

Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP)

Response to

The Government of Nova Scotia's Discussion Paper:

'A Framework for Immigration'

Submitted by CONSUP, September 27, 2004

Introduction

The Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) compliments the Nova Scotia Department of Education on the discussion paper *A Framework for Immigration*. The document is a good start to addressing the Province's immigration policy and programs.

CONSUP is interested in Nova Scotia's immigration policy and programs for three main reasons:

- Increasing internationalization is a feature of Nova Scotia university campuses today and international students are important contributors to bringing an international perspective and more diversity to the classroom.
- International students bring significant economic benefits to Nova Scotia's universities and local communities.
- Nova Scotia can do more to successfully attract and retain immigrants. International students are important connections for the province's longer-term trade and immigration interests.

It is CONSUP's view that Nova Scotia's universities are a key, strategic asset that can be much better leveraged by the provincial government to enhance the recruitment of highly qualified and motivated immigrants from around the world to our province. We believe that the universities can and should play a central role in enhancing the opportunities for immigrants to Nova Scotia.

We believe the discussion paper is a good start to developing a more effective provincial immigration policy and more successful programs designed to both attract and retain the best and brightest from across Canada and around the world to our province.

Overview

As noted, CONSUP believes *A Framework for Immigration* is a good start, however, we were surprised by the omission of Nova Scotia's universities in some key sections of the document.

In the **Introduction** to the discussion paper, Nova Scotia's universities are absent from the synopsis of those groups included as having '*expressed their support for attracting and retaining more immigrants in Nova Scotia.*' While this may be just an oversight (despite CONSUP being listed in Appendix B as a 'stakeholder') the continued omission of Nova Scotia's universities from other key sections of the discussion paper is disappointing.

Given the emphasis throughout the discussion paper on the government's commitment to consultation and working with key partners, the omission of Nova Scotia's universities in the section identified as **Engaging Partners** (pages 18-21) is also noteworthy.

We trust the government would agree that Nova Scotia's universities are key partners based upon the discussion paper's analysis and identification of issues and trends such as: '*out-migration of youth*', characterized in the paper as a '*brain-drain*'; the implications of declining population on the labour force - '*several clusters are of particular concern, including post-secondary professors*'; and economic challenges - '*If Nova Scotia wants to grow its economy, it must have the capacity to compete in a global marketplace and keep pace with changing conditions. To compete effectively we need innovative minds, access to capital, and an entrepreneurial attitude.*'

Nova Scotia's universities will have a significant and substantive role to play in addressing all these issues and trends effectively.

The discussion paper makes references to an obvious role for post-secondary education in several areas of **Strategic Actions**, including:

- **Awareness and Education** - '*educators can profile the benefits that immigrants bring to their communities and thoughtfully address policies, programs, and attitudes that have an impact on immigration.*'
- the **Nova Scotia Nominee Program** and the critical role for '*Post-secondary International Students*' within that program
- **English as a Second Language (ESL)** and
- **Credential Assessment and Recognition**

CONSUP respectfully suggests that it is clear that a partnership with Nova Scotia's universities is central to the ultimate success of these programs.

Why Nova Scotia's Universities are a key partner

There are many reasons why Nova Scotia's universities are key partners in developing and implementing Nova Scotia's immigration strategy and why considerably more emphasis needs to be given to consulting and working with our sector in the *Framework for Immigration*. CONSUP trusts that this brief will provide some compelling reasons why the Nova Scotia government should view the province's universities as key and willing partners to developing its immigration policy fully and implement its programs. We document three reasons below.

1. Perhaps the most compelling reason for the Nova Scotia government to partner with Nova Scotia universities in immigration policy and program implementation is to leverage the provincial government's annual funding investment of \$212 million in annual operating grants to the sector to the fullest extent possible.

CONSUP and the Nova Scotia government are currently engaged in a process to reach a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning a multi-year agreement on university funding

and student fees. A key component of the MOU will address the role of ‘post-secondary education’ in the province’s economic development strategy. Suffice it to say, immigration policy and programs will be a critical component of Nova Scotia’s economic development strategy and future prosperity.

