

**MPHEC**  
Maritime Provinces  
Higher Education  
Commission

**CESPM**  
Commission de  
l'enseignement supérieur  
des Provinces maritimes



**Multi-Year Business Plan  
2000/2001 through 2002/2003**

**August 1999**

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*"[Education] is a lifelong learning process ... the future of our society depends on informed and educated citizens who, while fulfilling their own goals of personal and professional development, contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of their community and the country as a whole."*

*Joint declaration of Ministers of Education of Canada*



### Acknowledgements

In presenting the Commission's First Multi-Year Business Plan, we would like to acknowledge the contribution made by Commission members and staff. This plan could not have been produced without their expertise and hard work. This plan represents their commitment collectively and as individuals to strengthening Maritime collaboration on post-secondary education.

As can be seen from the attached list of members and staff, each of these individuals had a unique contribution to make. This diversity is one of the greatest assets of this Commission and we look forward to relying on their expertise and commitment as we move forward with the implementation of this plan.

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Chair

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Carmelita Boivin-Cole  
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### Supplementary Information

- Annex 1: "Agreement Respecting the Renewal of Arrangements for Regional Cooperation Concerning Post-Secondary Education".
- Annex 2: List of Post-secondary Institutions within the Commission's scope





# 1. INTRODUCTION

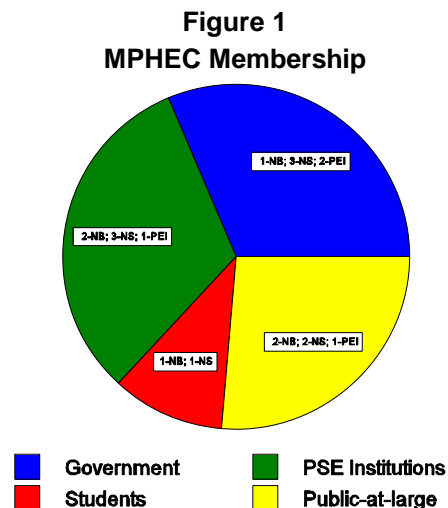
## 1.1 The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission

### *What is the Commission?*

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) was established in 1974. The MPHEC is an “agency of the Council of Maritime Premiers” that acts as a “regional agency for post-secondary education” (PSE). In June 1997, the Ministers of Education in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island agreed, after extensive review, to renew and refocus the Commission’s mandate through an “Agreement Respecting the Renewal of Arrangements for Regional Cooperation Concerning Post-Secondary Education”. This renewed mandate was ratified by the Council of Maritime Premiers. Parallel legislation is being drafted in each of the three provinces to give effect to this Agreement. A copy of the Agreement is attached as Annex A.

There are currently eighteen post-secondary institutions within the scope of the Commission, four of which are multi-campus institutions. They include all publicly funded institutions offering university degree programmes in the region as well as a number of other post-secondary institutions. A list of institutions currently within the scope of the Commission is attached as Annex B. The Agreement also includes the possibility of extending the Commission’s scope to cover other post-secondary institutions, should provinces agree to do so (Sections G2 and G3).

Representation on the Commission covers the three Maritime provinces and all major stakeholders from each of these provinces, including governments, post-secondary institutions and the public-at-large. Current legislation does not specify student representation on the Commission; however, the legislative proposal currently being drafted may include a provision that at least two of the members from the public-at-large category be students. Students are included as a separate category in Figure 1 on the current composition of the Commission. Each of these members brings a unique perspective and sectoral or geographic value to the table. At the same time, the balance of membership helps ensure that decisions are taken from a “regional collective” and “arm’s length” perspective.



The Commission is funded on a cost-shared basis by the three Maritime governments. It is required to submit a multi-year business plan and an annual report to these governments. It is responsible for providing stakeholders in each province with “value for money” and, above all, for delivering visible benefits from collaboration for each province as well as for the Maritimes as a whole. This includes the challenge of managing diverse structural arrangements and asymmetrical services (for example, the provision of financial services to the province of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island that are provided separately by the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education in Nova Scotia).

### *How does the Commission operate?*

This regional post-secondary education commission is unique in Canada. It operates on the basis of “good faith” and a shared perception among the stakeholders that working together on converging interests will benefit each and all stakeholders and ultimately “the changing learner community” that is set out as the primary focus of the Agreement (Section C). The Commission can be called on for advice by any or all of its stakeholders: individual governments, institutions, students and the public. It can thus influence the decisions and the strategic directions of these stakeholders but has no regulatory levers to enforce one particular direction rather than another. Its value lies in its ability to inform, persuade, and stimulate a network of mutually-beneficial and highly diverse partnerships on post-secondary education in the Maritimes. Its management of funding arrangements for regional programmes also facilitates more cost-effective access by Maritime learners to a broad range of opportunities.

This creates a fairly unique organizational environment that functions according to operating principles that have evolved over time:

#### **MPHEC OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

The Commission has agreed in all of its activities to:

- ? Endorse and promote the value of post-secondary education and research
- ? Foster an effective “learner” environment
- ? Show sensitivity to multiple stakeholder perspectives
- ? Build consensus and act collectively
- ? Rely upon evidence, expertise and informed argument
- ? Ensure transparency in the provision of information and advice
- ? Actively seek out opportunities for cooperation and collaboration
- ? Promote effective and efficient management of resources

### *What benefits does the Commission provide?*

This approach to collaboration provides the Maritimes with an arm’s length, neutral forum and advisory body on post-secondary education. It gives a “place” where stakeholders can identify converging interests, debate differences, and develop mutually beneficial strategies. It provides for external reviews of institutional practices and programmes thereby giving the public an external source of quality assurance. It supports more cost-effective approaches to the data, information and research needs of the knowledge economy, thus allowing Maritime institutions to “benchmark” themselves more effectively against national and international developments. History and credibility are also benefits. The Commission acts as a “collective memory” of Maritime post-secondary issues and approaches. The Commission is also well placed, as a bilingual cooperative venture, to advance Maritime interests in national initiatives – including the search for external partnerships.

Commission stakeholders operate in a highly ambiguous and increasingly competitive environment (both institutional and governmental). They need to work together to find areas of converging interests among competing institutions and demonstrate the benefits of strategic collaboration to each participant as well as to the “whole”. At the same time, they have to be sensitive to the uniqueness of each institution and

perspective. The challenge is one of “competitive collaboration,” achieving a dynamic and positive balance between cooperation and competition.

## **1.2 The Commission’s Multi-year Business Plan**

This is the Commission’s first Multi-year Business Plan. It is intended to focus the efforts of the Commission during the next three fiscal years (2000-01 through 2002-03) towards achievement of its new mandate as outlined in the 1997 Agreement. Activities planned for the latter half of the 1999-2000 fiscal year are included to provide for continuity.

The first section of this plan on “The Environment” looks at emerging trends and challenges in the broader post-secondary environment in the Maritimes. Its purpose is to highlight those areas on which the Commission will have to focus if it is to facilitate access to quality post-secondary education for Maritime learners and to maximize benefits to be derived from post-secondary education. These are areas where developments will need to be monitored: data, information and analyses will also have to be developed to support appropriate actions by the Commission and its stakeholders.

The second section of the plan on “Strategic Directions” brings together the Commission’s new mandate and the challenges found in the current post-secondary education environment into a new mission statement and new goals and objectives. It seeks to answer the question: “What can and will the Commission do within its mandate to address post-secondary opportunities and challenges in the Maritimes?”

The last two sections deal with financial and human resource requirements.

## 2. THE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT IN THE MARITIMES

*What are the key post-secondary challenges and opportunities?*

Maritime institutions have long enjoyed a reputation for quality and diversity of post-secondary education opportunities. The future presents serious challenges, however, largely as a result of changing demographics, globalization and increasing competition. Perspectives and expectations are also changing. The Commission’s Business Plan will have to take these changes into account if it is to achieve the results anticipated in the Agreement.

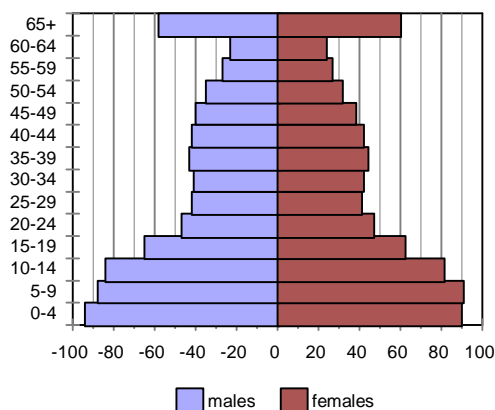
### 2.1 Changing Learner Profiles

#### Demographic trends

Post-secondary institutions have traditionally focussed on the recruitment of recent secondary school graduates. This group has been declining in recent years and can be expected to continue to decline. This is particularly true of French-language graduates. This is intensifying institutional competition and increasing the need to attract students from other regions and countries. It is also stimulating “outreach” activities such as non-credit courses, employer-sponsored courses, and community development involvement. In turn, a less homogenous student body is pushing the boundaries of traditional programmes, delivery modes, and administration.

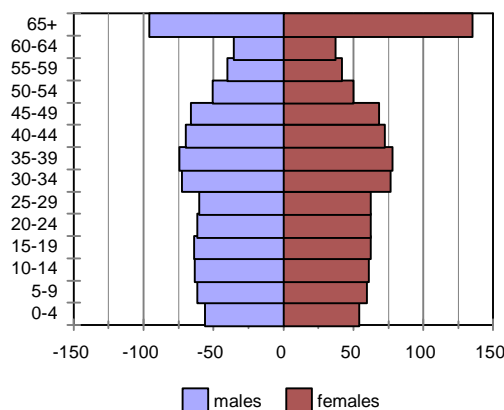
The two graphs shown below, demonstrate how the 1996 demographic profile for the Maritimes has been turned upside-down compared with 1961. The drop in birthrate has resulted in a declining number of young people of post-secondary school age. This demographic decline is stimulating efforts by post-secondary institutions to increase participation rates and also to attract students from outside the 18-24 age group.

**Figure 2**  
**Age Demographics, Maritimes, 1961**



Source: Census, Statistics Canada

**Figure 3**  
**Age Demographics, Maritimes, 1996**



**Enrolment trends**

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate that, between 1981 and 1993, full-time enrolment increased in the Maritimes, the increase being much more pronounced in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. However, since 1993 enrolments have stabilized or declined in all three provinces. A decline in enrolments may lead to increased pressure on universities to increase tuition. The decline is especially dramatic at the Université de Moncton which suggests that further research needs to be done on francophone participation.

