Meeting of Atlantic Liberal Caucus
Delta Beauséjour
Moncton, NB
Monday, February 22, 2010
10:30 AM

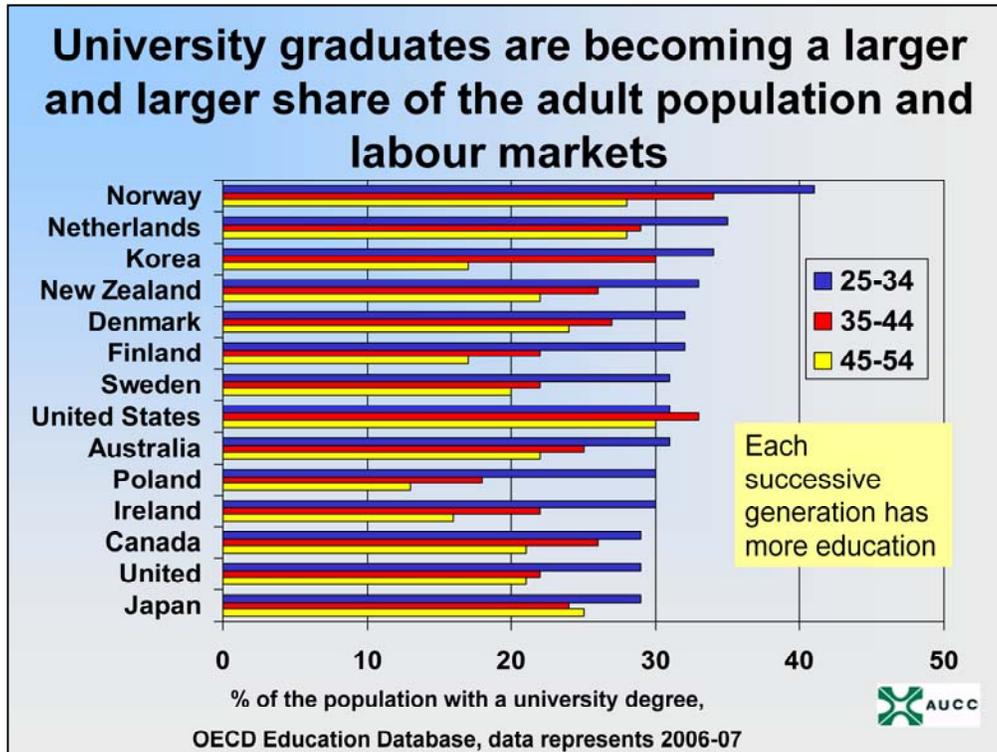**The future educational and occupational skills sets required for the Atlantic economy of the future.**

Dr. J. Colin Dodds, President, Saint Mary's University, Halifax and Chair, Association of Atlantic Universities

(Check against delivery)

AUCC

My intention this morning is to share some current data generated by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada – the AUCC - from various national and international sources.
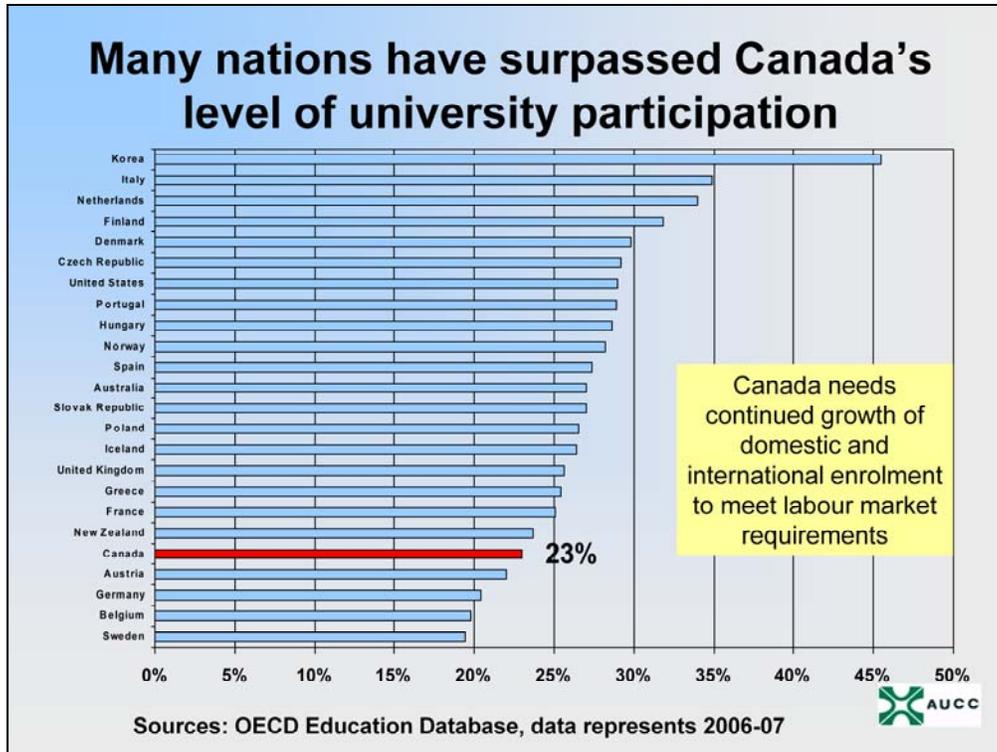
The data slides in my presentation will help illustrate my central point that: undergraduate and post graduate university degrees are absolutely essential to meet the future requirements of our regional economy.

