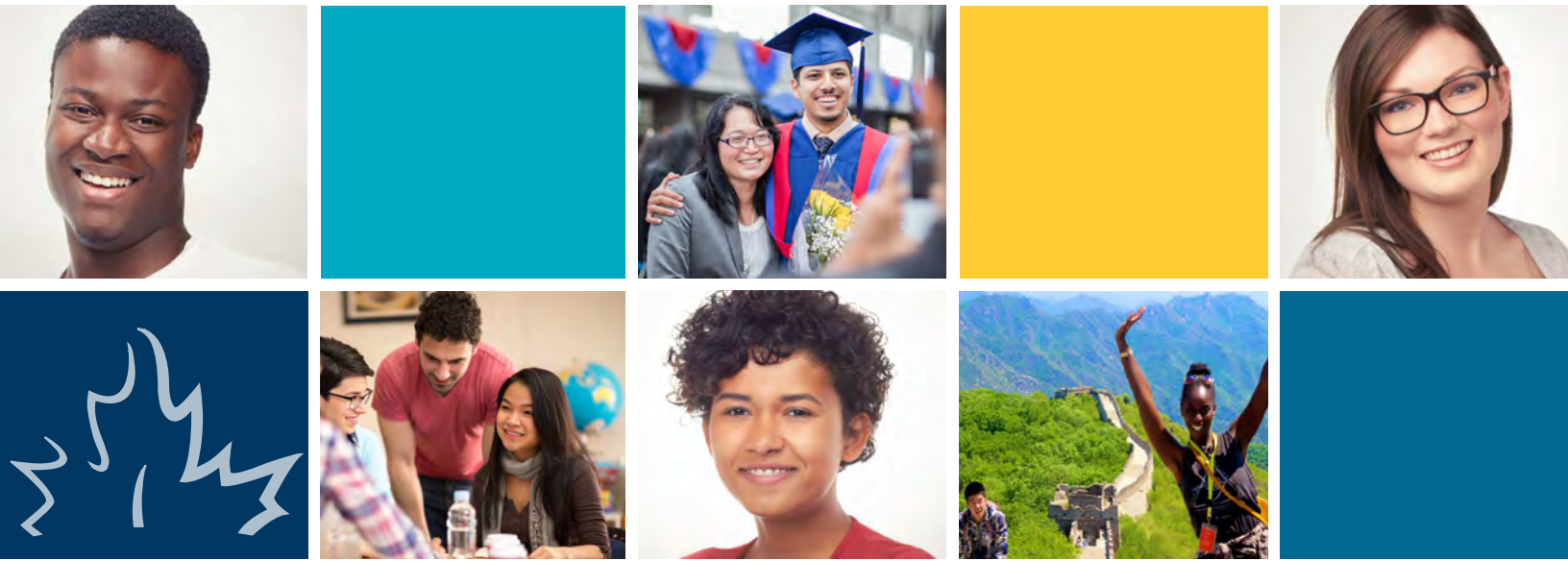


# Canada's Global Engagement Challenge



*Canadian Bureau for International Education  
Pre-budget Consultations  
2017 Federal Budget*



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*learning beyond borders*

## **Canadian Bureau for International Education**

The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) is Canada's international education organization, engaging our 150 member universities, colleges, institutes, polytechnics, cégeps and K-12 school boards across the country in building Canada's capacity to contribute and participate fully in the world through educational connections.

Central to our mandate is the development of Canada's leaders of tomorrow through international learning experiences. Our input to the Finance Committee will focus exclusively on this aspect of our work, which is increasingly critical to helping Canadian businesses meet their expansion, innovation and prosperity goals, particularly in the context of global competition and global opportunities, which is a key theme for the Committee's consultation.

## **Canada's Global Engagement Challenge**

Canada faces a great challenge: getting more of our students to take advantage of learning experiences in other countries and preparing them to become global citizens in the range of ways that the term implies.

Why is this so important?

For Canada, a major trading nation whose continued prosperity hinges on cross-border mobility of people, goods and services, ensuring we have a critical mass of professionals who have first-hand experience in the world and are well prepared to navigate the risks and maximize the benefits of global markets is critical.