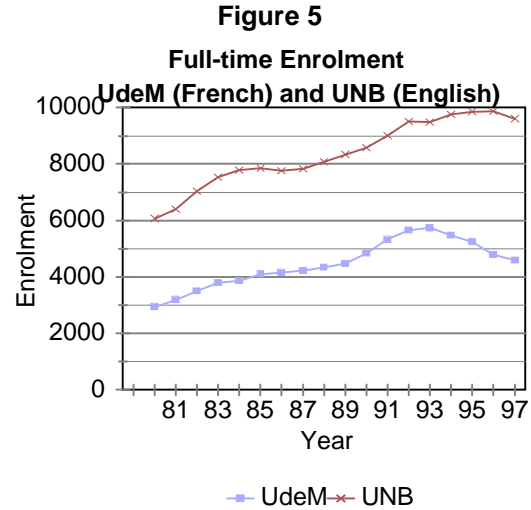
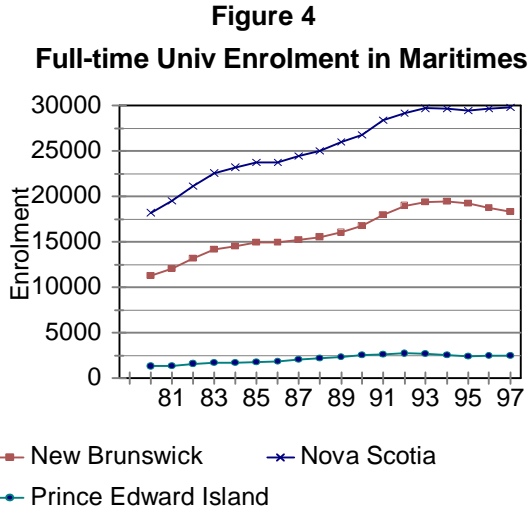
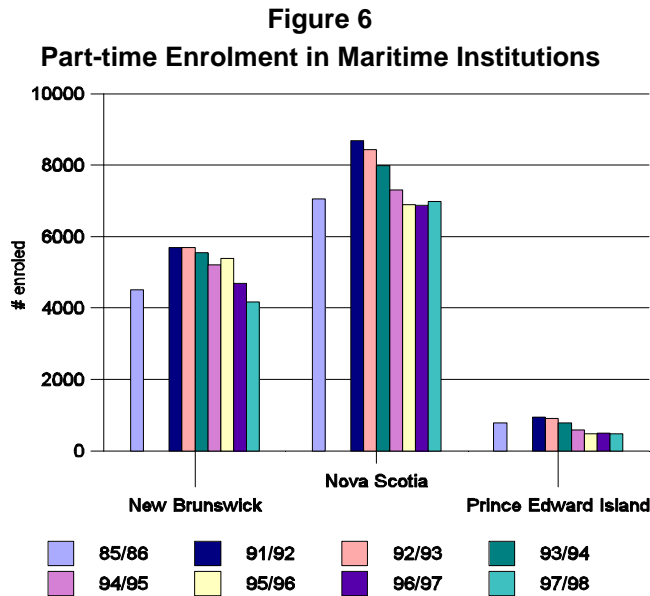
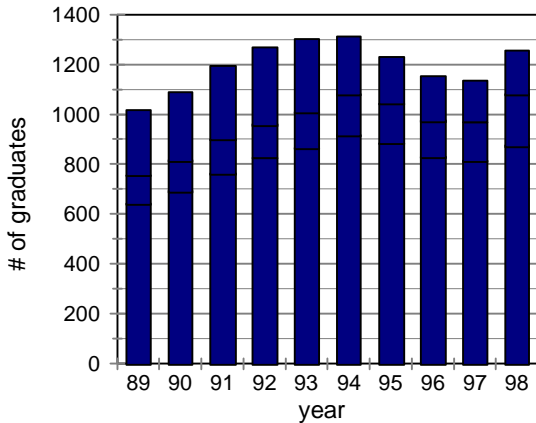


Figure 6 indicates that throughout the Maritimes, part-time enrolment has decreased significantly since 1992/1993. In Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, however, part-time enrolment seems to have levelled off since 1995/1996.



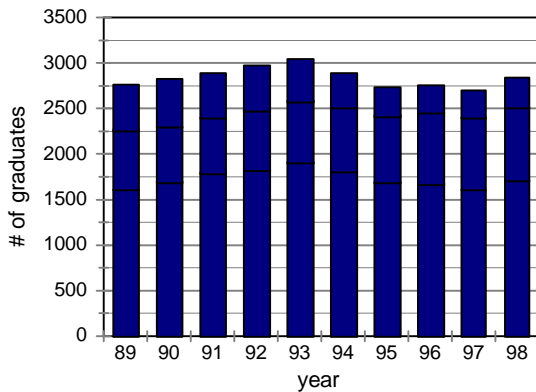
Source: USIS

**Figure 7  
NB Graduate Programme Enrolment**

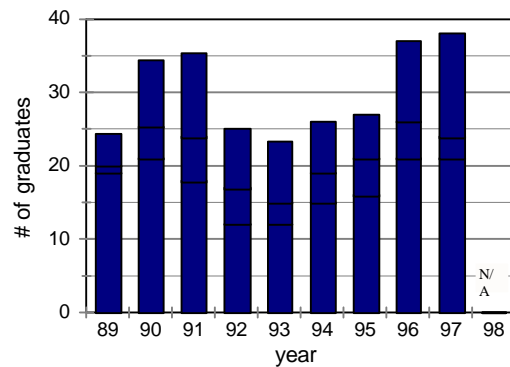


Graduate enrolments, on the other hand, present a different pattern that will need to be monitored over the next few years. Figures 7 through 9 show that between 1989 and the early 1990s, graduate enrolment was steadily increasing in all three provinces. In New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, it then decreased just as steadily until 1998 when enrolments picked up once more. In Prince Edward Island, while the pattern is the same, the increase started earlier, in 1994.

**Figure 8  
NS Graduate Programme Enrolment**



**Figure 9  
PEI Graduate Programme Enrolment**



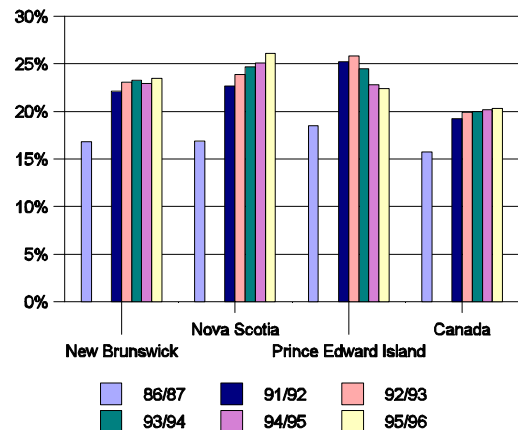
Source: USIS

**Participation rates**

The decline in the 18-24 population has to some extent, been offset by an increase in participation rates. Figure 10 shows that, in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, the university participation rate has consistently increased since 1986. This trend does not, however, hold in Prince Edward Island where participation rates have been declining.

This figure also shows that the participation rate in all three Maritime provinces is consistently higher than in Canada as a whole. This raises the issue of just how far increased Maritime participation rates can go to offset the declining 18-24 population. It also suggests that current university efforts to recruit from outside the Maritimes and

**Figure 10  
University Participation Rates**



Source: Statistics Canada

This ratio is a measure of the participation rate of residents of a province in university education somewhere in Canada.

beyond the 18-24 group will be a critical factor in sustaining enrolments. In this context, increased recruitment efforts by universities in central Canada (backed up in many cases by significant student funding) are a major concern for those Maritime universities that draw significant numbers of students from outside the region. It may therefore be more difficult in the future to maintain "market share". The need for competitive recruitment is thus likely to increase.

### **Continuing Education**

The need for specialized skills and, above all, the factors associated with lifelong learning (even for those pursuing a consistent career choice) are changing student profiles everywhere. This shift is having a profound effect on the nature and range of programme proposals being received by the Commission. There is also some evidence of increased demand for short term courses focussed on specific skills, non-credit and certificate courses. There is insufficient data to provide a solid analysis of this trend at the present time. This data will, however, eventually be captured through the Enhanced Student Information System (ESIS) that is being integrated within the Commission's Information Framework initiative.

### **Community Engagement initiatives**

Maritime universities are, to differing extents, increasing their level of engagement with the communities where they are located. They are increasingly supporting community-based initiatives that contribute to social, economic, and cultural development, thus moving in the direction of life-long learning. The extension of university activities into the community at large may also be considered a good investment for the future of the university as well as their communities.

All of the trends noted above clearly indicate that Maritime post-secondary institutions are faced with a significantly altered learner population characterized by (a) a decrease in the number of students from the traditional pool; (b) the ceiling reached by participation rates; and (c) an increase in the demand for short-term ad hoc training and education. These trends will be monitored over the planning period to assist governments and universities in responding effectively.

## **2.2 Accessibility Challenges**

Access to post-secondary education remains a key concern of governments, institutions, students and the public at large. In 1997, the Commission released the study, "Accessibility to Post-Secondary Education in the Maritimes". This study examined the dynamics at play when an individual chooses whether or not to pursue a post-secondary education. The research clearly demonstrates that the cost of post-secondary education and increasing debt levels are significant factors. Even more significant was the finding that students from lower income households are much more likely to be affected by financial issues in making decisions. There is also concern that students from certain sub-populations such as Aborigines and Acadians may be disproportionately burdened by accessibility issues.

Apart from financial barriers, other issues related to accessibility include: access to diverse learning opportunities; recognition of prior learning experiences; facilitation of access for disabled students; and transition "pathways" between high school, college, university, and the work force.



