



FNBFA President Report

Plenary Session and Annual General Meeting

May 12, 2022

Dear Colleagues:

Here we are again, at the end of one year and the beginning of another one.

Despite the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, with your help, our organisation was able to have some achievements in the context of its mission of defending our members' interests and helping to improve post-secondary education in New Brunswick.

Hereafter is a report on the activities of the Federation and the questions and situations that drew our attention in 2021-2022.

- **New Brunswick Select Committee on Public Universities** –Hearings were held September 28 and 29 with the following terms of reference “...that the house appointed Select Committee on Public Universities to be charged with the responsibility of inviting representatives of New Brunswick’s publicly funded universities and the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) to appear before the committee and to discuss and provide insight into university administration programming, performance, measurement, accountability and transparency.” We continue to insist through letters and lobbying efforts that the select committee would benefit from inviting the FNBFA to also provide insights. Finally, we were told by the party caucus during our annual lobbying event “Meet the MLAs”, that it is a great idea. Even the Post-Education, Training and Labour said he agreed that organizations representing faculty and students should be invited before the New Brunswick Select Committee on Public Universities. The Minister says he would like a law to be passed for the integration of the Select Committee on Public Universities into the Standing Committee on Public Accounts because since its creation with the Memorandum of understanding signed with universities, starting in 2017-2018 and ending in 2020-21 it had to be reconstituted each year.
This just in – May 2022 – The new Chair of the select committee, Ms. Kathy Bockus, wrote to us saying that her office will communicate with us regarding possible dates for the hearings.
- **Federal Elections** – We participated in the CAUT campaign “For our Future”, supporting member associations that wished to use the readily available CAUT tools for their own lobbying activities. I wrote a commentary that was published in both French and English provincial newspapers and was interviewed on a Radio-Canada Acadie show broadcasted through all Maritime Provinces on the issue of PSE in the federal election campaign with information from the CAUT as to what a federal government should do for PSE and what each federal party was saying on the subject.
- **Public university reopening/Vaccine or testing requirements** – As a result of our survey of member associations, we learned that some Faculty Associations have been more consulted than others

regarding COVID management, some not at all. Various members also raised concerns about the lack of clarity in communications from their university administrations on instructions related to Covid management.

- **Solidarity**

Atlantic Canada Council of Faculty Associations – The FNBFA hosted the Atlantic Canada Council of Faculty Associations (ACCFA) annual meeting that was held virtually June 9. It's an informal group that usually meet once a year with a provincial or a faculty association (where there are no provincial) each taking their turn in hosting. The CAUT Executive Director always graciously accepts our invitation to participate and to offer a national perspective on many topics that are discussed through participants' report on their activities since the previous meeting. Another meeting, hosted by the Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT) was held on December 13, 2021, and another one will take place June 24. We keep hoping that we can eventually meet in person when there is a fuller agenda of topics for an entire day and better opportunities to network.

Coalition for the Promotion of Public Post-secondary Education in New Brunswick – Acting on one of the recommendations of the May 15, 2020, AGM, we have undertaken soon thereafter multiple outreach efforts with various post-secondary education stakeholders in the province to form a coalition. We have written letters, commentaries and met with representatives of PETL. There haven't been any meetings in the current year, but we believe that mobilization would be possible as needed.

The NB local of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE NB) and the New Brunswick Nurses Union (NBNU) -- Letters of support were sent; expressions of solidarity were expressed through social media and members at member associations offered support on picket lines as these unions were rightfully demanding fair salary and working conditions.

New Brunswick Student Alliance (NBSA) Exchanges with the NBSA are useful for us to learn about the main concerns of students on our campuses and to understand their perspectives in relation to our many common lobbying topics. Such was the case on December 2, 2021, in the context of the NBSA's annual advocacy week. We easily found common ground with the student alliance's advocacy themes: accessibility for all whether students come from New Brunswick or elsewhere in Canada and in the world, as well as core funding for public universities that keeps up with the rate of inflation. Another meeting was held on March 18, as the NBSA ED, Wasiimah Joomun was ending her two-year mandate. She will, however, planned to remain in the Fredericton area until the end of April to ensure a smooth transition for the position's eventual new incumbent.

