

CONSUP

COUNCIL OF NOVA SCOTIA UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HALIFAX, NS – Nova Scotia’s university leaders are deeply disappointed with the Government’s decision to reduce its annual operating grant to their institutions for the second straight year.

The government’s announced three plus percent (-3.1%) reduction to the annual operating grant (\$10.5 million) to Nova Scotia’s universities for 2012-13, “...is another blow to the quality and national competitiveness of the province’s universities” said, Dr. John Harker, President and Vice-chancellor, Cape Breton University and Chair, Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP).

The 2012-13 cut to the system plus absorption of annual, inflationary cost increases by the universities will amount to approximately \$33 million in an overall funding reduction.

In 2011-12, the Government cut the operating grant to universities by four percent (4%) plus forced the absorption of annual cost increases. That resulted in an overall funding reduction of \$42 million to Nova Scotia’s universities.

Under this government, the overall funding cut to universities over the past two fiscal years amounts to \$75 million.

“Rather than take a creative approach to building the province’s knowledge economy, this government appears to believe they can achieve their growth objectives through cuts to post-secondary education”, said Dr. Harker.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Nova Scotia’s universities and the Government of Nova Scotia includes two potentially positive aspects for universities, students and government, noted Dr. Harker.

He said, “The Innovation Fund should foster the pursuit of greater inter-institutional collaboration, partnerships and potential efficiency improvements. The Partnership for Excellence provides an opportunity for university leaders and government officials to address critical issues around the funding formula, tuition policy, capital funding and R&D investment, all of which are integral to ensuring the quality and national competitiveness of our universities and the province.”

He also added that, “this is the time for the Government to show real leadership and creativity in support of the province’s growing knowledge economy, led by its universities. University leaders are hopeful that the MOU offers the opportunity for government to develop greater understanding and appreciation for the vital role our institutions play in all critical aspects of the province’s future prosperity and social well-being.”

Dr. Harker went on to say that, “This Government has built its economic growth and immigration strategies on the platform of making Nova Scotia the country’s leading province when it comes to learning, innovating and competitiveness. Its *JobsHere* strategy is driven by the need to aggressively develop the province’s knowledge economy. In fact, Premier Dexter has stated on many occasions that our universities and our students are the best hope for Nova Scotia’s future. Yet, Nova Scotia is the only province in the entire country investing less in higher education, not more.”

CONSUP recently released a study by Gardner Pinfold Consulting Economists which shows that the province’s universities generate over \$750 million annually in export revenues for Nova Scotia, placing it among the province’s top five export industry sectors.

“The province’s universities are one of the most significant and brightest economic growth opportunities for Nova Scotia, so it remains a puzzle as to why this Government has chosen to negatively affect the system and its hard earned reputation for high quality and national competitiveness”, concluded Dr. Harker.

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