

CSA PUBLIC POLICY CENTRE

Where to From Here?

Towards a new vision and policy framework for international higher education in Canada

January 2025

About CSA Public Policy Centre

For over 100 years, CSA Group has been working to help make Canada safer and more sustainable. With a mandate of holding the future to a higher standard, we have a vested interest in the social, economic, and environmental challenges that policy makers and governments face when addressing the evolving needs of Canadians. The CSA Public Policy Centre raises critical issues, provides thoughtful analysis, and produces new ideas and policy pathways for Canada's most pressing policy challenges. Building on the organization's long history of cooperation and inclusion, we facilitate conversations, raise awareness of emerging issues, and promote collaborative, evidence-based solutions.

The CSA Public Policy Centre is focused on four key priorities:

Promoting inclusive economic growth

Supporting public sector innovation

Enhancing the health and wellbeing of Canadians

Advancing environmental sustainability and climate resilience



About the Dais

The Dais is Canada's platform for bold policies and better leaders. The Dais is a public policy and leadership think tank at Toronto Metropolitan University, working at the intersection of technology, education and democracy to build shared prosperity and citizenship for Canada. Visit us at dais.ca

Toronto Metropolitan University

the dais

CSA GROUP

Contents

Executive Summary 5

Introduction 7

Canada's International Higher Education Crisis 8

Reforms to the International Student Program 9

Early impacts 10

Where to From Here? Findings and Policy Recommendations 11

Theme 1: Renewing Canada's international education goals and strategy 12

Theme 2: Clarifying immigration and career pathways for graduates 14

Theme 3: Ensuring integrity and consumer protection in recruitment 17

Theme 4: Oversight and quality assurance of designated learning institutions (DLIs) 19

Theme 5: Improving academic supports and student services 22

Theme 6: Repairing "Brand Canada" 25

Summary of Recommendations 28

Conclusion 30

Appendix A: Roundtable Participants 31

Endnotes 33

Authors

Graham Dobbs
Senior Economist

As a Senior Economist, Graham is a part of the research team at the Dais at TMU. At the institute, Graham explores educational and technological innovations in the Canadian labour force and its impact on occupational distributions and transitions.

André Côté
Director of Policy and Research

André has worked in a variety of roles at the intersection of policy, higher education and tech. As mission-driven consultant, offering strategic advice, research and other services to a range of clients. As senior advisor to Ontario's deputy premier and minister of advanced education and skills development, and for digital government services.

Mahtab Laghaei
Research Assistant

Mahtab is a research intern at the Dais, motivated by her interest in the innovation economy and the interplay between geopolitics and tech policy. She is currently pursuing a Master of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto, with a concentration in Digital Society and Security.

Noah Morris
Consultant

Noah Morris is recently retired from a 34 year career as an executive (executive director, assistant deputy minister) in the Ontario Government, and is now a principal at NJM Strategies. Noah's career in the Public Service was evenly divided by leadership positions in post-secondary education and finance.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to acknowledge The Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC) in Migration and Integration at Toronto Metropolitan University for research support and guidance, as well as The Business + Higher Education Roundtable (BHER) for hosting the Ottawa-based convening.

Reviewers: Naomi Alboim, Andrew Parkin, Anna Triandafyllidou

Contributors: Karim Bardeesy, Nina Rafeek Dow, Sanjana Shah, Viet Vu

Disclaimer

This work has been produced by the Dais at the Toronto Metropolitan University and is owned by Canadian Standards Association. It is designed to provide general information in regards to the subject matter covered. The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors. The Dais, Toronto Metropolitan University, and Canadian Standards Association are not responsible for any loss or damage which might occur as a result of your reliance or use of the content in this publication.

Executive Summary

On January 22, 2024, the federal government announced changes to the International Student Program, sending shockwaves through Canadian higher education. The reforms included an intake cap and a 35% cut in study permits for fall 2024 to address unsustainable growth. The number of students on active study permits had grown from 300,000 in 2013 to more than one million by the end of 2023.

The federal government expressed concern about bad actors exploiting students, and pressures on housing affordability, health care and other services. For many Canadian colleges and universities, the reforms severely curbed a major revenue source they had grown to depend on in an environment of provincial financial constraint.

The federal changes acted as an emergency brake on a system out of control. However, the short-term repercussions were significant. They included uncertainty and anxiety for current students about their prospects in Canada, and a collapse in new applications and enrolments. Post-secondary institutions suffered large revenue losses, with some announcing program closures. The reforms created frustration and uncertainty across both the public and private international education sectors, and damage to Canada's international reputation.

So, where to from here? Over the long term, a sustainable and successful international education system requires a fundamental reassessment of Canada's vision, goals and policy frameworks.

> **The number of students on active study permits had grown from 300,000 in 2013 to more than one million by the end of 2023.**

This report aims to provide federal and provincial policymakers and post-secondary leaders with actionable advice for renewing international education in Canada. It is informed by research, roundtable discussions and expert interviews with a wide cross-section of stakeholders in the Canadian post-secondary and international education communities.

The findings and recommendations that emerged from this project fall under six themes:

1. **Renew Canada's strategy**: Develop a refreshed, multi-year international education strategy through broad consultations, and support its implementation with improved federal-provincial coordination and regular outcome evaluations.
2. **Clarify immigration processes and graduate pathways**: Establish predictable visa intake caps and provincial allocations, involve provinces in post-graduate work permit (PGWP) decisions, and enhance transparency of career and immigration pathways for international students.
3. **Bolster integrity of recruitment practices**: Create a unified recruitment standard and code of conduct with clear, accurate and comprehensive information for prospective students.
4. **Strengthen quality assurance of designated learning institutions (DLIs)**: Improve provincial oversight of DLIs, modernize federal visa processing, and reward top-performing DLIs through a recognized institutions framework (RIF).
5. **Improve international student services**: Develop a standard for international student services, with provinces requiring DLIs to provide a minimum level of services as part of strengthened quality assurance regimes.
6. **Repair "Brand Canada"**: Develop a strategy for repairing Canada's international reputation through the EduCanada partnership, diversify recruitment source countries and increase transparency in student visa assessments.

The detailed set of recommendations is presented in the body of the report, with a summary list at the end of the report.



The project's roundtable discussions outlined the key requirements for successful renewal of international education in Canada.



1 First, there must be a commitment to taking a longer view in shaping the vision, strategies and policy framework for international education in Canada.

2 Second, coordinated solutions are needed in a system jointly stewarded by federal and provincial governments, and delivered through DLIs with their many partners.

3 Third, a firmer federal hand in strategy, coordination and oversight is needed, but should stop short of federal intervention in provincial post-secondary policy and workforce planning.

4 Last, beyond the scope of this report, provinces must address the post-secondary funding "elephant in the classroom."

Our call to action

Provincial and federal policymakers, higher education leaders, student groups, sector associations and the many other key stakeholders must join forces to revitalize the system. Together, they can create a program that provides a world-class educational experience for international students, while ensuring sustainability and value for the post-secondary system, communities from coast-to-coast and Canada's global standing.

Introduction

On January, 22, 2024, the federal government announced major changes to the International Student Program, including a large reduction in study permits for fall 2024, that sent shockwaves through Canadian higher education.[1] The stated aims of the reforms were to address threats to the integrity of the international student system, which had grown from 300,000 students on active study permits in 2013 to over one million in 2023.[2]

The government pointed to unsustainable growth and risk to the quality of experience for students, as well as pressure on housing affordability, health care and other services. At the same time, Canada's post-secondary institutions, especially Ontario's public colleges and universities, had come to depend on the much higher tuition fees paid by international students. This was in response to an environment of capped domestic tuition, and flat or real declines in provincial grants in many provinces.

