



November 12, 2014

The Honourable Kelly Regan
Minister of Labour and Advanced Education
Department of Labour and Advanced Education
P.O. Box 697
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2T8

Dear Minister Regan,

Thank you for the opportunity and mechanism by which we can provide a written submission to the University Consultation Framing Document in particular, and the ongoing provincial review of post-secondary education in Nova Scotia in general. We are the St. Francis Xavier Association of University Teachers (StFXAUT), representing all of the approximately 370 academics at St. Francis Xavier University.

Within the introduction of the Framing Document, we learn that universities are “places where our young people prepare for the jobs of today and tomorrow” along with a concern that “some graduates have trouble finding a job.” We also learn about the needs and interests of the Nova Scotian business community in terms of their desire for inputs that would promote their own growth. In sum, we are presented with a very narrow view of a university as a job training centre and resource generator for economic growth. We do not share this perspective. Markets change faster than universities, meaning that there will always be a perpetual need to chase trends. When universities shift resources and specialize to satisfy fluctuating demand, we erode the internal capacities necessary to subsequently satisfy the next new trend. Besides, few people keep the same job for their entire lives, so the notion that universities ought, as their core function, to train people for the job market is problematic. If we are interested in the lifetime earning potential of our citizens, then logic (and evolutionary theory) dictates a general education would fare better than a specific one.

Far too much time has been spent trying to rationalize university programs, promoting the concept of specialization and demonizing ‘duplication’ of programs. We do not agree that a proliferation of programs is at the heart of pressure on the operating costs of universities. Also, a provincial government may not be the best body to try to determine what programs should be offered. Universities will add and adjust programs as determined by their numerous and ongoing continuous improvement initiatives. Curriculums in programs, for example, are constantly reviewed and revised to meet the interests of students and the evolution of knowledge and practice in the field, along with best practices and competitive pressures from other universities.

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Within the Framing Document's section on Business, universities are being called to align their research and development efforts more closely with the interests of the private sector. This argument ignores the many other ways that universities already support local small businesses and communities in the province through such mechanisms as joint faculty-community research projects and student placements. This may be particularly true in rural university settings such as ours. The following data from Statistics Canada (<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/scte01a-eng.htm>) clearly indicates that universities in Nova Scotia do more than their share in attracting R&D funding which creates jobs and adds to the provincial economy. Also, if Nova Scotia businesses are too small to invest in research and development, how is it that businesses in Prince Edward Island are able to contribute 35% of that provinces' R&D spending? Perhaps the provincial government could find other ways to support small business R&D development?

Data	Total (millions)	Federal Government	Provincial Government	Business Enterprises	Higher Education	Private Non-profit	Foreign
Nova Scotia	503	31.21%	3.18%	21.67%	39.76%	2.39%	1.98%
New Brunswick	262	29.39%	2.67%	24.81%	38.55%	3.44%	0.76%
Prince Edward Island	63	42.86%	6.35%	34.92%	12.70%	1.59%	0.00%
Canada	31,307	19.10%	6.48%	47.38%	17.30%	3.79%	5.94%

In sum, what is most absent in the Framing Document was an alternative appreciation of universities as best positioned to help cultivate young people into educated citizens who are cultural, critical, analytical, compassionate, inclusive, entrepreneurial, responsible, historical, quantitative, curious and more. When we understand universities in such a manner, the fallacy of demanding a *direct* return on investment becomes obvious. Instead, investments into generating a public good by extension leads to private gains, in the same way that investments into the health of citizens becomes an enabler of a healthier economy.

We support and applaud the provincial government's interest in strengthening the university sector in this province, and indeed more can be done. With ten universities, Nova Scotia already has the resources to be recognized as a premiere education destination for students across Canada and globally, which in turn can stem the tide of out-migration in Nova Scotia addressed by the One Nova Scotia Commission. For this to become realized, further measures must be taken, such as the removal of unnecessary barriers to the retention of international students after graduation. Tuition levels also need to remain fair and accessible. Overall, we believe the university sector is a good investment for the taxpayers of this province and should be a priority for further investment.

Respectfully submitted,
 St. Francis Xavier Association of University Teachers (StFXAUT) Executive Committee

cc: The Honourable Randy Delorey, Minister of Environment and Minister of Gaelic Affairs
 Ms. Chris Hornberger, Halifax Global Inc.