



# **Presentation to the Select Committee on Public Universities**

**28 February 2023**

## Recognition and Respect of the Territories

We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Wəlastəkwiyyik (Maliseet).

This territory is covered by the “Treaties of Peace and Friendship” which Wəlastəkwiyyik (Maliseet), Mi’kmaq and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi’kmaq and Wəlastəkwiyyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations according to two very different ways of life and use.”

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## Who are we?

The **Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations** represents the interests of approximately 1,500 professors, contract academic staff, librarians, and researchers at six campuses of the province's four public universities. It advocates the advancement of their profession, the protection of the institutional autonomy of universities and academic freedom and aims to improve the quality of post-secondary education and research in the province.

- Founded in 1970
- Incorporated in 1981
- Member associations:
  - Association des professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Moncton-Campus d'Edmundston (APPUMCE)
  - Association des professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Moncton-Campus de Shippagan (APPUMCS)
  - Association of the University of New Brunswick Teachers (AUNBT)
  - Faculty Association of the University of St. Thomas (FAUST)
  - Mount Allison Faculty Association (MAFA)

# Academic Freedom

The freedom of teachers and students to teach, study, and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations, or public pressure.

*(Encyclopedia Britannica)*

# Institutional Autonomy

The necessary degree of independence from external interference that the University requires in respect of its internal organization and governance, the internal distribution of financial resources and the generation of income from non-public sources, the recruitment of its staff, the setting of the conditions of study and, finally, the freedom to conduct teaching and research.

(AIU, 1998)

Contrary to what is often said, respecting the **academic freedom and institutional autonomy** of public universities **is not** detrimental to:

- The **recruitment/retention** of students
- The **employability of the graduates**
- **Job creation**

## Accountability

Public universities and university faculty **are accountable** on a regular basis, in many ways:

Public universities:

- **Periodical review of study programs** (which include their own evaluations of the faculty) carried out by faculty members affiliated with other universities
- University Boards of Governors **evaluate the performance of the presidents and rectors**
- Every year, independent accounting firms **verify the financial statements of the universities**



## Accountability

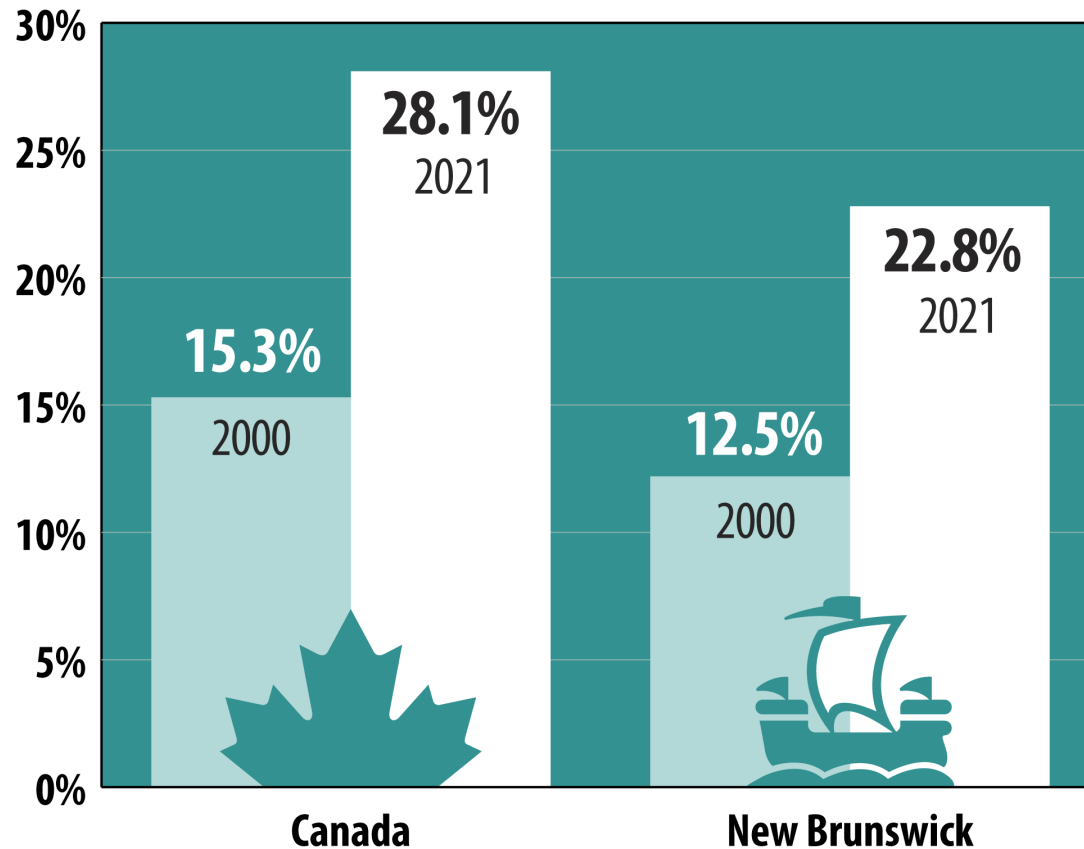
Public universities and university faculty **are accountable** on a regular basis:

