



**Developing Global Opportunities:
Creating a Postsecondary International
Education Strategy for Ontario**

Discussion Paper



Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

2016

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Une publication équivalente est disponible en français sous le titre suivant : *S'ouvrir au monde : Créer une stratégie d'éducation postsecondaire internationale pour l'Ontario*, 2016.

This publication is also available on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities website, at www.ontario.ca/tcu.

INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of postsecondary education is evolving. Where it once focused on student mobility, it has grown to include numerous activities such as cross-cultural learning, faculty partnerships and networks, exporting educational services, off-shore campuses, and the internationalization of the curriculum. While the breadth and depth of these activities vary across jurisdictions and institutions, there is a shared agreement that at its core, international education offers numerous benefits and tremendous opportunities. These opportunities range from branding a region for global investment, addressing gaps in shrinking domestic budgets, to enabling the evolution of a 21st century education for students.

Governments across Canada and around the world are recognizing that international activities are core elements of a successful public postsecondary education system. The competition to internationalize education through student mobility and global economic partnerships is rapidly reshaping the landscape both within Canada and abroad.

We are now living in a world where the province's capacity to compete globally relies, in part, on how well we can leverage global talent, promote innovation and foster partnerships that can drive new business opportunities. With Ontario's colleges and universities as key drivers of economic development and social change, the question is not whether Ontario should be participating in international education related activities, but where should it focus its attention and to what degree.

Now is the time to ask these questions. On September 25, 2014, the Premier asked the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to "bring focus to efforts to attract international students to Ontario and to institutions' internationally offered programs," and to "strike a balance between the benefits and challenges associated with these new forms of partnerships."

The province is looking to develop a postsecondary international education strategy that not only positions Ontario as a destination and partner of choice but also showcases Ontario as a leader on the global stage. Recognizing the critical role that postsecondary education plays in fostering the talent, skills, and future prosperity of the province, the government will work with students, publicly assisted colleges and universities, businesses and community partners on developing a comprehensive postsecondary international education strategy. This paper is meant to initiate these discussions.

ONTARIO CONTEXT

Ontario colleges and universities, like their counterparts around the world, are involved in many successful international education activities. A review of comprehensive postsecondary international strategies across Canada and the globe brings several common themes to the fore that demonstrate how international activities can be focused to positively impact students, institutions, communities, businesses and regions. These themes are identified below and should be kept in mind as we develop Ontario's strategy to ensure that benefits are broadly realized for all Ontarians.

Enhancing the student experience

Students are eager to incorporate more international activities into their own education through partnerships, exchanges, and exposure to internationally connected faculty, instructors and research. Through study/work abroad programs, research collaborations, or enhancing program offerings with global perspectives, students can develop the knowledge and competencies that are seen as advantageous by employers and foundational in developing a sense of global citizenship.

Students also value the diversity of perspectives and experiences that an internationalized student body brings to their individual learning and development. In this regard, institutions have made tremendous strides by doubling international enrolment in Ontario over the last five years. Domestic and international students agree that international students should receive a high quality education and the necessary supports to make the most of their experiences. The government, the postsecondary education sector, and other business or community partners could work together to enhance the student experience for international students and domestic students alike.

Creating skilled and talented workers

Ontario recognizes that international students can help fill Ontario's need for skilled and talented workers. International students who choose to stay and work could contribute to the long-term economic prosperity of Ontario. This includes opportunities to sustain rural and northern areas and contribute to Ontario's goal of 5 per cent francophone immigration.

The diversity of Ontario's population and the strength of its ethnic communities represent an important network that can help attract new students to the province and support them during their study and potential transition to residency. This diversity in combination with streamlined pathways to permanent residency could be a strong competitive advantage for the province. For example, Ontario has demonstrated leadership through the growth of the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program. The province recognizes the importance of working with the federal government to ensure that study permit and work permit programs are competitive with other countries, and that pathways to residency support the retention of talent in Ontario.