The [FNBFA Goals and Achievements](#) In this context of the pandemic, the issues of mental health, equity, workplace climate and membership revitalization have been brought up in priorities.

With regard to mental health, contacts were made with CAUT to address the issue through a workshop. However, it was later brought to our attention that CAUT's current focus on mental health is students and counselling faculty. We will find an alternative way to address that important issue in the coming year.

The important issues of equity, workplace climate and membership revitalization will also be addressed during the coming year with the help of CAUT, when available.

- **FNBFA’s “Meet the MLAs” annual event**

It's an important opportunity for the FNBFA Board members and colleagues from their faculty association to discuss each year with members of the Legislative Assembly about issues related to New Brunswick post-secondary education and to get their perspective on the state of PSE, how to best improve the quality of post-secondary education and its accessibility for all whether they come from New Brunswick or elsewhere in the country and in the world.

This year, the FNBFA Board of directors decided at its November 20 meeting to try to hold the traditional annual “Meet the MLAs” event through virtual meetings with caucuses.

Most of the caucuses virtual meetings were held between January 26 and February 2, 2022. The Progressive-Conservative caucus cabinet declined our invitation, preferring to forward it to the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL), with whom the federation already has opportunities to interact in other contexts. A meeting was nonetheless held with the Department’s Minister and Deputy Minister on February 17, 2022.

Participants in this lobbying event had the opportunity to convey to many MLAs their serious concerns through meetings with caucuses. Chief among them are the chronic underfunding of New Brunswick public universities and the fact that New Brunswick ranks last nationally in the proportion of its population holding a university degree. We also made the point that the university is not a mill that produces employees for a specific job and that besides, there is no guarantee that a graduate will work in the chosen field of studies.

- **2022-2023 New Brunswick Pre-budget consultation** At the end of February 2022, [a letter](#) was sent to the New Brunswick Minister of Finance in the context of the 2022-2023 pre-budget public consultations. The letter stated the serious consequences of chronic underfunding of public universities and how the upcoming budget would be a great opportunity to resolutely reverse the negative trend of the recent decades and demonstrate our faith in well-educated youth to drive the growth and economic development of our province. We offered to meet the minister of Finance to discuss this further. [In his reply](#), the Minister of Finances basically thanked us for our thoughts and the budget didn't contain a clear indication that operational funds to public universities were increased. It is when revising this report that we find out, through social media and newspapers that the budget is increased for the next year by less than 1.5% and that 1% can be added as an incentive to increase enrolments, but the goal is not made public with the news.

- **Upcoming Events**

June 24 – ACCFA (Atlantic Canada Council of Faculty Associations) The event is hosted this time by ANSUT.

Fall 2022 –

Working on member engagement, the FNBFA is in the planning stages, with the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), for a virtual webinar on the subject of demystifying the negotiations process. At this time, the tentative date is October 21, 2022, but it remains to be confirmed.

Also being planned is a bilingual awareness campaign on social media that could be launched around the end of September 2022 in order to increase the visibility of the federation and its members with the New Brunswick anglophone and francophone population.

In conclusion, I would like to thank:

- the Executive Director, Lise Robichaud, for her steadfast support of my role as President and her contribution to the activities, smooth operation of the Federation and her initiatives;
- my colleagues on the executive for their unwavering support: Jean Sauvageau, Mary Lou Babineau-Rosada, Lacina Coulibaly, and our newest member (since February 26) Carol Pomare;
- the members of the Board of Directors and the various committees for their invaluable contributions to the operation of the Federation.

The FNBFA essentially depends on the voluntary work of its members to accomplish its multiple tasks and achieve its objectives. Please continue to give of your time and encourage your colleagues to join in helping out. These are stressful times for what we stand for: academy and quality post-secondary education. Let us not spare any effort.

Respectfully submitted,

Hector Guy Adégbidi
President
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