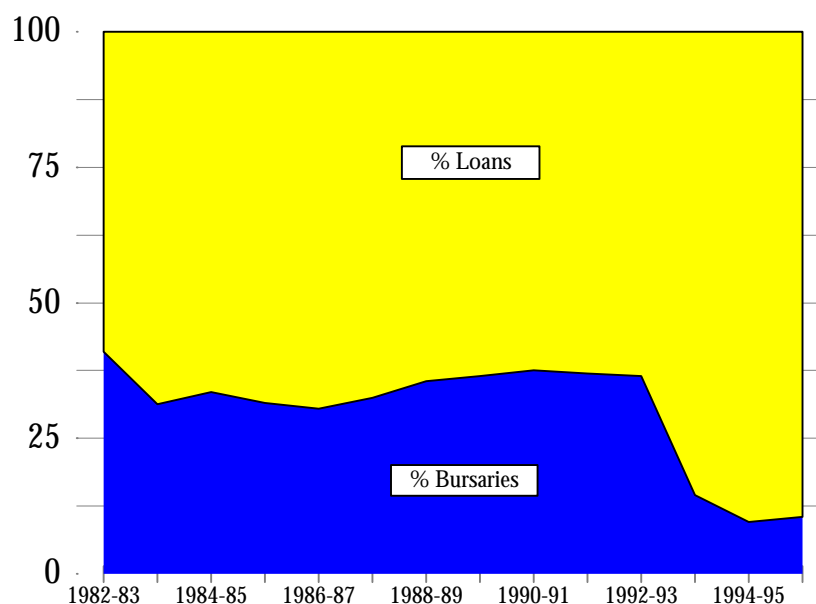
## Transitions from K-12

The Commission's focus is on post-secondary education and subsequent transition to the workforce and the community. However, the quality and appropriateness of K-12 skills preparation and student guidance has a major impact on the readiness of incoming post-secondary students. In this context, post-secondary education student attrition is a concern. Further data is needed to distinguish between students who drop out on a permanent basis from those who are changing institutions or simply taking time out (e.g. a unique student identifier that will enable us to track student flows more effectively). Nevertheless, the current level of attrition raises questions about the quality of student preparedness, guidance prior to entry, and support while in the post-secondary institution. Participants at a recent forum on Skills in the Knowledge Economy suggested a need for opportunities for interaction and feedback between post-secondary and K-12 teachers, administrators and counsellors on reasons for post-secondary attrition rates and what could be done to address these reasons.

## Financial Aid/Student Indebtedness

Maritime students have consistently used student loans as the primary source of income to finance their post-secondary education. Indeed, 50% of students in the Class of 1996 borrowed money through a government student loan programme to finance their education compared to 49% who borrowed in the Class of 1995. Moreover, since 1992-93, the structure of financial aid has changed significantly, moving more toward loans and away from bursaries, shifting the financial burden from governments to students. This is illustrated in Figure 11.

**Figure 11**  
Student Aid  
- Maritimes -  
(Loans and Bursaries as a Percentage of Total Student Aid 1982-1995)



Source: MPHEC and Maritime provincial governments, Student Aid - Total Assistance provided to students, resident of a Maritime province, studying in Canada (95-96 data are estimates).

In addition to a growing student population in debt, aggregate data reveals quite clearly that the amount of money students are borrowing is also on the rise. Figure 11 reveals that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students taking on particularly heavy debt loads. In 1993-94, for example, there were less than 10 students in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick together who had student debt of \$30,000 or more in their final year. In the three year period through to 1996-97, this number increased more than 100-fold to 994 students.

Assuming that government policies and other unseen variables do not intervene to modify the context within which students currently operate, the Commission predicts a continuing trend towards increasing debt loads for students graduating over the next 10 years. This gives rise to a need for better data and analyses of the extent and distribution of debt as a factor in accessibility. Specific attention will need to be paid to the impact of new initiatives such as the Millennium Scholarship Fund.

<b>Cumulative Debt - Maritimes</b>				
<b>- Bachelor's Students in Final Year -</b>				
<b>(1993 - 1997)</b>				
	<b>Number of Students Graduating in...</b>			
	<b>1993-94*</b>	<b>1994-95</b>	<b>1995-96</b>	<b>1996-97</b>
<b>Cumulative Debt Level Since 1988:</b>				
\$0-10,000	1,674	1,644	1,293	1,251
\$10,000-\$15,000	1,195	922	737	695
\$15,001-\$20,000	1,346	1,120	808	711
\$20,001-\$25,000	428	957	918	674
\$25,001-\$30,000	63	332	695	756
Over \$30,000	8	103	333	994

Source: Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission & Provincial Governments

\*New Brunswick and Nova Scotia only; data for PEI unavailable

Source: Accessibility to Post-secondary Education in the Maritimes report prepared for the MPHEC by the Angus Reid Group.

## **Employment concerns**

Students are motivated in part by anticipated labour market outcomes. On behalf of the Commission, Angus Reid conducted a survey of the graduating class of 1997. The results showed that almost all (93%) students said it was "very important" for them to pursue a post-secondary education, as it would improve their chances of finding a "good job". Labour market outcomes become especially important when considering the level of debt students incur in pursuing a post-secondary education. Students are thus increasingly concerned about the possibility of finding gainful employment upon graduation.

The 1997 survey of the university graduation class of 1996, conducted by Baseline Market Research on behalf of the Commission shows some improvement in this situation. The survey found that the Class of 1996's unemployment rate was 13.4%, down a full percentage point from that of the Class of 1995. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the Class of 1996 had jobs, most of which were full-time positions. The vast majority of graduates who had employment were in a position either directly (50%) or indirectly (31%) related to their studies.

The links between quality, timeliness, relevance, and skills are also critical. The major challenge here is the rapidity of workplace and technological change and the length of time it takes to bring a student through the post-secondary education process. There is a need to continue to strive to provide graduates with the best possible balance of core competencies (critical thinking, communications, work organization etc.) and specialized knowledge. There is also a need to heighten employer and student awareness of just how these

varied skills fit into employment possibilities. The recent use of Career Portfolio/Skills Transcript approaches is only one example of efforts being made in this direction.

### **2.3 Post-secondary “System” Challenges**

The quality, accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education is not just a matter for individual institutions or government departments. This is a case where the “sum” can often be greater than its parts. Collaboration on common issues is required to maximize benefits and to increase the range and scope of post-secondary learning opportunities across the region. Governments, institutions, and other stakeholders (particularly students) all have a unique contribution to make. There is a need to balance respect for academic expertise and responsibility of each institution with public concerns about overall cross-institution system balance, accessibility and cost-effectiveness.

Post-secondary institutions in the Maritimes continuously adapt their programmes, policies and strategies to meet changing learner needs. The increased assumption of costs by students is shifting the focus from post-secondary education as public infrastructure to post-secondary education as a market-driven product or service. Customization to meet consumer demands is driving institutions towards a broader range of more specialized and multi-disciplinary programmes. In addition, the increased focus on employment transitions is fuelling the debate about the most appropriate balance between core competencies and job-specific skills. Faculty and infrastructure renewal also present major challenges after years of budgetary reductions. In this kind of environment, each institution faces the challenge of competing with all other institutions both nationally and internationally for students, faculty, and infrastructure support. Together, they also face the challenge of maximizing their cost-effectiveness through niche development and collaboration.

Governments also have a critical role to play in improving the effectiveness, responsiveness and public accountability of post-secondary education. As noted in the *CMEC Report on Public Expectations*, “governments play an important role in post-secondary education, one that respects the distinctive and often autonomous management of post-secondary institutions and academic standards, as well as the broad public interest” (p. 7). Specifically, governments exercise their responsibilities by working with institutions and others to develop and implement appropriate policy, legislation, funding, quality and accountability approaches. They are also best placed to identify and maximize the benefits of post-secondary education and research in the achievement of socio-economic priorities.

Other stakeholders – students, parents and the public-at-large – can and should have a significant impact on the evolution of Maritime post-secondary education opportunities by providing information about their needs and, above all, through choices made among a range of options.

The following are only some of the major “system-wide” challenges facing all post-secondary education stakeholders:

#### **Reductions in Canada Health and Social Transfer**

Universities have suffered from an unprecedented decline in their core budgets over the past several years. One of the major factors in this decline has been federal cuts to transfers for post-secondary education. These cuts have hit the Maritime provinces hard. If one assumes that 30% of the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) is in support of PSE, these reductions come to \$62 million in Nova Scotia, \$50 million in New Brunswick and \$9 million in Prince Edward Island (Association of Atlantic Universities). The impact of these cuts on Maritime universities has been profound. They have seriously undermined the ability of

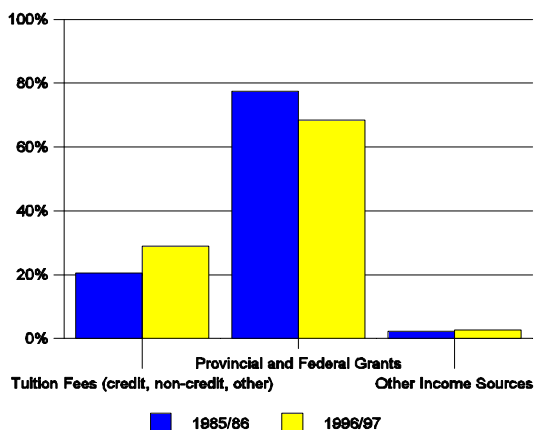
Maritime post-secondary institutions to ensure accessibility for all qualified students, to deliver high-quality education and to ensure necessary research capacity.

Representations are currently being made both regionally and nationally in support of a restoration of the education component of the CHST similar to that made recently in the health component. The Commission's data, information and analytical capacity will be made available as required to support these critical representations.

**Shift in Funding Sources**

Funding to cover the operating costs of universities is almost entirely derived from two sources: direct operating grants from governments and student fees. Post-secondary education costs are increasingly being paid by students rather than by governments. Figures 12, 13 and 14 show how in each province, tuition contributions to the general operating budgets of universities have significantly increased between 1985-86 and 1996-97, while at the same time government contributions have significantly decreased. This raises questions about the potential impact on accessibility and the most appropriate balance between government funding and tuition levels in the Maritime context. Comparability with institutions in other provinces also needs to be monitored.

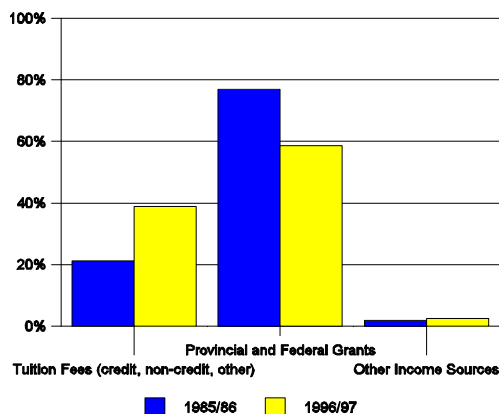
**Figure 12  
New Brunswick**



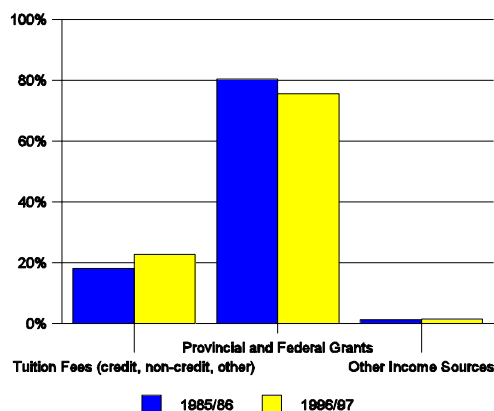
**Competition for government and non-governmental opportunities**

In addition to the CHST, there is a need to promote Maritime post-secondary education priorities relative to other federal and provincial initiatives more effectively. Examples at the federal level include: the Millennium Scholarships, Granting Council programmes, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, Technology Partnerships and so on. Access to support from non-governmental organizations such as business and charitable foundations is also an issue. There is a need to increase Maritime influence on expert boards particularly where programme priorities and design are concerned. In this context, it should be noted that there are significant differences between central Canada and Maritime socio-economic needs. Policy and

**Figure 13  
Nova Scotia**



**Figure 14  
Prince Edward Island**



Source: CAUBO

programme design that can work relatively easily elsewhere –such as the need to find matching funds from external (presumably business) partners -- present major difficulties here. The result is relatively poor accessibility. In this context, stakeholders need to work together to develop and promote approaches that will respond more effectively to the Maritime context.

