



ASSOCIATION OF
ATLANTIC
UNIVERSITIES

L'ASSOCIATION DES
UNIVERSITÉS
DE L'ATLANTIQUE

Atlantic Canada's Universities:

Engines of Economic Growth

"There are many fine universities in this part of the country. And like you, we know what the people in those institutions are capable of, when it comes to research and innovation. They are a match for any across Canada, or around the world."

Dr. Tom Brzustowski, President, NSERC
October 14, 2004

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"Canada's regional economies are a vital source of economic strength and stability. Support for regional and rural economic development will target the fundamentals – skills upgrading, support for research and development, community development and modern infrastructure ... by employing the regional agencies and tools such as the Atlantic Innovation Fund."

Speech from the Throne, February 2, 2004

Our Role and Commitment

Universities are central to the present and future of Atlantic Canada's social, cultural and economic life. Atlantic Canada's 17 universities are our region's special advantage: an enduring and stable economic engine, constantly changing and developing as new knowledge is gained and new technologies and industries are created.

Collectively, our 17 universities are developers and employers of talent, incubators of business and industry, storehouses of cultural resources, research centres, purchasers, economic engines and magnets for immigration.

Atlantic Canada's universities are committed to our essential role in helping transform the region's economy and its communities in partnership with Governments and the private sector.

Our Impact

In the current knowledge-based economy, the impact of our universities on the community at large is more significant than at any other time in Atlantic Canada's economic history.

Our 17 universities are a regional community of more than 460,000 people – 77,000 degree students; 15,650 other continuing education students; 17,500 employees, and 350,000 alumni.

The growing research and development capacity at our universities is attracting close to \$200 million in annual funding to Atlantic Canada. The new discoveries being made at our universities will be the engines for future growth and economic development.

Discoveries at our universities are spawning new industries, creating new businesses, strengthening existing enterprises, producing high quality jobs and attracting research-intensive institutions to our communities.

As our research capacity grows, Atlantic Canada's universities will continue to be an anchor for the region's economy, providing economic stability during the current period of transformation.

"In Atlantic Canada, we have a proud record of accomplishment in education. We have researchers and educators who are world leaders in their fields. And we have a growing track record of leveraging the results of that research and education to better the lives of Atlantic Canadians and indeed all Canadians.

In today's knowledge-intensive economy, education, research and innovation are key to achieving that maximum potential."

The Hon. Andy Scott, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs
Opening of NSERC's Atlantic Office, October 14, 2004

Strategic Alignment

There are important roles for Government, the private sector and universities in continuing the transformation of Atlantic Canada's economy, by building on past investments and by ensuring future investments are strategically focused.

Our universities are committed to a strategic partnership with Government to advance the innovation agenda and toward further development of the region's knowledge economy.

"There is an important role for Government to play in helping our region adapt, grow and expand to meet the challenges of a progressively global, knowledge-based economy. And that role is not to dominate, but to steadily, intelligently, comprehensively build an environment for rational, relevant economic development."

The Hon. Joseph McGuire, MP, Minister, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
APEC Atlantic Economic Summit, September 29, 2004

The Government has made clear that its social goals in Atlantic Canada can be best realized through economic growth. And that a highly educated population and a healthy research effort are essential to wealth creation in a knowledge economy, and that wealth creation in turn is crucial to ensure the sustainability of health and social programs over the long term.

Our universities are absolutely essential to helping Government realize its social, cultural and economic goals in Atlantic Canada.

Knowledge-Based Clusters

The Government has clearly indicated the key research areas it seeks to promote, such as *“biotechnology, information and communications and advanced materials – which will be the drivers of innovation and productivity in the 21st century economy.”*

Advancements in these areas are essential to meet the needs of people everywhere in the world for wholesome food, a clean environment, effective health care and clean energy. They are therefore key elements to growing sustainable modern industries.

Atlantic Canada’s universities are the core of knowledge-based clusters of technology, expertise and creativity, that will transform the region’s economy - meeting global needs and helping secure our region’s vital contribution to the national and world economy.

The dynamic excellence of an internationally competitive university sector in conjunction with a robust private sector - with the strategic support of Government - will create the vibrant and thriving communities vital to progressive lifestyles and affluence in Atlantic Canada.

Renewal of the Atlantic Innovation Fund (AIF)

“ACOA is a long way already towards delivering the knowledge products for Atlantic Canada. If I had my druthers, ACOA would maintain its level of funding, if anything get more and direct it solely towards knowledge, innovation and R&D agenda for the Atlantic region.”

