

**Submission to the  
Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs,  
Science and Technology**

**By the  
Canadian Bureau for International Education**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) values the opportunity to submit this brief to the Senate Committee regarding the accessibility of post-secondary education in Canada as it pertains to international students and the mobility of Canadian students enrolled in our PSE institutions.

CBIE is Canada's national, non-governmental organization dedicated to international education, a field that comprises an array of internationalization activities within Canada's education sector, and of partnerships with educational organizations and institutions abroad.

CBIE represents the full spectrum of Canadian education. Its membership is composed of 150 colleges, universities, school boards, provincial associations and organizations.

CBIE's activities comprise advocacy, research, information services for students and professionals, professional management of technical assistance and scholarship programs, professional development for international educators and a host of other services supporting member institutions' effectiveness – all of which keep CBIE at the centre of the issues related to effective international education.

CBIE's vision is to develop new generations of internationalists through access to an internationalized education.

Embedded in this vision is the belief that people-to-people exchange across national borders is one of the best ways to engender understanding and world peace.

This brief addresses access from both directions: international students inbound to Canada and Canadians students outbound.

It expands on the **value** of educational mobility to the individual, to Canada and to the countries with which we partner.

It identifies the **barriers** to access and makes **recommendations** designed to alleviate or eliminate them.

## **2. International Students in Canada**

Why do PSE institutions **value** international students to the extent that they increasingly set targets to increase their enrolment?

- International students broaden the worldview of Canadians. They enrich the academic and cultural fabric of our campuses. At graduate level they teach and conduct research. At all levels, many reach out to classmates and community to provide insights into their country and culture.

- International students from developing countries return home to contribute to the development of their communities and often society as a whole.
- International students become Canada's unofficial ambassadors to their home country.
- International students who stay in Canada post-graduation enrich our labour market with their Canadian-honed talent as well as diverse languages and cultural savoir-faire.

What are the **barriers** that prevent international students from coming to Canada?

Every five years, CBIE undertakes a national survey of international students in Canada at colleges and universities. Our most recent survey benefited from the support of DFAIT and CIC. We do this survey to 'take the pulse', to understand what the issues are, how satisfied students are, how we are doing and what we can do better to ensure their satisfaction and that of those who will come later – knowing that in enrolment much depends on positive testimonials from peers.

Bearing in mind that these are the students who have made it to our shores, the findings offer insights into the challenges that face students abroad who may be considering or wishing to enroll in Canadian educational institutions, including those who finally may not be able to come.

Our survey tells us that a top barrier is financial.

- Among the 6,000 international students currently in Canada who responded to CBIE's 2009 survey, 25% indicate that they are struggling, saying that it is often difficult to pay their living expenses.
- About 40% report problems obtaining money for living expenses and about as many report problems obtaining money for tuition fees.
- The typical international university or college student spends approximately \$14,000 annually for tuition, books and other study materials. Both college and university tuition have increased an average of about 86% in the last 10 years, well ahead of the rate of inflation in the same period.
- Below 1 in 10 of Canada's current international students come from non-affluent families (those who consider their family poorer than the average in their country). The number of students coming from such families decreased from 12% in 1988 to 8% in 2009.
- The vast majority of students are dependent on their families and/or personal savings to pay for their education: 85% of college students and 67% of university students report that parents, relatives or guardians help pay for their education.
- Only 4% of university students and 2% of college students reported receiving some funding from a government in Canada (federal or provincial).

Part-time employment can help students here in Canada to pay the bills. Canada has taken positive steps over the past five years to make it possible for international students to work during their studies through the Off-Campus Work Permit Program of CIC.

Nevertheless, both for current and for prospective students, Canada needs a much broader, bolder toolbox of scholarships and other incentives and support.

Moreover we need to open the doors to a larger group of developing country students and lower-income students from every country.

Why?

- To give Canada access to a wide range of interested and qualified students from around the world, including access to highly talented individuals who will enrich our research and potentially, post-graduation, our labour force;
- To give more students access to a quality Canadian education that will enhance their chances of success both in their own careers and in building capacity in their home countries.

In the past two years, the Government of Canada has established the Vanier Graduate (doctoral level) Scholarships, a tranche of which are dedicated to international students, and, in its 2010 budget, the Government announced a prestigious new international post-doctoral fellowship program.

As well, DFAIT has expanded the number of short-term exchange scholarships and post-doctoral awards available under the Commonwealth and Government of Canada Awards, including a major new program, the Emerging Leaders in the Americas Program.

These awards are welcome additions to the world of international exchange and post-doctoral research, and we applaud them.

However more is needed. As our survey demonstrates, a fraction of international students receive scholarships or support from Canadian sources.

And while short-term study in Canada is beneficial and DFAIT exchange scholarships are appreciated, a large number of developing countries require graduates of complete three- and four-year programs to give them the skill sets they need to advance.

Three key recommendations of the Competition Policy Review Panel, *Compete to Win* (2008), are relevant to this discussion:

- Governments should provide incentives and undertake measures to both attract more international students to Canada's post-secondary institutions and send more Canadian students on international study exchanges.