### **Policy information and action**

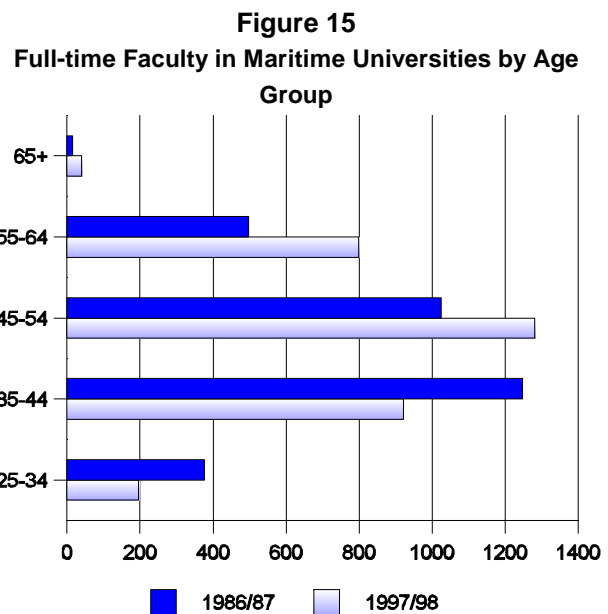
Post-secondary education is only one of many sectors (including health and transportation) that are competing for government attention and funding at both the provincial and national levels. In this context, there is a need for information-based analyses on the impacts of various funding and policy scenarios, such as: educational quality; accessibility; achievement of government socio-economic priorities; and the ability to attract and retain qualified faculty, researchers and graduates. These analyses have to include cost-drivers at the PSE level. There is also a particular need to improve understanding of the complex interrelationships between quality, national competitiveness, tuition levels and student access and assistance eligibility. More extensive efforts will be made by the Commission to promote timely and policy-related data and information to governments and institutions.

Post-secondary institutions are critical contributors to the social, economic and cultural life of their communities and the region as a whole. “Three elements –accessibility, quality, and research capacity –must be strengthened if Atlantic Canada hopes to diversify and compete in an economy based on knowledge and innovation” (Association of Atlantic Universities). More specifically, however, there is a need to build actual and potential contributions – particularly in the area of research and innovation – into national and provincial initiatives to attract new investment, enhance economic activity and improve social conditions in each of the Maritime provinces. Specific efforts are needed to factor post-secondary contributions into provincial, federal and non-governmental programmes as a key factor in their ongoing success. In most cases, this is an issue of inadequate communication about work underway and potential linkages.

### **Increased competition for students, faculty and graduates**

Increased demand for relevant work-related training, customized delivery, and placement support is driving the rise and competitive positioning of private training institutions. Examples include the entry into Canada of private sector institutes from other countries. They also include the trend in Europe towards company-based institutions (e.g. British Telecom and British Aerospace in the U.K. and Daimler-Benz in Germany). This adds further stimulus to institutional competition and customization. Pressures for job-related assurances or placement services similar to those given by private institutions can be expected to increase. Universities will also increasingly seek to position themselves more competitively by entering into cost-recovered partnerships with private institutions – working with rather than against these new entities. All of these trends point to a need to promote more effectively those benefits that are best attained through university studies and to show how these relate to workplace transitions, quality of life, and employability.

Faculty renewal is also a growing concern in the Maritimes as faculty retire. Figure 15 compares full-time faculty at Maritime universities in 1986-87 and 1997-98 by age group. The graph clearly shows that the number of faculty 54 years of age and above has dramatically increased from 1986 to 1998, while the number of faculty between 25 and 44 years of age has decreased significantly. Some jurisdictions (notably Ontario) are already actively searching out the “brightest and the best”. Innovative recruitment measures (including infrastructure and support) will be needed, given the relatively smaller size of Maritime institutions and limited corporate support in this region. Changes in faculty composition (tenure-track, gender balance, sessional or adjunct) are also attracting increased attention regarding potential positive/negative impacts.



Retention of graduates is also an issue. The “Survey of 1996 University Graduates”, completed in February 1998, found that about 87% of graduates who had lived in the region prior to attending a Maritime university stayed in the region afterwards. The situation is, however, becoming more competitive. Comparatively lower Maritime wage rates are promoted as an attractive feature for incoming businesses; however, they could also increase the difficulty of attracting and retaining top-notch graduates and knowledge workers to sustain communities and businesses over the longer term. It will be important to monitor trends across Canada as well as in the Maritimes to support effective government and institutional actions.

### Infrastructure backlog

A recent report of the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology states: “*The degree to which Canadians excel in the advancement of knowledge will determine our success in economic growth and social progress*”. Universities have an important role to play, in this respect, as educators of our future leaders and researchers, and as a source of the basic research competence and knowledge essential for future development. Up-to-date and safe infrastructure is critical to support knowledge and innovation development.

Years of financial cutbacks have led to a substantial backlog in physical plant maintenance and updating. Annual decreases in funding have meant that even the top priorities could not be dealt with. There is also the issue of research infrastructure required to sustain the quality of scholarship and research in Maritime universities. The cost of scientific journals and essential research materials (particularly those that have to be purchased with U.S. dollars) has outpaced inflation.

As competition for national research infrastructure dollars and for new faculty picks up, it will be important for post-secondary institutions to have the infrastructure they need to remain nationally competitive. Consequently, building a strong university research infrastructure in the Maritimes should be encouraged and innovative measures will be needed to stimulate greater national awareness and interest in Maritime potential and capacity. A particular issue here is the difficulty in the Maritimes of raising the required matching funds for federal programmes (such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation) compared to other provinces. In this context, it is critical that Maritime universities at least maintain their current research

strengths if research is not to end up primarily as a function of a “big ten” of central Canadian universities - with a consequent negative impact on Maritime innovation and development. There is also a need to strengthen and expand research quality and capacity to support achievement of socio-economic priorities in each of the Maritime provinces.

### **Growth in information and communication technologies**

We are in the midst of the Information Age. More and more children are using computers before they start formal schooling; more and more adults are classified as knowledge workers; articles and books have been written about the Learning Organization; there is a growing discipline called Knowledge Management. Lifelong learning is becoming a necessity. Multidisciplinary fields of study are emerging such as e-commerce, biotechnology, information, geoscience and learning technologies. These are some of the early impacts of the phenomenal technological growth that has put immense communication and computing power within the reach of the average person. Traditional post-secondary education institutions have begun to respond to this growth. However, the challenges posed by technological growth are only beginning to be felt. While the nature of the impact of computing and communications technology on today's post-secondary education institutions is difficult to predict, it is clear that it will be immense.

Technology and infrastructure are means to an end. They open up new avenues of access, particularly for part-time, work force or rural learners. They also, through new research infrastructure, increase the range of possibilities for knowledge and socio-economic growth. The rapidity of change in these two areas is forcing institutions to continuously upgrade their infrastructure, often at considerable expense, just to maintain their current levels of competitiveness. Students, faculty and partners look for the “newest and the best”. Ultimately, competitiveness requires strategic reinvestment that at least approximates what is happening elsewhere in Canada. This means maintaining the Maritime “edge” on learning technologies and electronically-mediated learning and applications. It means cooperation and sharing of facilities to maximize potential, through such collaborative arrangements as the New Brunswick/PEI Educational Computer Network (ECN) initiative.

### **2.4 The Challenge of “Competitive Collaboration”**

Each stakeholder group (institutions, governments, students and public-at-large) has a different perspective on each of the major environmental issues raised above. At a government level, there is the challenge of promoting the value of a PSE investment within the context of all the other government pressures. Data, information and analysis are essential to assist Ministers with informed policy, programme, investment and public accountability decisions. From an institutional perspective, there is also a need for information or support for more informed decision making. Students also need access to information to guide them in choosing from a range of options.

It is clear that demographic challenges are driving each institution to compete with every other institution for students, faculty and support. The fact remains, however, that Maritime institutions, even the largest, are considerably smaller than most institutions elsewhere in Canada. Strategic collaboration is essential to maintain a nationally competitive edge across the Maritimes. Most importantly, a collaborative environment is essential to providing Maritime learners with the best value for their own and the public's investment. In this environment, the Commission's most important challenge is to provide the information and analyses needed to effectively promote mutual understanding and sound decision-making.

### 3. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

#### 3.1 Mission Statement

The Commission's first step in dealing with its renewed mandate and the environment in which it has to be implemented was to develop a new Mission Statement that would enable it to refocus its activities more effectively. This Mission Statement reflects stakeholder consultations held in the Maritimes during the renewal process leading up to the 1997 Agreement. It also reflects the values or "principles" agreed to by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) in February 1999 in its "A Report on Public Expectations of Postsecondary Education in Canada".

#### MPHEC MISSION

As an Agency of the Council of Maritime Premiers that provides advice to Ministers responsible for Post-Secondary Education in the Maritimes, the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission:

***Assists institutions and governments in providing the best possible post-secondary learning environment***  
that reflects the following values

- ? Quality –continuous improvement in the quality of programmes, institutional practices, and teaching
- ? Accessibility –programme, delivery, and support services that optimize PSE availability
- ? Mobility –portability of learning and credits throughout the PSE system in the Maritimes
- ? Relevance –effective and responsive interaction among "learners," the work force, and the community
- ? Accountability –evidence of value, sustainability, and cost-effectiveness of public and learner investment
- ? Scholarship and Research - commitment to the pursuit of knowledge

#### 3.2 Organizational Renewal

Years of uncertainty about the Commission's mandate have led to considerable skepticism. There are also widely diverging views about just what the Commission's "value-added" as a collaborative agency should be. There is therefore a high-priority need to get "behind" the words of the Agreement and the new Mission Statement to a more concrete consensus on value, expectations and deliverables. The success or failure of the renewed Commission will ultimately depend more than anything else on its ability, with the support of its stakeholders, to redefine itself and to build bridges across the expectations gap that has developed during the "holding pattern" years.

