strong level of commitment and dedication to Champlain expressed by the majority of its stakeholders, I am obliged to underline how frequently I was struck by the apparent lack of coordination, common vision and collaboration between (a) the Chair of the Board of Governors and both the independent and appointed members of the Board (b) the Director General and the Campus Directors, and (c) senior managers at the central office and managers at each of the campuses. These significant difficulties were manifested by my observance of blunt and critical statements and behaviors from campus directors, rather surprising given the line of authority flowing from the Director General and the Board. That said, those statements and behaviors were evidently in response to sudden and apparently unexplained decisions by the Board and the General Directorate on changes to duties and protocols affecting campus-central administration operations.

I heard from current and former directors, managers and other staff members about deeply troubling levels of stress, poorly communicated policies, vague lines of authority and redundant and confusing administrative procedures. Campus directors and employee groups often complained of a lack of sensitivity and responsiveness to local concerns. Conversely, central-office administrators complained that the absence of clear line authority and the interventions of campus directors often prevent them from ensuring quality control and maintaining consistent practices and accountability mechanisms across the system. These individuals spoke of difficulties in dealing directly with campus colleagues working in their same areas of responsibility. Surprisingly, central office directors and managers are rarely present on the three campuses, a phenomenon that might be contributing to these described difficulties. From each of these two divergent camps, there was a nevertheless a consensus that roles need to be clarified, communication needs to be enhanced and better collaboration needs to be offered.

Recommendation 2:

A concerted effort must be undertaken by the college to develop and operationalize a shared vision that more effectively focuses on supporting the distinct orientations, populations and communities served by each campus. To that end, and in consultation with the Minister, Champlain Regional College should engage the services of a qualified individual for a period to be determined, to accompany the administration and the Board in undertaking this process and in ensuring that all stakeholders are duly consulted on it. The Ministry should assume the cost of engaging this individual.

Recommendation 3:

Without limiting the scope of Recommendation 2, Champlain College should undertake a process to modify its Letters Patent to reflect the unique character of each of its constituent campuses. These modifications could, for example, describe and enshrine St. Lawrence's prime focus on pre-university programs, its majority French-speaking student body, its entrenched relationship with Québec City's English-speaking community; Champlain Lennoxville's rural roots and connection to Bishops' University and substantial non-resident student body; St-Lambert's varied academic offer, urban-suburban environment and multi-racial/multicultural student body.

Recommendation 4:

Again, without limiting the scope of Recommendation 2, Champlain College should create a 'Campus Council' on each campus. Constituted as consultative committees of the Board of Governors, the Councils should be consulted on any matter relating to campus administration. This modification, which should also be entrenched in the Letters Patent, would encourage transparency and responsiveness to local needs by the central administration.

The issue of how to organize academic coordination and oversight at this uniquely structured Cegep has been a source of much contention and analysis over Champlain's long history. Currently, Champlain has a single Commission des études and Director of Studies at the central office, reporting to the Director General and the Board and collaborating with Academic Deans at each campus. There is no line authority between the Director and the

Academic Deans, in fact, the Deans each report in a line function to their Campus Director. Various reports have called for a more decentralized model, running from the creation of a Commission des études and Director of Studies on each campus to a hybrid involving greater delegation of authority to Academic Deans at each campus. Conversely, others have called for maintaining the status quo but with line authority established between the single central-office Director of Studies and the Academic Deans. In this model, the Campus Director would play only a collaborative role on all academic matters.

During my consultations, I held meetings with the Director General and the three Campus Directors of Studies at Collège régional de Lanaudière. This is the only Cegep actually recognized in legislation for its regional mandate, unlike Champlain. As noted, its three campuses are much closer geographically, more similar in their orientations, in the quality and size of their student populations and in the communities they serve than the constituent campuses of Champlain Regional College. Perhaps, surprisingly, they nonetheless enjoy a greater level of statutory and practical autonomy than their Champlain counterparts. The Director General and his three Campus Directors each pointed, with clarity and enthusiasm, to two key contributing components to a shared perception of the success of their own operations model: academic autonomy for each of the campuses and recognized senior administrators at each campus, with clear and accountable lines of authority between the campuses and the central administration.

I contend that such a model is vital to creating the necessary conditions to secure respect of both (a) the line authority of the Director General by the Campus Directors and (b) the complementary but necessarily distinct roles of the senior administration and the Board of Governors. Frankly, I contend that neither of these necessary conditions is in regular evidence at Champlain as I write this report. I do believe that this aspect of the Lanaudière example is instructive for Champlain, if it is to move forward on this most pivotal of issues regarding student welfare and success: academic leadership.

