



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### ***International student satisfaction survey:* Canada gets high marks for quality, but slips as first-ranked destination**

*Toronto, November 10, 2009:* The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) today launched its national satisfaction survey of international students across Canada.

The fourth CBIE student survey since 1988, *Canada First: The National Survey of International Students 2009* reveals improvements in a number of areas but also highlights a few troubling facts.

A total of 5,925 post-secondary students from 26 institutions responded to the 76-question survey, covering the gamut of academic and life experience.

Among the many positive results, the vast majority of students are either very satisfied or satisfied with their studies here, expressing appreciation for both Canada's academic advantages and quality of life. They are attracted by our quality education, our reputation as a safe and peaceful country, our programs of study offered in both English and French, the prestige of our degrees and diplomas, our overall reputation and by after- graduation employment possibilities. Canadian institutions clearly fulfill their expectations.

The new Canadian education brand, "Imagine", suggests to prospective students that Canada is a great place to realize your potential. When asked whether they consider this to be true, 96% agreed. We seem to have gotten our promotional message right.

Many students are benefiting from improvements in work opportunities since our last report in 2004. In fact, 52% of university students and 71% of college students plan to work here post-graduation for up to three years, bolstering Canada's talent pool and competitiveness. As well, fewer students noted difficulties in their contact with Canada's immigration authorities, suggesting welcome service improvements at visa offices abroad, at ports of entry and within Canada.

2.

However, despite all the positives, Canada is slipping as a “first choice” destination. While it continues to be the country of choice for a slim majority of international students who are studying here, Canada’s position has eroded. At the university level, from a high of 59% in 1999, only 53% of the students selected Canada first in the 2009 survey. The United States, United Kingdom, Australia and France are our top competitors. The USA is the first choice of fully a quarter of the students currently studying in Canada.

“We cannot underestimate how competitive the education marketplace is,” said Karen McBride, CBIE President, in launching the report at CBIE’s annual conference. “We are perceived as a great place to study by those who come to Canada, but they tell us that they are attracted to other destinations that also have a lot to offer. If we wish to be a priority host country for talented young people from abroad seeking educational opportunity, we need to work harder to be visible.”

An economic impact report released in October by Canada’s International Trade Minister, the Hon. Stockwell Day, stated that Canada earns \$6.5B annually from hosting international students but acknowledged that Canada captures only 2.7% of the world market in international students. Moreover enrolment increases in much smaller countries such as New Zealand greatly exceed Canada’s.

“We’ve got incredible advantages,” said Dr. Bob McCulloch, Chair of the Board of CBIE and President of Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST). “But other countries have advantages and they have organized themselves to gain visibility in the international arena. CBIE plans to work with our member institutions, partner associations and governments to make Canada first in the minds of far more students seeking an international study venue. We can achieve much more if we strengthen our collaboration. Over the coming weeks, CBIE will consult widely on the *Canada First* results and on the way ahead.”

*For more information:*

Jennifer Humphries  
Vice President, Membership and Scholarships, CBIE  
Telephone: 613-237-4820 Ext. 246; Cellular: 613-882-0296  
jhumphries@cbie.ca

*CBIE is a national not-for-profit educational association made up of nearly 200 school boards, colleges, universities and associates. It is involved in both aid-supported and trade-related educational projects around the world.*

## Canada First: The National Survey of International Students 2009

### *Highlights*

- 5,925 international students responded to the survey, from 26 institutions (22 universities and 4 colleges) across Canada. The overall response rate was 24%.
- About 9 in 10 students report that they are satisfied with their decision to study in Canada. This includes about 4 in 10 who are very satisfied.
- The majority of students report high satisfaction with their decision to study at their current institution, with almost 9 in 10 university students satisfied with their decision to attend their university, including almost 4 in 10 who strongly agree. Similarly almost 9 college students in 10 agree that they are satisfied with their decision to attend their current institution, including almost 3 in 10 who strongly agree. A strong majority of students are also satisfied with features of their institution such as library and computer resources and average class size, and with the various services offered by their institutions.
- Students appreciate their professors' support, with almost 9 in 10 agreeing that they have been treated fairly in class by their instructors and over 8 in 10 agreeing that their instructors are reasonably available outside of class.
- When asked whether they have experienced any form of racism or discrimination as an international student in Canada, about 6 students in 10 indicate that they have not. Conversely about 3 in 10 report some experience of racism or discrimination. Students from Sub-Saharan Africa are the most likely to indicate that they have experienced this (42%).
- Almost 9 in 10 agree that they would recommend Canada as a place to study, including 41% of university students and 34% of college students who strongly agree.
- The top reason for choosing Canada is the quality of education here, with almost 75% of students considering it very important in their decision-making. The second most commonly cited reason for choosing Canada is that it is a safe country.
- Canada was the first choice country of a slim majority of those surveyed. Among university students, the number of those saying that Canada is their first choice has fallen from a high of 59% in 1999 to 53% in 2009. Among college students the decline is similar: from 61% in 1999 to 56% today.
- One in three students currently at university in Canada has previously studied at either a secondary school or a language school in Canada. Clearly these types of study offer pathways to Canadian advanced education, which should spur a rethink of the way in which we promote to students. In fact a whole of sector approach would seem to be called for.
- Nine out of 10 students who saw advertising about studying in Canada say it influenced their decision to choose Canada. This would suggest that the recent launch of the "Imagine" brand by the governments of

Canada and the provinces should enhance Canada's visibility and increase enrolment numbers over the coming year.

- Canada's new brand advertises Canada as "a great place to reach your potential". Almost all students (95% of university students and 96% of college students) say that they think of Canada as a place to reach their educational potential, including 47% who very much think this is the case. In other words the position Canada has selected appears to be consistent with the beliefs held by international students.
- Fewer students than in past surveys report major problems with immigration officials or processes. A majority of students report no difficulty when dealing with immigration officials in their home country. However, about 3 students in 10 report having at least some difficulty including a few who report having much difficulty. Over the past 10 years fewer students have reported difficulties. In 1999, 41% of students reported some difficulty. This percentage has declined to 30% in 2009.
- 71% of college students and 52% of university students plan to work in Canada after they graduate. This reflects a positive response to changes in Canada's post-graduation employment policy since CBIE's 2004 report.
- 26% of university students and 15% of college students have worked or are currently working on their host institution campus or off-campus, up to 20 hours per week. At the time of the 2004 report only the off-campus work was open to only four provinces. The earlier survey showed that a majority of students wanted this opportunity, and in fact, due to financial difficulties, needed it. Their comments propelled the authorities to make the off-campus option available across the country.
- Over half of students intend to apply for permanent residency in Canada after they graduate. This is a dramatic increase from five years ago, when only about a quarter indicated this intention. One explanation could be that Canada's official attitude towards work after graduation has changed; another could be the implementation of the Canadian Experience Class within the immigration program, which prioritizes graduates of Canadian institutions and allows application from within Canada (other classes of immigrant must apply from outside Canada).
- Tuition fees are on the rise. In fact, international university tuition has climbed by 86% in the last ten years, while international college tuition has risen 56% over the same period. The most common recommendations made by students surveyed are financial: lower tuition fees for international students and provide them with scholarships or bursaries.
- Over the four surveys, the number of international students who report that their family is below average wealth in their country has fallen from 12% in 1988 to 6% in 2009, suggesting that large tuition increases have resulted in Canada attracting students who are better off, not necessarily the best and brightest from everywhere.