



**Response to the invitation by the Honourable Jim Flaherty,
Minister of Finance, to participate in the
Advantage Canada Consultations**

ADVANTAGE CANADA

*Building a Strong Economy
For Canadians*

From the Canadian Bureau for International Education

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The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) applauds the Government of Canada for the clear-headed and focused thinking expressed in *Advantage Canada*.

Specifically, we applaud the Government's attention to two key areas of international education: attracting international students to our education system and ensuring that international graduates of our institutions have the opportunity to stay in Canada after graduation.

We appreciate the Government's straightforward presentation of the demographic, economic and human resource imperatives that confront us and your awareness of the central role education plays in securing our future as a prosperous nation.

At the same time, we urge the Government to reflect on key elements of international education that do *not* appear in *Advantage Canada*.

We begin with rationales, then consider recent international and national statements, and conclude with proposed elements of a plan of action.

Rationales for International Education

The three key rationales for a country's engagement in international education can be summed up as follows:

- **Innovation and productivity.** Through international education in a range of forms we can enhance our capacity for innovation and our productivity. International study and work by Canadians, study in Canada by international students, international research cooperation and the sharing of learning across borders all play a role in achieving these results.
- **Economic.** International students enrolled at all levels of Canadian education contribute billions to their school districts, post-secondary institutions and local communities. Canadian educational exports bring substantial foreign exchange earnings for Canada and have huge growth potential. As well, Canada has a skills deficit in specific fields, and this

trend is accelerating and expanding to other professions and trades. As the Government states, international graduates of our own institutions are positioned to integrate successfully to our labour force and society and have much to contribute as eventual citizens. Globalization and the growth of the knowledge-based economy are rationales cited in *Advantage Canada* as “sharply increasing the importance of the skills, education and adaptability of our workforce for global competitiveness.” CBIE couldn’t agree more, and the best way to ensure such adaptability – not to mention knowledge of other cultures, intercultural sensitivity, and second and third language skills – is through international study and internships.

- **Diplomacy and security.** International mobility in both directions of students, faculty and trainers produces the skills and understanding vital to strong, peaceful linkages between our country and others and enhances the security of all. Education linkages with developing and transitional countries play a key role in building these societies and in establishing stability and peace. These connections can – and should – engage all levels of education in Canada and abroad, from K-12 to postgraduate.

The G8 Declaration

In July 2006, our Government and the G8 partners signed an historic document, enshrining educational mobility as an essential element in achieving educational systems and programs that excel at innovation.

That *education* was one of the three themes selected for the St. Petersburg meeting was significant. The prominence of *international* educational mobility and collaboration in the resulting declaration demonstrates profound recognition of their importance by world leaders.

As a signatory, Canada has agreed to collaborate on creating research networks among higher education institutions, research centres and business, and to promote international academic mobility at all levels, significantly increasing the mobility of students, teachers and researchers.

For those of us who dedicate ourselves to international education, these stated intentions are deeply gratifying and we applaud this Government for its role in the G8 declaration.

At the same time, we encourage the Government to move swiftly to plan and implement a Canadian response.

National Statements on International Education

Over the past two decades, Canadian international education professionals have looked on in awe and indeed dismay as the Governments of several countries developed strategies to enhance their education presence internationally.

Awe because, despite missteps, these strategies have been comprehensive, serious actions, with public and sometimes private sector investment behind them, and have not surprisingly yielded good results; dismay, because successive Governments here at home have paid lip service to international education and offered stopgap measures, but no overarching plan.

The frequently stated Canadian position that international education is *education*, and therefore must be a provincial matter, simply doesn't wash. International education is by definition different than domestic or national education and is just as much international *relations*, international *development cooperation* and international *business* as it is education per se.

First out of the gate was Australia, beginning in the mid-80s, with a plan to attract massive increases in its international student population, charging full fees in most cases, but offering generous scholarships to those from developing countries. Now, Australia outstrips Canada in international university enrolment despite having fewer than half the number of universities. It has also made strides in cross-border education, with numerous overseas campuses and distance education programs.