University graduates are becoming a larger and larger share of the adult population and labour markets
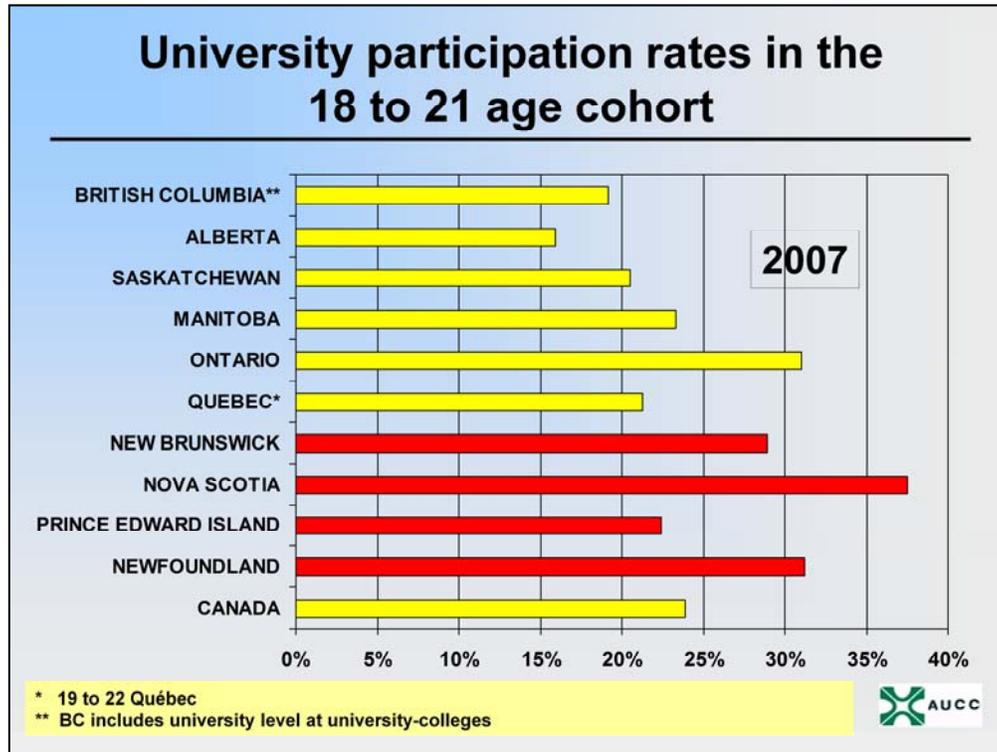
Each successive generation has more education

Canada trails most OECD countries

Many nations have surpassed Canada's level of university participation

Sources: OECD Education Database, data represents 2006-07

Despite the increasing enrolment at Canadian universities over the past 10 years, Canada is simply not keeping up with the growing participation rates of some of our competitor countries. And some are significantly ahead of us.

