



Alberta's International
Education Strategy

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Alberta
LEARNING

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I. CONTEXT

Globalization is driving rapid change in knowledge, skills, and innovation. The economic well-being of future generations of Albertans depends on investment in education today to ensure that the knowledge and skills of Albertans continues to be in demand in international communities. The Government of Alberta has a strong commitment to ensuring that Albertans are well-prepared to take their place in an increasingly competitive world.

In addition to economic well-being, international awareness brings many societal and personal benefits. Understanding cultural differences strengthens Alberta's communities and places of work. For individuals, knowledge of other languages and cultures increases opportunities to participate in international research, study, travel, or to enjoy other aspects of international life. Knowledge of other cultures and their languages also increases understanding of world events, and of Alberta's relationship to these events.

Alberta is already recognized, in international academic circles and in industry, for the high quality of its education system and graduates. Numerous international education partnerships already exist at the school, post-secondary institution, or government level with foreign learning institutions or governments. These partnerships and other initiatives support a wide range of projects including student and academic exchanges, certification of foreign learning, marketing of Alberta education programs and services, and non-profit humanitarian development. While varied and numerous, these activities have often depended on individual contacts and areas of interest, and overall connection or articulation with government direction has been limited.

International student recruitment in both the basic education and post-secondary sectors, and international marketing of Alberta expertise in education and training programs and services, provide net economic benefits to the province. Subsequent multiplier effects from related business, student, and tourism expenditures amplify the benefit to the provincial economy. With expanding worldwide demand for education and training and learners' ability to access leading educational programs wherever they are located, international education offers important growth opportunities for Alberta's economy.

Many governments, such as those in Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, are placing greater emphasis on the importance of international education marketing initiatives. In Canada, the federal government has opened a branch in Foreign Affairs and International Trade to promote international education, and has provided funding to create Canadian Education Centres abroad. Similarly, the Government of British Columbia has established the Centre for International Education and the Quebec Ministry of Education and Youth

has established a branch to promote linguistic and cultural exchanges, to provide professional development opportunities for teachers, to recruit international students, and to export Quebec expertise in education.

The Government of Alberta recognizes that government leadership in this sector is often essential for success in marketing abroad. Many countries are more receptive when initiatives have clear government support and when a coordinated approach to proposed trade opportunities is taken. While individual marketing activities of school jurisdictions and post-secondary institutions have yielded good results, a strong, consistent, province-wide campaign is essential to realize the full potential of international education. The Government of Alberta is committed to providing the leadership necessary to support Alberta's education system and to support a coordinated approach to international marketing opportunities.

The Minister of Learning can be a strong advocate abroad for Alberta's high quality and innovative education programs. By leading international missions, the Minister may lay important groundwork for Alberta's schools and post-secondary institutions to subsequently contract to deliver programs and services. Many international education initiatives have already recently been successfully launched, and the potential of this sector is increasingly being realized.

It is timely for government to enhance its efforts as an advocate and supporter of international education initiatives. The Alberta International Education Strategy will provide direction to Alberta Learning and other government departments, help coordinate the many international initiatives already underway, and support increased activity in this field. The aim is to ensure that Albertans are well-prepared as world citizens and are able to enjoy fully the benefits and opportunities of their global community, can participate fully in the economic growth associated with international education, can contribute to international humanitarian projects, and can compete successfully in the global economy.

2. PURPOSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY

The Government of Alberta has recently established a Framework for Alberta's International Strategies. That document establishes an overall international vision for the province, and identifies core businesses and government-wide strategies. Alberta's International Education Strategy is one of six related initiatives developed within that overall context:

- International Marketing Strategy for Trade and Investment
 - International Offices Review
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- Twinning Policy Strategy
- International Education Strategy
- World Trade Organization Negotiating Position
- International Governance Office.

This document provides a vision for Alberta's International Education Strategy, principles which underlie that vision, and overall objectives. Actions which may be explored for further development, many of which were raised by stakeholders, are included in the Appendix to this Strategy. The Minister of Learning is committed to ongoing consultation with all stakeholders as the International Education Strategy is developed and implemented.

The International Education Strategy provides direction to Alberta Learning in its efforts to internationalize the province's education system. It also provides direction and cohesion across government ministries to lead to a more coordinated approach to programs, services, and entrepreneurial activities in the education sector. Important objectives are to promote the internationalization of education curriculum to support Alberta's school jurisdictions and post-secondary institutions in providing international services and in accessing international markets, and to expand the range of international opportunities (economic and humanitarian) available to Albertans.

3. VISION FOR ALBERTA'S INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY

A vision statement was proposed during the autumn 2000 consultations on Alberta's International Education Strategy. The vision was widely supported, with respondents encouraging government to recognize Albertans' role as global citizens, as below:

Alberta will be internationally recognized as a leading provider of education, skill development and industry training, and Albertans will be well-prepared for their role in the global marketplace and as global citizens.

4. PRINCIPLES FOR ALBERTA'S INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY

The consultation also showed wide support for the principles which were proposed to support the vision statement and to underlie the International Education Strategy. As part of the following principles, the Ministry of Learning reinforces its commitment to a collaborative and transparent approach to the advancement of the Strategy.

- Alberta's education and training system provides a foundation to prepare Albertans to be competitive in international work and learning opportunities.
- Alberta's education and training system values and provides access to qualified international students wishing to learn and gain work experience here, and Alberta forms partnerships with foreign states to provide similar opportunities for Albertans.
- Alberta's communities and businesses value the economic and social benefits which come from knowledge and skills obtained in other education systems.
- The provincial government has an ongoing responsibility to ensure and promote Alberta's international reputation for high quality learning programs and services.
- System stakeholders¹ share with government ongoing responsibility for developing and advancing Alberta's International Education Strategy.

5. OBJECTIVES

The following objectives provide the focus for Alberta's International Education Strategy. They were supported by stakeholders in the consultations.

Objective 1: Albertans will have increased opportunities to develop better understanding of global economic, political, and social systems; to develop relevant global competencies, including second language skills; and to participate in international learning opportunities.

Objective 2: International students and learning systems will choose Alberta to meet their learning and accreditation needs.

Objective 3: Alberta will be more competitive in supplying education programs and services in the international marketplace.

Objective 4: International investment and trade of Alberta's goods and services will be enhanced by the sale of associated skills training and other educational programs and services.

Objective 5: International mobility of knowledge and skills will be facilitated.

Objective 6: Alberta Learning will provide leadership in promoting international education through its work with the federal government, international agencies, and ministries of education in other countries.

¹ Alberta's education and training system is comprised of many stakeholders including learners, parents, communities, schools and post-secondary institutions, teachers, instructors and industry.