Faculty members:

- Supervision during **graduate studies**
- Procedures for **hiring, appointment to various positions, tenure and promotion through the ranks**
- Submission of **annual reports** to the employer
- **Course evaluations** by the students
- **Research grants** competitions
- **Peer-review process** for academic publications

## Facts with respect to public universities in NB

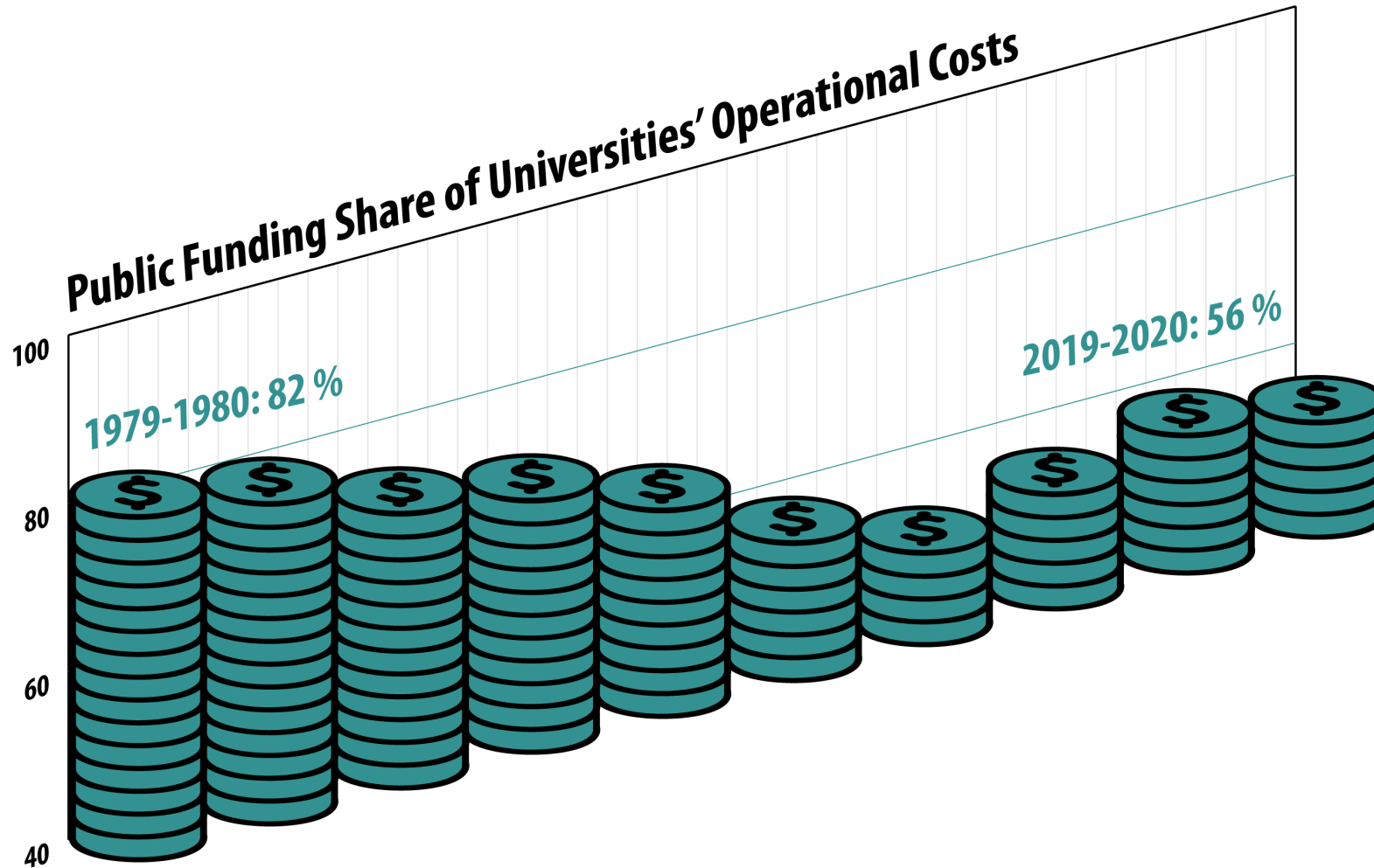
### Percentage of Diploma Holders



Gap between the Canadian average and NB:

