



MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION (MPHEC) – Maritime university enrolment weakening

February 23, 2015

Fredericton (NB) — After four years of year-over-year increases, Maritime university enrolment fell by 1.1% in 2013-14, to 69,664 students. According to a report released today by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, there were 3000 fewer university students—a 4.1% decrease—compared to 10 years earlier.

“As we have reported before, enrolment of Maritime residents in the region’s universities has been decreasing steadily over the last decade,” says Commission CEO Mireille Duguay. “This is the result of not only a demographic decline in the university-aged population, but also of a softening demand for a university education among Maritimers. This is not a new story, but it remains news because we have up-to-date data to present, to support those who make decisions on what tack to take to stay ahead of an enrolment decline.”

The universities’ successful recruitment and retention efforts over the last number of years allowed them to maintain overall enrolment numbers; but this year is the first where that does not seem sufficient. The report is timely because over the next 10 years, the university-aged population in the Maritimes is projected to decline by 15%. The Commission believes the time for a dialogue on new strategies is now.

Overall in the Maritimes:

- The number of Maritimers enrolled in the region’s universities has dropped by 16% (down 8,904 students) since 2003-04. Over the same period, Maritime universities have recruited more students from elsewhere in Canada (up 11% since 2003-04; +1,429 students) and more international students (up 77% since 2003-04; +4,500 students).
- Program choice has shifted: Enrolment in the Arts and Humanities has decreased by 31% since 2003-04. Maritimers and international students alike are more often choosing programs that have a clear connection to the labour market such as Health, Business or Engineering.
- The greatest impact of increasing international student numbers has been on Business programs. International students now represent nearly one in three students enrolled in Business.

The trends also vary in each of the Maritime Provinces:

- In New Brunswick, enrolment has decreased steadily over the last 10 years. In 2013-14, 21,223 students were enrolled; down 14.1% since 2003-04, and down 3.4% since 2012-13. Recruitment of students from outside the province or country has not been enough to compensate for the loss of local students. 67% of students in New Brunswick universities come from the province.
- In Nova Scotia, enrolment had decreased earlier this decade, but has since recovered, up 0.3% since 2003-04, and up 0.3% since 2013-14, reaching 44,227 students. University enrolment in Nova Scotia has been maintained by increasing the number of international students and



Canadian students from outside the Maritimes; 51% of students in Nova Scotia universities come from the province.

- In Prince Edward Island, enrolment reached 4,214 students in 2013-14; up 9.7% compared to 2003-04, but starting to decline, decreasing by 3.9% since 2012-13. PEI was the only Maritime province to have shown an increase in home province students since 2003-04, but that trend has reversed over the last two years. In 2013-14, home province enrolment was at its lowest since 2003-04; 68% of university students in PEI come from the Island.

The report *Annual Digest: University Enrolment 2013-2014* presents a series of summary tables and charts of provincial-level statistics for 15 publicly-funded Maritime universities, showing trends over one, five and 10 year intervals. Additional tables with a breakdown by university are available from the MPHEC website at www.mphec.ca.

About the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC): The MPHEC was established in 1974 as an arm's length organization accountable to the Ministers responsible for post-secondary education in the Maritime provinces. The Commission assists institutions and government in enhancing the post-secondary learning environment. The Commission's 20 members are drawn from the Maritime provinces, and represent higher education institutions, provincial governments and the general public. 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.

FOR BROADCAST NEWS

Maritime university enrolment is weakening. The number of students fell by 1.1% in 2013-14 compared to the previous year, to just under 70,000 students. According to a report released today by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, there were 3000 fewer university students—a 4.1% decrease—compared to 10 years earlier in the three provinces.

Commission CEO Mireille Duguay said that the decline in enrolment over the last decade is the result of not only a demographic decline in the university-aged population, but also of a softening demand for a university education among Maritimers. The number of Maritimers enrolled in the region's universities has dropped by 16% since 2003-04.

The universities' successful recruitment and retention efforts over the last number of years allowed them to maintain overall enrolment numbers; but this year is the first where that does not seem sufficient.



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- In Nova Scotia, university enrolment is up 0.3% since 2003-04. Enrolment in this province has been maintained by increasing the number of international students and Canadian students from outside the Maritimes; 51% of students in Nova Scotia universities come from the province.
- In Prince Edward Island, enrolment has just started to decline, down 3.9% since 2012-13. But the number of Islanders enrolling in university on the Island is at its lowest since 2003-04. 68% of university students in PEI come from the Island.

The report is timely because over the next 10 years, the university-aged population in the Maritimes is projected to decline by 15%. The Commission believes the time for a dialogue on new strategies is now.

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