

### **Post-secondary education offers hope for the economic development and recovery of our province**

On Tuesday, June 2, 2020, Statistics Canada published a study on the participation rates in colleges and universities of young people from 18 to 24 years of age, between 2000-2001 and 2018-2019. What emerges from this publication is as follows: New Brunswick is at the bottom of the list in Canada with a consistent rate of 34%, over the ten years of the study, while everywhere else (except in the Maritime provinces) this rate increased to reach 44% nationally. Such a statistic is very worrying and all the more so in this critical pandemic period while we focus on reviving the post-pandemic economy of our province.

In this context, we, stakeholder organizations in the public post-secondary education sector in New Brunswick, are concerned about this crisis in human development as well as the historic and worsening post-secondary educational gap of our province. We therefore draw the attention of all New Brunswickers and our governments on the following points.

### **Post-secondary educational institutions are part of the solution to revive New Brunswick**

Education in general, post-secondary education in particular, should not be seen as a private luxury that one can afford only when things are going well; it is a public good, an essential component of a modern, free and democratic society, and the engine of a strong and resilient economy, especially when the latter is facing a major crisis. The social, human and economic development of New Brunswick is largely based on knowledge stemming from post-secondary education and research. Making the best decisions for our collective future and developing structuring innovations require constant and consistent support from the state. Significant and recurring investments in post-secondary training and research programs are absolutely necessary to achieve this. It is important to note here that it is an investment, not an expense, because an educated population contributes to the wealth of a society.

Let us trust the students at our institutions to take up the challenge of the development of our province. These young people only ask for the support of our province.

### **Education is a source of development and a guarantee of resilience in the face of crises**

With the lowest percentage of its population having a post-secondary diploma in the country, New Brunswick has suffered from a university and college education deficit for several decades. Despite repeated calls to the successive governments of our province, the situation has only gotten worse. It is time for us to put in place measures to reverse this trend. An educated society is better able to create innovative solutions to problems, is better equipped and resilient in the face of crisis situations such as we are currently experiencing with Covid-19.

Various studies have pointed to the two most important explanatory variables driving the rate of attendance and success at post-secondary institutions: (i) having at least one parent with post-secondary qualifications and (ii) the affordable cost of education. Let us reverse this trend and have the vision and the courage to invest in our future by making it easier for young people in our province to access post-secondary education; let's eliminate tuition fees and debt for college and university students. The cost of such a venture would be more than offset by a strong return on investment in the medium to long term, and the economy of the entire province would benefit.

### **International students further the development of the province**

New Brunswick is facing an aging population that can be offset by international students in order to maintain a sustainable population growth. According to the 2017 document "We Are All In This Together: An Aging Strategy for New Brunswick", 19.5% of New Brunswick's population are seniors - defined as persons over the age of 65 - and this number is estimated to increase to 31.3% by the year 2038.

An increase in the number of international students will contribute to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which will allow for more funding for senior care as well as to the replacement of retirees in order

to maintain New Brunswick's economy. Indeed, according to the [2019 Economic Impact of Immigration in New Brunswick report by the New Brunswick Multicultural Council](#), the estimated 900 international students in the province in 2018 directly contributed \$75,811,502 to the GDP. Looking at the [higher education trends](#) within the Maritimes, New Brunswick has seen a steady decrease in international students; other Maritime provinces such as Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have seen an increase.

Unfortunately, for now with Covid-19, international students have been overlooked. While the Federal government has offered CERB and CESB fundings for students, most international students are not eligible for those programs. Minister Trevor Holder's statement on June 6, 2020, that he will be "open" to considering financial support for international students if the need arises is a clear demonstration that international students are left behind. There is a need for provincial funding to aid international students who have lost summer jobs, were not able to make it back home because of the pandemic, and are still expected to pay rent, buy groceries and survive.

The Government of New Brunswick has expressed the desire to remain competitive within the international recruitment market, as stated under Action 18 of the Population Growth Action Plan for New Brunswick 2019-2024: "work with New Brunswick post-secondary institutions to support the recruitment and increased enrolment of international students within their study programs." Not only will the increase in international students contribute to the GDP and help support the aging population, it will also create a more diverse multicultural society. This can allow for future growth in both business and tourism opportunities.

This investment in welcoming in international students is not only important to the post-secondary education, it also ensures that we provide the environment in which immigrants will want to stay in our province.

### **Advanced education and training for citizens helps us to prevent crises and respond to them more effectively**

The wide range of expertise of instructors, professors, librarians, researchers and support staff of our post-secondary education institution contribute to the understanding and solutions to the difficulties and adverse phenomena experienced by our society.

Post-secondary education offers hope for the economic development and recovery of our province. Let us ensure that it is up to the task by making the necessary investments before it is too late.

### **The Coalition for the promotion of public post-secondary education in New Brunswick:**

Association des bibliothécaires, professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Moncton (ABPPUM), Roger G. LeBlanc on behalf of the two units on the Moncton Campus : Unité I – full-time faculty and contractual faculty– 300 members; Unité II – Part-time faculty – 400 members.

Association des employés de l'Université de Moncton (AEUM), Daniel Goguen, President, on behalf of the two units on the Moncton Campus : Personnel d'entretien et métiers (maintenance and trades staff) – 79 members; Personnel de soutien administratif (support staff) – 95 members; Moncton Campus.

Association du personnel administratif et professionnel de l'Université de Moncton (APAPUM), Mikaël Doucet, President, of behalf of 91 members on the Moncton Campus (administrative and professional staff).

Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations (FNBFA), Hector Guy Adégbidi, President, on behalf of the following member faculty associations for a total of 1,500 professors, contract academic staff, professional librarians and researchers on six university campuses:

- Association des professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Moncton, Campus d'Edmundston (APPUMCE), Julien Massicotte, President;
- Association des professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Moncton, Campus de Shippagan (APPUMCS) Tarik Beldjilali, Representative;
- Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers (AUNBT), Fredericton Campus and Saint John Campus, Sue Blair, President;
- Faculty Association of the University of St. Thomas (FAUST), Gül Çalışkan, President;
- Mount Allison Faculty Association (MAFA), Matthew Litvak, President.

New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA), Wasiimah Joomun, Executive Director, on behalf of over 12,000 students across four campuses: Mount Allison University, St. Thomas University as well as the Fredericton Campus and the Saint John Campus of the University of New Brunswick.

New Brunswick Union (NBU) / Syndicat du Nouveau-Brunswick (S N.-B.), Susie Proulx-Daigle, President, on behalf of 1,205 members, including Instructors, Administrative Support Professionals, Non-Instruction and Information Technology at the New Brunswick Community College and the Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick.

Regroupement du personnel de soutien universitaire de l'Université de Moncton, Campus d'Edmundston (RPSU-UMCE), Patrick Couturier, President, on behalf of 45 members (support staff).