Frank McKenna, APEC Atlantic Economic Summit
September 30, 2004

The Government recognizes that a key element to its overall *“economic strategy is to strengthen Canada’s ability to generate and apply new ideas.”*

Since 1997, the Government’s substantial investment in Atlantic Canada has helped build a strong foundation in basic science and technology, including the Canada Foundation for Innovation, health research, the Canada Research Chairs, the national research granting councils - NSERC, SSHERC, CIHR - and other initiatives to create leading-edge capabilities. And the Government has strongly indicated its future intent to *“continue to build on this strength.”*

Strategic alignment between the Government and Atlantic Canada’s universities can make a critical difference in ensuring future investments are strategic, focused and delivering results across the region.

The AIF has proven itself to be a powerful tool that can help realize the Government’s economic strategy for Atlantic Canada and significantly help the region’s communities and citizens achieve their aspirations for prosperity.

Government’s substantial renewal of the AIF, strategically channeled through the region’s universities, will have a powerful, substantive impact on Atlantic Canada.

What We Can Achieve Together: Quickly, Effectively and Strategically

The need for socio-economic transformation of our region and its communities is urgent. It requires action. Together, our universities and Government can be a powerful force for change in Atlantic Canada.

In addition to the central role for our universities in an effective, regional economic development strategy, there are three other key areas where our universities, with strategic Government support, can quickly and effectively help transform Atlantic Canada's future. These are:

- *immigration policy and implementation*
- *regional advocacy*
- *infrastructure renewal*

Immigration Policy and Implementation

Like other regions of the country, the population in Atlantic Canada is aging. The only realistic way of overcoming this problem is through immigration of young, bright people.

Atlantic Canada's universities are one of the strongest assets Atlantic Canada has as a place welcoming to immigrants.

Our universities are natural magnets for the best and brightest students from around the world to our region. In 2004-05, we attracted 6,100 international students from nearly 150 countries - a 10 percent increase in visa students over the previous year!

Citizenship and Immigration Canada has sponsored two initiatives aimed at international students and involving Maritime provinces. A pilot project in New Brunswick and Manitoba enables international students to work off-campus during their undergraduate education, providing them with valuable local work experience and community exposure. And, another pilot project in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Alberta allows international students to gain an additional year of work experience in their field of study following graduation. Under this pilot project, work permits can be renewed for a second year, making it easier for graduates to continue working in the province.

Extending both initiatives to all of Atlantic Canada, will make a significant difference in encouraging highly motivated, bright young people from around the world to seek landed immigrant status in communities across the region, where they will enter the professions, start businesses and become community leaders.

Regional Advocacy

Few would disagree that Atlantic Canada needs to do a better job of ‘telling its story’ within the region, across the country and around the world.

The AAU is in discussions with ACOA about a university led ‘social marketing campaign’ designed to generate awareness and understanding of Atlantic Canada’s rapidly emerging knowledge economy. The campaign would focus on the key role our universities play as the ‘knowledge clusters’ of the new economy across the region.

One component of such a campaign would be an *Atlantic Canada Innovation Exposition* ‘road show’ designed to meet the interests of key decision-makers in Ottawa, Toronto and Boston.

Campus Infrastructure Renewal

“All levels of government – municipal, provincial and federal – must unite to *build and strengthen the infrastructure*, which is deemed critical to success in the knowledge economy.”

The Rising Tide: Continuing Commitment to Atlantic Canada

In order for Atlantic Canada to truly succeed, we must have an internationally competitive university sector. The transformation of the region’s economy is dependent on the universities’ ability to compete successfully for the most talented students and faculty from across North America and from around the world, and, retaining them locally once they graduate.

Government policy that supports university renovation and renewal is absolutely vital at this time. The AAU is working closely with the Council of Atlantic Premiers on a regional approach to campus infrastructure renewal.

It is envisioned that this vital investment be undertaken in a phased-approach. The first phase is a proposed investment of \$100 million in each of the next five years. The phase one investment will address the region’s core higher education infrastructure needs. The phase two investment, not yet fully-defined, will enable Atlantic Canada’s universities and colleges to expand their core education, research and commercialization capabilities so that our region has the human capital and innovation capacity it needs to build the 21st century economy.

SUMMARY

The AAU is seeking the Government to do the following:

- 1. Fund a substantive renewal of the AIF, strategically channeled through Atlantic Canada's universities;**
- 2. improve immigration policy and implementation with a focus on university-level students;**
- 3. support a university-led program of regional advocacy;**
- 4. make a significant investment in a phased approach to campus infrastructure renovation and renewal across the region and,**
- 5. work in partnership with the universities to help Government achieve its mission to: *'lead a determined, long-term initiative that will achieve our common goal: a strong, dynamic, confident future for Atlantic Canada and for all Atlantic Canadians.'***