



EDUCATION: ONTARIO'S TICKET OUT OF RECESSION

Ontario used to be the country's economic engine. It was the heart of steel and automobile manufacturing. But the global recession sent the province's economy crashing to the ground. Now it's struggling with a \$24.7-billion deficit.

But Ontario sees brighter days in the future. It has a plan to dig itself out of the hole.

EDUCATION IS THE NEW EXPORT INDUSTRY

In the March 8 budget speech, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty said **post-secondary** education will be the key to unlocking Ontario's future.

The province is calling its plan "Open Ontario." Under this scheme, the province will fund 20,000 new classroom spaces at colleges and universities this year. Ontario hopes to fill many of those spaces with **international students**. Over the next five years, the province wants to increase enrolment of international students by 50 per cent.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly \$1 billion is spent annually by about 38,000 international post-secondary students in Ontario. Most of that is spent on rent, food and clothing.

"Those international students who graduate can stay here and help us grow our economy, or go back [home] and work as a partner

with us in the global economy," said Premier Dalton McGuinty.

DISTANCE DEGREES GRANTED

Another prong to the plan is a new online education system. It's called the Ontario Online Institute. It will expand the ability of students to participate in **distance education**. Even people who live far from campus will be able to take classes – and receive degrees – from many of Ontario's colleges and universities.

INVESTMENT BEFORE CUTBACKS

Ontario is in trouble, there's no doubt about that. And there's no end in sight to the recession, either. But Premier McGuinty said he didn't want to put Ontario's economic recovery at risk by cutting funding to programs and services.

Instead, he wants to spend money where he thinks it'll show the fastest **returns**: in the classroom. Colleges and universities can charge more money for international students to attend. Sometimes they charge as much as three times the tuition that **domestic** students have to pay.

The tuition money stays in the university's pockets. It goes toward programs, salaries and buildings. But post-secondary students spend money at Ontario businesses, as well. And that's always a good thing.

Ontario's government looks to Australia as an example of where it would like to be. In this southern hemisphere country, international education is the third-largest industry.

THE SYSTEM IS TOO CONFUSING

But critics say Ontario schools aren't ready to compete on the global stage just yet. Experts say Canada is the only western country that lacks an **accreditation** system for its colleges and universities. Without such a system, it's hard for potential students to figure out which schools are the right ones for them.

Ontario must treat international education like a business, say experts. And that means reorganizing the system. Right now, universities aren't really cooperating with colleges to create a complete education. Ontario universities need to step off their pedestals and work with colleges. They need to streamline the diploma and degree-granting processes.

England, Wales, Australia and New Zealand have the right formula for export education, says consultant John G. Kelly. These countries have professional organizations dedicated to selling their own post-secondary opportunities to international students. Ontario has nothing of the sort. If Ontario wants to compete, says Mr. Kelly, it's got a long climb ahead.

DEFINITIONS

ACCREDITATION: a formal guarantee that a school meets certain standards and provides quality education equivalent to the nation's top accredited colleges and universities

DISTANCE EDUCATION: where students living anywhere in the country can earn their degrees via completing their courses over the Internet

DOMESTIC: from within the country

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: people who come from countries other than Canada to pursue their post-secondary studies

POST-SECONDARY: after high school

RETURNS: payoffs



QUESTIONS

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ANSWER THE FOLLOWING IN COMPLETE SENTENCES:

1. Explain Ontario's plan for lifting the province out of recession.

2. For what reason did Premier Dalton McGuinty opt to spend rather than cut?

3. What is the main problem with Ontario's existing post-secondary system?

4. How much money does Ontario bring in each year from international students?

5. Explain what experts say Ontario must do in order to become a more attractive destination for international students.

6. Besides spending money during their education, how does Mr. McGuinty think international students will help Ontario's economy in the future?

7. As you see it, for what reasons is it fair to charge international students higher post-secondary tuition fees? For what reasons might this policy be unfair?