- Governments should strive to increase Canada’s global share of foreign students, and set a goal of doubling Canada’s number of international students within a decade.
- Governments, post-secondary education institutions and national post-secondary education associations should undertake regular evaluations, measure progress and report publicly on improvements in business-academic collaboration, participation in co-op programs, and the attraction and retention of international talent.

### **RECOMMENDATION ONE:**

CBIE recommends that the Government of Canada officially adopt the goal urged by the Competition Policy Review Panel double Canada’s international student enrolment within the decade.

### **RECOMMENDATION TWO:**

In order to improve access to a broad range of international students to Canadian PSE (not only those who can afford full fees), CBIE recommends that the Government of Canada substantially enhance its investment in scholarships for international students, including significant support to students from developing countries.

Another barrier stems from the lack of a national strategy and federal investment in marketing our education sector and scholarships.

International students are a value-added component of Canada’s economy.

A report commissioned by DFAIT and launched last year by then International Trade Minister Stockwell Day demonstrated that Canada derives \$6.5B annually from international student expenditures in Canada on tuition and living expenses (*Economic Impact of International Education in Canada*, July 2009). These students also created over 83,000 jobs and generated more than \$291M in government revenue. The amount spent in Canada by international students is greater than our export of coal (\$6.07B) and coniferous lumber (at \$5.1B).

While impressive, the same report quotes data showing that Canada’s world market share was less than 2.7% in 2006 and is trending downward.

A second study commissioned by DFAIT and released last year illuminates the reasons for Canada’s weak performance.

The report, *Best Practices on Managing the Delivery of Canadian Education Marketing* (September 2009), identified strong competition from six key competitor countries and “a fragmented and underfunded promotion support landscape” as the top impediments to Canadian success in attracting more international students.

This same study suggests that growth in foreign enrolment in Canada has slowed to low single digits since 2004, running contrary to much stronger global expansion of international student enrolments.

Both 2009 reports recommend expanded federal investment in international education, ensuring that “international students are recognized and supported commensurate to their importance relative to other similar sized exports of goods and services” (*Economic Impact*).

The *Best Practices* report recommends an infusion of support for promotion – at least \$22M annually.

For too long international education has been undervalued and in many quarters ignored as an element of the national economy.

Nevertheless attention has been paid to international students as a vital link in the development of Canada’s labour force. *Advantage Canada* earmarked international students and graduates as potential contributors to our talent pool. Recommendations have been made in the context of key government reviews such as the Competition Policy Review Panel and the Science, Technology and Innovation Council Report (*Canada's Science, Technology and Innovation System: State of the Nation 2008*).

What will it take to achieve our important economic and labour force objectives?

Cooperation and investment.

In regard to cooperation, a major step forward has been taken with the establishment of the Canadian Consortium for International Education Marketing (CCIEM).

The Consortium is comprised of five national associations, which together represent the vast majority of Canada’s public education institutions:

- Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)
- Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)
- Canadian Association of Public Schools – International (CAPS-I)
- Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE)
- Languages Canada

On June 29, the five organizations will sign a Memorandum of Understanding to officially launch CCIEM.

They have come together to contribute to the national objective of bringing more international students to Canada, thereby improving Canada's economic competitiveness, as well as capturing other important benefits. The organizations recognize that collective action is required to improve Canadian education institutions' competitiveness in the global education market and thereby achieve better results in institutions' individual marketing efforts. Collective action means directly involving the Government of Canada and provincial/territorial governments through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada in its steering committee and actions.

The Consortium's strategy and activities will be complementary, designed not to reinvent the wheel but to add coherence and fill gaps in Canada's marketing efforts.

CBIE is committed to working within this cooperative structure to position Canada as a key participant in international education.

However, the work of the Consortium and our Government partners cannot be done without resources.

Some investments have been made and are yielding helpful returns. However the investments are modest in the extreme. For example, DFAIT's International Education and Youth Division is allocated about \$1M per year for its Edu-Canada activity (additional funding has been added, sometimes bringing this to \$2M, but this is not guaranteed).

If Canada is to achieve significant progress in increasing our attractiveness to international students, serious investment is needed. For this reason, CBIE fully endorses the recommendation of the *Best Practices* report for a federal investment of at least \$22M per annum and commensurate investments by the provincial/territorial governments.

### **RECOMMENDATION THREE:**

CBIE recommends that the Government of Canada invest at minimum \$22M per year over the next five years to promote itself as a study destination and to attract fee-paying students from abroad.

### **3. Canadian Students Abroad**

Why do PSE institutions **value** study abroad and work increasingly hard to provide study abroad opportunities for their Canadian students?

PSE institutions worldwide recognize that they play a key role in preparing their graduates for life in a globalized economy and interconnected world.

Access to study abroad by Canadian students, in the context of their Canadian post-secondary studies, is more than ever seen as an essential component of college, undergraduate and graduate level education.

