

# Internationalization Policy and Strategy - Canadian e-Magazine of International Education

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Philip Steenkamp, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for Ontario

## The Development of Ontario's Internationalization Strategy

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International education is becoming an increasingly competitive sector within the field of postsecondary education. Tomorrow's leaders will be expected to speak multiple languages, work in foreign countries, and bridge cultural differences to achieve social, economic and political objectives. Governments around the world are responding to this trend by intensifying the internationalization of their higher education systems — both attracting a greater number of international students and ensuring their citizens are able to pursue studies beyond national boundaries. In our globalized world, the demand for international education and experience continues to grow rapidly.

Investment in the marketing of international education by Canada's federal government has varied over the years. In 2004, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada ranked seventh as a destination for international students, with a 5.5 percent market share, as compared with the United States, which ranked first with a market share of over 25 percent. The federal government is increasingly interested in promoting Canada as a destination of choice for international students. In the [2007 Federal Budget](#), \$2 million (all figures Canadian dollars) was allocated over two years to develop a Canadian international education brand.

The Ontario government has also become an active supporter of international education at its forty-seven postsecondary institutions. In 2004, the provincial government announced an allocation of \$1 million annually to fund the international marketing of postsecondary education. This initiative provided the stimulus for a coordinated effort to market Ontario's publicly-funded postsecondary institutions in a strategic and visible way.

## Economic and Academic Benefits

The economic and academic benefits of international education are clear. Each international student is estimated to contribute more than \$25,000 to the economy — making education for international students a \$900 million industry in Ontario. In addition to economic benefits, international students bring valuable diversity to the classroom, the campus, and the larger community, enhancing the academic experience for all students. Diversity in the classroom enriches all students' understanding of the world by allowing them to share different perspectives, approach problems from different angles, and discover different cultural experiences.

In his report on the Ontario postsecondary education system, [Ontario: A Leader in Learning](#), the Honourable Bob Rae summarized the benefits of the internationalization of education:

*“International study is intensely enriching. Participating students benefit from a broader education experience. Home and host institutions benefit from a more diversified student body. Ontario benefits from stronger ties and contacts with the rest of the world and citizens with a better understanding of global issues.”*

Thus, international education has advantages not only for the student participating in the international experience but also for the receiving institution and country.

Rae’s report made two specific recommendations regarding international education. First, he advocated the creation of an Ontario International Study Program to increase the opportunity for Ontario students to complete a portion of their studies abroad. Second, Rae called for greater international marketing efforts, closely coordinated with the postsecondary sector and the federal government, to establish Ontario as an international destination of choice for students.

In response to the Rae report, the Ontario government launched the [Reaching Higher Plan](#), a \$6.2 billion investment over five years aimed at improving Ontario’s postsecondary education system. Within Reaching Higher, the government announced an investment of \$1 million in 2006-07, \$3 million in 2007-08, and \$5 million in 2008-09 and beyond, to support the internationalization of Ontario’s postsecondary education system and to sustain and enhance Ontario’s competitive position in an increasingly globalized environment.

## **Investing in Learning**

Government involvement in international education complements and expands Ontario’s position as a centre of higher learning excellence. For Ontario to continue to prosper, we must continue to invest in learning. Our society must develop the knowledge capacity to remain an important player in the new global economy. The creation of the [Ministry of Research and Innovation](#) also furthers this important goal.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has always recognized that Ontario’s postsecondary institutions have great expertise in international education. Our institutions have a long history of recruitment of excellent international students and faculty. Ontario’s postsecondary sector is also adept at creating opportunities for collaboration and exchange with postsecondary institutions and scholars around the world. To capitalize on these strengths, the government asked the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and [Colleges Ontario](#) to nominate representatives from their respective sectors to advise the ministry on how best to develop an international education strategy. This advisory committee is made up of four representatives from each sector, plus ministry staff.

Initially, the committee met to discuss and explain what the internationalization of education meant to them, what the objectives of the international strategy ought to be, the challenges facing international education in Ontario, and how funding could be most effectively allocated. This input proved invaluable and has been integral to the development of the ministry’s current international strategy. The ministry continues to consult with the advisory committee and regularly surveys institutions to ensure that government actions are relevant and helpful in achieving institutional objectives and support their international activities.

## **Ontario’s Objectives**

Ontario’s international education strategy has two key objectives: to expand and sustain its marketing of

postsecondary education services to the international community, and to develop and implement initiatives to increase opportunities for Ontario students to study abroad.