- 2000: 3.1 points de %
- 2021: 5.3 points de %
- NB: second to last, just ahead of NFL

# Facts with respect to public universities in NB



Données de l'ACPAU;  
compilées par la CESP

## Facts with respect to public universities in NB

### Inversion of priorities at the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training & Labour

Labour-related issues are the priority of PETL – **before post-secondary education**

- Constant imperatives about the **necessity to tie university education** to the needs of the labour market
- Scrapping of the **NB EI Connect** program: unemployment insurance benefits for students while studying (Radio-Canada, 2022)

## Facts with respect to public universities in NB

### Performance-based funding of universities does not work

- **Independent studies:** more than 30 years of attempts, throughout the world, in every possible way, **without success**
- **No direct « pipe line » effect** between **programs of study** and **employment sectors**
- **What works: affordable tuition fees, student debt reduced to a minimum**
- See: FNBFA. (2020). *Position paper on the implementation of performance-based funding in New Brunswick public universities*. Fredericton

## Facts with respect to public universities in NB

### Consequences of the erosion of public financing

- Chronic **increases** of tuition fees
  - NB students have the **highest debt in Canada**
    - Graeber, D. (2011). *Debt: The first 5,000 years*. Melville House.
- **Ferocious competition** from the other provinces for the NB & international students with respect to **tuition fees**

## Facts with respect to public universities in NB

### Consequences of the erosion of public financing

- Increasing **culture of dependency** on **contract academic staff**, i.e.:
  - **Short-term** contracts (1, 2, 3 years)
  - **Part-time** teaching – **per course** basis (most **precarious** status)
    - Up to **40% of courses** offered in public universities in NB are taught by **part-time teachers**
    - 30 years ago: **25% = red flag**

## Facts with respect to public universities in NB

### Consequences of the erosion of public financing

- The culture of **dependency** on **contract academic staff** negatively affects the contribution of universities to society:
  - The number of professors available to **accompany students** is decreasing
  - The number of professors available for the **governance and oversight of universities** is decreasing
  - The number of researchers able to **address the questions and challenges** of the province is decreasing



## Facts with respect to public universities in NB

### Consequences of the erosion of public financing

“The fact that I have to teach 8 courses per academic year - more than twice the workload of a regular tenured professor - and that I am chronically tired and anxious about the future has nothing to do with the Department in which I teach. This is a systemic problem, which the university’s administration is somewhat reluctant to address. They seem more interested in enrolment numbers, student evaluations and satisfaction, which they link to metrics and numbers, which become the basis for creation of jobs. There is a disconnect between the expectations of the administration and the academic body, which is interested in research and intellectual contributions.”

(Part-time teacher, in Foster & Burdell Bauer, 2018, p. 33)

## Facts with respect to public universities in NB

- University recruitment has become an **immigration recruitment strategy** – universities **are not equipped** for that role
  - Recruiting **students** and recruiting **immigrants: two completely different things**
- The public universities are **ready to welcome** all those who want to study, learn and work there
- International undergraduate students **are excluded** from the government funding formula (since 1997) :
  - **Contradiction** between the **pressure** put on public universities to recruit international students and the **absence of financial support** for those students once admitted

## Conclusion

- The necessity of a funding plan for public universities with respect to the real needs of the teaching and research mission of the universities
- The necessity of a plan to reduce the gap between the % of NB diploma holders vs. the Canadian average – a gap that is growing – that very likely requires a significant reduction in tuition fees
- The necessity of an open and ongoing dialogue between universities (faculty, student associations, administration) and PTEL for a true action synergy

**If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.**

(Unknown origin)

**In the causal sequence of human progress,  
educational development precedes economic  
development, never the opposite.**

(Todd, 2020, p. 61; translation)

**Please, follow our bilingual information campaign  
on Facebook and Twitter**

**Debunking the Myths  
A Look at the Lives of Public University Faculty**

Over the next few weeks, the Federation of New Brunswick Faculty Associations (FNBFA) will reach out online to New Brunswickers to introduce you to the real people behind public university education in this province, what they do and are passionate about.

**For more information, follow us  
on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/fnbfa.ca/>) and Twitter (@fnbfa).**

## References

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