In this context, the Commission's most critical challenges are to:

- ? *build shared understanding, consensus, and collaboration among PSE stakeholders.* This implies building consensus about the "value-added" that the Commission can bring to each and all of its stakeholder groups through implementation of its renewed mandate and mission. There are widely divergent views as to the Commission's role, particularly between post-secondary institutions and governments – with the former leaning towards a purely facilitative role and the latter towards more active support for public accountability and outcomes. Students also look to the Commission for advocacy on their issues and concerns. In all cases, there is a need to work out more clearly just what it is that each stakeholder receives for its cooperation and investment. Continuing and



intensive dialogue will be undertaken throughout this planning period to achieve consensus on the most effective approach to the Commission's new mandate and mission.

- ? *rebuild and leverage staff capacity:* During the "holding pattern" years, the Commission operated without a full-time Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Staffing was also postponed pending appointment of the CEO and achievement of a stable operating budget. This has seriously undermined capacity to deliver on expectations. Staffing is now underway with emphasis on acquiring the range of competencies needed to achieve the new mandate and mission. Staff capacity, even when rebuilt, will still be limited by funding constraints. This means that a more intensive effort will be required to leverage limited internal capacity with external partnerships and investments. Ultimately, this leveraging should increase buy-in, results, and the perception of value-added.

These two challenges relating to the Commission's organizational environment will require up to two years of intensive effort, mainly focussed on consultation, dialogue and the achievement of consensus. These efforts will underlie and permeate efforts to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the section below.

## 4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### *Achieving Results –What and How?*

In addition to the rebuilding exercise described above, the Commission will, during this planning period, seek to achieve four specific goals and objectives that are derived from the “principal functions” outlined in the 1997 Agreement. These are: 1. Quality Assurance; 2. Data and Information; 3. Cooperative Action; and 4. Funding Arrangements.

#### 4.1 Quality Assurance

The Commission, since its inception, has played a key role in ensuring that Maritimers have access to a broad range of quality programmes by approving (funding) new programmes, reviewing modified programmes, designating regional programmes, buying seats outside of the region for Maritime students, etc.

As a result of students’ increased financial participation in their education, the scarcity of public funds, and overall reduced levels of government funding, the quality of the educational process has become a major issue for students, governments and taxpayers alike, while, for the same reason, concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of the process have also increased significantly. The new context has led the Commission to develop a new policy aimed at providing both students and taxpayers with some assurances regarding the quality of programmes offered here, while maintaining activities such as the administration of regional programmes and interprovincial agreements.

#### **Quality assurance**

Impressions about quality are a key factor in student, employer, faculty, and public support choices. Multiple sources of information are available ranging from peer experiences and university calendars to measures found in such sources as Maclean’s Magazine (e.g., grades on entry, faculty-student ratios, library purchases, employment results). “Who to believe,” and on what basis, are increasingly critical questions in a globalized, competitive market. In this context, the Commission’s status as an arm’s length agency puts it in an excellent position to provide assurances that are independent of institutional marketing efforts and that are based on an agreed-upon set of assessment criteria.

The Commission’s *Policy on Quality Assurance in Higher Education* is based on two major considerations. On one hand, the policy recognizes that post-secondary institutions are autonomous institutions that are responsible to their boards for designing and implementing quality programmes for their clients. Responsibility for improvements and response to new requirements is theirs in the first instance. On the other hand, the policy also recognizes the fact that stakeholders (governments, students, taxpayers, etc.) have a legitimate need for assurances about the quality and cost-effectiveness of institutional programmes and services that they use and help to pay for. To balance these two perspectives appropriately, the Commission designed its policy to bring together two major tools: a review of individual programmes prior to implementation and a new programme to monitor institutional quality assurance policies. These two quality tools work together and should also be complemented by an ongoing effort to identify and disseminate information about effective quality practices.

The programme review process is intended to help institutions improve the quality of specific programmes and ultimately to assure potential students, employers, and the public at large that the programmes students

are enrolled in, and graduate from, meet agreed-upon standards of quality (appropriate programme structure, human and financial resources, adequacy of infrastructure etc.). The objective of the review is to ascertain the suitability of the programme given its objectives, structure, institutional appropriateness, resources, stated student outcomes and relevance. The review also provides a regional context for the programme and ensures that regional programmes are appropriately designated and that unwarranted duplication is avoided.

Programme approval by the Commission can support institutional recruitment efforts. It also gives assurances to students and governments about the value of programmes they support financially. A recent review of this process resulted in the institution of a “cursory review” approach for proposals meeting pre-determined criteria. This has reduced the time frame for assessment from three to six months to under four weeks; it has also increased the level of delegation and staff responsibility. This effort to streamline the process is intended to allow institutions to respond more quickly to labour market and student demands. More complex proposals are put through an external, peer review process. These usually result in significant improvements in the quality of the proposals and greater buy-in across the Maritimes, particularly in the case of regional programmes. In addition, institutions are expected to review approved programmes at regular intervals as specified in the approval decision.

A parallel process to monitor institutional policies and practices in the area of quality assurance has been designed through consultation with all stakeholder groups, and will be implemented during this planning period. The purpose of this initiative is to help institutions ensure that they have quality assurance policies and practices that meet international benchmarks while respecting each institution’s unique mission and circumstances. This new monitoring process should also provide a baseline with regard to institutional practices concerning quality of teaching. The Commission will have to explore whether it needs to focus on quality of teaching specifically, or whether this will be achieved through the overall monitoring process. The ultimate purpose of this exercise is to promote awareness of effective practices and continuous, recognized improvements in the quality of post-secondary education. There is also the issue of processes for rationalizing programmes for which there is declining demand.

### **Academic planning**

The Commission’s activities in this area are linked to the objective of offering the widest possible array of programmes while respecting fiscal realities. This includes avoiding unwarranted duplication as much as possible and involves designation of certain programmes that are unique in the region as “regional”. This is achieved through the programme approval process described above. With regard to avoiding unwarranted duplication of programmes, the Commission emphasizes the need to optimize the use of limited resources in the region. The Commission addresses issues associated with programme duplication through several variables. Among these are: geographical and linguistic accessibility for students; institutional differences, uniqueness and capacity; impact on the financial viability of the submitting institution; institutional programme niches and leadership in programme areas within the Maritimes; range of programmes required for any institution wishing to call itself a university; overlap of programmes and programme areas between the community college and university systems; and determination of programme need and impact within the context of the existing environment, both internal and external. The external environment includes examining the possibility of collaboration with other institutions. The range of offerings is also expanded through the administration of agreements with other provinces (Québec, Ontario) to guarantee seats (in a number of health professions for francophones, and in optometry, for example) for students from the region.

## Challenges

Several challenges affect the implementation and use of the Commission's Quality Assurance Policy. The first one is limited public awareness of the policy. Although the Commission has been approving programmes since its inception in 1974, the Commission's external approval is to some extent a well-kept secret. There is, therefore, a need to increase the public's awareness of the process. Another challenge is to arrive at consistent compliance by institutions across the Maritimes with the programme approval process. It is easier not to go through a voluntary process than to do so. Compliance sometimes is an issue where an institution wishes to be "first off the mark" with a programme or when it is developing a cost-recovered partnership with a private sector institution. The third challenge is to achieve an appropriate balance between two apparently contradictory objectives, that is, encouraging institutions to offer an appropriate array of programmes while respecting fiscal realities.

The new programme for reviewing institutional quality assurance policies and practices can also be expected to give rise to a number of challenges and issues, notably, the challenge of using this new review process effectively to help foster continuous institutional quality improvements. Here again, promotion of public awareness of the value of the Commission's involvement in quality assurance is essential to obtain maximum benefits from this policy for the Maritimes.

The current Quality Assurance Policy will be reviewed in January 2000. Prior to that date, consultations (possibly in the form of workshops) will take place with institutions and government officials to identify ways to improve achievement of objectives and efficiency of implementation.

<b>GOAL 1:</b> Provide assurances regarding the quality and range of programmes offered by institutions within the Commission's scope	
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
? Provide assurances that programmes developed by institutions within the MPHEC's scope meet agreed-upon quality criteria	? Programmes implemented by institutions within the MPHEC's scope meet agreed-upon quality criteria
? Confirm that institutions within the MPHEC's scope have appropriate policies and practices to ensure the on-going quality of their programmes	? Institutions within the MPHEC's scope have appropriate quality assurance mechanisms in place
? Facilitate and promote cost-effective, regional availability of the broadest range possible of programmes	? Maritimers have access to a broad range of programmes in the Maritimes
	? Unnecessary programme duplication is avoided

## 4.2 Data and Information

The Commission has long been recognized in the Maritimes and nationally as an invaluable source of data and information on post-secondary education. Its publications and services (encompassing enrolment data, financial forecasting, graduate outcomes, and more) have been widely used by decision-makers in the region and beyond. Stakeholders have increasingly relied on the Commission for up-to-date data and analysis about post-secondary education in the region and have also come to expect useful policy-related research.

## **Data collection, management and dissemination**

Over the past few years, requests for information have more than doubled to approximately 600 requests per year from a broad range of stakeholders: governments, the public, students, faculty, institutions, national organizations, etc. Many of these requests require analysis and integration of data from a range of resources. Sophisticated, client-friendly, web-based approaches are needed to respond cost-effectively to this growing need. A new web-based system is therefore at the heart of the Information Framework initiative, begun in the fall of 1996.

Key challenges of this initiative include:

1. Establishing agreement on what data to collect, how each element should be defined, to whom it should be presented, and for what purposes;
2. Designing and developing a data management system that will provide comparable, timely, accurate and client-sensitive data and information;
3. Facilitating data collection from institutions through coordination of various data collection initiatives to minimize the reporting burden;
4. Ensuring a dynamic, flexible, robust system to meet present and future information needs.

Ongoing data and information functions include response to inquiries, maintenance of various databases, production of data products, liaison with other initiatives concerned with post-secondary education, and ensuring an effective technology environment.

The Information Framework data management system is being developed in two phases, along with the ongoing work of the sector. The development phase is expected to end on March 31, 2000 with the end of budgeted special project funding. A two year transition phase will carry us through the completion of the project, with most or all of the approximately 90 approved elements in place at the end of that period. Subsequently, ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the system will be incorporated into the continuing work of the Commission in providing quality information services and products.

The Commission may extend the scope and value of its data in various ways. Examples include the possibility of including Community College data in its ESIS collection efforts, working to implement a National Student Number, and working with the Maritime provinces to obtain detailed student aid data. Developing new ways of presenting information via the Internet and enhancing data products and services will also be key to meeting expanding stakeholder needs.