The British implemented full-cost fees in the late 80s, but at the same time brought in the prestigious Chevening Scholarships for top international students. More recently, the United Kingdom has benefited immensely from the European Union programs such as Erasmus, as students wishing to improve their English language skills flocked to UK institutions.

Prime Minister Tony Blair is arguably the first national leader to fully comprehend the breadth of international education and its ultimate importance to a nation's educational and economic health. Inspired by a trip to China where he met numerous Chinese graduates of UK institutions, in 1999 Mr. Blair declared the Prime Minister's Initiative on International Education, promising to attract 50,000 more higher education students and 25,000 more further education students from non-EU countries. The ambitious first target was actually exceeded by 43,000, though the further education goal fell short (but by a mere 1,700).

In April 2006, Mr. Blair updated his vision, announcing the Second Prime Minister's Initiative with an emphasis on building sustainable partnerships across countries. A signature component of the £27M investment is the UK-India Education Research Initiative (UKIERI). By 2011 it will provide for 50 new collaborative research projects, 2,000 Indian students enrolled in UK award programs delivered collaboratively in India, and the movement in both directions of some 700 students and researchers. Several other partnerships, with China, Africa and Russia are part of the broad package of activities. The multi-pronged design aims to allow Britain access to creativity from around the world at the same time as sharing it. Sharing knowledge is the way forward, Mr. Blair affirmed in announcing the second wave of his plan.

The United States of America is not as organized – yet. However a groundbreaking report from the Lincoln Commission aims to see federal and private funding for one million US students a year to undertake a semester or year abroad.

Citing globalization and economic competitiveness, national security, US leadership, educational value and active engagement in the international community as the top rationales, the Commission's November 2005 report, *Global Competence and National Needs: One Million Americans Studying Abroad*, outlines a broad national fellowship

program that will increase the number of Americans studying abroad from the current level (190,000 in 2003-04) to one million students a year within ten years (by 2016-17). The Commission's report states: "Our national security and domestic prosperity depend upon a citizenry that understands America's place in the world, the security challenges it faces, and the opportunities and perils confronting Americans around the world. Responding to these realities requires a massive increase in the global literacy of the typical college student." The Government of President George W. Bush has already initiated a range of new National Security Education Program Grants, focused on regions and languages critical to the national interest. Of course, the centrepiece of US international education has long been the Fulbright Program, which since 1946 has benefited thousands of students and scholars, bringing huge returns in goodwill to the US.

There are strong indications that the Lincoln Commission's recommendations will be heeded by the US Congress in the coming months.

Canada, by contrast to these three countries, has not taken international education on board as a component of its international relationship building activity and as a matter of pressing national interest. In most respects, Canada is at the starting gate.

That is not to belittle the prestigious and valuable programs offered by the Government of Canada. In fact, they are excellent and should not only be continued but reinforced. They include the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, founded in 1959 through the initiative of Canadians. Other valuable programs are the Canada-China Scholars Program and Canadian Government Awards, all of which benefit from reciprocity from partner countries – our contribution is in all cases matched by those of the partners, allowing Canadian students to go abroad as we admit and support international students, many from developing countries. Canada also participates in a range of excellent work exchanges and offers the CIDA youth internships and global partnerships programs.

However, much more can be achieved by strategic planning and modest but well-placed investment.