Heading into the fall 2024 academic year, federal and provincial policymakers, post-secondary institutions, student and sector associations, and other stakeholders were grappling with the wide-ranging near-term impacts of the reforms. This includes large loss of revenues for many public and private universities and colleges, as well as new administrative processes, including a federal requirement for provincial attestation letters (PAL, or TAL for territories) to accompany study permit applications.[3] [4]

Canada's reputation has also sustained damage, with projections indicating that the numbers of international students enrolled at Canadian institutions will be even lower than the targets identified in spring 2024.[5]

Fall 2024 federal announcements introduced deeper study permit reductions for the 2025 and 2026 years and further limits to post-graduate work permit access. A new three-year plan reverses immigration growth targets, and commits to reducing temporary residents, including international students, from 7% to 5% of Canada's population by 2027.[6] In sum, 2024 was disastrous for many international students in Canada.

Looking beyond the short-term impacts, the upending of international education in Canada raises larger and longer-term questions for policymakers and post-secondary leaders. How must we renew the country's vision and goals for international education? How do we develop policy frameworks for quality, sustainability, integrity and success into the future? Where to from here?

Our project aims to answer these questions, led by the Dais at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), in collaboration with Canadian Standards Association Public Policy Centre and TMU's Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC) in Migration and Integration.

This report outlines key insights and recommendations. It combines input from two sets of roundtable discussions, with expert interviews and meetings with a wide cross-section of stakeholders in the Canadian post-secondary and international education communities. The aim is to inform federal and provincial policymakers and post-secondary system leaders with stakeholder-informed, actionable advice for renewing Canada's international education system.

How must we renew the country's vision and goals for international education? How do we develop policy frameworks for quality, sustainability, integrity and success into the future?

Canada's International Higher Education Crisis

Canada has been an attractive destination for international students to pursue their post-secondary studies. They bring global perspectives that enhance education for domestic students and make substantial contributions to local economies. International students can also become valuable assets to the country as workers and future citizens, and have been a large revenue source for post-secondary institutions.

However, the massive influx of international students to Canada over the past decade has raised questions about the integrity of the International Student Program and the post-secondary system. Over the last few years, the public has been galvanized by reports about unethical recruitment and exploitation of international students, poor student living and working conditions, and strains on housing and local services.[7] [8] [9]

Student surveys and research have reinforced some of these narratives, spotlighting serious gaps in academic supports, and language, health and social services, for international students.[10] They also report limited access to in-study employment, which helps many students cover their high tuition and living expenses, and suitable and affordable housing.[11, 12] Statistics Canada found that, among the municipalities with the largest numbers of international students, their likelihood of living in unsuitable housing ranged from 25% to over 50% – much higher than for Canadian-born students.[13]

Looking back, various policies created the conditions for the rapid growth of international enrolments and its adverse impacts. The post-graduate work permit (PGWP), introduced in 2008, was gradually modified to expand eligibility and increase maximum permit duration from one to three years. In 2011, an international education marketing plan was developed by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) at the direction of provincial premiers.[14]

In 2014, the federal government introduced an International Education Strategy that built on Canada's position as a leading international education destination. In addition to prioritizing outbound opportunities for Canadian students, the Strategy aimed to increase inbound attraction to address skilled labour shortages and longer-term workforce demographic challenges.[15] It set a target to double the number of international students in Canada by 2022. Policy changes implemented at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic were a further accelerant, expanding the ability for international students to work during their studies and easing the transition to permanent resident status.[16]

Provincial policy was also a key driver. Across the country, post-secondary funding frameworks are under pressure due to caps on domestic tuition, and limited or below-inflation operating grants. Persistent public underfunding has created strong incentives for public universities and colleges to ramp up international enrolments as a source of revenue growth. In Ontario, the 2018 reversal of a moratorium of public-private college partnerships spurred exponential growth in international students in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

In this environment, some institutions pursued aggressive international enrolment growth. Various reviews and analysts highlight the irresponsible expansion of programs by some smaller public colleges.[17] [18] [19] Internationalization also boosted prestige and research capacity for top-flight universities, and offered a vehicle for skilled immigrant attraction to smaller provinces. Overall, the last decade was a permissive environment with minimal government oversight.



Reforms to the International Student Program

In early 2024, the federal Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (IRCC) abruptly introduced reforms to address the challenges posed by the recent rapid growth of international students in Canada. In addition to improving system integrity and sustainability, and reducing pressures on social services and housing, the Minister emphasized the problem of degree mills and "bad actors" widely associated with the public–private delivery partnerships in the Ontario college system. The reforms, initially positioned as temporary for a two-year period, included:[20] [21] [22]

- A federal cap on international student intake, with 360,000 study permits allocated for 2024 – a 35% decrease from 2023.
- Eliminating public-private college eligibility for PGWP for international graduates of curriculum licensing arrangements.
- Extending PGWP eligibility for master's and doctoral students to three years.
- A federal requirement for provinces and territories to provide attestation letters to prospective international students as part of their federal study permit application.
- Doubling the required cost-of-living assets for international students to ensure they can afford to study in Canada.
- Reducing the eligible work hours for international students to 24 hours per week starting in fall 2024, replacing the temporary 40-hour allowance introduced during the pandemic.

> **"The federal government's plan proposes reducing temporary resident levels as a share of Canada's population from 7% to 5% by the end of 2026.**

In September 2024, further changes to the International Student Program were announced, which included:

- Reducing the study permit cap by a further 10% for 2025 and 2026. Graduate students, who were previously exempt from the study permit cap, will count towards the annual targets.
- Introducing a field-of-study requirement for PGWP eligibility for international graduates in five in-demand categories – agriculture and agri-food, health care, trade, transport, and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The government subsequently released a list of nearly 1,000 PGWP-eligible post-secondary programs.[23]
- Limiting work permit eligibility for spouses of graduate students to those whose graduate program is at least 16 months.

The government's 2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan, announced in October 2024, reflected the direction of these earlier reforms, reversing Canada's policy of growing immigration intake by scaling back targets for both permanent and temporary residents. The plan proposes to reduce temporary resident levels as a share of Canada's population from 7% to 5% by the end of 2026. This decline will result from a combination of fewer admissions of temporary workers and students, and having temporary residents admitted as permanent residents or having their status expire.

The proposed admission for students is just over 300,000 per year from 2025 to 2027.[24] The government has also announced reductions to the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which was a pipeline for international students holding PGWPs to apply for permanent residency status.

Beyond the measures listed above, the federal government has indicated it will work alongside provinces, territories and post-secondary institutions to build a comprehensive multi-year strategy for its International Student Program that ensures long-term sustainability. Further reforms are expected.

Early impacts

By fall 2024, the scale of Canada's international education challenge was coming into focus. In September, Universities Canada reported that the drop in international enrolments at universities will be "far greater" than the federal cap for 2024, falling by at least 45%.[25] The recruitment platform ApplyBoard estimated that about 40% fewer study permits would be processed in 2024 than 2023, with 2024 second-quarter figures showing 70% and 50% year-over-year reductions in study permit processing in Ontario and British Columbia, respectively.[26]





Reflecting the dramatic drop in international college students, GTA-based Seneca Polytechnic announced the temporary closure of its Markham campus.[27] Surveys show foreign student interest is waning, with Canada falling from first to fourth place in a ranking of desirable destinations for education, behind Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom.[28]

Where to From Here? Findings and Policy Recommendations



This project sought to look beyond the immediate challenges, aiming instead to spur discussion and seek common ground on a long-term vision and policy framework for international education in Canada. Through research and input from a wide range of stakeholders, this report provides findings and a comprehensive set of actionable recommendations for federal and provincial/territorial policymakers, post-secondary leaders and other system actors.

Two pairs of roundtables were held in late spring and early fall 2024. They convened stakeholders to share perspectives and discuss opportunities for the future of Canada's international education system. Because of a wide array of issues at play, the roundtables were divided into two themes – provincial/territorial and federal/national policy issues.