There are a number of policy issues and challenges as well. Key among these are ensuring that personal privacy is protected at all times and that sensitive institutional information is kept confidential. Ensuring that information is used for purposes appropriate to its nature and quality is also essential. In some cases, this may require the addition of a strategic and qualitative framework for interpretation of data.

## **Monitoring and analysis of trends**

### *PSE data analysis*

Not only is value added to the data by making it more easily accessible and relevant to user needs, but it is essential to develop quantitative and qualitative measures which are then monitored to identify outcomes and trends that require further analysis and research. The Commission strives to provide stakeholders with the data, information, and analyses needed to support strategic decision-making and policy development,

foster improved accountability, and enhance analysis and research. Data must be combined and presented in a way that informs stakeholders about key issues in a cost-effective manner. The uniqueness of each institution's mandate and community context must also be factored into the interpretation of data. This must be balanced with measures that support better understanding of the regional (system-wide) nature and development of the post-secondary sector and that also facilitate benchmarking of the region within the national context.

In this context, the Commission will continue to collaborate with federal, provincial and international bodies to ensure maximum coverage with minimal duplication of effort. This is essential to maintain the Commission's leadership role in providing advice to stakeholders. The challenge is to focus on key areas where change can be effected with the ultimate goal of supporting post-secondary education institutions and benefiting the learner community.

### *Financial analysis*

Another key objective in this area is to more actively foster the use of MPHEC's financial services and expertise. The Commission's ability to act as a "collective memory" on post-secondary financial information is of considerable value to stakeholders. The Commission has long been a central repository of financial data and information on PSE and houses the expertise needed to provide financial analyses on a variety of areas. Because of its "arm's length" mandate, the Commission is able to provide these analyses from a neutral perspective.

### **Conducting policy-related research**

The Commission's research programme needs to be focussed on key policy areas that are best looked at from a regional perspective, working to enhance and build on other initiatives at the provincial and national level. Four priority areas have been identified as special projects over the next three years. Other projects (such as K-12-PSE transitions) may be added as the need arises and resources become available. These projects are:

#### *Graduate Follow-up Survey Programme*

Ongoing, longitudinal surveying of graduate outcomes and satisfaction with their post-secondary education has been identified as a priority. The programme includes surveys one, five, and ten years after graduation. In 1999, a three-year-out survey of the class of 1996 will be conducted to develop expertise in longitudinal studies, while providing useful data on graduate outcomes. A new cohort will be developed with every third graduating class.

#### *Follow-up to the Accessibility Study*

Another area of increasing concern involves accessibility to post-secondary education. The objective of the proposed follow-up is to better understand the determinants of the decisions to pursue or not to pursue post-secondary education within the 18-24 population, with a view to providing governments and institutions with information and pathways to action.

### *Post-Secondary Research in the Maritimes*

This project seeks to improve the positioning of Maritime post-secondary institutions in national research. It includes the development of an overview of the scope of Maritime research, its niche areas, the degree of access to grants, investment and partnerships, and current and potential contributions to the achievement of social and economic priorities as well as future challenges.

### *Workforce Transition*

There is increased interest in better understanding the needs of employers so as to facilitate and improve linkages between employers and post-secondary institutions. This project may involve targeted focus groups in major Maritime employment sectors (oil and gas, forest management, IT, health sciences); this could lead to an MPHEC conference focussed on this theme. The purpose would be to exchange information on needs, expectations, converging interests, and to promote more effective research, training and placement policies and programmes. Partnerships are being explored with the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC), and others.

<b>Goal 2:</b> Provide stakeholders with “value-added” data, information, and analysis	
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
? Provide quality, comprehensive, relevant and timely information	? Enhanced support for informed public policy, programme and accountability decisions
? Identify, analyse and research key post-secondary education issues	? Ready access to diversified, accurate, useful information and research in a variety of formats
? Make effective use of information and communications technology to simplify and improve data collection, storage and dissemination	? Increased stakeholder satisfaction with data and information provision
? Provide financial/funding information and analyses as required	? Financial analyses available to decision-makers

### **4.3 Stimulating Cooperation**

Cooperation and collaboration have always been one of the objectives of the MPHEC. Commission, committee and workshop meetings all support increased understanding and collaboration. The Commission has also used a number of other vehicles, and in particular the MPHEC Conference, to promote dialogue. In addition, the Commission supports Maritime government and institutional representatives, as appropriate, in their participation in national fora, including working groups of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC).

In this context, the following committees should be noted:

<b>Maritimes</b>	<b>National</b>
? Finance Committee	? CMEC Research Working Group
? Information Framework Advisory Committee	? Policy Research Secretariat Fora (PCO)
? AAU-MPHEC Academic Advisory Committee	? Strategic Management Committee (CMEC)
? Atlantic Advisory Committee on Health Human Resources (AACHHR)	? Working Group on Data Quality (Statistics Canada)
? New Brunswick/Prince Edward Island Educational Computer Network	
? Comité provincial des sciences de la santé du Nouveau-Brunswick	

Discussions with stakeholders also indicate a need for more concerted action in specific areas. One area that has been suggested by a number of institutions is facilitation of access to information about ever-changing federal and other funding programmes. The Maritimes do not currently receive a proportional share of national grants, particularly in the area of research and infrastructure. It is difficult for smaller institutions in particular to follow changing federal funding opportunities and requirements. The Maritimes are also disadvantaged in any “matching funding” initiative by the fact that their economy is dominated by small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Programme design that impedes access is also an issue that might be addressed effectively by an arm’s length, regional agency. Generally, the challenge is one of raising the national profile of Maritime capacity and PSE-related needs.

Another challenge involves the need to leverage limited provincial funds for the Commission’s special projects, such as the Graduate Follow-up Programme and the Accessibility Study. These projects provide clear knowledge benefits to a range of stakeholders. Yet, in the past, the sole source of funding has been the Maritime provinces. An effort is needed to develop new partnerships and investments to reduce provincial costs and increase the value of proposed projects. A side effect of this effort would undoubtedly be increased buy-in by external partners with respect to action on issues identified through the special projects. In this context, some staff time would need to be devoted to the writing of funding proposals for Commission initiatives (e.g. to Industry Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, etc.).

It is anticipated that there will also be a continuing need to support cross-Maritime working groups and task forces on specific issues. Emerging areas include the Task Force on Physical Education (Kinesiology, Recreation Leisure Studies, and Health Education), education programmes, and the use of technology to improve access including support for specialized training given in the French language. Workshops could also be conducted in areas of shared interest.

Finally, it is possible that more active, information-based support for government participation in national initiatives and consultations (e.g. CMEC work on research outcome indicators and expectations response or national policy research consultations) could also produce benefits by increasing awareness of Maritime post-secondary education strengths. It could also help improve access to opportunities, particularly funding opportunities. A small amount of strategically targeted staff time would be required to support expertise and contacts available through Commission members themselves.



<b>GOAL 3:</b> Promote and facilitate cooperation and collaboration within the Maritimes and with other provinces and external partners	
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
? Ensure that learners have access to high- need high-cost programmes not offered in their language in the region	? Access by Maritime learners to high-cost, high-need programmes not offered in their language in the region
? Develop and manage inter-provincial agreements cost-effectively	? Increased dialogue and action on Maritime post-secondary issues regionally and nationally
? Increase awareness of and dialogue on Maritime PSE issues and opportunities both in the Maritimes and nationally	? Increased collaboration among Maritime PSE stakeholders, including increased regional administrative and policy coordination initiatives and an increase in cost-efficiency as a result of these initiatives
? Facilitate development of cost-effective and collaborative Maritime approaches to PSE administration, programmes and policies	
? Facilitate access to opportunities for external funding and knowledge partnerships	? Increased funding for Maritime PSE initiatives

#### 4.4 Managing Funding Arrangements

Managing regional and other inter-provincial funding agreements continues to be the responsibility of the MPHEC. There are also province-specific funding responsibilities for the provinces of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. (This service is provided in Nova Scotia by the Nova Scotia Council.) In 1998-99, the province of New Brunswick was also provided with detailed analyses of the impacts of potential post-secondary institution funding scenarios. For 1999-2000 and 2000-2001, there will be a need to provide some staff and information support to that province for its Multi-Year Funding project. Following completion of the project, changes will likely also be required in MPHEC financial management processes for New Brunswick.

It should be noted that Goal 4 includes activities related to finances not previously accounted for in the business plan. For example, the administration of the NB-Québec agreement and the Tripartite Agreement on Optometry are accounted for under Goal 1 dealing with accessibility to quality programmes; the administration of the NB-PEI Educational Computer Network and seeking external funding for Maritime PSE-related activities are accounted for under Goal 3 dealing with cooperation.

<b>GOAL 4:</b> Manage funding of regional programmes and provide financial analyses and services	
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>OUTCOMES</b>
? Administer funding arrangements for regional programmes and inter-provincial agreements	? Regional and inter-provincial funding arrangements managed effectively and appropriately
? Foster use of MPHEC's financial services and expertise by stakeholders	? MPHEC's resources and expertise are used effectively to add value to provinces requiring assistance
? Ensure equitable accounting of expenditures and revenues	? Provinces' financial accountability objectives are met
? Effectively deliver requested services and analyses	? Clients are satisfied with financial services and analyses

## 5. RESOURCE PLAN

### 5.1 Purpose of this Section

This is the first Multi-Year Business Plan to be submitted through Deputy Ministers responsible for Education in each of the three provinces to their Ministers for approval. This section provides details on revenues, expenditures and human resources that are required to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in the preceding sections for the 2001 through 2003 fiscal years. Information on the 1999-2000 fiscal year is included to provide a basis for comparisons.

When approved and finalized, this section will be used to prepare a more detailed 2000-01 Base Budget Submission to Regional Treasury Board. Estimates for 2001-02 and 2002-03 will also be put forward to Regional Treasury Board for "Reference" or Planning approval (subject to adjustments through annual budget discussions). This document will also serve as a basis for provincial decisions on special project funding provided through direct provincial contributions. Differing funding mechanisms (e.g. Regional Treasury Board as compared with direct provincial contributions) are outlined below under 5.2.

