



MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION (MPHEC) – Maritime universities see fewer local students enrolling

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Fredericton (NB) - In 2014-15, 68,427 students were enrolled in Maritime universities, down from 69,664 a year earlier or -1.8%. According to a report released today by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), this number has declined 6.1% over ten years. In all three provinces, the largest one-year declines were recorded in the enrolment of local students. In addition, students are clearly shifting their preferences away from Humanities (enrolment went down 10.6% in one year and down 24.6% in five years), towards other programs.

Trends do vary among the three Maritime Provinces.

- With a 5.2% decline, **New Brunswick** experienced the largest one-year decline of total enrolment, to 20,118 students in 2014-2015. This is spread across all student groups: there were 5.9% fewer New Brunswickers, 5.0% fewer international students, 4.5% fewer students from the other two Maritime provinces, and 1.8% fewer out-of-region Canadians. New Brunswickers now comprise 66.2% of the student population in the province
- **Nova Scotia** saw its enrolment decrease to 44,037 students in 2014-2015, down 0.4% compared to the previous year. This was largely driven by the 3.1% drop in the number of Nova Scotians. International student enrolment saw a 7.0% increase, but this was insufficient to offset the slide in local student enrolment. Numbers of out-of-province Canadian students posted zero or near-zero growth. Nova Scotians now comprise 49.7% of the student population in the province.
- **Prince Edward Island** was the only province to show an increase in total enrolment of 1.4% to 4,272 students compared to the previous year. But like its neighbours in the region, the number of local students decreased significantly, down -5.5%. The number of international students increased 18.5%, helping to offset the decline in the number of local students. Islanders now comprise 63.4% of the student population in the province.

The Commission provides insight as to the reasons for the declines in local students observed in all three provinces.

Over the last 10 years, demographic trends contributed to enrolment decline as the population of 18-24 year olds (i.e., the university-aged cohort) decreased 4% regionally, with New Brunswick seeing a much larger impact, a decrease of 8%.



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As Commission CEO Mireille Duguay notes, there is more to the story: “Not only is the pool of potential university students shrinking in the region, but smaller proportions of them choose to pursue a university education, which is adding to the impact of the demographic trend.” The Commission tracks university participation rates, which are an important measure of demand for education.

“This kind of data is crucial to our stakeholders,” Duguay continued. “The Commission’s job is to provide data for support to those who make decisions on what strategies to employ, to get ahead and stay ahead of the overall enrolment decline.”

“As with all our reports, the Commission encourages dialogue among our stakeholders in all sectors. Together we can use this up-to-date data as a foundation for new strategies going forward,” concluded Duguay.

For the report [Annual Digest: University Enrolment 2014-2015](#), university enrolment is calculated from data in the MPHEC postsecondary student information system (PSIS), which contains detailed information on demographics, programs, and courses for all students enrolled in 15 publicly-funded Maritime universities. The *Digest* and more detailed information are available on the MPHEC website at www.mphec.ca.

About the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC):

The MPHEC was established in 1974. The MPHEC is an arm’s length organization accountable to the ministers responsible for postsecondary education in the Maritimes. The Commission comprises 20 members representing universities, the public-at-large (including students), and the three Maritime governments. The Commission’s primary orientation in carrying out its duties is to give first consideration to improving and maintaining the best possible service to students as lifelong learners.

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