Recommendation 5

The academic leadership of Champlain Regional College should be restructured to better reflect the realities of its distinct three campuses and the academic requirements of the communities they serve. The Campus Directors should be reclassified as hors-cadres, assuming the title of ‘Campus Directors of Studies’, at which time the central Director of Studies position should be phased out, with the centralized academic coordination function being assumed by the Director General. Under this new structure, it is proposed that Champlain retain a single Institutional Policy on the Evaluation of Student Achievement (IPESA) and Institutional Policy on the Management of Academic Programs IPMAP but with the insertion of local adaptations tailored to the particular situations of each campus. Necessary adjustments to the *Loi sur les collèges d’enseignement général et professionnel* would be made to allow for implementation of this recommendation.

There is no doubt that the role of the Board of Governors, prescribed in the *Loi sur les collèges d’enseignement général et professionnel*, is rendered more complex by Champlain’s unique structure. Its oversight and coordination role is rendered difficult with three constituent campuses serving distinct clienteles and communities. Furthermore, ensuring

equitable representation from each entity on a central body is not always easy. It is my finding that these inherent challenges are being exacerbated by some problems with the current Board: incomplete and inconsistent provision of necessary documentation, unclear demarcations between administrative and Board functions and unresolved divisions on the future direction of the college.

With respect to the Board composition, there is currently a rotation of one designated member of the professional and the support staff groups from one of the three campuses or from the central office for mandates of three years. As a result, professionals and support staff at a given campus find themselves with a local representative on the central board for only one three-year mandate out of every 12 years. The limited number of non-unionized professionals and support staff at the central office are part of the rotation, a phenomenon that was questioned frequently in my consultations.

Recommendation 6:

With a view to achieving a better balance between centralization and campus autonomy, the following changes to the composition and operations of the Board of Governors should be instituted:

(i) The Campus Directors, pending implementation of the changes to their classification proposed in Recommendation 5, should be named ex-officio members. Their status as ex-officio members should in no way have the effect of compromising the line authority of the Director General over the Campus Directors as the senior ex-officio member of the Board.

(ii) The participation of professional and support staff representatives on the Board of Governors should be limited to those representatives working at one of the three constituent campuses

(iii) The faculty associations representing the St. Lawrence and St. Lambert Campuses should end their current practice of non-participation in Board meetings

(iv) An annual full-day information and orientation session should be organized to better facilitate effective decision-making and more coherent interaction between administration and governance

(v) A statutory reporting item from each Campus Council (Recommendation 5) should be instituted on Board agendas.

I heard suggestions from many representative groups including union associations and students, and echoed by the Director General that Champlain and its unique three-campus structure is often hampered by the 'FABES model' for Cegep financing by the government. About 85 per cent of total operating revenues to the 48 institutions is supplied by direct government funding under this formula. (The components of the FABES formula are designated as follows : F=allocations fixes; A=allocations aux activités pédagogiques; B=allocations de fonctionnement liés aux bâtiments; E=allocations pour le personnel enseignant; and S=allocations spécifiques pour les cas particuliers.)

Champlain's unique structure can create additional budget pressures that are not necessarily faced by other Cegeps. That concern was raised frequently during our consultations with

Champlain stakeholders. Given the geographical distances between campuses, are allowances made to assure that three separate sites are afforded equitable staff allocations? Second, does the FABES model allow for Champlain to staff its centrally delivered services and allow for the appropriate complement of staff in related areas on the three campuses? Similarly, can Champlain procure its equitable share of resources to implement special government-initiated projects?

In fact, the college received more than \$2.1 million in additional funding by virtue of its unique status and duly allocated under the current FABES model. Surprisingly, no member of the administration, faculty, staff or Board expressed acknowledgement of these additional funds during my consultations. The Minister has announced an upcoming review of the FABES model.

Within the college itself, there seems to be a lack of clarity on financial allocation and reporting practices as well. Is each campus responsible for balancing its own budget? Are only certain lines of the budget so reported? Is a deficit or surplus reported by a campus or the central administration attributed to that site only, or is it the collective responsibility or windfall of the entire college? Case in point: Some Board members and Campus Directors reported to me their surprise and frustration over a shortfall of \$1.6 million on the central-office statement of revenues and expenditures, hastily-reported to the Board in April. The campuses were advised that they would have to absorb that shortfall, with little information on how it accrued and by what protocol it would be recovered.