2. Nova Scotia’s universities are a natural magnet for highly motivated and qualified international students. In 2003-04, nearly **4,000** international students, representing 140 countries, were enrolled at our universities in undergraduate and graduate programs, representing eight per cent of total annual enrolment on our campuses. That is close to a **25 per cent increase** over 2002-03.

In addition to a substantially growing number of international students attracted to Nova Scotia’s universities, our province can also boast having the second highest inflow in the country of **out-of-province students (29 per cent/5,000+ annually)**.

In combination, this in-migration of international and inter-provincial students offers a significant opportunity for Nova Scotia to offset its declining population and the out-migration of youth in their prime working years or ‘brain-drain’ as characterized in the *Framework for Immigration*.

In its *Survey of 1999 Maritime University Graduates in 2001* (April 2003), the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC), determined that 27 % of graduates from outside this region continued to live in the Maritimes following graduation. It is likely a safe deduction that the retention of out-of-province students following graduation from Nova Scotia’s universities is higher than the Maritime average. While the number of out-of-region graduates who stay does not offset the out-migration from Nova Scotia, it certainly helps to bring a degree of stability to our gradually declining population. More importantly, however, the retention of out-of-region university graduates in Nova Scotia, contributes to our province as having the best educated workforce, per capita, in the entire country!

3. Less transient than students, of course, are national and international faculty members recruited to teach and conduct research in Nova Scotia’s universities. Our campuses boast a large number of leading scientists, technologists, engineers, business experts, social scientists and scholars from across North America and from around the world. Not only are Nova Scotia university faculty members highly skilled and culturally diverse, they are community leaders, providing expertise to business and industry, to governments and to community service organizations across the province.

Author Richard Florida in his best selling book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, provides critical insight into how communities can be built around the new economy. Florida describes the emergence of a new social class - *the creative class* - which embraces scientists, engineers, architects, designers, writers, artists, musicians, creative people in business, health care, law, computer software designers and alternative culture. Its members are involved in the new design of everything. More than 30 per cent of the North American workforce is in the creative class and universities act as the creative hubs for vibrant and thriving communities, progressive lifestyles and affluence.

Being a ‘creative hub’ is a key role that Nova Scotia’s universities play in their respective communities, attracting the best and brightest students and faculty from across North America and from around the world to Nova Scotia to learn, teach, research and to contribute to the communities in which they reside.

International Programs and Linkages

Our universities’ international engagement - institutional partnerships, teaching, training and research and community service - are areas that correspond to internationalization objectives of preparing graduates, helping maintain Nova Scotia’s competitiveness, and addressing, through scholarship, the interdependent nature of the world.

In 2002, Nova Scotia’s universities were engaged in 52 collaborative international projects with institutions in over 20 countries around the world with a focus on research, education and training, and development. This work is above and beyond the work the individual institutions carry out around the globe.

Nova Scotia universities’ cooperation with foreign institutions and governments is often initiated or formalized through institutional agreements. A current example of such an agreement is the MOU signed this past week between the Nova Scotia Agricultural College with Cheonan Yonam College of Korea. The agreement is designed to allow for easier exchange of staff between the colleges as well as to promote greater student mobility. Both institutions have agriculturally-focused programs.

The well-developed international linkages between Nova Scotia’s universities and post-secondary institutions around the world can be capitalized upon to identify source regions for new immigrants. Additionally, these international linkages can serve as a platform to promote Nova Scotia effectively as a ‘welcoming community’ offering abundant opportunities for those considering immigration to Canada.

Welcoming Community and Attraction

On page 15 in the ‘**Where We Want to Go**’ section of the *Framework for Immigration*, it is noted that there is a vital role for Nova Scotia’s ‘**excellent post-secondary institutions**’ to play in making our province an attractive and ‘**welcoming community**’ for new immigrants to Canada.