The first tables focused on the role of provinces and post-secondary institutions in ensuring integrity of international recruitment and availability of supports specific to the needs of international students. The second tables focused on reassessing Canada's objectives for international education, integrity in international recruitment and programming, and immigration and career pathways. A small number of interviews and meetings combining provincial and federal perspectives were held to supplement the roundtables.

This section summarizes the findings and recommendations that emerged from the project under six themes:

1. Renewing Canada's international education goals and strategy
2. Clarifying immigration and career pathways for graduates
3. Ensuring integrity and consumer protection in recruitment
4. Enhancing oversight and quality assurance of DLIs
5. Improving academic supports and student services
6. Repairing "Brand Canada"

For each theme, we outline the challenges and policy gaps identified through research and synthesize roundtable discussions, which were held under modified Chatham House Rules, meaning the identity of individual speakers was kept confidential. The findings and recommendations seek to capture the spirit of the roundtable discussions, but do *not* necessarily represent consensus among participants, and should be attributed solely to the Dais and report authors.



Theme 1: Renewing Canada's international education goals and strategy

The problem: Canada's international education goals and policy objectives need to be reassessed to guide system reforms beyond the two-year transition.

The CMEC international education marketing plan and 2014 five-year plan, *Canada's International Education Strategy,* established the objectives and growth targets that set the course for the past decade. A subsequent five-year plan, *Building on Success: Canada's International Education Strategy (2019–2024)*, recommitted to that path.[29]

The primary lens for international student attraction was economic, seeking "contribution to Canada's prosperity" and ensuring the labour force has the needed skills and talent. The *Strategy* proposed to build on the country's attributes as a "powerhouse in international education: high quality schools and programs of study in both English and French; peaceful, welcoming and diverse communities; an enviable quality of life; opportunities to work and start careers; and pathways to permanent residency." It sought to "ensure a sustainable international education sector."

By several measures, these strategies have not produced the desired outcomes. The Minister has described international student growth, well in excess of targets, as jeopardizing the integrity and sustainability of Canada's enviable international education system.[30] Experts also note that the system has fallen short in achieving the economic objective of addressing skilled labour shortages, with many students in fields such as "general business" that have not filled labour gaps in health, the trades or STEM.[31]

While the federal government undertook consultations in early 2023 to inform the development of a new 2025 strategy, the past year's events require fundamental reassessment of Canada's long-term international education goals and objectives. For policymakers, post-secondary leaders, students and others: *where to from here?*

Roundtable insights

While participants recognized the challenges of the rapid, excessive and sometimes unethical growth of international education in recent years, they expressed great frustration with IRCC's sweeping 2024 policy reforms. Common perspectives, expressed many different ways, are that the reforms:

- Were implemented without consultation
- Are both overreaction and federal overreach
- Apply a "one-size-fits" all approach to province-specific issues
- Are causing unneeded chaos and uncertainty for students, institutions and other stakeholders
- Were politicized

Participants also felt strongly that policy should consider differences among international students at public and private institutions, universities and colleges, and undergraduate and graduate programs. These differences include varying program lengths, areas of study, age of students and incentive to study in Canada.



Participants felt the reforms are not anchored to clear national objectives for international education nor a long-term strategy for advancing those objectives. There was widespread agreement that Canada does not have a coherent or well-understood policy rationale for international education, nor one that provinces can agree to and help implement. Calling for deep reflection about "why international education is vital to Canada's interests," participants identified potential goals for a renewed vision and strategy. These include to:

- Enrich learning and global diversity in Canadian post-secondary education
- Create opportunities for Canadian students to study internationally
- Generate economic impact for Canada and the post-secondary system, through student-related revenues and contributions to world-leading research
- Support labour market and regional development objectives
- Offer a pathway to highly skilled immigrants
- Contribute to Canada's humanitarian and diplomatic "soft power" in the world

Lastly, many participants highlighted the need for better coordination between federal and provincial governments, and within the federal government itself. Specific concerns included misalignment in policy decisions seemingly made in a vacuum, lack of common standards and oversight of international education, and absence of a common "Brand Canada" approach in international recruitment.

Participants observed there are few opportunities for intergovernmental policy coordination and ineffective coordination across federal departments, notably IRCC, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

Recommendations

The Government of Canada, along with the provinces and territories, post-secondary sector, student groups and other stakeholders, should:

- **Lead a process of meaningful, broad consultation** to shape a refreshed, long-term vision and policy objectives for international education in Canada.
- **Develop a new multi-year international education strategy** for Canada, informed and guided by an extensive consultation process. The strategy should reflect the dramatically changed environment, and align with broader national objectives in immigration, the labour market, regional development and global affairs. It should also consider the differences in institutional and program contexts between public and private institutions, colleges and universities, and undergraduate and graduate programs.
- **Designate a specialized body for federal-provincial coordination** of international education programs. This could be via expanded mandates for existing bodies like the CMEC or Federal-Provincial Consultative Committee on Education-Related International Activities (FPCCERIA), or through a new, purpose-built committee or forum for international education.
- **Commit to regular review and evaluation** of international education in Canada and transparent reporting of outcomes to Canadians.

Theme 2: Clarifying immigration and career pathways for graduates

The problem: Canada does not have a clearly defined, transparent pathway between international education and post-graduate immigration and careers.

For most international students, the potential of an immigration pathway has been the main motivation for choosing Canada. The 2023 International Student Survey, conducted by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), found that 70% of students intended to apply for a PGWP and nearly 60% for permanent residency.[32] However, there is a major discrepancy between students' expectations of an immigration pathway and their reality. As the numbers of international students rise steadily, a growing share of those who stay on PGWP are unlikely to be successful in the highly competitive pursuit of permanent residency.

Researchers at the TMU Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration (CERC Migration) found that the lack of clarity has created the conditions for misrepresentation, fraud and unscrupulous recruitment, which can have devastating effects on students.[33] The authors find clear and transparent immigration pathways, that are consistent over time, are needed by international students considering Canada as a destination for study.

Misalignment to in-demand career pathways is a related problem. International students are a rich source of highly skilled talent. However, they are both underrepresented in high-demand fields like health and the trades, and limited in their opportunities for relevant work experience needed to pursue those paths.[34]

Worse, the large number of students in general business and other low-alignment programs struggle to transition to high-demand occupations on their PGWP and often fail to receive permanent residency.[35] This is a bad outcome for both international students and Canada's economy. Given the diversity of provincial and local labour markets across the country, there is an added regional development dimension to this issue. To address this issue, one of the federal 2024 reforms limits PGWPs to international graduates in programs related to fields with long-term Canadian labour shortages.



Roundtable insights

Immigration-related issues were the most contentious topics dealt with during the roundtables. While participants recognized the need to stem the rapid growth of international students, there was no consensus on whether federal actions to reduce, cap and allocate study permits is the appropriate policy mechanism to address immigration-related challenges.

Participants agreed that federal and provincial governments, and post-secondary institutions, must better inform prospective international students about the possible immigration pathways *before* they choose Canada, to ensure fairness and clear expectations. This requires accurate and timely information about immigration processes and post-graduate employment prospects. However, there was little consensus on how a well-defined international student immigration pathway could be established. A difficulty one participant highlighted is that there are a great many "pathways" through the immigration system for applicants.

Participants had mixed perspectives on alignment of international education to labour-market needs. Some felt that addressing labour shortages should remain a central objective for international education, calling for a stronger emphasis on high-demand fields like STEM, health or the trades.

However, there was no agreement on *how* better alignment could be achieved through policy. Participants shared concerns about the reliability of projecting labour-market demand years into the future, and with the federal government's unilateral use of immigration levers like the PGWP to influence post-secondary and workforce policy on a provincial and local level. There was consensus that Canada should prioritize *excellence* in international students, especially among those at the graduate level and in research-intensive fields.

Participants were fully in agreement that Canada should improve *information and resources* for international students about career pathways related to their areas of study. The aim would be to better equip international students in the application process regarding labour-market conditions and post-graduation opportunities in Canada.





