



ASSOCIATION OF  
ATLANTIC  
UNIVERSITIES  
ASSOCIATION DES  
UNIVERSITÉS DE  
L'ATLANTIQUE

*Check Against Delivery*

**Remarks by Peter Halpin, Executive Director, AAU**

**Virtual Town Hall with The Hon. Sean Fraser,  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)**

**Thursday, October 13, 2022; 3:00 p.m.**

- First, the AAU wishes to acknowledge your great commitment to our region's universities as an MP and now as Minister of IRCC.
- We appreciate having the opportunity to participate in today's roundtable, share some concerns of AAU members and, work in partnership with IRCC officials to seek solutions.
- There are three critical issues related to international student study permit processing that I'm certain are not unknown to you and your senior officials-
  1. Inordinate delays in processing study permit applications and the negative implications for students, the subsequent revenue impacts on university budgets, not to mention the reputational damage;
  2. We've discovered that our universities appear to have among the highest study permit disapproval rates and lowest approval rates of universities across the country and finally,
  3. The longstanding issue of 'dual intent' which sends mixed messages to international students and heightens risk that their study permit application will be denied if they express interest in programs that encourage them to stay in Canada after their graduation, such as *Nova Scotia's Study and Stay Program*.
- These issues are affecting successful international student recruitment and retention: vital to fulfillment of regional and provincial population growth strategies.
- It's recognized that international students attracted to our universities are the best source of new immigrants to Atlantic Canada.
- There are now close to 22,000 international students studying at universities across Atlantic Canada – a 15.5 percent year-over-year increase!
- Recent AAU research indicates that close to 70 percent of those students would like to stay following their graduation.
- In short, the attraction of international students is vital to the financial sustainability of our universities and, their retention is critical to the successful achievement of regional and provincial population growth goals.
- Again, the AAU is grateful for the opportunity to participate in today's roundtable, and we look forward to working in partnership with IRCC to seek solutions to the concerns I've raised on behalf of our members.

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