### 5.2 Funding Mechanisms

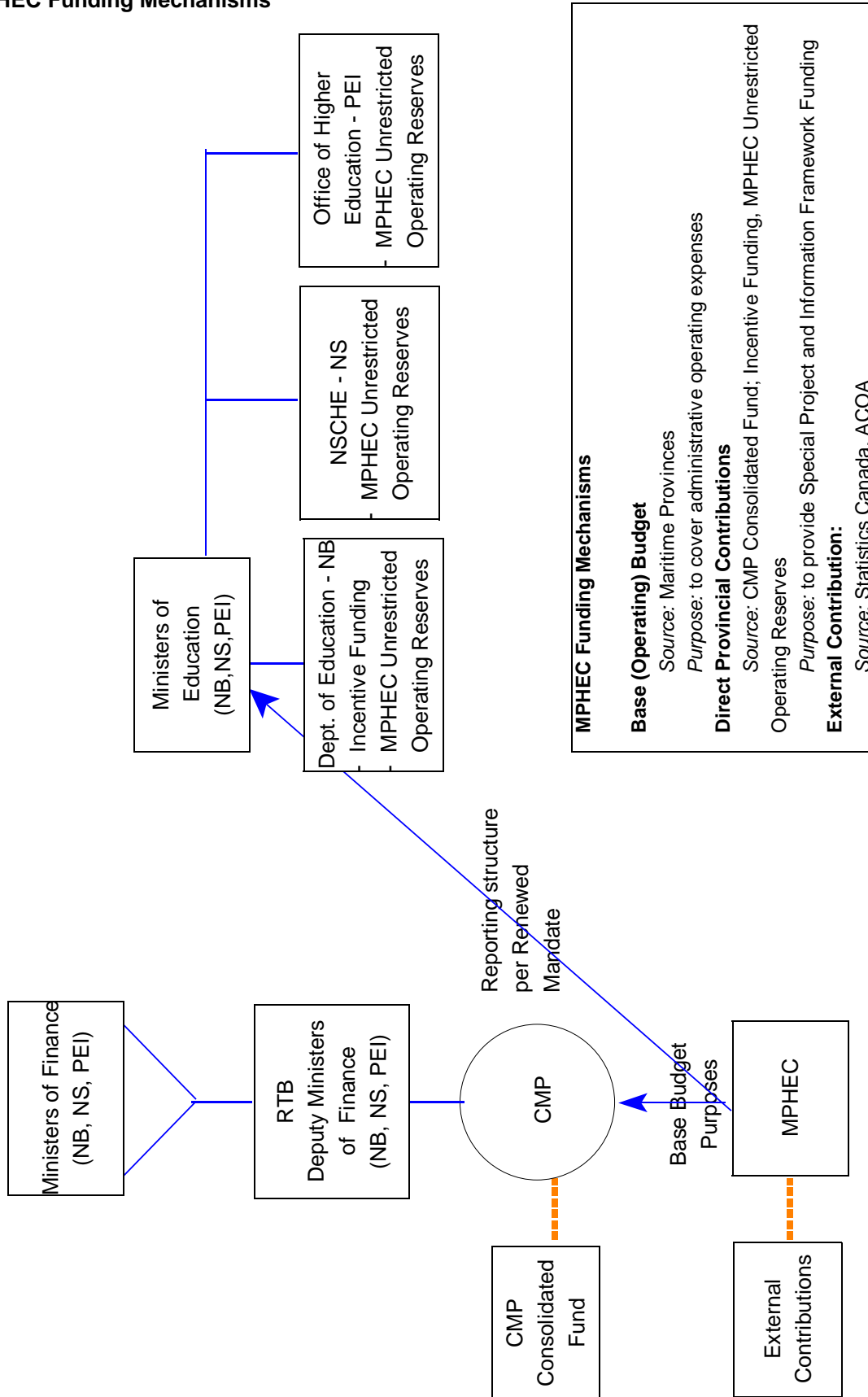
Figure 16 provides a visual representation of the MPHEC Funding Mechanisms, which include Base (Operating) Budget, Direct Provincial Contributions, and External Contributions.

? **Base (Operating) Budget:** As an agency of the Council of Maritime Premiers (CMP), the MPHEC is required to submit its budget annually to the CMP for approval by Regional Treasury Board (RTB). In addition, under the renewed mandate, the Commission is accountable to the Ministers responsible for post-secondary education in each of the three Maritime provinces.

The Maritime Information Framework Project has been funded exclusively via Direct Provincial Contributions since work began in 1996-97. The total budget requirement for that year was funded from the CMP Consolidated Fund. Since 1997-98, the Provinces of NB and NS fund their annual contribution to the project through a combination of direct contributions and a transfer from the CMP Consolidated Fund. The Province of PEI funds its share totally from the CMP Consolidated Fund. The total funding commitment for the pilot phase of the project is \$991,000. The Commission will be requesting an increase in its base budget from Regional Treasury Board after completion of the pilot in 2000-01. This incremental request relates directly to increased technical complexity and scope of the new system.

? **External Contributions:** As outlined in Section 4.4, the Commission is interested in devoting more time and effort to developing new partnerships and investments to help leverage limited provincial funds and increase the value of MPHEC's special projects, such as the Graduate Follow-up Survey, the Accessibility Study etc. To-date (1999-2000 fiscal year), an amount of \$45,000 in Special Project funding has been secured from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and it is expected that Statistics Canada will renew the existing contract to June 2000 for the Enhanced Student Information System (ESIS) project.

**Figure 16**  
**MPHEC Funding Mechanisms**



### 5.3 Resource History

#### Financial

Like all institutions involved in post-secondary education, the Commission struggled to maintain operations through more than five years of uncertainty and budgetary cutbacks. Cumulative cuts in the Administration Budget from 1974-75 came to 39% by 1998-99. In 1999, Regional Treasury Board agreed to increase the Commission's base from \$792,617 to \$917,141 to support refocused responsibilities under the Agreement. It was noted at the time, however, that this proposal did not include ongoing technical maintenance (operating costs) for the new and more complex Information System which are being covered off until the end of fiscal 2001-02 through special project funding (direct provincial contributions). As promised in the 1999 budget submission, incremental (new) system maintenance requirements beyond 2001-02 have now been identified.

#### Human Resources

No change is proposed in the Commission's ongoing FTE authority. This authority has remained relatively stable at 11 FTEs since the creation of the Commission. Budgetary restrictions had, however, systematically reduced the Commission's ability to absorb the costs of staffing core positions. The result was that the Commission operated from 1984 to 1999 with approximately 7-9 permanent FTEs. Key positions were not filled. The infusion of new operating funds in 1999-2000 has remedied this situation (except for salaries and contract moneys needed to support the more complex information system after development has been completed in 2001/2002). Positions have been redefined to fit the renewed mandate and staffing to 11 FTEs is underway.

As noted above under financial resources, special (additional) funding has been made available from 1997 through 2000-01 for the development of a new and more complex Information System. A portion of these funds has been used to staff 3-5 term (additional) positions for this project. Some of the functions performed by term staff will however continue beyond the expiration of special project funding, including more sophisticated institutional coordination requirements; need to run parallel systems for three years to support application of funding formulae; and the need for ongoing technical support (e.g. programming web-base design, and LAN administration expertise).

In this Business Plan, ongoing FTE requirements related to the management of the new Information System have been integrated within the authorized 11 FTE complement. Two term positions (out of the current five) have been redefined and integrated into a long-term 11 FTE human resource plan. It is expected that salary, benefit and overhead costs associated with these positions can be funded through a combination of Base and Special Project funding until 2001-02. It is proposed that additional operating funds be provided in 2002-03 to support contracted (term) support in the more specialized areas such as programming, LAN administration and web-design on an as-needed basis. It is estimated that these professional services costs would be in the range of \$88,000 per year. These are incremental requirements directly related to the new and more complex system. This estimated base adjustment will continue to be reviewed for each year of the multi-year funding plan prior to a request being made to RTB for funding in fiscal year 2002-03.

#### Workload

As noted in the preceding section, this business planning exercise had to take into account major increases in workload over the past five years. Examples include:(a) an increase in programme approval submissions from an average of 19 proposals per year five years ago to more than 70 per year and climbing; and (b) an increase from approximately 300 to 600 data requests per year. In addition, under the revised Agreement,

new responsibilities have been added including a new programme to review institutional quality practices and the new requirement for business plans. It is anticipated that workload will continue to increase with the new Information System. As basic data becomes more easily accessible, it is expected that there will be increased demand for more specialized data, information and analyses.

#### 5.4 Resource Plan

This section provides more detailed information on the resources needed to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in this Multi-Year Business Plan. The recently approved Budgetary Submission for 1999-2000 was used as a base for developing subsequent year financial plans. Certain other assumptions have been made:

- ? There will be unavoidable year-to-year cost increases in Base Funding requirements in such areas as rentals (increases built into lease arrangements), salary increases (based on CMP salary scale steps), translation, printing etc. Adjustments have however been made to restrict the total estimated inflationary increase below 1.5% per year.
- ? Staff complement will be maintained within the authorized 11 FTEs . No new FTEs are requested.
- ? There is a need for additional operating funds to sustain the new and more complex Information System after the special project phase is completed (2001-02). FTE requirements will, however, be absorbed within the approved 11 FTEs. Additional operating funds will be used primarily to support specialized professional services and technical infrastructure (programming, web-design adaptation, etc.).
- ? Special Projects will continue to be funded through supplementary funding (listed as "Other Provincial Contributions or "Transfer from Consolidated Fund" in Table 1) that is provided on an as needed basis (per approved Commission project proposals) each year. These include such projects as the Graduate Follow-up Survey Programme and the Accessibility Study. This approach is taken because of significant year-to-year fluctuations in costs. Estimates for currently approved projects listed under Goals and Objectives are factored into this Financial Plan.

The Commission's Financial Advisory Committee has been involved in the analysis of financial requirements and the recommendation of year-to-year adjustments. The Information Framework Advisory Committee has also been involved in the development of estimates for the Information Framework Project and the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the new system.

