



**FAMILIES
FIRST**



NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology

B.C. to lead Canada in offering students free, open textbooks

VANCOUVER – British Columbia is set to become the first province in Canada to offer students free online, open textbooks for the 40 most popular post-secondary courses.

Up to 200,000 B.C. students each year could benefit from this move under B.C.'s Families First Agenda, saving each student hundreds of dollars a year or more on textbooks – money that can go toward other learning supplies or living expenses.

An open textbook is typically published under an open licence and can be read online or downloaded at no cost. If a printed copy is desired, the book is made available for printing at a fraction of traditional textbook costs. Because the open textbooks are digital and open, they can be modified and adapted by instructors to fit different classes.

Open textbooks are part of a growing movement worldwide supporting Open Education Resources, which takes advantage of the Internet (making information sharing easier) and open licences (which extend the rights to use, reuse, revise and share material).

Government will work with post-secondary institutions in implementing an open textbook policy in anticipation they could be in use at B.C. institutions as early as 2013-14, supporting students taking a variety of courses in areas like arts, sciences, humanities and business.

The open textbooks are expected to be created with input from B.C. faculty, institutions and publishers through an open Request for Proposal process co-ordinated by BCcampus, a publicly funded organization that aims to make higher education available to everyone through the smart use of collaborative information technology services. Educators will continue to have the option of using other teaching materials in developing curriculum and teaching classes.

This is the latest step announced under the Families First Agenda for British Columbia, which helps make life more affordable, support vulnerable families and keep communities safe.

Quotes:

John Yap, Minister of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology –

“By taking advantage of technology, more people can get the learning they need in the knowledge economy and access to new or better jobs. This innovative step under B.C.’s Families First Agenda, is an example of how our government is making our world-class education system even better, while increasing accessibility and affordability for students and their families.”

“British Columbia is proudly leading Canada in committing free, open textbooks to students and joins other international jurisdictions in taking a leadership role that puts technology to work for students.”

David Porter, executive director, BCcampus –

“BCcampus is leading the way on Open Educational Resources – OER – in Canada. We believe the goal of higher education is the creation, dissemination, and preservation of knowledge, and as a system agency co-ordinating collaborative online learning services, we have an essential role to play.”

“BCcampus is in a unique position to develop and support the virtual space for educational innovation to happen across B.C. post-secondary system, and we are well-positioned to co-ordinate the BC Open Textbook project.”

Dr. Cable Green, director, Global Learning, Creative Commons –

“B.C. is leveraging 21st century-technologies and licensing to ensure its citizens have affordable access to high-quality post-secondary textbooks. Open licensing on publicly funded content ensures the greatest impact for the public dollar.”

“Canada has long been a leader in online learning and Open Educational Resources; it will now lead in the creation and open sharing of high quality textbooks. Creative Commons congratulates the B.C. government for its vision and leadership and stands ready to assist.”

Alan Shaver, president and vice-chancellor, Thompson Rivers University –

“Given the explosion of high-quality Open Education Resources – OERs, led by some of the best universities in the world, it’s clear that many people are looking to these resources to advance their education. Providing key textbooks online not only helps students enrolled in distance and on-campus programs, it also complements other OERs projects in helping learners access the wealth of online learning resources for self-development in a way that assures excellence in learning outcomes.”

Terry Lake, B.C. Minister of Environment –

“Open textbooks are an innovative way to support B.C.’s green initiatives while lowering our carbon footprint. As well, having the option of accessing the books online will save students money that they can use for other priorities and expenses.”

Quick Facts:

- It is estimated students spend between \$900 and \$1,500 per academic year on textbooks. Open textbooks reduce this to around \$300 or less when printed books are needed – or \$0 for e-copies.
- Open Educational Resources (OERs), like open textbooks, provide workers with easy access to training materials needed to find employment or upgrade skills.
- OERs also have significant benefits for educators and post-secondary institutions, allowing professors to more easily incorporate a teaching module designed by a colleague directly into their course, and materials shared between provinces, or worldwide, with savings for taxpayers in public dollars spent on the development of programming and curriculum.
- Since 2003, the B.C. government has provided \$9.5 million for the BCcampus Online Program Development Fund which supports the development of online courses, textbooks, manuals, videos and other learning materials. Once completed, these materials are licensed and uploaded to the Shareable Online Learning Resources repository (SOL*R) at BCcampus where public post-secondary educators can share online learning resources for free. OER textbooks developed under this new program will be made available in SOL*R to everyone.

Learn More:

- To read The Families First Agenda for British Columbia, share your ideas or provide feedback, visit: <http://www.familiesfirstbc.ca/>
- To learn more about BCcampus, visit: <http://www.bccampus.ca/>
- To learn more about the Open Education 2012 Conference, underway Oct. 16-18 in Vancouver, visit: <http://openedconference.org/2012/>

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