



Expanding Options for Canada's Private Educational Institutions

Issue

Current federal government policy, as described in the Federal Government's Post-Graduation Work Permit Program, under Citizenship and Immigration Canada, limits potential labour force growth and creates an uneven playing field (based on enrolment appeal) between publicly funded and private postsecondary educational institutions. The imbalance is created because post-graduation work opportunities in Canada are not permitted for foreign students who choose to obtain their education, through a Canadian private institution by way of a certificate or diploma, as opposed to degree program.

Background

Presently, foreign graduates of public institutions are eligible to work in Canada for a varying period of time if they achieve a certificate, diploma or degree from a "Participating (or recognized) Canadian Post-Secondary Institution." Foreign graduates of private educational institutions, with the exception of Quebec, are not eligible to obtain employment in Canada unless the private institution confers degrees.

If the private post-secondary institution does not confer degrees, but instead grants diplomas or certificates, foreign students graduating from these programs are not eligible to work in Canada at all; even if the program they graduated from or the skills which they developed fully meet Canada's labour needs.

Certificate- and diploma-granting private post-secondary institutions operating in Quebec attract foreign students and graduate them into work in the Canadian labour market. Foreign graduates from certificate and diploma granting private institutions in all other provinces are prevented from entering the labour market.

By practising a policy that prevents foreign graduates of private institutions from working in Canada, the federal government eliminates a potential inflow of workers with Canadian credentials who could easily transition into employment in Canada's marketplace, and help resolve labour shortages.

By eliminating the current policy barrier, the federal government will not only level the playing field between public and private institutions, which already is reason enough to act, but also ensuring that foreign graduates of all skill levels have an equal chance of gaining meaningful by employment upon graduating from a Canadian post-secondary institution.

Further, by removing the work restrictions placed on foreign graduates of private institutions, the federal government will enable Canadian private institutions to attract more potential workers into Canada. This will have tremendous positive effects through increased tax revenue from private institutions and new students, as well as a growing labour pool to help resolve shortages.

A 2012 federal government report measuring the economic value of the presence of international students in Canada estimated that total expenditures by international students while they study in

Canada (tuition, accommodation, living costs, travel and discretionary products and services) resulted in a \$7.7 billion infusion to the Canadian economy. According to the report, expenditures of international education students have now surpassed exports of unwrought aluminum (\$6 billion) and helicopters, airplanes and spacecraft (\$6.9 billion). (Note that this amount does not include exports of education services, which were not part of the scope of the study). The same report also found that in 2012 these international students generated more than \$445 million in government revenue and created economic activity that sustained employment for 81,000 Canadians.

Furthermore by expanding all work permit availability to private institution certificate or diploma graduates, the federal government would put more control and responsibility for success in the hands of private small and medium-sized businesses, which ultimately are what drive the growth of our country's economy. At a time when Alberta is striving for economic diversification, this policy shift would allow an emerging non-resource-based industry to thrive.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce recommends the Government of Canada;

1. Expand the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program to allow foreign graduates from accredited Canadian private post-secondary institutions to obtain a Canadian Work Permit upon completion of their degree, diploma or certificate program.