

## THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: EXPANDING STUDENT OPPORTUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

### *SUMMARY OF POLICY AND PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS*

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- 1) **Incorporate the international education sector into the Government's integrated trade development initiatives and ensure that the sector can benefit from the development of the 'BC Brand.'**
  - a) Assign lead responsibility for government initiatives in the marketing and promotion of international education to the Ministry of Economic Development and ensure that the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education play integral roles in the planning and implementation of those initiatives.
  - b) Collect enrolment, program and economic data associated with international education activities and use the data to inform policy development.
  - c) Utilize the above data to inform the general public of the strong positive benefits which accrue to having a vibrant international education component in the public education system and to highlight the important contribution made by the private sector education sector to the province's economy.
  - d) Consider working with the public institutions to showcase specific examples of benefits flowing to domestic students and communities from international education activities.
  - e) The Ministry of Advanced Education should consider requiring public institutions to report international students as a distinct part of their annual capacity reports.
  - f) Develop export-briefing packages for all ministries that include international education as a significant element.
  - g) Increase international government-to-government interaction at the ministerial and senior government official level, targeted primarily at emerging and potential markets for BC's education products and services.
  - h) Consider establishing BC Trade and Education Offices in China and India, and other emerging markets.
  - i) Emphasize BC's social capital advantages in tandem with economic advantages in all economic development and international education promotional tools.
  - j) Develop a 'BC Brand' that builds on both Canada's national brand and the upcoming Olympics.
  - k) In cooperation with business, industry and the education sector, develop brand identifiers or phrases, with consistent use of font, logos and script, which can be used by international education providers in their marketing and promotional efforts.
  - l) Develop a strong BC presence at education trade fairs (similar to the 'Ontario Pavilion' concept).
  - m) Develop web pages on the Government's website which target prospective international students.

**2) Consider creating an organization, perhaps modelled on Tourism BC, which can deliver effective coordination and support to the public and private sector international education providers.**

- a) In cooperation with the relevant ministries, the organization should develop market information and coordinate efforts to expand and diversify the number of international students.
- b) The organization should work with its members to find ways of promoting BC through a coordinated campaign aimed at alumni.
- c) The organization should work with its members to promote the university transfer system and distance delivery programs to potential international students.
- d) BC's post-secondary institutions should consider developing distance delivery packages for overseas markets building on the capabilities of the BC Campus system.
- e) To ensure a better rate of return to the BC economy, the organization should assist education organizations to link overseas secondary graduation programs to specific public or private post-secondary institutions, thereby helping ensure a guaranteed flow of students from these overseas projects.

**3) Expand study abroad opportunities in order to develop a more globally literate workforce in the province.**

- a) Provide sufficient resources to the One World Scholarship Fund to permit a significant number of students to study or take up cooperative education work placements abroad on an annual basis.
- b) Set aside a portion of the One World Scholarship Fund to provide financial assistance to overseas students who could not normally afford to study in British Columbia.
- c) Work with the public and private education systems to promote the importance of study abroad for personal and economic growth.

**4) Support the international education sector's role in regional economic development.**

- a) Develop a government funded marketing and promotion assistance program to help interior, northern, and coastal educational institutions expand their international education enrolments.
- b) Gather data that can be used to assess the efficacy of any marketing and promotion assistance program.
- c) Ensure that smaller, non-metropolitan, institutions are well represented at any marketing and promotional events overseas.
- d) Encourage public institutions to develop year-round language tourism packages in cooperation with the private sector.
- e) Sponsor group visits by the presidents of small colleges and universities and senior officials of the Ministry of Advanced Education, and by non-metropolitan school districts and officials of the Ministry of Education, to key international education markets.
- f) Ensure that the above visits are based upon sound market information so as to maximize returns to the expenditure of time and financial resources.

- g) Encourage the presidents of the province's larger universities to take a leadership role in promoting and marketing the post-secondary system overseas.
  - h) Regional colleges and universities should be encouraged to form regional consortia aimed at developing and marketing innovative integrated program packages to overseas students.
  - i) Assist non-metropolitan education organizations to develop partnerships with overseas institutions that focus on first and second year university courses and involve both face-to-face instruction overseas and distance delivery.
- 5) As a matter of high priority, address quality assurance concerns in the ESL training arena by re-regulating private sector schools and by establishing minimum teaching qualifications for both public and private sector providers.**
- a) Re-regulate the private ESL sector so that the negative impacts on market perceptions of recent business failures can be mitigated.
  - b) Establish minimum qualification levels for ESL instruction in the public and private sectors.
  - c) Consider establishing an Education Quality Assurance (EQA) designation, modelled on the wine industry's VQA system, that will assure potential international students that they will be receiving high quality education and pastoral care should they decide to enrol in EQA designated educational organizations.
- 6) Address existing visa processing challenges with the Federal Government and secure a pilot project that will assist the province in meeting the pending shortage of skilled workers.**
- a) The Provincial Government should encourage the Federal Government to speed up student visa approvals and permit spouses of graduate students and faculty from overseas to work in the province without restriction.
  - b) The Federal Government should be urged to permit overseas students to work anywhere in the province after graduation for a period of up to three years.
  - c) The Provincial Government should lobby the Federal Government for permission to operate a pilot project designed to smooth the transition from student visa to landed immigrant status for international students who successfully graduate from the province's post-secondary and skills training programs.
  - d) Once the pilot project is in place, expand the number of international students in trades and technical studies through a coordinated effort involving colleges, the university colleges, BCIT, TRU, and the Industry Training Authority. This effort could usefully be backed up by a modest scholarship program supported by the Provincial Government.

- 7) Minimize policy and procedure impediments to the entrepreneurial activity of both public and private sector international education providers.**
- a) Consider adjusting the current degree approval process to allow for post-implementation audits so that universities can provide more timely responses to international clients.
  - b) In order to improve marketing and promotion efforts, rename BC's secondary graduation certificate. Consider a joint initiative with Alberta aimed at establishing the 'Western Canadian Secondary Graduation Certificate' or the 'Canadian Secondary Graduation Certificate' to replace the Dogwood Certificate.
  - c) Ensure that the Government's marketing and promotion efforts in international education do not constrain the entrepreneurial activities of either the public or private education sectors.