



July 29, 2020

Dr. Hector Guy Adégbidi
President
Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations (FNBFA)
277 Main Street, Suite 202
Fredericton, NB E3A 1E1

Dr. Adégbidi:

Thank you for your correspondence dated July 7, 2020, concerning the post-secondary sector. We understand that post-secondary education is critical to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of our communities. Thank you for your commitment to this important area.

The response to COVID-19 has led governments at all levels to face difficult decisions, yet we are hopeful that we may also find shared opportunities. The province needs our universities, faculty, staff, and students to work and stand together to contribute to our recovery in innovative ways.

Our government monitors post-secondary participation rates published in studies and through reporting agencies. These rates are important metrics of sector performance. Improving on post-secondary participation is a common goal we share with the FNBFA, the universities and colleges. We have invested in understanding these phenomena better through data connection projects with the New Brunswick Institute for Research, Data and Training. I was pleased to see that, according to Statistics Canada's data tables, New Brunswick's university participation rate rose from 19% in 2000-01 to 26% in 2018-19 (Table: 37-10-0103-01).

The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour's (PETL) main priority has been to work closely with our post-secondary institutions with respect to the COVID-19 situation. We have weekly communications with institutions, which include representatives from the Department of Health.

The degree of planning and the effort put forth by Public Health and PETL has been exceptional to ensure that institutions may operate in a way that is as safe as possible for all involved. We understand the significant impact this will have on the sector.



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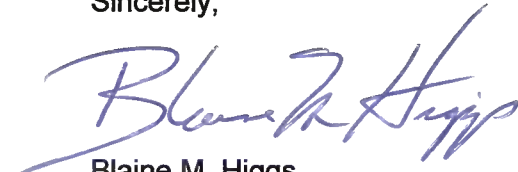
This year we are providing \$233M in direct support to public universities in operating grants. This is a 2% increase in overall support. Due to the decline in enrollments, (tied largely to youth demographic trends), we are witnessing increased cost per student. This direct support excludes other sources of funding which exist through PETL, like the Access and Success Program, University Deferred Maintenance Program, experiential learning initiatives, New Brunswick Innovation Foundation funding, student loans and grants, and many sources of funding from other departments too numerous to list here. All this funding flows to institutions, to their faculty and staff, and to students.

In March the provincial and federal governments announced a six-month interest-free moratorium on the repayment of student loans. The 2020-21 provincial budget lowered interest rates on the provincial portion of student loans to prime from prime plus 2.5%. In April, PETL introduced the Emergency Bridging Fund for Vulnerable Post-Secondary Students which was administered by post-secondary institutions. Recently, the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit has also been added to the list of student supports.

We are committed to growing our population and retaining international students. The recruitment and retention of international students is an institutional responsibility. However, the Population Growth Division of PETL engages international students at publicly funded, post-secondary institutions in the province to attract those students to immigrate here. Since March, PETL has offered four virtual immigration sessions to all international students and an additional two sessions specific to students in the Study and Stay Program. Additionally, PETL has maintained regular communication with stakeholders including, post-secondary institutions, local immigration partnerships and settlement agencies to share information. Through these communications, we have collaborated on some individual situations to support students.

We will continue to work collaboratively in all these areas and hope we can count on your support in ensuring that New Brunswick emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic a stronger province than before.

Sincerely,



Blaine M. Higgs

c. Ms. Lise Robichaud, Executive Director, FNBFA