

## **CBIE Media Release**

**November 16, 2007**

International students

### **Canada slides while the US climbs**

#### ***International Education Week 2007 celebrated but improvement needed***

*Ottawa:* Canada celebrates International Education Week 2007 amid a raft of new reports that suggest it continues to decline in world importance as a host country for international students.

“We are pleased to support International Education Week in Canada,” said Jim Fox, President of the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), which is represented on the IE Week Steering Committee. “Canada has a lot to offer, both in terms of welcoming international students and programs that allow Canadians to study and work abroad. But we need to radically step up our efforts to attract students globally and to get our own students into the world.”

*Citizenship for the World - Preparing Graduates for the Future* is the theme for Canada's 2007 International Education Week, held from November 12-16. CBIE member institutions across Canada have organized innovative activities and events to celebrate intercultural skills and relations in an increasingly interdependent world. See: [www.iew-sei.ca](http://www.iew-sei.ca).

#### **US increases**

The new *Open Doors* statistical report from Institute of International Education documents a 3.2% overall increase in international students in the United States in 2006-07 from the preceding academic year. This follows years of decline and stagnation post-September 9, 2001.

The US revival reflects a major push by the country's Secretary of State Department and Department of Education. Over the past year, these departments provided substantial support to US promotion offices abroad and trade missions focused on education. At the same time, on the study abroad front, the Bush administration provided new support to US students for study in foreign languages deemed critical to US foreign policy.

Enrollments from top sending countries increased. The US also benefited from a Saudi-government scholarship program that more than doubled the number of students enrolled from Saudi Arabia, and saw substantial increases from Vietnam where demand for study abroad has risen fueled by a booming economy.

## **Worldwide trends**

An OECD report released in October, *International Student Mobility: Patterns and Trends*, designates Canada “an evolving destination” along with Japan and New Zealand. “In recent years...., the governments of each of these countries has highlighted the value of higher education as an export service, yet to date none has developed an action strategy to more successfully market their advantages...as higher education host nations.”

The same report reviews the strength of the three “major players,” the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, along with the growing promise of the “emerging contenders,” Malaysia, Singapore and China, finally suggesting that key motivational factors for future international students will be the student experience and cost.

A *University World News* article titled “The smart money is on Australia,” based on an interview with an OECD official, suggests that Australia will continue to excel in attracting international students because it has moved to a student-centred model. It provides terrific service to its international students, focusing on student needs. Even though a high tuition fee is charged, international students there receive good value for their money. According to the article, two key reasons for the Australians’ relative success are that they are good at recognizing entry qualifications and very good at selling their programs abroad.

“Contrast that with Canada,” said Jim Fox. “We have high quality programs, excellent quality of life for our students. However we work on a supply-driven model. We need to reinvent the way we see international students. Admissions offices have to achieve greater openness to foreign credential recognition. Career offices have to work with students and employers to make the post-graduation employment possibility a reality. Institutional leaders need to look at classroom size and how we teach. And our governments need to invest more in profiling our education system internationally.”

## **CBIE Report**

CBIE’s new report, entitled *Northern Lights: International Graduates of Canadian Institutions and the National Labour Force*, illustrates the Canadian dilemma. Our post-graduation work permit program is good in design but lacking in delivery. Regulations surrounding the program and employer awareness need prompt improvement if Canada – and international graduates – are to benefit. Currently only a third of international students plan to stay in Canada to work post-graduation.

The CBIE research, conducted by Dr. Sheryl Bond and a team of graduate students at Queen’s University, with financial support from the Canadian Council on Learning, surveyed 900 students at 20 institutions across Canada. See: [www.cbie.ca](http://www.cbie.ca).

The research also relayed news from the OECD: Canada has fallen from 5<sup>th</sup> rank to 14<sup>th</sup> among host countries for international students. Canada's market share of 3% pales in comparison to that of other destinations: US 22%, UK 12%, Germany 10%, France 9% and Australia 6%. Australia's foreign enrolments grew by 169% from 1998-99 to 2004-05 while Canada's grew by only 14.8% -- not impressive in a vastly accelerating market comprising 2.7 million students in 2005, up 61% from 1999.

The OECD recently criticized Canada for producing only limited data on higher education. Nowhere is this more damaging than in international education. It is *possible* that there is good news on fresh international enrolments in Canada: an informal survey of CBIE member institutions reveals that, in this current academic year, there is some cause to hope for a turnaround. While no dramatic upswings are reported, institutions are holding their own, with several citing modest increases in new, first-time enrolments. But Canada has not prioritized research and data collection on international students, so it is hard to know precisely where we stand.

"CBIE has called for a national strategy since the early 90s," said Jim Fox. "On the basis of recent performance, we urgently renew our call."