



ASSOCIATION OF  
ATLANTIC  
UNIVERSITIES

L'ASSOCIATION DES  
UNIVERSITÉS  
DE L'ATLANTIQUE

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# **Building Atlantic Canada's Knowledge Economy**

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**April, 2004**

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The Speech From the Throne, February 2, 2004, made clear the Federal Government's commitment to Strengthening Canada's Social Foundations; Building a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy and establishing Canada's Role in the World.

Atlantic Canada's universities and colleges, as leaders and builders of the new knowledge economy and, in partnership with governments, are the best-positioned to help the Federal Government achieve its long-term commitments in Atlantic Canada and to positively transform our region.

However, as noted in *The Rising Tide: Continuing Commitment to Atlantic Canada*, creating a '*dynamic, sustainable economy for the future*' requires '*the development of our physical and intellectual infrastructures.*'

**Atlantic Canada's universities and colleges are pivotal to leading the successful transformation and revitalization of our region's economy.**

**A focused and strategic investment by the Federal Government on building human and physical infrastructure on our university and college campuses is essential to take advantage of the opportunity for economic renewal that is now available to Atlantic Canada.**

### **The Case**

Currently, our universities and colleges contribute **over \$3 billion** annually to Atlantic Canada's economy!

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**The Rising Tide:  
Continuing Commitment to Atlantic Canada**

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‘The Government of Canada set ambitious – but important– goals in its **Innovation Strategy**. Its objective is to increase the number of graduate students (students admitted to Master’s and Ph.D. Programs) at Canadian universities by an average of 5% each year, through 2010 and create the circumstance for 100% of high school graduates to have the opportunity to participate in some form of post-secondary education.’

To meet the goals of the Innovation Strategy, universities and colleges will need to significantly expand their teaching, research and development capacities and commercialization of research efforts. The Atlantic Innovation Fund (AIF) has helped to significantly foster productivity and innovation as well as increase investment in research and development and technology adoption across Atlantic Canada.

Over the next decade, in partnership with others who have a stake in building Atlantic Canada’s knowledge economy, we must build on the achievements of the AIF to build twice as many new, high quality jobs as created in the previous decade.

A strategic investment by the Federal Government in prioritized infrastructure revitalization on our campuses will significantly advance the strategies to build the human skills infrastructure of Atlantic Canada as outlined in the Rising Tide: Continuing Commitment to Atlantic Canada:

- 1. Improve literacy and other basic skills throughout the region.**
- 2. Improve access to lifelong learning opportunities for Atlantic Canadians.**
- 3. Foster an environment that encourages Atlantic Canadians to increase their education by obtaining university and other post-secondary degrees.**

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In addition to our core strength as centres of learning and research and development, our university and college campuses are the heart of life long learning, community outreach, arts and culture and recreational activities in Atlantic Canada. In partnership with governments, our universities and colleges can lead the production and creation of wealth in Atlantic Canada as well as help improve the quality of life for its citizens.

**Atlantic Canada's universities and colleges have enormous potential to become knowledge-base clusters and the centres of new technology and innovation, so necessary to the Rising Tide's vision of a 'dynamic, sustainable economy for the future'.**

To achieve these ambitious growth objectives and the economic and social impacts that will accompany them, we need to recruit approximately 2,000<sup>1</sup> new faculty members in response to retirements, turnover and the expanding student population. Attracting and retaining large numbers in a competitive international academic labour market will require, among other things, healthy, well-maintained campuses. Accommodating large numbers of new students and assuring them a quality educational experience will similarly require healthy, well maintained campuses including, in many instances, significant amounts of new space to ensure our universities and colleges remain nationally competitive. In short, a significant investment in infrastructure renewal is paramount.

### **The Challenge**

**On a per student basis, the maintenance deficit in Atlantic Canada is 70 percent higher than the national level.**

*The Canadian Association of University Business Officers, A point of No Return: The Urgent Need for Infrastructure Renewal at Canadian Universities (April 2000), P.23*

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<sup>1</sup>In Fall 2001, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Committee launched an initiative to address this issue which led to the release of the report, *Faculty Recruitment and Retention in the Maritimes*, in August 2002. The report identified trends of aging faculty, increasing faculty-student ratios, and increased use of part-time faculty. It forecast that 55% of the current full-time faculty pool would be lost to retirement and attrition over the coming decade, creating a need to recruit over 1,800 new faculty.

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Over the next decade, a **significant investment** in capital infrastructure revitalization on our campuses is critically important to Atlantic Canada's communities and vital to growing its knowledge economy.

This investment is required for three student-centered priorities:

- **technology upgrades** - sophisticated internet infrastructure for campus and community
- **enhanced classroom and living environments** - to ensure accessibility to nationally competitive centres of learning
- **enhanced scientific and technology laboratories** - to build research capacity and increase commercialization

The figures associated with capital infrastructure revitalization on the university and college campuses across Atlantic Canada look imposing, however, the potential socio-economic impact of such an investment will deliver enormous long-term benefits to urban and rural communities across the region.

### **The Funding Strategy**

For the communities of Atlantic Canada to share in the success of such an investment, it will take a bold plan of action, created by those with vision and commitment to building a 21<sup>st</sup> century, knowledge economy.

That vital investment could be undertaken in a phased-approach. The first phase is a proposed investment of \$500 million<sup>2</sup> over five years. The phase one investment will address the region's core higher education infrastructure needs, enabling it to compete nationally. 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy.

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<sup>2</sup>Council of Atlantic Premiers Post Secondary Education Infrastructure and Maintenance Working Group: 'Post Secondary Infrastructure Renewal in Atlantic Canada', February 2003 (DRAFT).

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**The Rising Tide:  
Continuing Commitment to Atlantic Canada**

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'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. We call on the federal government 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.'

We look to the Government of Canada to be that champion for Atlantic Canada and to lead a partnership of key stakeholders including Provincial Governments, universities and colleges.

We are committed to being part of the solution and exploring different investment approaches.

**'But the key of any good strategy is to concentrate on your strengths. We need to pick the segments where we can really build a competitive advantage ....**

The Right Hon. Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada  
Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal  
September 18, 2003

The universities and colleges of Atlantic Canada offer the Federal Government and Provincial Governments in our region a tremendous competitive advantage that should be used strategically to make the rest of Canada and the world aware of the transformation and revitalization of Atlantic Canada's economy.

With appropriate Government investment in our campuses, the universities and community colleges of Atlantic Canada will deliver better student achievement; help create

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healthier communities; generate better workers for better jobs in an innovative economy; improve quality of life for all citizens - urban and rural, and, perhaps most importantly, produce more active citizens who will contribute to building a stronger, more vibrant Atlantic Canada.

**Campus Infrastructure Revitalization:**  
**A Vital Investment in Atlantic Canada’s Future**