To provide a complete picture to students, this information should combine data on education quality of post-secondary programs with labour market information (LMI) for job outlooks, wages and work requirements in occupations in their chosen fields of study. Institutions and governments should also seek to standardize approaches to supporting in-study employment and work-integrated learning (WIL), to improve eligibility and available opportunities, and ensure adequate worker protections.

In sum, there was agreement that a transparent and predictable immigration framework is critical to maintaining Canada's reputation as an education destination. A common view was that the 2024 reforms have created great uncertainty about Canada for prospective students, and are deeply unfair to students on PGWP whose opportunity for an immigration pathway has been shut down.



Recommendations

The Government of Canada, in consultation with the provinces and territories and the post-secondary sector, should:

- **Put in place predictable, multi-year processes for setting the annual student visa cap and provincial allocations.** Under an updated policy framework, provinces and post-secondary institutions should have longer plan horizons than they had this year. Study permit caps should be established on a three-year rolling basis, aligned to the three-year temporary resident targets in the 2025–2027 *Immigration Levels Plan*. This should be accompanied by a simple, population-based provincial allocation formula, allowing provincial governments to set their own allocation policies to offer multi-year planning certainty to universities and colleges.
- **Establish a provincial role in determining PGWP-eligible post-secondary programs and graduate student levels**. For both jurisdictional and efficacy reasons, the federal government should not be using immigration levers to direct the *composition* of students by program or field of study. Instead, determination of PGWP-eligible academic programs and graduate student levels should be done in conjunction with, or deferred to, the provinces. They have jurisdictional authority for setting post-secondary policy and are better equipped to understand the labour market and regional development needs.
- **Enhance the transparency of immigration pathways for prospective and current international students.** Establish a clear immigration framework as part of the International Education Program. It should provide international students with clear expectations about their immigration prospects and pathways. This includes information about eligibility for PGWP and permanent residency, required steps in the immigration process, and immigration outcomes for international graduates by post-secondary institution and program of study.
- **Develop labour market information (LMI) tools to inform post-secondary recruiters and students about in-demand fields of study and career pathways.** User-friendly information resources such as annual briefs or data dashboards, accessible through IRCC, provincial education ministries and international education sector organizations, could present updated LMI with multi-year workforce projections. These projections could be broken down to regional and local levels to inform university and college program development and recruitment planning. Additionally, they would support prospective and current students in making critical study and career choices.



Theme 3: Ensuring integrity and consumer protection in recruitment

The problem: Canada needs to improve the integrity, transparency and accountability surrounding the recruitment of international students.

For prospective international students, clear and accurate information about their study choices is essential in determining whether to come to Canada. Yet, research and expert discussions reveal that one of the most consistently cited challenges for international students is the lack of transparent or accurate information from post-secondary institutions and third-party recruiters.[36]

There have been many reports of misleading information provided to international students by unscrupulous international recruiters and agents.[37] With at least half of international students recruited by agencies contracted by public and private colleges and universities, there has been increased scrutiny and concern about the practices of third-party recruiters.[38] [39] Misleading information is commonly about immigration-related issues, with students oversold on their chances for successful permanent residency.[40]

Provincial oversight of post-secondary international recruitment practices is limited. Manitoba has a legal Code of Conduct for Recruiters and language about misleading or deceptive recruiting conduct in the provincial International Education Act.[41] [42] Ontario has advertising rules for private career colleges to increase consumer protection.[43] Colleges Ontario, the association for public colleges, introduced sector-wide standards of practice for international education for its members.[44] Other jurisdictions, such as Australia and the United Kingdom, have introduced ethical recruitment standards that could serve as a model for Canadian provinces.[45] [46]

There have been many reports of misleading information provided to international students by unscrupulous international recruiters and agents.

Roundtable insights

A common perception is that Canada does not have adequate regulatory frameworks, oversight or enforcement over international recruitment, whether for ensuring consumer protections, authenticating foreign credentials, or holding institutions accountable for good practices. Most actors in the system are seen to be behaving responsibly. But the strong financial motivation for institutions to grow international enrolment, sometimes via third-party agencies with incentives for aggressive tactics and insufficient oversight, has led to some unethical and misleading practices.

Constructive proposals were tabled. Some participants called for stricter penalties for unethical agents and contracting institutions to improve accountability. Others suggested leveraging technology to improve oversight and transparency in recruitment, including standardizing application processes, credential recognition and language proficiency requirements, to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is provided. Participants suggested Canada could look to examples like the London Statement principles for ethical recruitment by education agents and consultants.[47]



Recommendations

The Government of Canada and provinces and territories, in collaboration with the post-secondary sector, the education recruitment industry and other groups, should:

- **Establish a common recruitment standard and code of conduct to ensure ethical and accountable practices.** These could borrow from the Manitoba Code of Conduct or the models in place in other jurisdictions. Oversight should be coordinated across both levels of government. However, provincial governments should be responsible for enforcement of the standard and code of conduct as part of their oversight of designated learning institutions (see Theme 4 below). Penalties for institutions could include fines, reduction of study permit allocations or removal of DLI status.
- **Establish standards for the accuracy and scope of international student recruitment information.** This can include requirements for universities or colleges to present accurate information about immigration prospects of graduates, the quality of educational programs, acceptance rates, tuition and fees, regional costs of living and in-study student work opportunities.

Theme 4: Oversight and quality assurance of designated learning institutions (DLIs)

The problem: Trust in Canada's international education system and student visa process needs to be restored.

The federal government has communicated that its reforms seek to strengthen the integrity and sustainability of the International Education Program by addressing the oversight and accountability of DLIs and the quality of experience for students.[48] The 2024 reforms also seek to rebalance the overall intake of international students to alleviate pressures on housing affordability, health care and other social services, while continuing to address labour market needs.

DLIs are approved by provinces and territories under delegation from the federal government. The joint federal-provincial program establishes that institutions have adequate facilities, available services and appropriate curriculum to educate international students, with each province administering the program.

However, concerns have surfaced about provincial rigour in awarding DLI status, and about the ongoing quality assurance processes for approved DLIs. Since the January 2024 federal announcement of changes to the International Student Program, many provinces have frozen or restricted the allocation of new DLI status to adhere to the federal study permit cap and address criticism about quality assurance issues.[49]





In addition to limiting the overall number of students, IRCC's 2024 reforms have sought to bolster quality assurance through a new provincial/territorial attestation letter (PAL/TAL) requirement for study permit applicants, and the various changes to PGWP eligibility in Fall 2024. The federal government has also made regulatory changes to require DLIs to provide compliance reporting about their students at the request of the federal IRCC minister.[50]

Other measures have been proposed but not yet introduced, including a recognized institutions framework (RIF) to "incentivize post-secondary educational institutions with DLI status to meet higher standards with regards to international students."[51] In theory, RIF status would offer benefits like fast-tracking federal study permit processing for DLIs that meet a higher bar for quality and outcome metrics.

Roundtable insights

Discussions focused on the weaknesses of regulatory frameworks and accountability mechanisms at the federal level and in some provinces, and how this contributed to the unmanaged growth and diminished public trust in the international education system. Specific concerns were identified, relating to oversight of DLIs, authentication of language requirements, and assessment of financial resource requirements and academic credentials. Some participants called for greater scrutiny of private career colleges in particular, based on perceptions of substandard education, student support services and outcomes. There was general agreement about the inconsistency in quality assurance across post-secondary institutions, with a few "bad actors" but most operating with integrity.

Participants made various policy proposals. A common view was a need to strengthen provincial DLI oversight and enforcement, with specific mechanisms such as quality assurance audits, non-compliance penalties, and enhanced information collection and reporting requirements. Some called for the development of a standard quality assurance assessment for use across provinces, with common guidance and measures. Others suggested establishing common data collection and reporting processes and infrastructure as a foundation for tracking accountability and outcomes. Many agreed that institutions should be required to report on key metrics such as student graduation rates, employment rates (overall and in area of study), student satisfaction, and other measures tied to economic and labour force goals and immigration targets.

