

# Work permit regulations prove costly for Canada

## Foreign graduates, who must leave if they can't find a job in 90 days, head to U.S., Australia

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Canada is losing up to two-thirds of the foreign brains it trains by making it so hard to find a job that they leave instead for other countries, warns a report to be released today.

Citing dire labour shortfalls in the health, energy and computer sectors, the report urges Ottawa to work harder to recruit international students, and give them more than 90 days to find a job here after graduating and let them work here for more than just one or two years – perhaps for five years, as in Australia.

It notes Canada has dropped to 14th place – down from once being in the top five – as a destination for the world's "globally mobile" students.

"Canada has a real problem keeping the international students we have educated, and in light of the competition from other countries, we need to fix that," said Jennifer Humphries, vice-president of the Canadian Bureau for International Education, which commissioned the report by Queen's University professor Sheryl Bond.

"There has to be a bigger national strategy around this in light of the economic competition from Australia, New Zealand and the United States," she said, noting New Zealand gives international students 18 months to find a job after graduating.

"We know many Canadian-born graduates can take up to 18 months to find a job, yet we give our international students only 90 days after graduating before we send them back – why?" said Humphries.

International students also must have a job offer before they can apply for a work permit.

Of nearly 1,000 international students interviewed for the study, only one in three said they plan to stay in Canada to live and work, largely because the process is confusing and too rushed for both the foreign graduates and the employers who would like to hire them.

"Canada is losing tons of the international students it educates to the United States, Australia and even England because we reject their application for work permits even though we've trained them ourselves," says Brent Farrington, deputy chair of the Canadian Federation of Students and an international student from the U.S., who has just graduated from an urban planning program.

In recent years, Canada has changed regulations to let international students work off-campus, and to allow them to work, if they get a job within 90 days, for up to two years after they graduate – instead of just one year – in cities other than Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.