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## MEDIA RELEASE

## Four B.C. post-secondary institutions to collaborate on social infrastructure development

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B.C. post-secondary institutions are collaborating in a groundbreaking initiative to strengthen communities through social infrastructure development.

Today, four of the province's leading post-secondary institutions committed to establish the B.C. Collaborative for Social Infrastructure. [Simon Fraser University](#) (SFU), the [British Columbia Institute of Technology](#) (BCIT), the [University of Northern British Columbia](#) (UNBC) and [Vancouver Island University](#) (VIU) are founding partners of this innovative partnership. The project, supported by the [McConnell Family Foundation](#), will enable the institutions to use their collective energies and strengths to make real, sustainable impact in our communities.

The collaboration will focus on the following action areas:

- Green and sustainable campus and community building
- Indigenous entrepreneurship and social finance
- Social procurement
- Library outreach and community scholar programs

"The McConnell Foundation has supported innovation in post-secondary institutions for the past 25 years through such initiatives as the introduction of community service learning. We're pleased to build on this work through our engagement with the B.C. Collaborative for Social Infrastructure," says Stephen Huddart, President and CEO of the McConnell Foundation. "Helping build social infrastructure is a way for universities and colleges to contribute to social and environmental resilience and sustainability, while deepening relationships with their local communities."

McConnell has also funded [Universities Canada](#) to create a national platform for universities to gain knowledge concerning social infrastructure development.

The four institutions will share practices and policies to encourage progress and to determine how initiatives can be scaled-up and enhanced. The institutions plan to create a community of practice that can be shared with other post-secondary institutions in B.C. and across Canada.

The initiative has its origins in a roundtable hosted by SFU and McConnell in 2017 attended by university presidents and foundation representatives from across Canada.

## **Background**

### **Quotes:**

Kathy Kinloch, President, BCIT :

"BCIT and our educational partners play a pivotal role in cultivating the talent and applied solutions that will drive our economy, green our planet, and enhance quality of life within our communities," says BCIT President Kathy Kinloch. "Through this important collaboration, we are developing mechanisms to encourage growth and strengthening the infrastructure that supports social innovation."

Andrew Petter , President and Vice-Chancellor, SFU:

"Canada's public post-secondary institutions have a huge opportunity, and I believe responsibility, to increase the contributions we make to the communities we serve," says SFU President Andrew Petter . "This project will enable SFU and our partners to share best practices and to test some of the many instruments we can leverage to build social infrastructure."

Daniel Weeks, President and Vice-Chancellor, UNBC:

"Collaboration is a core tenet of the post-secondary world. Having four leading institutions come together to drive social innovation not only sets an example for other types of institutions to emulate, but positions the post-secondary sector as thought leaders and innovators," says UNBC President Daniel Weeks. "Each institution will bring its unique knowledge and resources to the discussion and by working together, continue to bring the University mindset of problem solving outside our walls and into the communities we are proud to serve."

Dr. Ralph Nilson , President and Vice-Chancellor, VIU:

"Education is a key determinant for social change and sustainable prosperity," says VIU President Ralph Nilson. The B.C. Collaborative for Social Infrastructure will only serve to amplify the impact universities can have on the communities they serve. By creating spaces for dialogue, and demonstrating the success of partnerships such as this, post-secondary institutions can model how sustainable and scalable change is possible, and the ongoing impact it can have in communities across the country."

### **About the McConnell Foundation:**

The McConnell Foundation is a private Canadian foundation that develops and applies innovative approaches to social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges. We do so through granting and investing, capacity building, convening, and co-creation with grantees, partners and the public.

### **About the British Columbia Institute of Technology:**

For more than 50 years, the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) has been training the experts, innovators, and professionals who shape our economy – across British Columbia and around the world. BCIT offers over 300 programs and educates nearly 50,000 students each year in areas such as applied and natural sciences, business, computing, trades, engineering, and health sciences. Through our unique applied education model, BCIT students gain the technical skills, real-world experience, and problem-solving ability needed to embrace complexity and lead innovation in a rapidly changing workforce. Our curriculum is developed through close consultation with industry and delivered by instructors who have direct, hands-on experience in their fields.

### **About Simon Fraser University:**

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded more than 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is Canada's leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 150,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

### **About the University of Northern British Columbia:**

Located in the spectacular landscape of Northern British Columbia, UNBC is one of Canada's best small universities. We have a passion for teaching, discovery, people, the environment, and the north. UNBC provides outstanding undergraduate and graduate learning opportunities that explore cultures, health, economies, sciences and the environment. As one of B.C.'s

research-intensive universities, we bring the excitement of new knowledge to all of our students, and the outcomes of our teaching and research to the world. In addition to fostering and celebrating academic excellence, UNBC is a welcoming place, with a learning environment that is friendly, inclusive, and supportive. UNBC is a university both in and for the North, and this mission has instilled a strong sense of ownership, purpose, and adventure among our students, alumni, faculty, staff, and the communities we serve. We are also Canada's Green University™, leading the way to a more sustainable future for all.

**About Vancouver Island University:**

Known as a centre of excellence for teaching, applied research and learning, Vancouver Island University (VIU) offers programs that include graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational programs and trades, as well as access programs. With roots that date back to 1936, VIU is today a dynamic, internationally known university supporting a student population of 16,000 learners, including 1,900 international students and 2,000 Indigenous students. VIU is deeply connected to coastal and First Nations communities and works closely with them to create a supportive, culturally relevant learning environment for Indigenous learners. The University is also focused on providing access to quality post-secondary education for non-traditional learners who face a variety of barriers. In recognition of its exceptional learning environment, VIU has been chosen as a finalist in the Higher Education Academy's Global Teaching Excellence Awards.

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