In the wake of the federal reforms, there was significant discussion of the role of the federal government. Participants criticized the slow and ineffective study permitting process administered by IRCC, as it shifted this year from open-ended processing to a more complex system encumbered by new policies such as permit caps, provincial allocations and attestations. Some questioned the interventionist federal role in the post-secondary system, both on jurisdictional grounds and a perceived lack of post-secondary expertise and capacity.





Recommendations

The provincial governments, with the Government of Canada and post-secondary institutions, should:

- **Strengthen accountability and oversight for DLIs.** To retain accreditation and inform the public and both levels of government about how each institution is doing, DLI accreditation should require regular assessments. This could include periodic on-the-ground inspections for quality assurance and regular reporting on results such as graduation rates and time to completion. Over the longer term, DLI status should be tied to evidence-based outcomes that reflect federal and provincial goals for international education.
- **Update the joint governance of DLIs.** While provinces have held authority for awarding and governing DLIs, the recent regulatory changes signal a larger federal role in overseeing DLI accountability. IRCC and provincial education ministries should agree upon a renewed "division of labour," with clear and transparent expectations for the DLIs.
- **Standardize international education program quality and student outcome reporting.** The aim would be to establish common measures, reporting processes and data governance to track international education quality and outcomes over time. Quality measures for DLIs would be established for international program and graduate outcomes. These may include, for example, student satisfaction, student retention, graduation and completion rates, in-study employment and work-integrated learning (WIL), post-graduate employment outcomes and return to home country.

The Government of Canada, in consultation with the provinces, territories and the post-secondary sector, should:

- **Modernize student visa processing to simplify and speed up the process for prospective students and post-secondary institutions.** IRCC should commit to updating their systems to streamline key aspects of the application process, including authentication of applications, credential recognition, student language and financial requirements, and new provincial attestation requirements.
- **Establish a recognized institutions framework (RIF) that rewards DLIs that demonstrate the best outcomes in achieving international student success.** The aim is to prioritize DLIs with a demonstrated track record of providing high quality education and graduate success. This would be based on key metrics for program quality, student outcomes and alignment with Canada's international education strategy goals, such as addressing skilled labour shortages, meeting DLI accountability requirements and common recruitment standards. RIF-designated institutions could benefit from expedited federal study permit processing. Provinces could also choose to provide RIF institutions with a larger share of student permit allocations.



> **Many international students voice feelings of being lost or stranded.**

Theme 5: Improving academic supports and student services

The problem: Universities and colleges do not provide adequate academic and non-academic services for international student success during studies in Canada.

The inadequacy of in-study international student supports has been a major area of concern. Academic supports, ranging from language proficiency to tutoring and academic upgrading, are often unavailable, difficult to access or poor quality.

Access to adequate and affordable housing has been a particular difficulty for many international students, who can be subject to housing discrimination and exploitation by landlords and property managers.[52] International students can also face challenges accessing healthcare and mental health services that are culturally appropriate for their needs. A study by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) found that many international students are reliant on off-campus employment to fund their studies and living costs, and struggle to find work or protect themselves from unscrupulous and exploitative employers.[53]

Our research and consultations also revealed that many international students voice feelings of being lost or stranded. Cultural differences can complicate their educational experiences. Representatives of student advocacy organizations share that career services staff can be unfamiliar with the international student experience and unable to provide adequate or culturally informed support. A recent study examining international student experiences at an Ontario college found that "faculty training and development, and intercultural co-curricular activities" were crucial to international student success.[54]

The HEQCO report calls on policymakers to consider targeted approaches to supports for international students, distinct from traditional support for domestic students.[55] Others call for access to adequate and affordable housing as a critical necessity for all students, recognizing international students face specific challenges that demand a unique housing strategy that addresses these barriers.[56] Some provinces have already responded. Ontario announced it will require public colleges and universities to guarantee that housing options are available for incoming international students.[57]





Roundtable insights

Roundtable participants reinforced many of the challenges highlighted through research and reporting on international student experiences. This included criticism of language and academic supports for international students. There was agreement about the unique challenges international students face to access health services, legal services and employment protections related to precarious jobs. Limited affordable housing access has left many students in overcrowded or unsafe living conditions.

Participants proposed a number of constructive interventions. Common standards could be developed for comprehensive wrap-around services to be provided by DLIs, and provinces could set requirements for universities and colleges to reinvest a portion of international tuition fees into these services. Institutions could bridge the academic support gap by allocating more resources to tutoring and academic advising, with a focus on multilingual and culturally sensitive resources and services.

Access to WIL programs, such as co-ops and internships, and employment services could be expanded to help students gain relevant Canadian work experience, and prepare them for employment after graduation. Finally, institutions should be required to guarantee adequate affordable housing options for international students, as well as housing services and legal assistance to support students in off-campus landlord disputes.



Recommendations

Provincial governments, in consultation with the Government of Canada, the post-secondary sector, student groups and service providers, should:

- **Develop a common standard for international student services at DLIs to encourage comparable service levels across Canada.** The standard should include language and academic services and upgrading, as well as housing and culturally informed mental health support, employment counselling and health care access. It could align with, or be modelled upon, the standard for mental health and well-being of post-secondary students, established by the Canadian Standards Association.[58] Efforts to improve program reporting for quality assurance (see Theme 4) should include compliance measures for the standard to support DLI oversight activities.
- **Mandate that DLIs provide a minimum level of international student services and demonstrate they are meeting the pan-Canadian service standard.** As for recruitment, these minimum standards could become a requirement for securing and maintaining DLI status, subject to more robust provincial oversight and enforcement activities. Provinces can mandate that institutions dedicate a minimum percentage of international tuition revenue to these support services. For example, the University of British Columbia established a policy that allotted 7.5% of international tuition revenues for international student financial aid.[59]



Theme 6: Repairing "Brand Canada"

The problem: Canada's international education reputation has sustained significant damage, and will need to be restored to attract top students in the future.

A number of indicators point to a rapid decline over the past year of Canada's reputation as an international study destination. They include international education surveys, media reports of shifting applicant demand to peer countries[60] and online Reddit message boards in key source countries like India.[61]

The International Education Program reforms have been widely perceived by foreign students as Canada "closing the door." The result has been a sharp drop in applications to Canada, with projections suggesting international enrolments for 2024 will be below the reduced admissions cap.[62]

The damage to "Brand Canada," if not rapidly addressed, could impede interest in Canada for the best and brightest international students for years to come.[63] This is a joint federal-provincial challenge. The country's official EduCanada brand for international education promotion is managed as a collaborative partnership of Global Affairs Canada and CMEC.



Diversifying source-country recruitment activities, an objective of Canada's recent international education strategy, should be a heightened priority given the rising geopolitical tensions with India and China. However, policy and study permit processes have not actively encouraged diversification of country of origin. While not typically a recruitment consideration for universities and colleges, IRCC has made efforts to diversify source-country recruitment by varying permit acceptance rates by country, with opaque criteria that factor in past evidence of immigration violations or fraudulent applications.

Roundtable insights

There was broad consensus – and strongly expressed opinions – that the crisis has inflicted swift and severe damage to Canada's international education brand. The rapid decline of study permit applications and international enrolments represents billions of dollars in lost revenues to the post-secondary sector and foregone economic opportunity for Canada. Participants from the international recruitment sector speculated that the crisis would get worse before it gets better, projecting application declines even more severe in 2025 than 2024.

In a highly competitive global market, participants felt that repairing Canada's international education reputation requires a focus on the "value proposition" for students to choose Canada. In addition to the potential immigration pathway, Canada continues to offer a compelling mix of benefits – top-tier academic programs, multiculturalism and global connections, quality of life, and relative affordability of tuition and cost of living compared to top global competitors.





