



Ontario's International Students Need Support to be Part of Provincial Recovery

December 2nd, 2021

TORONTO, ON – The reliance on international students to fund Ontario's colleges poses serious financial risks and potentially devastating impacts to the college sector. In her latest report, Ontario's Auditor-General Bonnie Lysyk found that international students provide 68 per cent of all tuition revenue for Ontario's colleges, despite making up only 30 per cent of its student body. International student fees have reached staggering peaks, climbing to \$1.7 billion last year alone, which is in fact higher than the amount of provincial grants that Ontario's colleges received.

Auditor-General Lysyk also cited that this heavy reliance on funds extracted from international students poses significant risks to the province. Given that 62% of Ontario's international students come from India, if new barriers suddenly arise that cause a drop in international student enrolment, such as an inability to obtain study permits, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU) currently has no plan to deal with this threat. CSA would remind the provincial government that this scenario is exactly what occurred in 2018, when Saudi Arabia, in a diplomatic dispute with the Canadian government, recalled thousands of postsecondary students, and this departure was cited as a contributing factor to Laurentian University's insolvency.

As of yet, the MCU has failed to develop a strategic plan for the college sector that would mitigate the risk of a sudden drop in international students, or address the subsequent impact this could have on the college sector, students, and province. CSA would like to see the MCU develop a strategy plan that would combat these risks, and set a plan on how it will address the underlying problem: declining provincial transfers to colleges.

Over the last decade, the Ontario government transfers to colleges have actually declined by 1%, and currently provincial grants, tuition-relief funding, and per Full-Time-Equivalency (FTE) student expenditures are the lowest in the country. The absence of reflective funding has been cited as a contributing factor to colleges turning to rely heavily on international student fees to supplement lost revenue.

CSA is hopeful that the government will continue to increase the annual funding received by post-secondary institutions to promote the financial sustainability of the post-secondary sector and affordable tuition for international students. Most importantly, as student financial struggles continue to rise, CSA would encourage new funding in the area of expanded OSAP grants, especially for Indigenous students.

T. 416-340-1212
312 Adelaide Street West, Suite 301
Toronto, ON M5V 1R2



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International students will be an integral part of Ontario's post-pandemic recovery, the government must give them the assistance they need to accomplish this. A skilled international student population with the required support to successfully graduate and enter the workforce is essential in the rebuilding of our province. If enacted, CSA's recommendations will help to ensure that international students are adequately supported to complete their programs and contribute to a brighter future for Ontario.

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About College Student Alliance:

College Student Alliance (CSA) advocates on behalf of Ontario college students in partnership with student leaders. Through our member student associations, CSA represents the collective voice of Ontario's college students.

Contact:

Jason Baryluk
Interim General Manager
advocacy@collegestudentalliance.ca
C: 647-888-6922

