



**Research Summary: Post-Graduation Employment Planning  
Cape Breton University Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management Students**

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This is a summary of research conducted by the Cape Breton Island Tourism Training Network, part of the World Tourism Institute at Cape Breton University. This research is intended to assist decision-makers and policy makers address tourism workforce issues by identifying motivating factors that lead students studying in the Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management (BHTM) program at Cape Breton University to either stay and work in Cape Breton or leave for another location.

This survey was developed to gauge the potential of BHTM students to address the Cape Breton Island tourism labour shortage by identifying factors in the decision-making process related to future employment and residency. The following questions guided this research project:

- How attracted are BHTM students to residing and working on Cape Breton Island after graduation?
- What factors have the largest influence on BHTM students' decision of where to live and work after graduation?
- What can industry operators, Municipalities, Nova Scotia legislators, Cape Breton University administration and faculty, and economic development organizations do to increase the number of BHTM students choosing to reside and work on Cape Breton Island after graduation?

This survey was completed by 186 students enrolled in the BHTM program at CBU during the winter 2023 semester. The total population of BHTM students at CBU during this period was 230. This is a response rate of 80.87%. At a confidence level of 95%, the margin of error for this survey is  $\pm 3\%$ .

Survey participants represented 12 different nationalities. 94.6% of survey participants were international students. The largest two groups of students were from India with 72 participants and China with 57 participants. There were 10 Canadian participants who were all from Nova Scotia.

### Summary of Results

International BHTM students represent a significant group of potential labour for the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. Over 88% of international BHTM students are at least considering living and working in the Cape Breton Island tourism industry after graduation. Indian students were more than twice as likely to indicate a desire to stay in Cape Breton compared with Chinese students. This survey also found that BHTM students who have spent more time in Cape Breton are more likely to want to remain after graduation compared to students who more recently arrived.

Most international BHTM students believe that there is a path to either permanent residency or at least to a long-term worker's visa. However, almost half are unclear or uncertain of exactly if or how that process would work for them.

The majority of international BHTM students are motivated in their choice of where to live and work by the presence of a job offer. Over 60% responded that they were likely to move to a location because of a job offer. If offered a competitive, full-time, and year-around job by a tourist operator in Cape Breton, 81.51% of international BHTM students indicated that they were either very likely or likely to stay

(Figure 1). Only 40% of BHTM students from Nova Scotia indicated that they would stay in Cape Breton because of a good job offer.

**If you receive a competitive, full-time, and year-round, job offer from a hotel or tourist operator on Cape Breton Island, how likely would you be to stay? (International Students)**

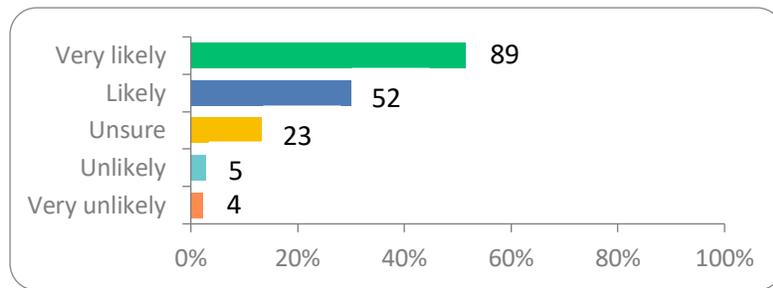


Figure 1

Participants were also asked to rate the importance of a variety of factors in their decision of where to live and work after graduation. By far the most important factor for deciding where to go was a good job offer. This was followed by having a year-around job and the quality of the local economy. Of moderate importance are having a network of friends, opportunities for socializing, being near family, and opportunities for education. Of low importance was the level of familiarity with a location, places where their native language is spoken, familiarity of the culture, existence of a romantic relationship, and the local history or culture.

### Recommendations

This research indicates that international BHTM students represent a significant potential labour pool for the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. To maximize the availability and size of this potential labour group, this research has highlighted several areas where actions could increase the number of people choosing to live on Cape Breton Island and work in the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. These include:

- Improve communication regarding immigration and work visa requirements and processes for international BHTM students.
  - CBU could regularly present or host informational sessions on immigration requirements.
  - CBU or an economic development organization could create and distribute an immigration checklist and process flow chart for international students at CBU.
- Encourage the creation of year-around (non-seasonal) tourism jobs in Nova Scotia.
  - The Nova Scotia Government and Municipalities could subsidize the hiring of year-around (non-seasonal) workers for tourism operators who typically only hire seasonal employees.
  - The Nova Scotia Government and Municipalities could encourage the expansion of seasonal operators into year-around operation through financial incentives.
- The Nova Scotia Government and Municipalities could explore the development of a pathway to citizenship that can be pursued using seasonal jobs in the tourism sector.
- CBU and the BHTM faculty could formalize and invest in a system/activity to facilitate communication between BHTM students and potential employers on Cape Breton Island.
- Highlight the Cape Breton tourism economy as growing, secure, and stable.
  - BHTM faculty could use case studies of successful Cape Breton tourism operators as in-class resources (currently in development by the CBITTN).

- All stakeholders, such as Destination Cape Breton, the Cape Breton Partnership, and Municipalities could encourage tourism entrepreneurship and investment from BHTM students.
  - BHTM faculty could highlight for their students areas of tourism growth on Cape Breton Island (ex. adventure tourism) and opportunities for investment or development in new tourism ventures including succession planning.
  - The BHTM faculty or an economic development organization could create a tourism entrepreneurship and investment flow chart for BHTM students.

This is an incomplete list of potential actions suggested by this research that could be taken to strengthen the Cape Breton Island tourism labour pool. This research can be used to support additional strategies and initiatives for addressing the tourism labour shortage on Cape Breton Island.

## Conclusion

This research shows that international BHTM students are very interested in moving to Cape Breton Island and working in the Cape Breton Island tourism industry. They represent a potentially valuable source of labour for existing tourism operators on the island. This research indicates that over 80 of the 230 BHTM students currently at CBU already know that they want to stay in Cape Breton after they graduate. Over 120 additional BHTM students are considering remaining in Cape Breton after they graduate. **If full-time, non-seasonal jobs in the Cape Breton Tourism sector are offered, there are likely over 185 BHTM students who would remain in Cape Breton from the 230 currently enrolled in CBU's BHTM program.** In short, international BHTM students are highly attracted to residing and working on Cape Breton Island after graduation.

Economic considerations are the largest factors that affect the decision of BHTM students on where to go after graduation. Chief among these is the existence of a full-time, year-around job in the tourism industry. Friendships, opportunities for socializing, and access to educational opportunities also have some influence on BHTM students post-graduation decision making.

The Cape Breton University administration and faculty, Municipalities, Nova Scotia legislators, industry operators, and economic development organizations can all increase the number of CBU BHTM students who choose to live and work on Cape Breton Island after graduation through the implementation of specific strategies, the adoption of legislation, and the development of materials to support international BHTM students in finding worthwhile employment and navigating the Canadian immigration system.