Recommendation 7:

Without limiting the scope of Recommendation 2, Champlain Regional College should undertake a review of its financial practices and protocols. Consequent changes should be clearly communicated. The review should include an examination of the mandate and practices of the Audit Committee.

Second, the Ministry should ensure that the unique situation of Champlain Regional College is duly considered and then accounted for in any changes implemented pursuant to the planned review of the current FABES model.

The capacity of Champlain and its constituent campuses to build and foster essential community and industry links is again calling into question whether the college has struck the right balance between local autonomy and centralized administration. This is a serious matter, as fundraising becomes an increasingly important source of supplementary revenue for educational institutions. While fundraising is centralized under one Champlain foundation at the moment, many stakeholders on each of the campuses have reported that donors are much more inclined to be forthcoming with support for their local campus. Concerns were also expressed during our consultations regarding the flexibility, or lack thereof, afforded each campus to build apprenticeship programs, job-placement links and technology exchanges with local industries and small businesses.

Recommendation 8:

Champlain Regional College should institute the necessary measures to allow each of the three campuses to create its own foundation for fund-raising. This will strengthen the relationship of each with its constituent communities, local businesses and academic partners, all the while allowing each to benefit from its position within the single Champlain 'brand'.

Recommendation 9:

Recognizing the substantial distance between the central administration office of Champlain and its three constituent campuses, the Minister should allot a modest recurring allocation to the college for travel and meetings. This allocation would encourage greater on-site interaction and collaboration.

Recommendation 10:

The college should be encouraged to develop communication tools and strategies to enhance information flow, encourage a shared sense of joint purpose and promote greater collaboration. The tools and strategies should be developed under the supervision of the Director General, in concert with the Director General's Advisory Committee and the Board of Governors. They should be used to facilitate college-wide awareness of and involvement in the implementation of the changes recommended above.

Recommendation 11:

Champlain Regional College should invite the Minister to a public meeting of the Board of Governors within the months following the publication of this report. The meeting would be an important opportunity to exchange on the state of governance and operations at the college.

Annex I

Champlain Regional College consultations

1. March 9th - Champlain Regional College, DG Odette Côté
2. March 9th - Lennoxville, Campus Director Nancy Beattie
3. March 9th - Lennoxville, Teachers' union, Darren Westman
4. March 10th - St-Lambert, Support staff union, Nathalie Doyon
5. March 10th - St-Lambert, Support staff union, James Sparks
6. March 10th - St-Lambert, Campus Director Don Shewan
7. March 10th - St-Lambert, Teachers' union, Christine Kerr
8. March 28th - St-Lawrence, Campus Director Edward Berryman
9. March 28th - St-Lawrence, Teachers' union, Lisa Birch
10. March 28th - St-Lawrence, Professional union, Christina Brosseau
11. March 28th - St-Lawrence, Support staff union, Richard Garneau
12. April 18th - Lennoxville Support staff union, Pierre Roy
13. April 18th - Directeur des études, Paul Keaser
14. April 20th - Cégep régional de Lanaudière, DG Marcel Côté
15. April 20th - Joliette campus DG, Hélène Bailleau
16. April 20th - Assomption campus DG, Alain Lamarre
17. April 20th - Terrebonne DG, Michel Rouleau
18. April 21st - John Halpin, former Campus Director, St. Lawrence
19. April 26th - Christian Ragusich, former Directeur des études
20. May 1st - Lennoxville students
21. May 1st - Nancy Chrétien, Secrétaire générale
22. May 1st - St-Lambert students
23. May 1st - Bernard Tremblay, PDG, Fédération des cégeps
24. May 5th - St-Lawrence students
25. May 5th - Chair of Board of Governors, James Shufelt
26. May 15th - Lennoxville Professionals' union, Judith Beaudoin
27. May 15th - Charles Simard, DG, Association des cadres des collèges du Québec
28. May 31st - Helen Walling, Board member
29. June 1st - Cathleen Scott, Board member
30. June 14th - Centrale de la CSN on MCE report
31. June 16th - Meeting with Champlain Board of Governors
32. June 21st - St-Lawrence Campus Managers
33. June 21st - Lennoxville Campus Managers
34. June 21st - St-Lambert Campus Managers
35. June 21st - Central-office Managers
36. June 28th - Michael Murray, past Board president
37. July 11th - Central office professionals and support staff
38. July 11th - Valerie Macleod, past Vice-Chair, Board of Governors
39. July 12th - J. Ken Robertson, former Director General (Correspondence exchange only)
40. August 3rd - Gerald R. Cutting, former Director General