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Via Email: ResourceStewardship.Committee@assembly.ab.ca

February 26, 2018

Mr. Rod Loyola, MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship
6th Floor, 9820 - 107 Street
Edmonton, AB, T5K 1E7

RE: Review of the *Conflicts of Interest Act* – Written Submission

Mr. Loyola,

I am pleased to provide input into the *Conflicts of Interest Act* (Alberta) in response to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship's invitation for submissions. In particular, my comments are focused on the statutory requirements that recently came into effect following the passage of Bill 27. Thank you to the Standing Committee for the opportunity to provide input.

As a public institution, Bow Valley College is committed to ethical, transparent, and accountable operation practices and culture. These values and principles are reflected across the organization's operational policies. Our operational policy framework requires minimal updates to bring Bow Valley College into full compliance with new statutory requirements introduced in Bill 27. We will meet the April 30, 2018 deadline for submission of our updated *Conflicts of Interest Policy* to the Ethics Commissioner.

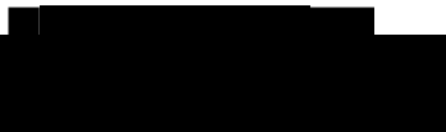
While restrictions on gifts are yet to be defined, information provided suggests they could include conference fees and related travel costs. Bow Valley College's position is that conference fees and related travel costs are not gifts. Rather, they are an important part of performing senior leadership functions. Conference participation provides exposure to ideas and solutions that enrich institutional leadership and knowledge as well as provides access to forums where the strategic interests of the institution can be advanced. These activities benefit the institution and the public post-secondary system broadly. Moreover, presidents and other senior officials are often invited to conferences to lead talks or participate on panels. Such commitments require significant work on the part of invited officials, rendering the coverage of conference fees and/or travel costs as an offset for the required effort, not a gift.

We would also request that the Committee consider the unique position of Comprehensive Community Institutions and the increasing need for these institutions to find innovative ways to partner with industry and seek donor support as a means of offsetting the impact of budget constraints. The opportunity to freely access all networking opportunities that further the Mandate of Bow Valley College without restriction, are critical to our success. Additionally, to foster these vital relationships, it may be necessary for senior officials to attend dinners and events at the invitation of community partners which have a value greater than the limit for gifts set out in the regulations. To this end, we recommend that the permitted amount for gifts as set out in regulations be adjusted to reflect a more reasonable amount which recognizes the types of activities undertaken by senior officials and employees to attract and retain donors that are so critical to the sustainability of Comprehensive Community Institutions.

The College further recommends that the co-employment restrictions, as they relate to system presidents also be reviewed. As part of the conventions of community leadership, institution presidents are expected to participate on community, service-oriented, and public agency boards. Bow Valley College asserts that board service is not employment. Indeed, board members of post-secondary institutions are not employees of the organization. Nonetheless, we believe it is vital that board service is explicitly excluded from co-employment restrictions.

Thank you for your review of Bow Valley College's input. If you require further information, I would be pleased to speak with you or the members of the Standing Committee of Resource Stewardship.

Sincerely,



Laura Jo Gunter
President and CEO

CC: Board of Governors of Bow Valley College