



## Media Release

January 25, 2018

### **ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY'S BOARD CHAIR AND PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR RESPOND TO THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW BRUNSWICK'S MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING WITH PUBLICLY FUNDED UNIVERSITIES**

### **STU CANNOT AGREE TO THE MOU THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF NEW BRUNSWICK IS SIGNING WITH UNB, MTA AND UDEM**

*St. Thomas University Board of Governors Chair Peter Forestell, QC, and President and Vice-Chancellor Dawn Russell issued the following statement on the announcement that the Government of New Brunswick and three publicly-funded universities have reached agreements on memoranda of understanding on tuition and funding.*

We are disappointed that St. Thomas University has not yet been able to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of New Brunswick on tuition and funding.

As the Government is aware, STU students are underfunded within New Brunswick when compared to students attending UdeM, MTA, and UNB. This situation was recognized and prioritized for correction in 2007 by the Commission on Post-Secondary Education. The Commission concluded that "St. Thomas clearly suffers from a funding anomaly that needs to be addressed" as the university is "supported at a level well below the other universities in the province."

While previous Provincial Governments have recognized the funding anomaly and taken incremental steps towards a resolution, we have been unable to make any progress with this Government. Given the importance of the issue, our Board of Governors has directed that STU not sign any agreement that does not make progress in correcting this funding inequity.

St. Thomas University's operating grant is currently 89% of the provincial average in terms of operating grant per-weighted full-time student. Among the provincial universities, STU is an outlier and should be closer to the provincial average. This means that on an annual basis, STU's annual operating grant is \$1.4 million lower than it should be. This circumstance has been recognized by successive Provincial Governments as evidenced by incremental adjustments to STU's operating grant over the past ten years that began to narrow the funding gap but which still fall short of correcting this funding inequity.

As a result of this situation, STU students—the vast majority of whom are from New Brunswick—receive less financial support for their education from the Province of New Brunswick than other New Brunswick students. They even receive less financial support from the Province of New Brunswick than out-of-province students attending New Brunswick universities.

This is a public policy issue that begs a basic question of fairness and equity — Why does the Government fund in-province and out-of-province students at other New Brunswick universities more generously than New Brunswick students attending STU? The lack of a coherent government policy on funding and tuition is damaging.

St. Thomas University will continue to deal proactively with its fiscal challenges as it delivers a world-class education as demonstrated this past summer by the success of our undergraduate students in beating students from Oxford, Yale and Buenos Aires to win the world championship at the Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition.

STU has a strong track record of frugal fiscal management and low debt levels. It is a challenging period for post-secondary education and we have been dealing aggressively with fiscal challenges. The difficult decisions we have made in recent years have served to maintain and enhance our calibre of education. We have taken \$500,000 of costs out of our budget, and any new spending has targeted academics and student services.

STU has been working quietly to resolve this issue but must speak out now because of the potential impact on our students. We take the Premier at his word that education is his government's priority. Here is a chance to put words in to action and to fix a long-standing problem. Students have done their part in paying more tuition. STU has done its part in keeping costs as low as possible. Now we are asking the Provincial Government to address this inequity that has been recognized by an independent government commission.

As part of the proposed MOUs, there is an agreement for universities to appear annually before the Legislative Assembly. STU would welcome the opportunity to appear before any committee of the Legislative Assembly to speak to this issue more fully.

We have a key meeting set for next week with departmental officials and have also requested a meeting with Premier Gallant to discuss options for a plan to begin to correct this unfairness.

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## **STU QUICK FACTS**

- STU's liberal arts enrollment is the largest in New Brunswick and third largest in Maritime Canada
- New student enrollment has grown for three years
- First-year international student enrollment has doubled in recent years
- STU has 17,103 contactable alumni of which 10,264 reside in New Brunswick
- STU has the highest liberal arts entrance requirements in the province
- 1 in 7 first-year students receive a major scholarship
- *Maclean's Magazine* ranked STU #1 in Canada for teaching writing
- *Maclean's Magazine* ranked STU #2 in Canada for helping students think critically and solve problems
- 97% of students say they would attend STU again

A recent *National Survey of Student Engagement* survey of 79 Canadian universities found that 92% of fourth-year students rate their overall experience at STU as good/excellent.

The *National Survey of Student Engagement* survey found that STU students were significantly more likely than students at other Canadian/Maritime universities to report greater gains in their knowledge, skills, and development by learning how to:

- Think critically and analytically
- Write clearly and effectively
- Speak clearly and effectively
- Solve complex, real-world problems
- Become an informed, active citizen

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