The international marketing campaign was launched with the creation of the Study in Ontario brand, centred on the [www.studyinontario.com](http://www.studyinontario.com) website. This initiative promotes Ontario's publicly-funded postsecondary institutions under a single banner. The website also provides important application and transition information to prospective international students. The Ontario government has also begun supporting our postsecondary institutions at recruitment fairs and international education conferences across the globe. This has led to improved coordination of resources, increased consultation with all institutional partners, and a more polished and informative presentation of the advantages of an Ontario education.

## Scholarships and Exchange Agreements

While it is important to attract the best and brightest international students to Ontario, it is vital that we provide our own citizens with opportunities to study abroad. Unfortunately, these opportunities can be expensive. To assist students in overcoming the cost of international study, the ministry created the Ontario International Education Opportunity Scholarship program in February 2007 as the flagship program of our international strategy. Students at every publicly funded postsecondary institution in Ontario are able to apply for these scholarships, valued at \$2,500 and awarded on the basis of financial need and academic merit. More than 250 students received \$2,500 in 2006-07, and 800 students will receive scholarships in 2007-08.

In addition to the scholarships, the ministry is working on a number of bilateral student exchange agreements to create greater opportunities for international study. Exchange programs of this type are very valuable. Not only do participating institutions benefit from the influx of international students, but government support of these programs helps reduce the cost of participating in these programs for individual students. Bilateral exchanges also help foster greater links with key international jurisdictions. The ministry is currently funding three exchange programs: one between Ontario and Rhône-Alpes, France; one with Baden-Württemberg, Germany; and one with Maharashtra and Goa, India. York University has been instrumental in establishing these agreements, working with the ministry and international partners to develop and administer each exchange program. New exchange agreements with other jurisdictions are currently under development.

It is the ministry's hope that study abroad programs will become a normal and accessible opportunity for Ontario's students. [Queen's University](#) in Kingston has taken great steps in that direction, with 65 percent of third-year Commerce students now participating in international study programs. At [Carleton University](#) in Ottawa, a Bachelor of International Business program has been established featuring a one-year compulsory study abroad component. These sorts of changes to the academic culture are converting the familiar question "Are you going to study abroad?" to "Where are you going to study abroad?"

In addition to helping make international education more affordable for Ontario students, the provincial government is working with the federal government to enable foreign students to meet the costs of their education through the Off-Campus Work Permit ([OCWP](#)) program for international students. The OCWP was announced in April 2006 and entitles approved full-time international students to work off-campus for up to twenty hours a week during the regular academic year and full-time during scheduled breaks. The OCWP program allows international students to participate in the Canadian economy and help fund their studies through meaningful employment.

Ontario is also enhancing its international humanitarian reputation by helping individuals from socially and

economically depressed regions access a postsecondary education. In partnership with the World University Service of Canada ([WUSC](#)), the ministry funds twenty-five student refugees to attend higher education in Ontario every school year.

## In Conclusion

The Ontario government is very proud of its initiatives to facilitate international postsecondary education for students in Ontario and around the world. The [Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario](#) is very excited about the future of the international strategy, which has tremendous scope for improvement and expansion. We will continue to promote Ontario as a world-class destination for international students, provide our domestic students with the benefits of international education, and enhance the reputation of our postsecondary educational institutions as distinguished, diverse, and welcoming providers of a valuable learning experience.

## Author's Information

Philip Steenkamp is the Deputy Minister, [Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario](#), Canada. He was appointed Deputy Minister effective March 1, 2006, by Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Most recently, Dr. Steenkamp worked for the [Province of British Columbia](#) as Deputy Minister of Strategic Policy and Social Development, Office of the Premier. Prior to that, he held the position of Deputy Minister of [Advanced Education](#), where he led the development of a long-term, comprehensive vision for postsecondary education designed to add 25,000 new student spaces by 2010.



Dr. Steenkamp began working for British Columbia's provincial government in 1994 at the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs. He went on to become Chief Negotiator for treaties on Vancouver Island and in northern British Columbia, Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, and then Deputy Minister of the Treaty Negotiations Office.

Dr. Steenkamp attended the [University of Natal](#) in Durban, South Africa, graduating with a BA Honours in History and English, and [Queen's University](#) in Kingston, Ontario, where he earned his MA and PhD in African history with a focus on migrant labour and economic development.

After teaching history at Queen's for two years and doing research for a year in Namibia, Dr. Steenkamp went to the [University of Victoria](#) in BC, where he taught African and South African history.

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