

**REMARKS BY PETER HALPIN, Executive Director,
Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU)
To the
ADVISORY PANEL ON CANADA'S
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY
Wednesday, December 7, 2011
9:00 - 11:30
Admirals South Room, Four Points by Sheraton Halifax
1496 Hollis Street, Halifax, NS**

Check against delivery

Good morning.

My name is Peter Halpin. I am the Executive Director of the Association of Atlantic Universities – the AAU.

The AAU is an advocacy organization working on behalf of the region's 17 universities.

First, I take this opportunity to commend the Federal Government for undertaking this national consultation process.

The AAU strongly supports the position taken by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada - the AUCC - on the critical question posed by the Advisory Panel concerning Canada's strategy and ability to attract top international students and export our country's strengths in higher education.

Canada's East Coast universities are globally-engaged and globally-ready. They have a profound commitment to internationalization and each of our institutions across the region, from the smallest liberal arts universities – to – the more research intensive universities has considerable interest in the significant opportunity to engage internationally in new and innovative ways.

It is well-known that our region suffers from the most rapidly aging and declining population in the country and the lowest rates of immigration.

Our universities have seized on the opportunity offered by the international student marketplace. For the third straight year, our universities have increased year-over-year international student enrolments in the double digits.

The total number of international students studying in our universities is currently 9,692 – a 14% year-over-year increase of more than 1,000 students!

This growth more than reinforces the adage: **'Demography is not Destiny'**.

We are seeing record-breaking international enrolments:

- Cape Breton University has reported a 70% year-over-year increase, while Mount Saint Vincent University and Dalhousie University, both located in Halifax, have reported year-over-year increases of 22% and 18% respectively.

The AAU attributes this remarkable growth to the strengthening of university branding as well as more strategic, effective marketing efforts in select international markets.

In support of our member universities, the AAU has worked hard at positioning *Canada's east coast universities as the best destination for international students seeking high quality education and world class degrees in naturally beautiful and safe communities.*

The success of our universities in international markets is also having a huge economic impact across the region. A 2009 regional research study conducted among international students by the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training indicates that the economic impact of international students on Canada's east coast exceeds \$450 million annually. Perhaps more interesting is the revelation that among those international students who participated in the study, more than 40 percent indicated their interest in becoming Permanent Residents of Canada either during their studies or following graduation.

That is why AAU members strongly hold the point of view that our universities are the most effective regional immigration policy tool available.

Nova Scotia's universities recently completed a study of their collective export revenue generation.

Universities in this province annually generate \$750 million in export revenues, largely attributable to our attraction of international and out-of-province students to Nova Scotia.

This places Nova Scotia's universities among the top-five export revenue generating industry sectors in the province.

The success of all our universities in the international marketplace can only be enhanced by active collaboration between federal and provincial governments, institutions and education advocacy organizations, like the AAU, in positioning Canada as a global leader in education; the promotion of our country as the ideal destination for students and researchers in the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels, and, the positioning of Canada as the partner of choice for institutional cooperation and research collaboration to facilitate the two-way mobility of students and researchers.

Canada's East Coast universities are building people-to-people linkages and institutional partnerships in emerging key economies such as China, India and Brazil and cultivating new strategic opportunities in target markets such as Saudi Arabia.

Universities' internationalization efforts are key to ensuring Canada's prosperity through the development of globally knowledgeable and engaged graduates, engagement in global research efforts with the world's leading experts, attracting top talent to Canadian institutions, and cultivating strategic alliances and partnerships that lead to political, social and economic ties of tomorrow.

Again, on behalf of the AAU and its member universities, we thank the Federal Government for inviting us to share our point of view concerning Canada's International Education Strategy through this roundtable consultation process.