

MARITIME PROVINCES HIGHER EDUCATION COMMISSION
University Participation High in Maritime Region

The Maritime provinces' reputation for having a high university participation rate got solid support from a report released today, June 24.

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission's report *University Participation: A Maritime Perspective*, found that universities in the region attract high numbers of students from within and outside the Maritimes, and a high proportion of Maritime youth (age 18-24) attend university here or elsewhere in Canada.

Measuring the proportion of the population that enrolls in university is an important method for governments, universities, and the public to get a sense of whether qualified students have access to a university education. It is also a marker of future economic prosperity, given its link to future educational achievements.

Over the past 25 years, overall participation in Maritime universities has more than doubled to 34 per cent, eight points greater than the national average. Overall participation rates by province were: Nova Scotia, 39 per cent; Prince Edward Island, 25 per cent; and New Brunswick, 28 per cent.

"What we have shown in this paper is that no single measure of participation will accurately cover all the questions and perspectives on this issue," said Mireille Duguay, chief executive officer of the Commission. "Anyone engaged in dialogue about access and participation will need to take into account, for example, the geographic origin of students."

Ms. Duguay said students from outside the region make up about 27 per cent of enrolment, contributing to high overall participation in Maritime universities relative to the number of Maritime youth. This effect is strongest in Nova Scotia.

"From another perspective, however, we found that if we look at Maritimers who enrol in university anywhere in Canada, participation is also at or above the national average," said Ms. Duguay.

The paper explores other important participation factors, such as, from the early 1980s, the participation of women increased faster than men, leading to today's 10-percentage-point difference between the sexes.

The paper is available on the Commission's website at www.mphec.ca.

The Measures of Student Progress and Outcomes project is funded in part by the Canadian Council on Learning. A working group of institutional researchers from six universities in the region is helping the commission develop areas of measurement for the project,

including persistence and graduation rates, and course success.

The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission was established in 1974 to assist institutions and governments to enhance the post-secondary learning environment. The Commission's 19 members are from the Maritime provinces and represent higher education institutions, provincial governments and the general public.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

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Chief executive officer of the Commission Mireille Duguay says students from outside the region make up about 27 per cent of enrolment. She says the report also found that if Maritimers who enrol in university anywhere in Canada are included participation is also at or above the national average.

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