CBIE respectfully recommends the following international education avenues to achieve the economic goals of *Advantage Canada*:

- 1. Study Abroad to Develop International Competence of Canadians and Enhance Awareness of Canadians and Canadian Values in the World:** CBIE urges the Government to support a major International Learning Grants Program permitting Canadian university and college students to do a semester or year abroad while enrolled at their Canadian institution. While such a Program should be developed based on consultations with the education sector, CBIE has previously field-tested a model that works. As in the CBIE program, priority should be given to those for whom need is a factor and who are going to developing or transitional countries. At the college level, due to the shorter duration of their programs, support should be available for group programs and field schools that provide credit towards diplomas and certificates. The advantages for Canada are the development of young Canadians – future leaders – with international knowledge and experience, positioned to tackle the challenges of the global economy.
- 2. Scholarships for Study in Canada – Attracting Top Minds:** We urge the Government to support a substantial prestige program to bring the best and brightest to Canada, and reinvest in the existing “developed in Canada” Commonwealth Scholarship Program in time for the scheme’s 50th anniversary in 2009. Over the past decade, funding for the CSP has slipped while tuition fees have soared, with the result that half as many students now come to Canada on the program as came in the mid-90s. Examining the new British model, involving multifaceted partnerships with India and several other countries, a new program targeting strategic linkages, such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, would yield potentially huge benefits and would almost certainly attract private sponsorship leveraged from public investment.

3. **Promoting Study in Canada – the Economic Benefits:** At the same time, we urge a deepening the Government’s existing engagement in marketing and promotion, including the recent branding initiative, designed to bring privately sponsored students to Canada, as well as those sponsored by home government awards who have the choice of several destinations. This initiative must be a sustained, multifaceted program, including activity around major world events such as the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing and, especially, the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver/Whistler.

4. **International Graduates - Assets to Canada’s Labour Market and Prospective Future Citizens:** We urge the Government to support research and facilitative measures arising from the research designed to assist international graduates to settle in Canada. CBIE is currently undertaking a research initiative, with the generous support of the Canadian Council on Learning, investigating the attitudes and experiences of recent graduates alongside the views of education administrators, private sector employers and Government representatives notably those from Citizenship and Immigration Canada. CBIE expects our results, available next summer, to provide useful avenues for action in this area. At the same time, it is already clear from our research and monitoring activity that the processing of post-graduation work permits is often dilatory, unpredictable and unsatisfactory. As well, we continue to be concerned at the exclusion of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver graduates from the two-year permit even when these grads choose to work outside MTV.

5. **Development Cooperation:** School districts possess vast knowledge and experience that is not being tapped by Canada’s development authorities towards fulfilling our Education for All targets and the Millennium Development Goals. They are a neglected resource. CBIE has heard from numerous school boards that they are interested in contributing and partnering but lack the mechanism and small amounts of funding required. There are many ways in which this interest could be mobilized, such as establishing teaching teams at a distance using the Internet, within a mentoring approach, and drawing Canada’s best resources for basic education to the

field for educational planning including governance and the organization or reform of the sector. School districts wish to enter into dialogue with policy makers in Government and at the Canadian International Development Agency. This is an interest that merits prompt attention, given the urgent need for EFA and the world's slippage in meeting EFA goals: as noted by G8 leaders, interim targets for eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education have not been achieved.

6. **Exports:** Education exports are big business for Canada. CBIE alone has earned over \$2B for the Canadian education sector during the past 30 years. However, much more could be done by opening up risk mitigation and insurance programs to educational institutions and organizations. Canadian schools abroad are a growth sector, but their advance is slowed by lack of such supportive measures.

There is much ground to be made up. Yet the Government is well positioned for success. The insights in *Advantage Canada* reflect a fresh understanding of the importance of the kind of education for our citizens that builds competence and competitiveness in a global economy; of attracting more international students to our educational institutions – bringing academic benefits to them and to our own students, as well as positive economic impacts; and of international graduates as potential new talent for our society and economy. Taken a step further, these insights can lead to a broader approach yielding exponentially more benefits than can be gained from focusing on aspects of the whole.

CBIE would be delighted to provide further information on our programs and experience, generated over 40 years and blending the expertise of a cross-sectoral, multi-level education membership across Canada.

CBIE is a national non-governmental organization comprised of 200 colleges, universities, school boards, educational organizations and businesses. CBIE is dedicated to the internationalization of education and the expansion of educational partnerships between Canada and countries across the globe.

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