Learning abroad is an unparalleled way to develop international knowledge and intercultural skills. In a recent CBIE survey, 1,300 Canadian students who had participated in learning abroad reported that the experience led to significantly greater learning outcomes in the following areas: knowledge of historical, cultural traditions and achievements of your host country (91%); openness to a different way of thinking (87%); cultural awareness and understanding (86%); knowledge of world events (83%); and foreign language skills (75%).

Moreover, learning abroad is an unparalleled way to develop the soft skills employers say they need in business leadership. A March 2016 report of the Business Council of Canada, based on a survey of 90 leading Canadian employers, argued: "... 21st century leaders require strong communication skills, the ability to collaborate, adaptability, decisiveness, tactfulness and empathy... This underscores the need to nurture and develop soft skills at the K-12 and post-secondary levels – an approach that would broaden the pool of future leaders in the Canadian workforce."

In 2014 CBIE asked some 150 alumni of learning abroad programs about the top cross-cutting skills they gained. Those highlighted are precisely the soft skills our business leaders will need: interpersonal skills (90%); cross-cultural competency (90%); adaptability (89%); self-awareness (87%); and communication skills (84%). Data from other sources is equally conclusive.

Beyond business, it's no secret that the world we inhabit is fraught with challenges of a global nature.

Canadians need to be prepared to participate and contribute as global citizens, working across borders, cultures, languages and values to mutual benefit. What are we doing to develop Canada's leaders of tomorrow, the individuals who can negotiate, analyze, connect and engage in meaningful ways at the international level?

## **Making Learning Abroad a Priority**

Other countries are making huge advances in internationalizing their next generation. In the United States there are initiatives such as the *100,000 Strong Initiative* with both China and the Americas, as well as *Generation Study Abroad*; the European Union's *Erasmus Program* has been active for more than 25 years, supporting learning abroad for over three million students; the Mexican government has developed *Proyecto 100.000*; and Australia's *New Colombo Plan* will have sent more than 10,000 students across the Indo-Pacific over three years.

Unlike these countries, which understand the strategic value of such investments, Canada has not approached internationalization of its talent pool as a national imperative.

The federal government's current International Education Strategy (IES) sets an ambitious target of doubling the number of international students in Canada – to 450,000 – by 2022, and CBIE is committed to helping achieve the target. This, however, is only one pillar of a

comprehensive international education approach. Equally important is outbound mobility of young Canadians, if we are to capture the full range of positive impacts of international education for Canada's economic prosperity, as well as its ability to play a prominent role on the world stage in many domains.

Where, for example, more than 30 percent of German students go abroad during their studies – and there is a concerted effort to increase this to 50 percent – it is estimated that a miniscule 3 percent of Canadian students participate in their Canadian university or college exchange programs. The number of high school students participating is equally dismal. Without a concerted effort to help our young people benefit from learning abroad, we risk raising a generation of Canadians which lacks the competitive edge that puts globally-mobile students ahead.

Funding is key. Although there are other barriers to learning abroad (e.g., rigidity of curriculum or lack of awareness – barriers which CBIE is also working with member institutions to address), in a recent CBIE survey of more than 7,000 Canadian students, where 86% of respondents said that they are interested in participating in a learning abroad experience, 80% indicated that they would require financial assistance to do so. We need to make learning abroad financially feasible for students.

Already in 2012, the report of the Advisory Panel on Canada's International Education Strategy, titled [\*International Education: A Key Driver of Canada's Future Prosperity\*](#), called for 50,000 awards to be offered to Canadian students each year by 2022 in order to overcome Canada's critical international skills deficit.

CBIE therefore recommends that the federal government finally take action and decisively set us on the right course towards this vision, by investing in a major program that will help support a critical mass Canadian secondary and post-secondary students across the country to pursue learning abroad opportunities, particularly those who cannot afford to participate.

Let's not allow Canada's Global Engagement Challenge to be the Achilles' heel in our aspirations for greater engagement and competitiveness on the world stage.