



April 25, 2023

Alan Harrison, PhD
Chair, Blue-Ribbon Panel
Minister of Colleges and Universities
5th Floor, 438 University Ave
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Dr. Harrison,

Re: Blue Ribbon Panel-Ontario Putting Public Colleges and Universities on Stable Footing Now and into the Future

I'm writing to you today regarding the establishment of a blue ribbon panel to **"improve the financial sustainability of the postsecondary sector, to support colleges and universities in developing a skilled workforce, and to promote economic growth and innovation."**

World Education Services (WES) is pleased to see that the government has established a blue-ribbon panel of distinguished experts to ensure financial stability and prioritize an optimal student experience in Ontario's post-secondary education sector.

WES is a non-profit social enterprise that supports the educational, economic, and social inclusion of immigrants, refugees, and international students. For nearly 50 years, WES has set the standard for international academic credential evaluation, supporting millions of people as they seek to achieve their academic and professional goals. WES has deep expertise in reducing barriers through various programs that we offer including evaluating academic credentials to shaping policy, designing programs, and providing philanthropic funding.

WES partners with a diverse set of organizations, leaders, and networks to support individuals to enter the labour market commensurate with their prior experience as well working directly with government and regulators to drive systems change. Together with its partners, WES enables people to learn, work, and thrive in new places.

WES supports the government's efforts to **"improve the financial sustainability of the postsecondary sector, to support colleges and universities in developing a skilled workforce, and to promote economic growth and innovation."**

We are aware Ontario's colleges and universities have faced a significant reduction in provincial funding alongside cuts in federal funding for the past three decades. Decreased government funding for higher education and to remain sustainable, colleges and universities have been forced to

increase the number of international students they enroll. Ontario hosts the largest international student population in Canada: **52 percent** of the country's international students live in the province.

International students in Ontario pay, on average, more than four times what domestic students pay and contribute a significant portion of the tuition fee revenue in the province. In 2020/21, their college fees alone accounted for 68 percent of the tuition fee revenue, which was worth **\$1.7 billion** and exceeded provincial funding provided to the colleges.

Although International students play a vital role in Ontario's economic, social, and cultural prosperity, they face **various challenges** both before and after they arrive, such as receiving inaccurate or misleading information from recruitment agents, being charged differential tuition fees, accessing affordable housing, finding commensurate employment, and not being eligible to access settlement services, to name a few.

Our Recommendations

The panel has an opportunity to address the challenging state of affairs facing international students in Ontario. We call upon your panel to include the unique needs of international students in your advice and recommendations to the Minister of Colleges and Universities on creating a sustainable post-secondary sector. We recommend the following actions:

- Allocate sufficient funding to colleges and universities while also placing **limits on the tuition fees charged to international students**.
- Examine **current recruitment practices** and propose guidelines and regulations that support fair and ethical recruitment practices.
- Ensure that post-secondary institutions **provide support and services to international students**, including financial, employment, housing, and mental health services.
- Review eligibility requirements for **work integrated learning programs** to ensure that international students can qualify for and access them.

WES would be pleased to meet panel members to provide further details on the recommendations we put forward.

Sincerely,



Shamira Madhany,
Managing Director, Canada, and Deputy Executive Director
World Education Services

cc:

- Eddy Avila, member, blue-ribbon panel
- Cindy Forbes, member, blue-ribbon panel
- Maxim Jean-Louis, member, blue-ribbon panel
- Dr. Robert Luke, member, blue-ribbon panel
- Bonnie Patterson, member, blue-ribbon panel
- Brent Tookenay, member, blue-ribbon panel
- Dr. MaryLynn West-Moynes, member, blue-ribbon panel