To achieve internationally competitive levels of university participation, Canadian universities will need to attract more Aboriginal students, visible minorities, students from less advantaged economic backgrounds, international students, and graduate students.
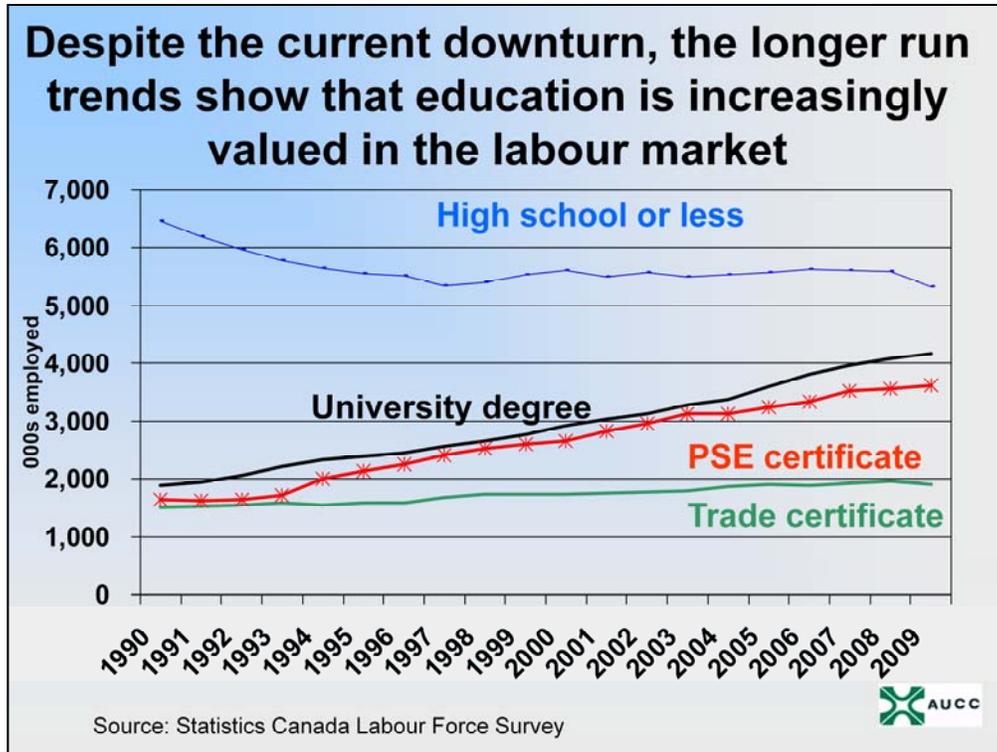
Each of these cohorts could fuel growth in Canada's overall participation rate in the decade ahead and help Canada meet rising demands in our labour markets for highly skilled graduates

University participation rates in the 18 to 21 age cohort

Despite the urban myth that too many young Canadians are going to university, the fact is that Canada's university participation rate is less than 25%!

Nova Scotia continues to lead the country with a participation rate of slightly less than 40%.

The participation rate in New Brunswick is slightly less than 30%; PEI about 23% and Newfoundland about 32%.
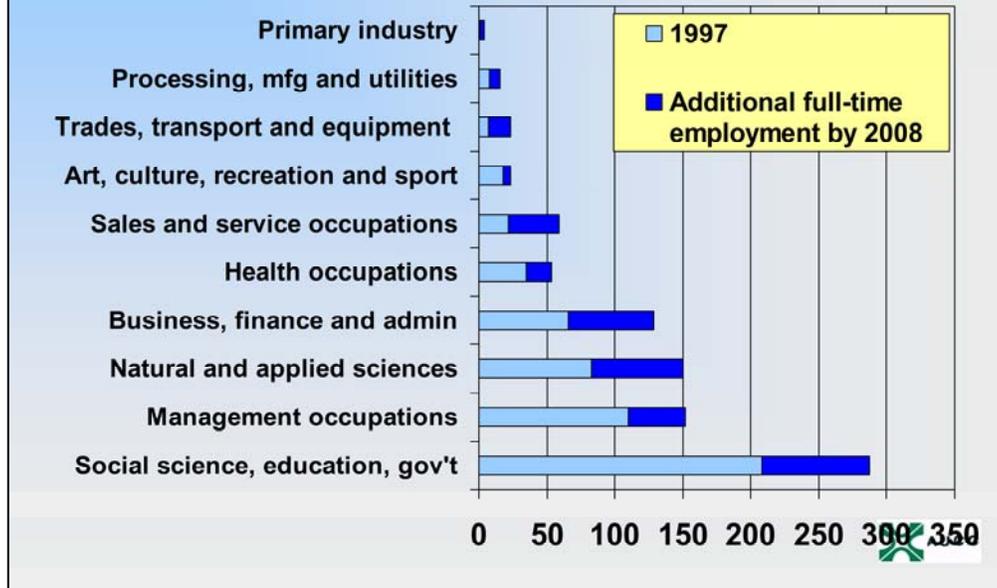
There is a growing awareness of the importance of universities in driving our prospects for economic growth and prosperity

Recent labour market growth in Canada has been driven by those with postsecondary certification …

