

Backgrounder

“White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education”

Current Status of Provincial Post-Secondary System

- Newfoundland and Labrador’s public post-secondary education system consists of publicly funded institutions including the College of the North Atlantic (CNA) and Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). Several health-related programs are also offered through regional health authorities.
 - Within the province, MUN operates a St. John’s campus, including the Marine Institute and Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook. Memorial offers a comprehensive range of programs including undergraduate, graduate and doctoral degrees, as well as certificate and diploma programs. Fall 2004 enrollment was about 18,000 including both full-time and part-time students.
 - CNA operates 17 campuses throughout the province including two in Labrador, as well as a campus in the State of Qatar. A broad range of career programs are offered including certificate and diploma programs. Fall 2004 enrollment is about 6,400 full-time students.
 - The Eastern and Western Regional Integrated Health Authorities, formerly the Health Care Corporation of St. John’s and Western Health Care Corporation, provide degree, diploma and certificate training to nurses and in other health-related disciplines in cooperation with MUN.
- Hundreds of millions of dollars are invested in post-secondary education annually through sources such as provincial operating grants, student aid, tuition and the Labour Market Development Agreement.
- Demographic changes in the population have been dramatic. Since 1991, the province’s population has declined by 8.8 per cent due primarily to declining birth rates and net out-migration. The population is aging and becoming increasingly urban and it is expected that the demographic changes will impact post-secondary education.

White Paper Process

- The Minister of Education appointed Dr. Wayne Ludlow as Commissioner and Mr. Cyril Farrell as Advisor to the Commissioner.
 - Dr. Ludlow has had a thirty-year career with Memorial University, sixteen of which were spent at the senior executive level. He is currently serving as the Newfoundland and Labrador Administrator for the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation.
 - Mr. Farrell’s career in adult education in Newfoundland and Labrador spans almost thirty years and includes experience at both the academic and administrative levels. Currently he is on secondment to the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium as its Executive Director.

- The review used a dual approach:
 - Public consultations with key stakeholders including Memorial University, the College of the North Atlantic, student groups and business and industry representatives during the summer and early fall. In addition, parties made direct submissions through a Web site dedicated to the *White Paper* process.
 - Research and analysis to ensure full consideration of the issues and challenges facing our post-secondary system and the implications of any specific decisions that government wished to make related to post-secondary policy.
- The review scope of the *White Paper* included:
 - The existing public post-secondary structure. This includes both location and governance for Memorial, including the Marine Institute, Sir Wilfred Grenfell and Harlow. Also included is the College of the North Atlantic with its 17 campuses.
 - The funding of post-secondary education, including:
 - operating grants to public institutions;
 - tuition fees including impacts on affordability and access;
 - student aid programs including loans, grants and bursaries;
 - federal funding including LMDA funding; and
 - use of tax incentives including tax credits.
 - The impacts of population changes including the aging adult population, the declining youth population and shift of population to urban centres.

White Paper Strategies

The *White Paper* review clearly indicates that the Province has a strong, vibrant, student-centered post-secondary system and one that doesn't require major restructuring. Rather, the focus of the strategies is on ensuring the Province can maintain an innovative and sustainable system to carry it into the future. Specifically, the *White Paper* provides a broad range of strategies that address:

- strengthening the base of our existing post-secondary system;
- improving system capacity through a number of initiatives;
- helping students;
- maintaining stable funding; and,
- enhancing governance.

To strengthen the base, the *White Paper* identifies the following strategies.

- Supporting an adult learning culture in this Province in a number of ways:
 - launch an Adult Learning Campaign;
 - increase the portion of the College of the North Atlantic grant-in-aid designated to the Adult Basic Education program;
 - provide greater access to literacy training; and,

- pilot a preparatory course for persons wishing to challenge the General Education Development (GED) test.
- Enhancing rural participation by providing funding to College of the North Atlantic and Memorial University to expand distance education programming in rural communities and enhancing delivery of work-place based training for small and medium sized enterprises.
- Accommodating and supporting increased aboriginal enrolment in post-secondary education.
- Increasing the number of journey-certified trades people needed to address projected skills shortages by:
 - reviewing existing policy, particularly the one that requires one apprentice to work with one journeyperson;
 - introducing a policy for Government to increase its hiring of apprentices; and,
 - working with the federal government, business and industry to identify the best strategies to increase apprentices' employment opportunities including piloting a wage subsidy program, with priority given to women, to support small and medium enterprises in their hiring of apprentices.
- A number of other strategies, in addition to the above, to support and increase women's participation in engineering, applied science, technology and skilled trades.

