

Post-secondary institutions play important role in attracting immigrants: Minister Holder

Universities, colleges can be 'gateway' for the opportunity for newcomers to stay in province

BY JENNIFER GOUCHIE-TERRIS



Trevor Holder, New Brunswick's minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training, and Labour.

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New Brunswick's new Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training, and Labour is determined to ensure the province has a highly educated and skilled workforce.

"It's important to have universities, colleges, and private institutions meet the demands of businesses coming to New Brunswick to set up shop," says Trevor Holder, who oversees the province's public universities and colleges, the provincial student loan system, labour, and adult learning and literacy.

"But it's also important to understand these institutions are about building better citizens," added the minister, named to his post after the Progressive Conservatives were elected in last September's provincial election.

One of his main priorities is to attract and retain more immigrants to the province and he believes post-secondary institutions play an important role in that incentive.

"Universities are the gateway to having the opportunity for students to stay once completing their education," he said. "We want to retain them and create jobs. We want to see

more opportunities than ever before."

Another of his priorities is to create an economic development climate and skilled workforce at post-secondary institutions to not only attract new Canadians to New Brunswick, but entice others to return home.

Opportunities attract business to the province which he noted is why it's vital to have a skilled workforce that's trained and ready to be deployed.

Meanwhile, Holder said he has no intentions of discarding the programs introduced by the previous Liberal government. In fact, he plans to not only study the programs currently in place to see if they're working, but also revisit those offered in the past.

"It's important to look at the programs in place to see what is working, but also those offered in the past to see if they're effective."

For example, Holder supports the tuition payback program introduced by the Brian Gallant government which he believes makes post-secondary education more accessible by providing additional upfront financial assistance to New Brunswick students.

Holder wants students to have the opportunity to work here to pay back their students loans.

“We need to make sure students have opportunities to not be strapped by debt and have access to work to pay back student loans,” he said. “I’m a big believer in the tuition payback program.”

Research and development are also important to Holder who considers universities and colleges as a place where answers are found, and the innovation that results as significant. Citing an example, he described Fredericton’s New Brunswick College of Craft and Design as a place where dynamic new ideas are created.

“It’s always that research and development that can create the innovation that’s needed,” he concluded.

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TREVOR HOLDER, MINISTER POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND LABOUR