Participants concluded that Canada's marketing should be centred on the quality and diversity of the post-secondary education experience available to international students. They felt this could be made clearer with accurate and predictable information about students' post-graduate work opportunities. At the same time, many international students do not intend to stay. If these graduates receive a high-quality education and an excellent experience, they will become valuable global ambassadors for Canada and the post-secondary system.



Recommendations

The federal and provincial governments, in consultation with the post-secondary sector and international recruitment industry, should:

- **Develop a strategy for repairing "Brand Canada" through the EduCanada partnership.** The central objective should be to reposition Canada as a trusted, attractive destination for high-quality post-secondary education, and establish coordination across a fragmented recruitment landscape. The strategy should seek to develop common promotional narratives and align activities where possible. This includes across provincial, institution-specific and third-party recruitment, and broader trade promotion efforts through Global Affairs Canada, the Trade Commissioner Service and others. The strategy should include a renewed "Study in Canada" marketing campaign that highlights the high quality and diversity of post-secondary education in Canada.
- **Encourage the diversification of source-country recruitment, and increase transparency in the assessment process for student visas.** Canada should develop a targeted diversification strategy to reduce overreliance on a few countries for international student recruitment. Canada can create a more resilient and diverse international education sector by expanding recruitment efforts to underrepresented regions such as Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia. IRCC needs to be more transparent with the criteria it uses to assess student visa applications across the various source countries and regions.

Summary of Recommendations



Theme 1: Renewing Canada's international education goals and strategy

The Government of Canada, with the provinces and territories, post-secondary sector, student groups and other stakeholders, should:

- Lead a process of meaningful, broad consultation to shape a refreshed, long-term vision and policy objectives for international education in Canada.
- Develop a new multi-year International Education Strategy for Canada.
- Designate an expert and specialized body as the forum for ongoing, good-faith federal-provincial coordination of international education programming.
- Commit to regular review and evaluation of international education in Canada, and transparent reporting of outcomes to Canadians.



Theme 2: Clarifying immigration and career pathways for graduates

The Government of Canada, in consultation with the provinces, territories and post-secondary sector, should:

- Put in place predictable, multi-year processes for setting the annual student visa cap and provincial allocations.
- Establish a provincial role in determining PGWP-eligible post-secondary programs and setting graduate student levels.
- Enhance the transparency of immigration pathways for prospective and current international students, including PGWP eligibility.
- Develop labour market information (LMI) tools to inform post-secondary recruiters and students about in-demand fields of study and career pathways.



Theme 3: Ensuring integrity and consumer protection in recruitment

The Government of Canada and provinces and territories, in consultation with the post-secondary sector, should:

- Establish a common recruitment standard and code of conduct to ensure ethical and accountable practices.
- Establish standards for the accuracy and comprehensiveness of international student recruitment information.

Theme 4: Enhancing oversight and quality assurance of designated learning institutions (DLIs)

Provincial governments, with the Government of Canada and post-secondary institutions, should:

- Strengthen accountability and oversight for DLIs.
- Update the joint governance of DLIs.
- Standardize international education program quality and student outcome reporting.

The Government of Canada, in consultation with the provinces, territories and post-secondary sector, should:

- Modernize student visa processing to simplify and speed up the process for prospective students and post-secondary institutions.
- Establish a recognized institutions framework (RIF) that rewards DLIs that demonstrate the best outcomes in achieving international student success.

Theme 5: Improving academic supports and student services

Provincial governments, in consultation with the Government of Canada, the post-secondary sector, student groups and service providers, should:

- Develop a common standard for international student services at DLIs to encourage comparable service levels across Canada.
- Mandate that DLIs provide a minimum level of international student services and demonstrate they are meeting the pan-Canadian service standard.

Theme 6: Repairing "Brand Canada"

The federal and provincial governments, in consultation with the post-secondary sector and international recruitment industry, should:

- Develop a strategy for repairing "Brand Canada" through the EduCanada partnership.
- Encourage the diversification of source-country recruitment, and increase transparency in the assessment process for student visas.

Conclusion

Canada has one of the finest post-secondary systems in the world, built over many generations, with an incredible range of institutions. Long a beacon for international students, the system fell into crisis in 2024 due to years of inadequate oversight, lack of federal-provincial collaboration, post-secondary funding restraint, and insufficient attention to the quality of education.

This report, based on extensive research and convening of the international education community, offers policymakers and post-secondary leaders comprehensive findings and policy recommendations across six themes.

However, we see a few critical prerequisites to create the conditions for success:

- **A short-term view will not suffice.** There needs to be a commitment to taking a longer view in shaping the vision, strategies and policy framework for the future.
- **System solutions require coordinated approaches.** An international education system jointly stewarded by federal and provincial governments, delivered through DLIs across the country with many partners, cannot be run in silos.
- **The federal role in international education should be firm but limited.** The crisis has rightfully prompted intervention to address uncontrolled growth, unethical practices, and threats to the integrity and public trust in the immigration system. A firmer hand in international education strategy, coordination and oversight are needed, but should stop short of interventions that intrude on provincial jurisdiction and stretch limited federal capabilities in post-secondary education policy.
- **Provinces must address the post-secondary funding "elephant in the classroom."** Beyond the scope of this report, provincial austerity policies in post-secondary education, limiting both operating grants and domestic tuition, created the conditions for universities and colleges to aggressively pursue growth in international enrolments. A renewed international education system will not succeed without financially sustainable DLIs.

Albert Einstein once said, "In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity." Provincial and federal policymakers, higher education leaders, student groups and sector associations, and other key stakeholders can join forces to revitalize the system. Together, they can create a world-class education and experience for international students, while ensuring sustainability and value for the post-secondary system, communities from coast-to-coast and Canada's global standing.



Appendix A: Roundtable Participants

Two pairs of roundtables were held in late spring and early fall 2024, convening numerous international education community stakeholders to share perspectives and discuss constructive opportunities for the future of Canada's international education system.

The first set of roundtables were scoped to engage *provincial/territorial policy* issues, focused on the role of provinces and post-secondary institutions in ensuring integrity of international recruitment and availability of student supports specific to the needs of international students, both academic and non-academic. The second set of roundtables focused on *federal policy* issues, reassessing Canada's objectives with international education, integrity in international recruitment and programming, and immigration and career pathways for international graduates. A small number of bilateral interviews and meetings were also held to supplement the roundtables.

To allow participants to speak freely about their personal views as well as their organizational positions, discussions were held under a modified Chatham House Rule, with participant interventions summarized but not attributed to individual speakers. A key caveat is that we were *not* able to reach consensus on policy recommendations through the roundtables – nor did we try to, given the diversity of perspectives and our limited time. As such, **the findings and recommendations in the report seek to capture the spirit and focus of the discussions, but can be attributed only to the Dais and the authors**.