The attached tables provide the following breakdown for 1999-2000 (base year) through 2002-03:

Table 1– Proposed Revenues and Expenditures

Table 2– Workload (FTEs) –Distribution by Goal

**TABLE 1**  
**PROPOSED REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES**

	<b>1999-2000</b>	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2001-02</b>	<b>2002-03</b>
	<b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Budget</u></b>	<b><u>Budget</u></b>
<b>Revenue</b>				
Base Funding (note 1)	917,141	917,141	930,898	1,069,255
Information Framework Funding				
Deferred Revenue (note 2)	246,829	104,053	-	-
Transfer from Consolidated Fund	21,934	50,413	8,500	-
Direct Contributions	0	139,374	4,845	-
Other Provincial Contributions (Special Projects)	190,000	299,500	364,900	284,000
Management of New Information Systems (note 3)	-	-	-	87,993
Recovery from ACOA (note 4)	45,000	-	-	-
Recovery from Statistics Canada (note 5)	60,000	15,000	-	-
	<u>1,480,904</u>	<u>1,525,481</u>	<u>1,309,143</u>	<u>1,441,248</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>				
<b>Administration</b>				
Salaries & Benefits	625,670	682,610	637,402	669,339
Operating Costs	426,755	420,631	426,941	443,345
New IF System Maintenance				
Operating Costs (note 6)	-	-	35,550	44,564
<b>Special Projects</b>				
Graduate Follow-up Survey	150,000	151,500	153,000	154,500
Public Satisfaction Levels	10,000	-	-	10,000
Research Capacity	75,000	-	-	-
Accessibility Follow-up Study	-	148,000	18,750	-
PSE - Workplace Transitions	-	-	-	82,000
Ongoing Information System Development	-	-	37,500	37,500
<b>Information Framework</b>				
Operating Costs	128,784	83,090	-	-
Development	64,695	39,650	-	-
	<u>1,480,904</u>	<u>1,525,481</u>	<u>1,309,143</u>	<u>1,441,248</u>

**Notes**

- 1 Base funding increased by 1.5% per annum for inflationary costs on non-discretionary expenditures (based on estimates contained in the NB Multi-year Funding Plan) and anticipated salary step increases. The estimate for fiscal year 2000-01 also includes a correction for an underestimation of the CEO Salary & Benefits costs provided as supplementary funding in the 1998-99 budget year.
- 2 Relates to carry over of unspent contributions related to the Information Framework Project
- 3 Anticipated amount of additional funding to be requested from RTB for ongoing management of new information systems. No additional FTE's are being requested. Salaries relating to systems management and development were covered under the pilot project funding to 2000-01. The Commission's 1999-2000 budget submission to RTB indicated that the ongoing operational budget requirement will need to be built into the base budget.
- 4 Funding provided for project on Research Capacity
- 5 Funding provided relating to Statistics Canada ESIS project.
- 6 Includes costs for specialized professional support as needed for general programming, web site design & programming, expansion of data elements and hardware.

**TABLE 2**  
**WORKLOAD (FTE'S)**  
**OPERATIONAL BUDGET - DISTRIBUTION BY GOAL**

	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE
<b>Strategic Directions and Administrative Assistance</b>	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.25
<b>Quality &amp; Academic Planning</b>	2.35	2.35	2.35	2.35
<b>Regional Programmes/Funding</b>	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
<b>Cooperation</b>	0.45	0.45	1.35	1.35
<b>Data, Information &amp; Analyses</b>				
D-base Management, Services & Products	3.15	3.15	2.25	2.25
Monitoring and Research Projects	1.40	1.40	1.40	1.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>11.00</b>	<b>11.00</b>	<b>11.00</b>	<b>11.00</b>

\*Based on expected results of actuarial pension valuation (due April 15, 1999), the employer's share of superannuation has not been included in the benefits estimate of 9%. Next actuarial valuation due 3 years hence.

	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
	FTE	FTE	FTE	FTE
<b>Information Framework Development</b>	4.00	4.00		
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>		



**AN AGREEMENT RESPECTING THE  
RENEWAL OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION  
CONCERNING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**Between** Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of New Brunswick, as represented by the **Minister of Advanced Education and Labour**;

**And** Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of Nova Scotia, as represented by the **Minister of Education and Culture**;

**And** Her Majesty the Queen in Right of the Province of Prince Edward Island, as represented by the **Minister of Education**.

(Hereinafter at times called the Provinces)

**A. INTRODUCTION**

The Provinces acknowledge the significant role in the development of post-secondary education fulfilled since 1973 by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission. Through this agreement and following consultation, the Ministers responsible for post-secondary education in each of the Maritime provinces reaffirm their commitment to cooperation in post-secondary education matters, and set out key points of agreement as to the manner and mechanisms by which that cooperation shall continue.

**B. REGIONAL AGENCY**

1. Provinces agree to continue to provide for the operation of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission as a regional agency for post-secondary education.
2. Provinces agree to amend the parallel legislation in effect in each Province so as to give effect to the points set out in this agreement.
3. Provinces agree that until such time as the parallel legislation is amended, the points set out in this agreement under the headings below shall provide an orientation and framework for the activities of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission.
4. The Commission will continue to be an agency of the Council of Maritime Premiers.

## **C. PRIMARY ORIENTATION - SERVING A CHANGING LEARNER COMMUNITY**

1. In carrying out its functions, the Commission will be asked to give first consideration to improving and maintaining the best possible service to students as life-long learners.

This includes:

- (a) assuring that programs of study are of optimum length and best quality;
- (b) stressing prior learning assessment and recognition, and credit transfer, to implement the principle that duplication of effort should not be required in order to gain credit for learning which has been successfully accomplished;
- (c) providing for smooth transitions between the learning force and the labour force;
- (d) providing equitable and adequate access to learning opportunities, including making those opportunities available at times and places convenient to the learner;
- (e) assuring teaching quality.

## **D. PRINCIPAL FUNCTIONS**

Provinces agree that the principal functions of the Commission will be as follows:

### **1. Quality Assurance**

The Commission will undertake measures intended to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of academic programs and of teaching at post-secondary institutions included within its scope.

These measures may include the review of institutional practices for assuring continuous improvement in the quality of academic programs and of teaching, and making recommendations to institutions and governments.

### **2. Data and Information**

The Commission will ensure that information is collected, maintained and made available for assuring the public accountability of post-secondary institutions within its scope, and to assist institutions and Provinces in their work.

This may include:

- (a) establishing data and system standards;
- (b) establishing public reporting requirements, and producing public reports;
- (c) carrying out studies in regard to public policy, institutional concerns, and issues related to post-secondary education, and providing advice to institutions and to governments on these matters.

### **3. Stimulating Cooperative Action**

The Commission is expected to take initiatives to stimulate cooperative action among institutions and governments where such action is likely to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Maritimes' post-secondary education system.

This may include:

- (a) encouraging initiatives for institutions to offer joint, complementary and regional programs; and
- (b) encouraging administrative, financial and common service arrangements which reduce the overhead cost of programs, and the overall costs to students and to governments.

### **4. Administration of Regional Programs**

The Commission will continue to develop and administer funding transfers among Provinces for regional programs, and may develop and administer funding arrangements for programs outside the region as required to provide additional educational opportunities for students from the three Provinces.

## **E. OTHER SERVICES AND FUNCTIONS**

1. The Commission may provide other services or functions to one or more institutions or Provinces as set out in its business plan.
2. Provinces agree that the determination of funding policy is a matter for each Province to decide. The Commission may be asked by Provinces to provide advice or services to them for determining funding policy or for providing funding in support of post-secondary education.

## **F. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESOURCES OF THE COMMISSION**

1. The Commission is funded by the Provinces and is accountable to them, reporting to the Ministers responsible for post-secondary education.
2. The basis for the funding and accountability of the Commission shall be a multi-year business plan.
3. The Commission's business plan will outline by function the planned activities of the Commission, the expected results from those activities, and the resources required in order to carry them out.
4. The business plan will be updated annually, and submitted for approval in August of each year to the Ministers and Deputy Ministers responsible for post-secondary education. It shall clearly identify the resource requirements for the government fiscal year which begins the following April, including an appropriate sharing arrangement among the provinces based on regional and provincial-only services provided by the Commission and in conformity with any budget instructions provided through or in cooperation with the Council of Maritime Premiers.
5. Following advice from the Ministers responsible for post-secondary education in each Province a base budget for the ongoing operation of the Commission will be established by the Council of Maritime Premiers, and a special projects budget may be established in a similar fashion.
6. Ministers and Deputy Ministers responsible for post-secondary education will from time to time review the performance of the Commission considering its approved business plan.

## **G. SCOPE**

1. The Commission will focus on university education, including primarily those programs which recognize successful completion by conferring a degree.
2. This scope may be modified with the consent of the Ministers responsible for post-secondary education in each of the Maritime provinces.
3. Provinces agree to further review the potential for cooperative arrangements among the three Provinces for Community College and similar programs. Until that review is complete, community college programs should not require the approval of the Commission.

## **H. COMMISSION OPERATION**

1. The Chair of Commission will be separate from the Executive Head of Commission staff.
2. Provinces agree to carry out a national search for the Executive Head.
3. The Chair will rotate every two years among the Provinces, beginning April 1997.

## **I. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION**

1. The present composition of the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission will continue, except that:
  - (a) The Chair will be chosen from among the nineteen members of the Commission rather than appointed as a twentieth member, and
  - (b) The Executive Head will be an ex-officio member of the Commission.

## **J. LEGISLATION**

1. Ministers will examine legislative requirements necessary to give effect to this Agreement. The target date for completion of necessary legislative changes will be April 1998.

## **K. TERMINATION OF AGREEMENT**

1. This agreement continues until the legislation referred to above comes into force in all three Provinces, at which point it will terminate.

## **L. COMING INTO FORCE OF THIS AGREEMENT**

1. This agreement comes into force when ratified by the Council of Maritime Premiers and signed by the Minister responsible for post-secondary education in each Province.

THIS AGREEMENT DATED THE \_\_\_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_, 1997

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hon. Roland MacIntyre  
Minister of Advanced Education and Labour

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hon. Robert S. Harrison  
Minister of Education and Culture

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Hon. J. Chester Gillan  
Minister of Education

**ORIGINAL SIGNED ON JUNE 22, 1997**

**MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR DES PROVINCES MARITIMES**

Institutions within the purview of the MPHEC - Établissements qui relèvent de la CESPM

**NEW BRUNSWICK/NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK**

MARITIME FOREST RANGER SCHOOL  
R.R. #10  
Fredericton, NB E3B 6H6

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY  
65 York Street  
Sackville, NB E4L 1E4

ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5G3

UNIVERSITÉ DE MONCTON  
Moncton, NB E1A 3E9

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5A3

**NOVA SCOTIA/NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE**

ACADIA UNIVERSITY  
Wolfville, NS B0P 1X0

ATLANTIC SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
Halifax, NS B3H 3B5

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY  
Halifax, NS B3H 4H6

MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY  
Halifax, NS B3M 2J6

NOVA SCOTIA AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE  
Truro, NS B2N 5E3

NOVA SCOTIA COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN  
Halifax, NS B3J 3J6

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY  
Antigonish, NS B2G 1C0

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY  
Halifax, NS B3H 3C3

UNIVERSITÉ SAINTE-ANNE  
Pointe-de-l'Église, NS B0W 1M0

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF CAPE BRETON  
Sydney, NS B1P 6L2

UNIVERSITY OF KING'S COLLEGE  
Halifax, NS B3H 2A1

**PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND/ÎLE-DU-PRINCE-ÉDOUARD**

HOLLAND COLLEGE  
Charlottetown, PE C1A 1P4

UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND  
Charlottetown, PE C1A 4P3