



ASSOCIATION OF  
ATLANTIC  
UNIVERSITIES

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UNIVERSITÉS DE  
L'ATLANTIQUE

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**Presentation  
to the House of Commons Standing  
Committee on Citizenship and  
Immigration**

**Ottawa, Ontario**

**Wednesday, June 7, 2017  
4:30 – 5:30 PM (EST)**

*by*

**Peter Halpin, Executive Director  
Association of Atlantic Universities  
(AAU)**

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Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to appear before the committee on a subject so important to the future of Atlantic Canada – the successful attraction and retention of new Canadians to our region.

I'm Peter Halpin, Executive Director, Association of Atlantic Universities – the AAU.

The AAU is an advocacy organization working on behalf of the Presidents and Students of the Region's 16 universities.

Today, I will share some data on the attraction and enrolment of international students; their social and cultural impact on our campuses; their regional economic impact and, their interest in staying in the region following graduation.

I will also address what universities are doing to position Atlantic Canada as an attractive education destination in the world as well as our collective efforts to help improve receptivity toward hiring recent international student graduates.

Over the past ten years, enrolment of international students in our universities has increased by more than 100%!

Today, there are more than 13,000 international students studying at Atlantic Canadian universities.

Those students represent nearly 20% of total full-time, university enrolment in Atlantic Canada.

As the region's domestic population continues its steady decline, the value of international students to institutional sustainability grows in importance.

Atlantic Canada's universities are talent magnets and the best source of new immigrants to the region.

Our universities are working harder than ever on marketing the region and its institutions to international students as a welcoming education destination in the world.

With the assistance of ACOA's International Business Development program, the AAU has led an international student digital marketing research study on behalf of the region's post-secondary education sector.

The results of that study will equip our universities and colleges with: actionable information about key international target markets and their cultural nuances; who to target within those markets; and, when, where and how to engage student prospects.

Over 150 countries are represented on our campuses.

That cultural and ethnic mix has a profoundly, positive impact on the educational and social experience of the entire university community.

By way of example, Saint Mary's University in Halifax is considered the most international of any university in Canada with Visa students representing close to 35% of the total student body.

Having more than 13,000 international students in the region also has a significant economic impact.

In 2009-10, international students generated \$565 million of economic activity across the region!

The Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training – CAMET – is currently updating that study with results expected this fall.

In 2016, the AAU conducted a graduate retention study among graduating university and community college students across the region.

That research produced an astonishing result.

75% of the international students who participated in the research indicated they would remain in their province of study following graduation if given the opportunity to do so.

In order of importance, those students rated quality of life in Atlantic Canada most highly, closely followed by job opportunities, as the major factors which would encourage them to stay.

With the generous support of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency – ACOA – and its Atlantic Policy Research Initiative program – the AAU is now doing a follow up study among those international students who responded to the 2016 study, to determine what has happened in their lives one-year following graduation.

We expect those study results at the end of June

Our university leaders believe we have an important role to play in attracting more international students to the region.

And, we are also committed to working collaboratively with governments, the private sector, and others, to help retain those students - the future professionals, entrepreneurs and citizens we so badly need to populate our region.

The AAU is tentatively hosting the Atlantic Leaders' Summit in Halifax, on July 10<sup>th</sup>.

We propose to bring together academic, business, community, student, government and political leaders to examine the barriers affecting retention of international student graduates in Atlantic Canada.

The Summit features the Hon. Ahmed Hussen, Minister, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, as keynote speaker.

The Minister will address the Atlantic Immigration Pilot project as well the Immigration Pillar of the Atlantic Growth Strategy

In summary, the AAU is committed to inter-institutional collaboration to better position Atlantic Canada and our universities as an education destination in the world.

We are also working collaboratively with other key players to retain as many of our international student graduates as possible in communities across the region.

Again, thank you for your invitation to appear before the committee and I look forward to your questions and our discussion.