

**Brief of the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations**

**Presented to the**

**Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission**

**Mount Allison University**

**September 21, 2003**

The Federation once again welcomes the opportunity to make a presentation to the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.

In its letter of invitation to the Federation, the Commission states that it wishes to discuss, among other issues, the follow-up related to the forthcoming release of *Strategies for Faculty Renewal in the Maritimes*.

The Federation has had numerous editorials – the vast majority of them commenting on post-secondary education topics - published in the last several years as part of an ongoing communications strategy designed to engage the interest of the general public more closely.

We have traditionally compiled these editorials, which have appeared variously in the Telegraph Journal, The Daily Gleaner, and the Times & Transcript, into annual portfolios for distribution to interested parties who may not have had the opportunity of reading them at the time of publication. Copies of the 2002 and 2003 (to date) portfolios are enclosed herewith for distribution to the members of the Commission.

Earlier this year, the Federation also circulated, for the second time, “*Did you know...*”, an up-to-date public-awareness fact sheet (copy also enclosed) which documents the following:

- provincial government funding per full-time student for New Brunswick’s universities has fallen by more than 10% in the last decade;
- New Brunswick now spends 16.7% less of its Gross Domestic Product on post-secondary education than it did ten years ago;

- average university tuition fees in New Brunswick have more than doubled in only the last decade;
- the likelihood of university attendance increases, in Canada, in direct proportion with family income level;
- in New Brunswick last year university tuition fees alone were, on average, 10% higher than students' earnings from summer employment;
- summer jobs, and not parental contributions or student loans, are the largest source of funding for most Canadian university students;
- university enrolments in New Brunswick recently fell while they increased, overall, by 6.6% in the rest of Canada;
- since 1991-92, the number of students attending New Brunswick's universities part-time has fallen by almost 30%;
- the percentage of the New Brunswick population holding university degrees is 26.6% lower than it is in Nova Scotia; and
- Nova Scotia allocates one-third more of its total provincial expenditures to post-secondary education than New Brunswick does.

From the portfolios, Commission members will perceive that the Federation - among others - has become increasingly concerned about the impact of rising tuition fees on the ability of students either to complete their education, or to do so with a manageable debt load. Whether or not some potential students will be able to participate at all, owing to prohibitive tuition fee levels, is also becoming more and more worrisome.

It is apparent that there is an exponentially-increasing need for post-secondary education in our society, and that rising tuition fees are among the biggest obstacles in the path of

access to it. Recently, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, with the support of the Federation, called for the elimination of tuition fees altogether, on the grounds that formal education to the post-secondary level is already an absolute requirement for the majority of Canadians to obtain employment; and that it should, therefore, now be treated similarly to the “K-12” norm to which we have become accustomed.

However, the Federation recognizes that the introduction of a tuition-free post-secondary system would have far-reaching fiscal and economic consequences, the potential of which must be carefully evaluated before such a step were to be taken.

Consequently, the Federation suggests that some of the Commission’s resources be immediately utilized to perform an in-depth cost-benefits analysis of the introduction of tuition-free post-secondary education at the earliest possible moment.

The Federation again thanks the Commission members for the opportunity to participate in this important dialogue.

Respectfully submitted by the  
Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations  
At Mount Allison University  
September 21, 2003

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