

# Canada faces grad student crisis: report

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OTTAWA -- Universities need to increase their masters and doctoral students by 35% in the next decade if Canada wants to avoid a crippling shortage in highly educated employees, including professors, warns a national post-secondary education group.

To that end, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada is lobbying the federal government for \$319-million in new scholarship money annually, to be phased in over three years, to lure more masters and doctoral students from home and abroad.

Institutions are also increasing efforts to market Canada as an enticing destination for international students in hopes that if more come to study they will elect to stay in the country and join the high end of the labour force.

The association, representing 92 colleges and universities, recently made its pitch to the House of Commons finance committee as it hears submissions in preparation for the 2008-2009 federal budget.

"We're way, way, short. We need to produce more masters-trained and more PhD-trained students for the Canadian economy," Tom Traves, president of Dalhousie University and chairman of the association, said in an interview. "It's not a huge problem now, but it will be in 10 years."

Universities must turn out 500,000 new graduate students in the next decade -- 150,000 more than current projections -- if Canada is to keep pace internationally in the knowledge economy at a time when the country faces "a massive demographic problem" of an aging workforce, said Traves.

Not only are half the country's 40,000 professors on the retirement track and need to be replaced with other academics, the government and the

private sector are also seeking more highly educated employees, said Mr. Traves.

Universities are pressing the government to create 2,500 scholarships for international students, which would cost \$70-million annually when fully subscribed in three years.

On the domestic front, universities want Ottawa to pitch in another \$105-million annually to entice students to pursue their masters and PhD's in Canada and another \$144-million per year in scholarships for research.

On top of the scholarship funding, universities want another \$50-million annually toward sponsoring new masters and doctoral graduates in work placements.

The Canadian Bureau for International Education also has been struggling with ways to attract more students from abroad. In a report this fall, the Ottawa-based organization called on the federal government to develop a national strategy to attract foreign students and to keep them here after they graduate.

The bureau reported that Canada is slipping behind other comparable countries as a destination, receiving less than three per cent of all international students. Also, only one-third of those who come to Canada plan to stay. The study blames Canada for setting up too many bureaucratic roadblocks, including a cumbersome process of obtaining visas and a requirement that graduates must leave the country within 90 days if they haven't found jobs.

Several provinces have made concessions for foreign students in the last few years by allowing them to work and earn money while they study.