To improve system capacity, the *White Paper* strategies provide:

- Enhancing the role of Sir Wilfred Grenfell College within the larger context of Memorial University and enhancing its ability to offer new programming.
- A review of the position of the Marine Institute within the context of a public post-secondary strategic plan with a focus to build on its international reputation as a centre of excellence in marine and ocean technology and training.
- Implementation of a transition plan to align College of the North Atlantic with the Province's social and economic agenda that links the College's geographic resources and infrastructure to socioeconomic initiatives of Department and agencies. This will include linkages to the Province's Innovation Strategy and the Comprehensive Regional Diversification Strategy.
- An assessment of the feasibility of establishing a Faculty of Health Science to include the present Faculty of Medicine as well as the Schools of Social Work, Pharmacy and Nursing. Such a model is currently being used at many Canadian universities with considerable success.
- Discussion of a model that consolidates the administration of nursing education programs, including the practical nursing program, within Memorial University.
- Delivery of the paramedicine program at College of the North Atlantic.

- Establishing a coordinating committee of key players in distance education to identify opportunities for stronger partnerships, more sharing of expertise and resources, and a more integrated educational system.
- Exploring the creation of Genesis Centres throughout the Province.
- The White Paper also supports the province becoming an international leader in applied environmental research and development. Budget 2005 committed \$0.5 million for a master plan and feasibility studies around the creation of a Centre for Environmental Excellence in Corner Brook.

The *White Paper* strategies provide greater support to students financially and in a number of areas, including:

- Maintaining the tuition freeze for a three year period.
- Increasing provincial loan limits consistent with the federal government increase.
- Ensuring Debt Reduction Grants are applied against the new provincial loan limits.
- Reducing expected parental contributions to enhance access for middle-income families.
- Improving debt management measures by providing a 5% increase in income thresholds to qualify for interest relief.
- Requesting that the Millennium Scholarship Foundation pilot a program to provide enhanced financial support for low-income students.

In addition to this increased financial support to students, the *White Paper* also provides for:

- Increased collaboration in student recruitment and advising activities between MUN and CNA.
- Establishing a system-wide public post-secondary Student Services Advisory Committee to enhance cooperation and improve services for students.
- Improving the timely transmission of data from one institution to another and to Student Financial Services Division.
- Greater co-operation between MUN and CNA to enhance career employment services.
- Establishing a collaborative service and support model which partners public post-secondary institutions with other agencies involved in supporting students with disabilities.
- Encouraging institutions to explore opportunities to collaborate on enhancing access to student housing, including common residences.
- Establishing a working group from the Department of Education, MUN, CNA and the Public Libraries Information and Resource Board to identify opportunities to enhance the

QEII library's connectivity to other communities and library structures within the province.

The *White Paper* outlines that Government provide stable funding to Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic in a number of ways, including:

- Increasing their grant-in-aid in 2005/06 and each of the next two budget years.
- Providing funding to offset any lost tuition revenue resulting from a tuition freeze.
- Providing funding to College of the North Atlantic to upgrade equipment and retain its technological currency.
- Seeking support of industry in Labrador West to provide access to infrastructure that supports the delivery of the Mining Technician program.
- Supporting an infrastructure fund campaign for both MUN and CNA by matching dollar for dollar private sector contributions.
- Encouraging federal government investment in post-secondary infrastructure renewal to support our economic growth.
- Supporting the Industrial Research and Innovation Fund for MUN and CNA, providing matching and start-up funds that will attract further investments in research by the federal government. These funds will help position the University and College in supporting the Province's Innovations Strategy.
- Requesting additional federal contributions so that the indirect costs associated with the research supported by federal granting councils can be adequately funded.

As it relates to governance, the *White Paper* recognizes that as part of a one university-one college post-secondary education system, Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic have significant opportunity for collaboration. As such, strategies include:

- Amendments to the *Acts* governing MUN and CNA to include requirements for each organization to demonstrate greater connectedness with each other and accountability to the public. This will include:
 - a reconfigured Council on Higher Education recognized in legislation;
 - three joint appointments to the University and College Boards; and,
 - a process of monitoring and reporting to the Council by the jointly appointed members.
- An outcome-based post-secondary strategic plan be implemented to ensure our system is meeting societal expectations.
- Government entering into three-year performance contracts with Memorial and the College.