



CBIE MEDIA RELEASE

International education community applauds post-graduation work improvements for foreign graduates

Ottawa, April 24, 2008 – International education professionals at Canada’s universities and colleges were pleased earlier this week to learn that their recommendations regarding the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWP) for international students had been adopted nearly 100% by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

On Monday, CIC Minister Diane Finley announced that, effective immediately, international students graduating from Canada’s post-secondary institutions would be eligible for:

- An open work permit – no longer tying them to employment directly related to their field of study, and making them employable immediately upon receipt of a job offer;
- Up to three years of work after graduation – previously only one year was possible in Canada’s three largest cities (Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver) and two years elsewhere.

The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) has advocated for changes to the PGWP since the current scheme came into effect in 2005. CBIE represents 150 member institutions across Canada.

“This is almost precisely what we asked for,” said Jim Fox, CBIE’s President. “Our report last fall, *Northern Lights: International Graduates of Canadian Institutions and the National Workforce*, identified a serious disconnect between the stated intent of the Post-Graduation Work Program and its delivery. Students were offered the opportunity to work but within such strict boundaries that it was impossible for many to participate. Employers balked at offering jobs to foreign grads when they found out that it would take two months following the offer of work for their new hire to obtain a permit. With the Minister’s announcement, several hurdles have come down.”

A key challenge remains and, with the good news, it seems churlish to raise it.

Nevertheless, employer awareness is crucial to the success of the PGWP, and it is not certain that employers will be any more knowledgeable of or comfortable with the improved program than with its predecessor.

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CBIE will continue to press CIC to develop a comprehensive education package for employers. This was a key recommendation of CBIE's *Northern Lights* report: employers themselves asked for it, urging better web-based information as well as CIC workshops or individual visits to human resources professionals.

But for the moment, CBIE and its pan-Canadian membership will savour this major success – the announcement of a refreshed program that sets Canada ahead of other major host countries in terms of employment opportunities for international students.

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CBIE is a national non-governmental organization comprised of colleges, universities, school boards, educational organizations and government partners. 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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