Project Participants

Name	Organization
Alexandra Macfarlane	Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario
Andrew Parr	University of British Columbia
Ashika Niraula	Toronto Metropolitan University
Christine Wach	IDP Education
Cindy McIntyre	Canadian Bureau for International Education
Clark Hortsing	GuardMe
Craig Riggs	ICEF Monitor
David Carter-Whitney	DCW Consulting
Drew Fagan	University of Toronto
Emmy Egulu	CSA Group
Farah Huq	Strategist
Glenn Craney	Humber College
Graham Barber	Universities Canada
Graham Owens	Boreal Education
Isaac Garcia-Sitton	Toronto Metropolitan University
Jeremy Strachan	Conference Board of Canada

Appendix A: Roundtable Participants

Name	Organization
Joan Atlin	World Education Services
John Shalagan	JTS International Higher Education Consultancy
Kathryn Dennler	World Education Services
Khoi Luu	Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance
Krista Steeves	CEWIL Canada
Larissa Bezo	Canadian Bureau for International Education
Lisa Kachulak-Babey	University of Manitoba
Marshia Akbar	Toronto Metropolitan University
Matthew McKean	Business + Higher Education Roundtable
Mehnaz Lamia	Canadian Federation of Students
Michael Crawford Urban	CSA Group
Michael McDonald	Colleges and Institutes Canada
Michael Sangster	National Association of Career Colleges
Michael Tahir	College Student Alliance
Mikal Skuterud	University of Waterloo
Mike Allcott	ApplyBoard
Mike Henniger	Illume Student Advisory Services
Naomi Alboim	Queen's University
Nevena Dragicevic	CSA Group
Raghwa Gopal	M Square Media
Ratna Omidvar	Senate of Canada
Rica Agnes Castaneda	Toronto Metropolitan University
Robert Barnard	Youthful Cities
Roopa Desai Trilokekar	York University
Sam Jemison	SpacesShared
Shamira Madhany	World Education Services
Steve Orsini	Council of Ontario Universities
Val Walker	Business + Higher Education Roundtable
Vinay Chaudhry	Worldwide EduConnect Global
Yvonne Su	York University

Endnotes

(1) See the text of the IRCC announcement here.

(2) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. "Temporary Residents: Study Permit Holders – Monthly IRCC Updates - Canada - Study Permit Holders on December 31st by Province/Territory and Study Level - Open Government Portal." May 18 2024. https://open.canada.ca/data/dataset/90115b00-f9b8-49e8-afa3-b4cff8facaee/resource/b663a97c-61d4-4e17-af51-0cba01ef3a44.

(3) Nicholas Keung, "Drop in international students leads Ontario universities to project $1B loss in revenues over 2 years," Toronto Star, October 18, 2024. https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/drop-in-international-students-leads-ontario-universities-to-project-1b-loss-in-revenues-over-2/article_95778f40-8cd2-11ef-8b74-b7ff88d95563.html.

(4) The attestation letters are federally mandated directives requiring provinces and territories to confirm that each international student receiving such a letter falls within their allocated quota.

(5) Nicholas Keung, "Canadian universities see international students' enrolment down 45 per cent after rule change. 'The system is just hanging on,'" Toronto Star, September 6, 2024. https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/canadian-universities-see-international-students-enrolment-down-45-per-cent-after-rule-change-the-system/article_ab3243bc-6bbb-11ef-a627-374400a10a6a.html.

(6) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Notice – Supplementary Information for the 2025-2027 Immigration Levels Plan," October 24, 2024. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2025-2027.html.

(7) Peter Zimonjic, "Minister, advocates say they fear international students will be blamed for housing crisis," CBC News, September 9, 2023. https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/marc-miller-international-students-stigmatization-1.6959645.

(8) Matthew Halliday, "The murky world of unregulated international student recruiters," University Affairs, November 2, 2022. https://universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/the-murky-world-of-unregulated-international-student-recruiters/.

(9) Bryan Passifiume, "Record number of international students straining Canada's housing supply further," National Post, August 11, 2023, https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/record-international-students-straining-housing-supply.

(10) Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), "The Student Voice: National Results of the 2023 CBIE International Student Survey", p. 5, 2023. https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2023-ISS-the-student-voice.pdf

(11) International Students Needs Assessment Report, Peel Newcomer Strategy Group, pp. 16-17, 2018. https://peelnewcomer.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/10/PNSG_International-Students-Final-Report.pdf.

(12) Naomi Alboim, Karen Cohl, and Marshia Akbar, "Ontario Colleges and International Students: A Pivotal Time," Policy Brief 18, Toronto Metropolitan University, p. 5, February 2024. https://torontonorthlip.ca/en/resources/ontario-colleges-and-international-students-a-pivotal-time/

(13) Max Stick, Feng Hou, and Haozhen Zhang, "Housing international students: Housing suitability across municipalities," Statistics Canada, May 22, 2024. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2024005/article/00001-eng.htm.

(14) Council of the Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), "Bringing Education in Canada to the World, Bringing the World to Canada: An International Education Marketing Action Plan for Provinces and Territories," June 2011. https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/264/COF_Bringing_Ed_to_Canada_Eng_final.pdf

(15) Global Affairs Canada, "ARCHIVED - Canada's International Education Strategy (2014–2019)," May 21, 2019. https://www.international.gc.ca/education/report-rapport/strategy-strategie-2014/index.aspx?lang=eng.

(16) Ashika Niraula, Anna Triandafyllidou, and Marshia Akbar, "Navigating Uncertainties: Evaluating the Shift of Canadian Immigration Policies during the COVID-19 Pandemic," Canadian Public Policy, Vol. 48, No. S1, pp. 49–59, 2022. https://utppublishing.com/doi/full/10.3138/cpp.2022-010

(17) Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. " Follow-up on 2021 Value-for-Money:Public Colleges Oversight," 2023. https://www.auditor.on.ca/en/content/annualreports/arreports/en23/1-18FU_publiccolleges_en23.pdf

(18) Alan Harrison, "Ensuring Financial Sustainability for Ontario's Post-secondary Sector," Blue-Ribbon Panel on Post-secondary Education Financial Sustainability, November 14, 2023. https://files.ontario.ca/mcu-ensuring-financial-sustainability-for-ontarios-postsecondary-sector-en-2023-11-14.pdf

(19) Alex Usher, Janet Balfour, "The State of Post-secondary Education in Canada 2023," Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates. https://higheredstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2023-11-03-SPEC-2023_final-2_smaller.pdf

(20) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Canada to stabilize growth and decrease number of new international student permits issued to approximately 360,000 for 2024," January 22, 2024. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/01/canada-to-stabilize-growth-and-decrease-number-of-new-international-student-permits-issued-to-approximately-360000-for-2024.html.

(21) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Update on public-private partnership programs for international students," March 22, 2024. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/update-public-private-college-partnership-programs.html.

Endnotes

(22) Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, "Major changes to Canada's international student program: An overview of recent federal and provincial announcements," March 7, 2024. https://www.blg.com/en/insights/2024/03/major-changes-to-canadas-international-student-program.

(23) Government of Canada, "Field of study requirements," accessed November 8, 2024. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/eligibility.html#field-of-study.

(24) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan," October 10, 2024. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/10/20252027-immigration-levels-plan.html.

(25) Sean Previl, "International student enrolment down 45 per cent, Universities Canada says," Global News, September 7, 2024. https://globalnews.ca/news/10738537/universities-canada-international-student-enrolment-drop/.

(26) "Looking Ahead to 2025: Predictions for Canada's International Student Program," ApplyBoard, September 10, 2024. https://www.applyboard.com/applyinsights-article/looking-ahead-to-2025-predictions-for-canadas-international-student-program.

(27) CBC News, "Seneca Polytechnic to close Markham campus citing 'dramatic drop' in number of international students," CBC News, October 26, 2024. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/seneca-closure-1.7364762.

(28) International Consultants for Education and Fairs (ICEF), "Survey shows new visa rules are encouraging international students to apply to more destinations," ICEF Monitor, October 23, 2024. https://monitor.icef.com/2024/10/survey-shows-new-visa-rules-are-encouraging-international-students-to-apply-to-more-destinations/.

(29) Global Affairs Canada, "Canada's International Education Strategy (2019–2024)," August 22, 2019. https://www.international.gc.ca/education/strategy-strategie/2019-2024.aspx?lang=eng.

(30) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Canada to stabilize growth and decrease number of new international student permits issued to approximately 360,000 for 2024," January 22, 2024. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2024/01/canada-to-stabilize-growth-and-decrease-number-of-new-international-student-permits-issued-to-approximately-360000-for-2024.html.

(31) Mike Crawley and Valerie Ouellet, "Canada's foreign student push 'mismatched' job market, data shows," CBC News, May 9, 2024. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/international-students-college-university-fields-study-data-1.7195530.

