



ASSOCIATION OF
ATLANTIC
UNIVERSITIES

ASSOCIATION DES
UNIVERSITÉS DE
L'ATLANTIQUE

For Immediate Release

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HALIFAX, NS – International student enrolments across Atlantic universities have been further badly eroded by federal government policies affecting the recruitment of those students to the region.

Enrolments of international students across Atlantic universities have declined by nearly 28 percent (-6,431) year-over-year. Overall enrolments of domestic and international students (undergraduate and graduate) have declined 4.4 percent (-4,229) year-over-year.

The Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) released its [2025-2026 Preliminary Survey of Enrolments](#) today.

When the federal government (IRCC) announced the ‘cap’ on international students in January 2024, its objective was to reduce the total enrolment of international students by 35 percent. Since imposing the ‘cap,’ international student enrolments across Atlantic universities have declined by **36 percent or 9,425 fewer students!**

“Atlantic Canada and our universities have been disproportionately hurt by the federal government’s ‘cap’ placed on international students aspiring to pursue higher education in our region,” said Dr. Paul Mazerolle, Chair, AAU and President, University of New Brunswick.

The AAU has a growing concern that the overall effects of the IRCC policy changes which capped enrolment; made the visa approval process more complicated; increased the amount of funds that students need to bank during their studies; and limited opportunities to work during and after their studies, have collectively damaged Canada’s image as a welcoming country among prospective international students.

Prior to the imposition of the ‘cap’ in 2024, the region retained 60 percent of international students following their graduation.

According to Rhonda Tulk-Lane, CEO of the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce, Atlantic Canada’s progress has been threatened by reduced immigration allocations, including international students “With one of the oldest populations in the country and declining birth rates, our region faces an urgent challenge: how to sustain our businesses and secure our economic future.”

The importance of international students to the future of Atlantic Canada is further affirmed by the Atlantic Economic Council (March 2025) noting that “Atlantic Canada needs immigrants to support our economy and workforce. The fact is more people are dying than being born in Atlantic Canada; our population simply cannot sustain our economy on its own.”

Dr. Mazerolle noted a positive aspect in the survey is a four percent year-over-year increase in full-time, first-year students (+505). “Atlantic universities remain focused on student success and their social mobility; driving innovative research that matters and serving the public good. These core values will serve our universities well as we compete for both domestic and international students.”

He added that, “the AAU has communicated its concerns about government policies affecting international students to the federal Minister of Immigration and advised her of a proposed regional strategy to create a sustainable international student enrolment program. The Minister acknowledged that international students are an important talent pipeline and central to Atlantic Canada’s future population, economic growth, and social and cultural development.”

The Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) represents the interests of universities across the region, ensuring public visibility for the important role they play in preparing future leaders of our communities, in path-breaking research and innovation, and in contributing to the economic, cultural and social prosperity of life in Atlantic Canada.

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