

**SPEAKING NOTES
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SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**ON THE OCCASION OF A LUNCHEON
HOSTED BY
HER EXCELLENCY SHEILA SEALY-MONTEITH
HIGH COMMISSION OF JAMAICA**

**RESIDENCE OF THE AMBASSADOR
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High Commissioner Sealy-Monteith,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

It is a pleasure to join you this afternoon and I would like to begin by thanking High Commissioner Sealy-Monteith for hosting this excellent luncheon, and for providing an opportunity to discuss the important subject of international education. Collaboration between Caribbean and Canadian universities, notably those in New Brunswick, offers benefits to all concerned.

An international education has played a significant role in my own life, beginning with travel to Ireland to start post-secondary education. The University College of Dublin became my home away from home for an undergraduate degree followed by graduate studies in Rome. Being immersed in other cultures and languages broadens horizons and provides new perspectives.

Returning to New Brunswick to take up a teaching position at St. Thomas University, I had the pleasure of working with a number of educators, both at St. Thomas and its neighbour the University of New Brunswick, who had earned their

degrees in other countries. Dr. Russell McNeilly came to Canada from Trinidad to teach in the Faculty of Education at UNB, having graduated from the University of the West Indies. He was a leading researcher and advocate for human rights in New Brunswick and was one of the founders of the Atlantic Human Rights Centre, in Fredericton, where our friendship and collaboration continued until his passing.

In addition to his work at the University of New Brunswick and the Atlantic Human Rights Centre, Russell stayed in close touch with his alma mater. This included serving on doctoral committees for graduate students of the University of the West Indies long after he had formally retired in 1995. His situation is but one example of the possibilities that exist between the Caribbean and New Brunswick.

New Brunswick is a natural location for students and researchers from the Caribbean. Given the well-deserved reputation of the Canadian winter, this may seem counter-intuitive. However, New Brunswick is Canada's only bilingual province and thus offers post-secondary education in both English and French, the languages of the countries many of you represent.

New Brunswick has three Anglophone universities: the University of New Brunswick, which has campuses in Fredericton and Saint John; St. Thomas University in Fredericton; and Mount Allison University in Sackville. The Université de Moncton, with its main campus in Moncton and several satellite campuses throughout the province, serves the francophone community. The New Brunswick Community College also offers programs in both official languages.

It is true that Canada could be a better destination and a better sending point for students. Financial barriers represent one of the most significant obstacles that students encounter. International tuition rates for Canadians abroad are comparable to tuition rates for students coming to Canada. While the costs can be partly

overcome through scholarships, bursaries and government programs, these sources may be insufficient or even completely lacking. In addition to tuition costs, the costs of living in their host countries are often higher than they would be at home.

A second challenge for students who want international educational experience either in Canada or abroad is the bureaucratic process, which may be cumbersome and lengthy. There have been cases where students who hoped to come to Canada were not able to negotiate the red tape in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, such barriers are often reciprocal, adding to the challenges for Canadian students wishing to study in other countries.

A third challenge is that studies abroad may not be recognized for credit at home. This discourages students from attempting to spend a year or two away from their home institution if they are not certain that they will receive full credit value for their studies. It is a problem that affects both incoming and outgoing students who want to explore academic opportunities outside of those which have been negotiated between the Universities through approved formal accreditation bodies. Where studies abroad are not recognized, the cost of that time is much higher because students will have to spend more time in their home countries to complete their degrees.

One consequence of these barriers is that only 3% of Canadian students have any direct experience with international education. Most Canadian post-secondary students are neither receiving the benefit of international education through participating in programmes themselves, nor by meeting international students in their own universities.

It is important to note that the benefits of international education accrue not just to Canadians and not just to students. A positive effect is that students who

come to Canada become unofficial ambassadors for their home country's culture and values while they are here and Canadian ideals and values when they return to their homes. They also bring with them the knowledge acquired in Canada, which helps them participate in the economic and academic growth of their own countries.

Another benefit lies in the strong personal relationships formed between Canadians and citizens of other countries in the process, which endure and promote greater harmony and understanding among nations. The enriched learning environment promotes amity and friendship between individuals and among cultures.

Canada has recognized the advantages of international education and has been increasing the number of international students. The Government created the Imagine Education au/in Canada portal which provides an entry into study in Canada. Included in the information provided is a list, by country, of awards available to incoming international students, researchers, and faculty.

There are 20 funding sources listed for those coming from Caribbean countries, including the Canada-CARICOM Leadership Scholarship Program. Many of these, including the Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship and the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships, are of recent origin. In allowing international students to be eligible for these publicly funded scholarships, the Government of Canada has recognized the economic value international students bring to our country.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada changed its regulations for the international student visa program to allow students to work off campus on their student visa without requiring a separate work permit. The Canada Experience

Class allows international students who have studied in Canada and graduated from a post-secondary institution to seamlessly apply for a post-graduation work permit. This enables them to obtain the full-time work experience needed to apply for citizenship.

Finally, the Government of Canada has dedicated \$10 million over the next two years to attract new international students. This funding will strengthen the “Imagine Education au/in Canada” program which aims to promote the high quality of a Canadian education to international students.

There is still room to improve and increase exchanges between New Brunswick and the Caribbean post-secondary education institutions. There is currently no bilateral exchange programme between a New Brunswick and a Caribbean university. Reciprocal exchange agreements, where the student pays his home tuition and gets advance approval of what credits will be accepted, would be a positive first step to facilitate people-to-people exchanges. Another step would be for your governments to begin negotiations with Canada to enter into a youth mobility agreement. Canada has several of these bilateral agreements to facilitate youth study and work abroad. These are a more comprehensive framework than the institution to institution agreements between universities that would allow for student exchanges between our countries as well as working holidays.

In addition to student exchanges, we should also consider bolstering faculty exchanges. Some universities in New Brunswick have bilateral faculty exchanges where faculty members are traded, sometimes for a week or upwards of a semester. They host visiting professors who are on sabbatical from other countries. Similar agreements with Caribbean universities would be looked upon positively by faculty in New Brunswick, especially in January and February.

There are several programs to which faculty from Caribbean community universities could apply to decrease the costs associated with the exchange. Our Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has a Faculty Leadership Program, under which the Canadian host institution applies on behalf of an incoming international faculty member who is coming to Canada to do research or professional development for up to six months.

I will conclude on a positive note by stating that progress has been and is being made. The challenges which lie ahead should be viewed as opportunities yet to be fulfilled. We can all look forward to toasting further successes when next we meet.

Thank you.