

Elections, electoral platforms and post-secondary education

A brief overview of the electoral platforms of the various provincial political parties reveals that none of the parties take a sure stand regarding the funding of post-secondary education in New Brunswick.

In our province, the underfunding experienced in the recent years, including the withdrawal of \$8.7 million dedicated to the nursing education programs at the University of New Brunswick and the Université de Moncton, has had a dramatic impact on the finances of those institutions. The financial burden resulting from the transition that public institutions of education must now operate to offer online or hybrid teaching will have, in the short to medium term, negative impacts on the quality of instruction. That burden includes, the acquisition, installation and maintenance of computer equipment, the offer of training for faculty, the management of physical space to ensure the respect of physical distancing, the additional cleaning of facilities and classrooms, etc.

Yet, no federal nor provincial help has been provided to universities and colleges, despite the obvious level of additional demands resulting from the pandemic. The federal government announced recently the creation of the Safe Return to Class Fund, with an envelope of \$2 billion for the schools of the country's provinces and territories. Nothing of the sort was promised for the post-secondary institutions of the country.

If there is something that the pandemic has taught us, it is the crucial importance, from a political and social standpoint, of the technical and scientific knowledge within society. New Brunswick cannot persistently treat post-secondary education as a second-order issue. For sharp, creative and ingenious minds to contribute to the weaving of the future of our province, our leaders will have to give to the institutions of post-secondary education the required financial resources necessary for an accessible and quality education.

On behalf of the Coalition for post-secondary education in New Brunswick,

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