(32) Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), "The Student Voice: National Results of the 2023 CBIE International Student Survey," p. 7, 2023. https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2023-ISS-the-student-voice.pdf

(33) Naomi Alboim, Karen Cohl, and Marshia Akbar, "Ontario Colleges and International Students: A Pivotal Time," Policy Brief 18, Toronto Metropolitan University, p.5, February 2024. https://www.torontomu.ca/cerc-migration/Policy/CERCMigration_PolicyBrief18_FEB2024.pdf.

(34) Ben Richardson and Yadullah Hussain. "Course Correction: How international students can help solve Canada's labour crisis." RBC Thought Leadership, September 1, 2022. https://thoughtleadership.rbc.com/course-correction-how-international-students-can-help-solve-canadas-labour-crisis/

(35) Lilach Marom and Balraj S. Kahlon, "They Take the Money from Karan and Give It to Karen: Education-Migration and Grassroots Advocacy for Punjabi International Students," India Migration Report 2023, Routledge, New Delhi, p. 70, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003490234.

(36) Naomi Alboim, Karen Cohl, and Marshia Akbar, "Ontario Colleges and International Students: A Pivotal Time," Policy Brief 18, Toronto Metropolitan University, p.5, February 2024. https://www.torontomu.ca/cerc-migration/Policy/CERCMigration_PolicyBrief18_FEB2024.pdf.

(37) Kathy Tomlinson, "The foreign students who say they were lured to Canada by a lie," The Globe and Mail, June 26, 2019. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-international-students-coming-to-private-colleges-say-they-were-duped/.

(38) Matthew Halliday, "The murky world of unregulated international student recruiters," University Affairs, November 2, 2022. https://universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/the-murky-world-of-unregulated-international-student-recruiters/.

(39) Sabi Marwah, Ratna Omidvar, Hassan Yussuff, and Yuen Pau Woo, "Strengthening The Integrity Of Canada's International Student Program," p. 9, September 2023. -https://www.ratnaomidvar.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/EN_CanadasInternationalStudentProgramDiscussionPaper-Final.pdf

(40) Naomi Alboim, Karen Cohl, and Marshia Akbar, "Ontario Colleges and International Students: A Pivotal Time," Policy Brief 18, Toronto Metropolitan University, February 2024, p. 5. https://www.torontomu.ca/cerc-migration/Policy/CERCMigration_PolicyBrief18_FEB2024.pdf.

(41) International Education Branch of Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, and the International Education Act Working Group (IEAWG), "The Guide to the Code of Practice and Conduct Regulation for Manitoba Designated Education Providers, their Staff Recruiters and Contracted Agents," Government of Manitoba, 2015. https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ie/pdf/code_of_practice.pdf.

(42) The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, The International Education Act, Bill 44, accessed October 21, 2024. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/b044e.php#:~:text=A%20recruiter%20must%20not%20engage,recruitment%20of%20prospective%20international%20students.&text=The%20obligations%20and%20prohibitions%20under,providers%20in%20any%20other%20enactment.

Endnotes

(43) Government of Ontario, "Advertising rules for career colleges," Ontario.ca, accessed August 23, 2024. https://www.ontario.ca/page/advertising-rules-career-colleges#section-3.

(44) Colleges Ontario, "Ontario public colleges' standards of practice for international education," March 14, 2023. https://www.collegesontario.org/en/resources/standards-for-international-programs.

(45) ICEF, "Australia expands regulatory oversight of education agents and announces new integrity measures for VET," ICEF Monitor, October 4, 2023. https://monitor.icef.com/2023/10/australia-expands-regulatory-oversight-of-education-agents-and-announces-new-integrity-measures-for-vet/.

(46) British Universities' International Liaison Association (BUILA), "AQF: UK Quality Framework for Education Agents." https://www.buila.ac.uk/activities/a-partnership-for-quality-uk-quality-framework-for-education-agents-2.

(47) British Council, "Landmark 'International Code of Ethics' for education agents," British Council, April 26, 2012. https://www.britishcouncil.org/contact/press/landmark-international-code-ethics.

(48) DLIs are learning institutions approved by provinces and territories, under delegation from the federal government. Each province has its own policy regime to award DLI status to institutions through measures such as quality assurance audits.

(49) Government of British Columbia, "B.C. strengthens quality standards for international education," Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, January 29, 2024. https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024PSFS0002-000094.

(50) "Regulations Amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (Designated Learning Institutions)," Canada Gazette, Part I, Vol. 158, No. 26, June 29, 2024. https://gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p1/2024/2024-06-29/html/reg1-eng.html.

(51) Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "IRCC Minister Transition Binder 2023: International Student Program," accessed November 23, 2023. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/transition-binders/minister-2023/student.html.

(52) Marshia Akbar, "Challenges Facing International College Students in Canada," India Migration Report 2023, Routledge, New Delhi, p. 156, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003490234-7.

(53) Julia Colyar, Jackie Pichette, and Janice Deakin, "Matching Rapid Growth with Adequate Supports: How Colleges and Government Can Enhance International Student Experiences in Ontario," Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, Toronto, January 11, 2023. https://heqco.ca/pub/matching-rapid-growth-with-adequate-supports-how-colleges-and-government-can-enhance-international-student-experiences-in-ontario/

(54) Adam McGregor, Christina Decarie, Wendy Whitehead, and Shelley Aylesworth-Spink, "Supporting International Students in an Ontario College: A Case for Multiple Interventions," The Canadian Journal of Action Research, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 5-28, February 2022.

(55) Julia Colyar, Jackie Pichette, and Janice Deakin, "Matching Rapid Growth with Adequate Supports," p. 24.

(56) Marshia Akbar, "Challenges Facing International College Students in Canada," India Migration Report 2023, Routledge, New Delhi, p. 156, 2024. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003490234-7.

(57) Government of Ontario, "Ontario Allocating International Student Applications to Support Labour Market Needs," 2024. https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1004360/ontario-allocating-international-student-applications-to-support-labour-market-needs

(58) Mental Health and well-being for post-secondary students, CSA Z2003:20, Canadian Standards Association, Toronto, 2020. https://www.csagroup.org/store/product/CSA%20Z2003:20/?srsltid=AfmBOoq8JhDpA6OykKtEUC58n4tOhZx6ytPdyofJzHk4m9sLk3DiqDMs.

(59) University of British Columbia, "Basics of the University Budget," accessed July 24, 2024. https://consultations.students.ubc.ca/basics-of-the-university-budget/.

(60) Marie Woolf, "Student visa approvals projected to drop by almost half this year: report," The Globe and Mail, September 9, 2024. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-student-visa-approvals-projected-to-drop-by-almost-half-this-year/

(61) Reddit: https://www.reddit.com/r/india/comments/171eub6/scared_about_going_to_canada_for_my_further/

(62) Nicholas Keung, "With dipping study permit approval rates for international students, Canada may not meet its reduced immigration targets," Toronto Star, June 19, 2024. https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/with-dipping-study-permit-approval-rates-for-international-students-canada-may-not-meet-its-reduced/article.html.

(63) Global Affairs Canada, "EduCanada: New international education brand," February 22, 2016. https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2016/02/educanada-new-international-education-brand.html.

About CSA Group

CSA Group is a global organization dedicated to safety, social good and sustainability. We are a leader in Standards Development and in Testing, Inspection and Certification around the world including Canada, the U.S., Europe and Asia. Our mandate is to hold the future to a higher standard.

The mission of CSA Group's Standards Development organization is to enhance the lives of Canadians through the advancement of standards in the public and private sectors. We are a leader in standards research, development, education, and advocacy. The technical and management standards developed with our more than 11,000 members improve safety, health, the environment, and economic efficiency in Canada and beyond.

CSA Group always strives to provide up to date and accurate information. However, no representation or warranty, expressed or implied, is made that this information meets your specific needs and any reliance on this information is at your own risk. Please contact CSA Group for more information about our services.

© 2025 Canadian Standards Association. All Rights Reserved.