Employment of university graduates has risen by some 90 percent over the last 15 years .
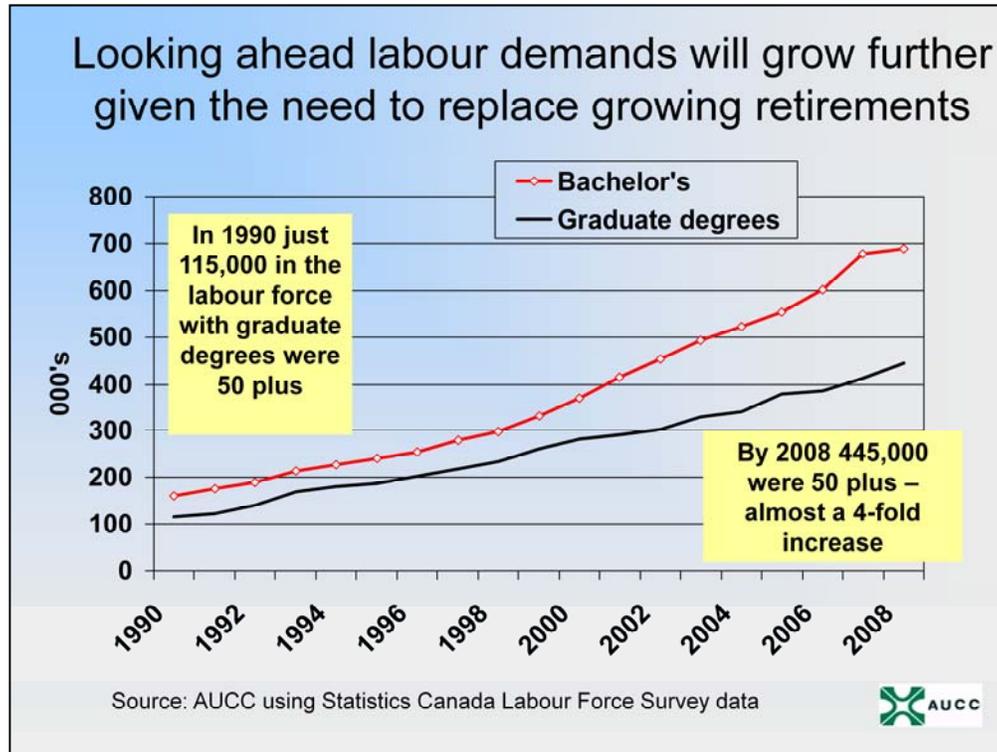
More over, in an increasingly knowledge-based society, the fastest growing occupations are those that require a university degree.

This chart confirms that the fastest growing occupations in the last 10 years also require the highest level of education (social science, education, government, management, sciences, business, finance and administration, health occupations)

Looking ahead labour demands will grow further given the need to replace growing retirements
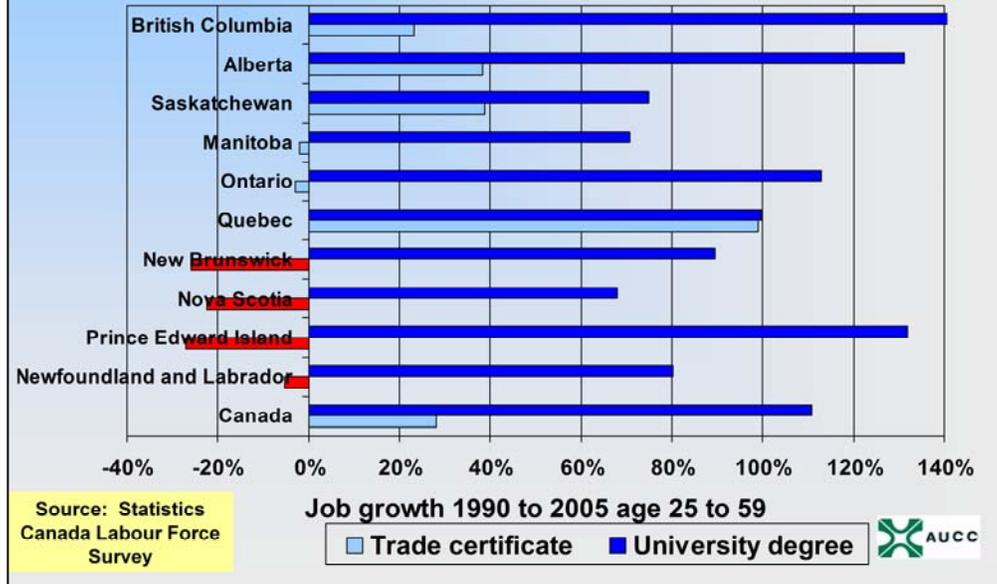
In 1990 just 115,000 in the labour force with graduate degrees were 50 plus

By 2008 445,000 were 50 plus – almost a 4-fold increase

Source: AUCC using Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey data

Our region faces huge demographic challenges – a rapidly aging and declining population

Replacing the university-educated in our workforce will become a significant challenge as the baby boom generation enters retirement

However, the economic recession has slowed retirements somewhat – people are no longer automatically retiring and many are opting to continue working past 65

Despite what you may hear to the contrary, job growth for university graduates has been much stronger than for those with trades certificates in Atlantic Canada.

In summary, Atlantic Canada's future economic prosperity will depend upon our ability and commitment to encourage greater participation in university education, especially among under-represented communities; we must continue to invest in the quality of university education in order to successfully compete for out of region and international students and, we must improve our competitiveness for graduate students by investing much more in scholarships.