As previously noted, Nova Scotia’s universities have internationalization goals, particularly when it comes to international outreach by institutions, faculty members, university researchers and students. A key objective of each our universities is to prepare graduates who are internationally knowledgeable and inter-culturally competent. This objective is achieved by a number of supporting activities: work/study abroad for Canadian students, interaction of Canadian and international students on campus and in the classroom, and integrating an international dimension into the university curriculum.

Each of our universities has an objective of helping to maintain the economic, scientific and technological competitiveness of Nova Scotia. This objective is supported by activities such as: international research collaboration (partnerships, networks, infrastructure); enhancing Nova Scotia's talent pool through international outreach and accessing international resources for commercialization.

All of the above plays a critical role in developing awareness and delivering the education that creates a '*welcoming community*' for new immigrants through innovative programs and course materials that integrate cultural diversity, cultural competency training and improved credentialing processes.

International Research and Collaboration

Nova Scotia's universities recognize that collaboration, at home and abroad, is critical to maintaining and growing an international reputation. In order to meet the challenge of integrating an international dimension into university research, Nova Scotia universities encourage

- the development of collaborative memoranda of understanding, detailing joint research and training interests between Nova Scotia institutions and international institutions;
- international collaboration on research in the natural sciences and engineering, the social sciences and humanities;
- collaboration in research with partner countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Japan and more recent partnerships with non-G7 European partners and significant growth with 'scientifically-proficient' countries such as India;
- research initiatives with an explicit international focus such as: Asian issues; globalization or international study issues; European studies; international business and management issues; international sustainable development issues and human rights issues.

Nova Scotia's universities are home to a large body of researchers across a spectrum of fields with expertise in issues related to the themes outlined in *A Framework for Immigration* including immigration, migration of populations and diversity. Our university researchers have the proven capacity to attract funding from federal sources and foundations that could help underwrite the costs of research relevant to Nova Scotia's immigration policy and program development.

Atlantic Metropolis Atlantique (AMA)

The newly-founded Atlantic Metropolis Atlantique (AMA), Centre for Excellence for research on immigration, must be considered an important '*partner*' to be engaged in the development of Nova Scotia's Framework for Immigration policy and programs. Since its creation, the AMA has

attracted more than \$1 million in federal funding for immigration research in Atlantic Canada!

The Halifax 'node' - Dalhousie University and Saint Mary's University - interface with four other national centres of excellence and the international arm of the Metropolis Project. The AMA provides the means to build national and international linkages and to learn from other regions in Canada and other countries (e.g. Scotland) also currently engaged in trying to attract and retain more immigrants. With twin offices in Halifax and Moncton, and bilingual operations, the AMA is opening doors to build relationships with other Atlantic Canadian provinces, New Brunswick in particular.

The AMA is also well-positioned to facilitate the development of immigration strategies that fit Nova Scotia's Acadian and Anglophone communities.

The value of the AMA to the province of Nova Scotia is that our researchers are either faculty members or are enrolled as post-graduate students in Nova Scotia's universities who could readily provide expert advice to government.

Summary

The purpose of this response to the Framework for Immigration is not to suggest that Nova Scotia's universities have all the solutions to the immigration policy, program challenges and opportunities facing the province. But our basic premise is that Nova Scotia's universities are a key, strategic asset that should be better utilized and leveraged to help develop and execute effective immigration policies and programs for our province.

Nova Scotia's universities are already a natural magnet for the best and brightest students and faculty from across North America and around the world. They are attracted to our province's '*excellent post-secondary education institutions*' and are highly motivated and qualified.

Our significant commitment to internationalization of curriculum; international programs and linkages; international research and collaboration; our AMA centre of excellence for immigration research; and our fostering university environments and community outreach programs that promote cultural diversity and international understanding, is helping create the '*welcoming community*' so essential to successful immigration policies and programs in Nova Scotia.

An effective immigration policy and programs is absolutely essential to Nova Scotia's future success and prosperity. Our universities must be considered an essential partner to the government of Nova Scotia in the development and implementation of its *Framework for Immigration*. There are many ideas to explore with government and other key partners; it is a role we welcome and are committed to fulfilling to the very best of our abilities.