



About one million international students flocked to colleges and universities in Canada last year. They came seeking a world-class education.

Foreign students are big contributors to the Canadian economy. In 2020 alone they spent \$22.3 billion on **tuition**, rent, and other expenses. That's more than we make from exporting auto parts, lumber, or aircraft.

These students often benefit the Canadian economy even further once they graduate. Those who remain here sometimes start businesses. Others conduct research that keeps Canada **innovative** and competitive. They also fill crucial jobs, replenishing the nation's aging workforce.

### MAJOR CUTBACKS

International students must apply for and receive a permit from the federal government to be able to study in Canada. In January, federal Immigration Minister Marc Miller announced a 35 percent cutback in new foreign student permits. Ottawa will issue just 364,000 in 2024. That won't change for two years. Each province and territory will get a portion of the permits based on population. They will decide how to distribute them among their universities and colleges.

Mr. Miller said that the change was necessary for several reasons. The main one? To take action against certain small private colleges. He said that some of them just want to make easy money. They don't offer students a good education.

By capping permits, the government will be able to force these substandard schools out of business.

### DID YOU KNOW?

In Canada, provincial governments are responsible for all levels of education. However, the federal government provides financial support for postsecondary education.

### STRESSING OUR SYSTEMS

What's more, Canada is in the midst of healthcare and housing crises. The minister argued that we can't cope with such a large annual **influx** of students

Many Canadians can't find a family doctor. Our hospital emergency rooms are struggling to handle patients. There are waiting lists for surgery.

### DEFINITIONS

**INFLUX:** the fact of a lot of people, money, or things arriving somewhere

**INNOVATIVE:** introducing or using new ideas, ways of doing something, etc.

**TUITION:** the money that you pay to be taught, especially in a college or university



As well, the demand for affordable housing greatly exceeds the low supply. That's especially true in larger cities.

### TENTS AND CLOSETS

Supporters of the student permit cutbacks say that Mr. Miller has a point. In the fall of 2023, some 25 international students in North Bay, Ontario, had to sleep outside in tents. The reason? They couldn't find – or couldn't afford – decent accommodation. Their school, Canadore College, eventually secured them places. However, the situation dramatically emphasized how drastic the housing crisis is.

"We come seeking a better life and sometimes we have to live in closets," said Natalia Tola of Ecuador. She graduated this year with a journalism degree from a Halifax university.

But others pointed out that the housing crisis is the result of many factors. They cautioned that foreign students shouldn't become **scapegoats**.

"There's a **narrative** that international students [cause the housing crisis]. We know that it's much more complicated," said Professor Joseph Wong of the University of Toronto.

### MONEY IN THE BANK

In 2024, foreign students who apply to study in Canada must also show that they have \$20,635 for living expenses. That's more than double what they had to show before.

Ottawa said that this measure will protect foreign students, who can work in the country for up to 20 hours a week. The logic? If they don't have money to make ends meet, **unscrupulous** bosses can **exploit** them. They could force them to work in unsafe conditions, for example. But if they have enough money to support themselves, they are less vulnerable.

### CASH COWS

Many schools don't like the permit cap because foreign students are a big source of income for them. And governments have been cutting funding to universities for years. Some provinces also limit the tuition that universities can charge citizens.

But schools are allowed to set their own rates for foreign students. Some charge up to five times what Canadians pay. On average, local students shell out about \$6500 per year for an undergraduate degree and

\$7000 for a graduate degree. Foreigners pay about \$30,000 and \$18,000 respectively. So, fewer international students means a big drop in revenue for universities and colleges.

### UNEVEN CONSEQUENCES

The new plan will hit schools in Ontario, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia the hardest. They currently have the highest number of foreign students. In Ontario, for instance, the permit distribution proposal could result in a 50-percent-plus drop in the number of new international students. Meanwhile, other provinces could see an increase.

Some say all these changes will hurt Canada's global standing.

"Canada's reputation as a destination for top students from around the world is now damaged," warned an editorial in *The Globe and Mail*. "Tens of thousands... awaiting study permits... are in limbo while the provinces argue about their market share." ★

## DEFINITIONS

**EXPLOIT:** to treat a person or situation as an opportunity to gain an advantage for yourself

**NARRATIVE:** a spoken or written account of connected events

**SCAPEGOAT:** to blame somebody/something for a failure or for something bad that another person has done

**UNSCRUPULOUS:** without moral principles; not honest or fair



## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How many international students attended Canadian colleges and universities in 2023?

2. How did these students benefit the Canadian economy?

3. Name the federal immigration minister.

4. What did he announce in January regarding foreign student permits?

5. List the main reason why Ottawa decided to reduce the number of permits for international students.

6. List at least one other reason why the number of foreign student permits was reduced.

7. How much money will foreign students must now access to in addition to their tuition fees?

8. How do tuition fees for foreign students compare to the fees paid by Canadian students?

9. Why are some universities and colleges opposed to the reduced number of foreign student permits?