

## Education: a New Player on the Team

**A** first for Team Canada 1997 was the inclusion of a large delegation from the education field, one of the eight key sectors of the Canadian economy highlighted on this trip.

Sixteen university and college presidents and deans were among 60 people from the education sector who took part in the mission.

Among them was Dr. John Tibbits, President of Conestoga College of Kitchener, Ontario. Tibbits gets right to the point when asked why he was on the Team Canada mission: "revenue generation."

Education may not seem at first glance to be a business venture, but generating revenue is just as important to maintaining a high level of excellence in Canadian institutions as are a good curriculum and a competent teaching faculty.

Over the last four years, foreign student enrolment in Canada's universities has dropped by 18 per cent, depriving the institutions of significant tuition fees and threatening graduate programs in engineering and mathematics — programs that Canada's high-technology industry banks on and that traditionally rely on Asian participation.

### Aggressive marketing strategy needed

University officials believe that the erosion in foreign enrolment is due to a combination of aggressive marketing strategies from institutions in other countries such as Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom and, conversely, ineffective marketing on the part of Canadians.

"We haven't developed a coherent articulate strategy for marketing ourselves abroad: we've been modest to a fault," Guelph University President Mort Rozanski was quoted as saying in *The [Sherbrooke] Record* before embarking on the Team Canada plane. The trade mission was an effective way to try to reverse this trend.

Team Canada missions are essential to letting Asian governments and businesses know that Canadians are serious about exporting their talents and products, says Tibbits. This mission has given Conestoga added credibility, he adds, and will make future deals go more smoothly.

### Broadening educational horizons

Tibbits sees numerous possibilities in the international market for what he terms "training and cultural tours." These involve bringing in foreign students for well rounded courses that combine specialized training with introductions to life in Canada.

Tibbits was also on the mission to scout out opportunities for bringing English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers from Korea, Thailand and the Philippines — as the College is already doing in China.

In addition, Tibbits is looking into developing a new program where by Asian students could take the first year of a Conestoga diploma in their home country, using the college's curriculum, and then finish their studies in Canada once their English skills are proficient. In the future, Tibbits also hopes that Asian students will be able to complete their entire education in their home countries by following Conestoga courses and purchasing training programs and teaching materials from the college.

### The benefits of selling education

Steven Kelley agrees that marketing and selling educational services is the main way that colleges and universities can stay afloat when funding is cut.

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