Driving economic growth

Forming international partnerships is crucial to supporting the education and training needs of local regions and growing Ontario's economy overall. The province has a broad business base that includes domestic companies operating abroad, foreign companies operating in Ontario, and other organizations that could partner with colleges and universities to increase their global reach. These international partnerships can provide benefits that range from additional experiential learning opportunities abroad to strengthening the training and research capacity in our institutions. Ontario's trade offices and missions could play a key role in helping to coordinate, support and foster these partnerships.

Ontario's innovation also depends on a research and commercialization infrastructure that can plug into a globalizing world. Building on the strong research base and growing number of dynamic incubators and accelerators in both colleges and universities could help bring Ontario innovation onto the world stage. This includes attracting internationally renowned faculty and PhD students, as well as forming global partnerships to produce new entrepreneurs, businesses, and investment opportunities.

Strengthening the postsecondary education system

An international strategy presents opportunities to enhance each institution's individual strengths within Ontario's postsecondary system by giving them a global profile. Through the 2014 Strategic Mandate Agreements, we heard from colleges and universities about the range of international activities and partnerships they are undertaking to build on their unique teaching and research strengths, and to provide students, faculty and staff with access to global opportunities.

Examples include:

- ◆ Work-integrated learning, training and research collaborations with international businesses;
- ◆ Exchange and research partnerships with international institutions; and
- ◆ Initiatives to support the internationalization of programs in Ontario that give students, faculties and researchers multiple opportunities to add an international dimension to their studies.

The province should continue working with institutions to promote and build on each institution's areas of strength to ensure that Ontario's postsecondary education system is recognized for its world-class education, research and training.

The four themes identified are important to help realize the benefits of international education within an Ontario context. An additional theme that is common to international education strategies in many jurisdictions is the direct revenue benefit. In thinking about developing a strategy the province recognizes that while increasing revenues from international education activities is important, it should not in and of itself be a driver for decision making.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In developing an Ontario postsecondary international education strategy, the ministry will adopt a balanced and integrated approach through a commitment to three main principles.

First, the ministry recognizes that each college and university plays a different role and has a distinct mandate within the system. An international strategy should acknowledge these differences and respect institutional autonomy, while, at the same time, protect the public interest and our collective investment in the postsecondary education system.

Second, for any international strategy to be successful it must complement and leverage other provincial initiatives such as the Province's Strategy for K-12 International Education, the Ontario Immigration Strategy, Ontario's Trade Strategy and the innovation agenda. Creating links with other government priorities, including how students, faculty, institutions, communities, businesses and government can contribute, will help ensure a coordinated approach to internationalization in the province.

And finally, the ministry recognizes that while the internationalization of postsecondary education brings many benefits, the government together with institutions should ensure that the growth of international activities is supported by best practices that manage our financial and reputational risks. This is particularly important when it comes to third-party partnerships, entrepreneurial activity, and program delivery in other countries.

NEXT STEPS

The ministry is interested in hearing from students, colleges, universities, faculty, employers, and community organizations on a postsecondary international education strategy.

Ontario is committed to openness and transparency throughout the consultation process and, as a first step, welcomes written responses to this discussion paper.

Written comments can be sent to strategicpolicy@ontario.ca by **Monday, April 4, 2016**.

The following questions have been developed to help guide written feedback. They are intended as a guide only; we welcome all thoughts and input:

- ◆ What actions could be taken by employers, educational institutions, and the broader community to provide more opportunities for students and build Ontario's strengths as a leader in international education?
- ◆ What partnerships would be required to support international education across our postsecondary system?
- ◆ What existing international initiatives could the government better leverage to benefit postsecondary students, faculty, and institutions as a whole?
- ◆ In what ways could the postsecondary international education strategy support the viability of northern, rural, and francophone communities in Ontario?
- ◆ What opportunities and challenges does international education present over the longer term?

As a second step, MPP Han Dong, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will invite students, faculty, and select community partners and businesses to discuss the international strategy in focused half-day discussion sessions in early 2016.

During this period, the ministry will also engage with colleges, universities, student and faculty groups to hear their ideas that could help develop and support the strategy.

As a final step, the Honourable Reza Moridi, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will host a half-day symposium to summarize and discuss what was heard in the consultation process and highlight key outcomes. Further details will follow.

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