However the participation rate is appallingly low.

The most recent data show that under 3% of Canada's university students and only 1.1% of our college students participate in study abroad programs offered by their home PSE institution.

CBIE, with support from HRSDC, undertook a study over the past year to understand why so few PSE students in Canada take advantage of their institutional study abroad programs and to identify the ways and means to change the status quo.

The study was important because CBIE and our member institutions firmly believe in the transformational quality of the study abroad experience.

We also believe that international study by our students is increasingly needed. Given the overwhelming global challenges faced by the new generation of students and graduates, a broad worldview, underpinned by direct substantive experience of diverse cultures and alternative concerns, is crucial.

For Canada, as a trading nation, it is vital to develop graduates with a rich knowledge of other cultures and languages who can successfully do business abroad.

The findings of our new study, *World of Learning: Canadian Post-Secondary Students and the Study Abroad Experience* (2010), are both gratifying and troubling.

We were pleased to learn that many education professionals, both staff and faculty members, value study abroad and encourage it. As well, study abroad is valued by the general public – a national public opinion poll revealed that 90% of Canadians believe that it is valuable and should be available to a broader swath of our population. Most also believe that financial support should be available, so that lack of a relatively small amount of money does not stand in the way of a globalized education for motivated students.

Clearly study abroad is not seen by Canadians as an elitist activity, but rather as one that by circumstance is available exclusively to an elite – a situation that needs to be rectified.

A strong majority of students also appreciate the importance of study abroad and would like to undertake it. But many, though keen at first, abandon the option part-way through their study program.

What are the **barriers** faced by these initially enthusiastic students?

The most frequently cited barrier is financial. While some terrific foreign-study programs exist and are sending a few students abroad, a large number of students cannot participate due to lack of funds. Often the lack is just a top-up, perhaps to cover airfare or a small amount for additional living costs while abroad.

Sometimes students “drop out” of study abroad due to programmatic issues – either credit transfer concerns or the timing of required courses offered only at the home institution. Sometimes, frankly, they decline to participate due to a sense that the institution, despite expressed interest, really does not see this aspect of their studies as essential.

*The Globe and Mail* strongly supported the recommendations of our study. An editorial (May 28, 2010) commenting on the report called our post-secondary students “alarmingly provincial, in a globalized age,” adding: “Just 3 per cent of undergraduates head out into the world beyond this country’s borders as part of their university studies. This represents a lost opportunity of epic scope, to the students first and foremost, but also to Canada.” *The Globe* urged that the area of study abroad is “ripe for innovation at both the federal and provincial levels.”

Approximately 350 Canadian students per year undertake study abroad under the aegis of two International Academic Mobility projects: the North American Mobility Program, with our NAFTA partners, and the Canada-Europe Mobility Program. These students are enrolled in study programs (undergraduate and graduate) at their home institutions and receive credit for their study abroad. These programs also support sustainable institutional cooperation across borders. Canada’s overall contribution to these programs, managed by HRSDC, is modest – about \$3.4M per year.

It should be noted that Canada supports a number of important initiatives including exchange scholarships and post-doctoral research fellowship through DFAIT’s International Scholarships Program. However there are only a few bilateral programs with reciprocity built in.

A number of provinces offer grants ranging from \$600 to \$2,500 for a limited number of their students who wish to do a study abroad program.

This is helpful, but hardly enough.

Recently the Lincoln Commission in the United States developed a plan which would see one million US students annually taking part in a semester or year abroad by 2016. A bill is making its way through Congress that would fund the plan.

Other countries too, notably but not only the European Commission, are making progress in study abroad.

Much more needs to be done to develop a critical mass of young Canadians who graduate with a deeper knowledge of the world and how knowledge is structured in other parts of the world. As a trading nation, whose success depends on this kind of understanding, we cannot afford to ignore this need.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FOUR:**

CBIE recommends that the Government of Canada adopt a target of no less than 15% of our PSE student population undertaking a study abroad semester or year, or participating in a field school of minimum four weeks, by 2015.

#### **RECOMMENDATION FIVE:**

In order to achieve this target, CBIE recommends that the Government of Canada invest in a major study abroad program offering top-up grants or airfare support to students undertaking their home institutions' study abroad or field school programs. At the same time, CBIE recommends that the Government of Canada develop new bilateral initiatives whereby Canadian students benefit from study in the partner country in equal numbers as the partner country students in Canada.

## **4. Conclusion**

This submission has drawn attention to three key issues essential to the international dimension of access:

- Increasing access to Canadian PSE by deserving international students who cannot afford to pay full tuition fees, notably those from developing countries.
- Increasing participation of international students in Canadian PSE generally.
- Enhancing access by Canadian students to the international knowledge and competencies that are gained through structured study abroad programs.

CBIE believes that our recommendations are tailored to addressing these three issues and hopes that the Senate Committee furthers this line of analysis.

CBIE is keen to work with the Senate Committee and partners to establish a national vision for international education, to set achievable targets, and to get to work quickly to realize them.

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