

READER'S FORUM

Importance Of University Tuition Hikes Should Not Be Minimized

The article on lower university enrolments which appeared in Tuesday's Telegraph Journal is, unfortunately, misleading.

It is true that high school enrolments are gradually falling in New Brunswick, and that last year the "double cohort" of Ontario high school graduates gave rise to significant enrolment increases here.

Nevertheless, to introduce the article with the headline "University officials say tuition fees may not be to blame for enrolment drop", while injudiciously using the plural form, also inaccurately implies that there has been a widespread fall in enrolments.

A careful reading of the article reveals that only one university official, at Mount Allison, reported a drop in enrolments this year; and that this, moreover, was only in first-year enrolments, while overall enrolments had remained "fairly stable".

Mount Allison probably having been the largest beneficiary of last year's unusual influx of Ontario students, though, surely it is likely that any reduction resulting from the restoring of normalcy in enrolments from that source this year would be most noticeable there as well.

On the other hand, a spokesperson for l'Université de Moncton, according to the article, said only that the overall enrolment there is projected to be "about the same this year" as it was last year; while officials at the University of New Brunswick – by far the largest institution – stated that it was "too soon" to give out

"even rough estimates" of its enrolments this year.

In fact - again according to the article - at the Atlantic Baptist University enrolments are about five per cent higher this year than last.

Where, then, is the evidence to support the article's postulate of "sagging university enrolments" in New Brunswick?

There is little, if any.

However, there are now over three times as many parents in Canada with university degrees as there were only two decades ago, and their number is growing.

Without doubt, most of these parents will encourage their children, in sufficiently increasing numbers to more than offset any potential decrease in university enrolments attributable to declining high school populations, to follow in their footsteps and obtain a university education.

In this context, therefore, any future decreases in university enrolments which may occur will undoubtedly be as much the result of prohibitive tuition fees as of anything else.

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