

Canada is known for its programs of teaching English and French as second languages. France, Britain and the United States have successfully marketed such programs. Why haven't we? There are tremendous profits to be realized in this - profits that could be used to finance other programs in education and international cultural relations.

The members of the AUCC are all aware of the need to attract a larger number of foreign students. This is a financial imperative for some of you. The presence of foreign students in Canada has important economic spinoffs for our economy. You are facing heavy competition from U.S. institutions, for example. Yet we don't take a back seat to anyone in this regard. Our institutions and programs are among the world's best. Our quality of life is certainly attractive to a good number of foreign students. Our tuition fees are fully competitive. Are there enough foreign students in Canada? Surely not. I think that the time has come to devise a strategy to promote Canada's universities and colleges abroad. However, I would like to be clear on one point: the universities must not enter into strong competition with one another to attract foreign students. A common front must be adopted. The whole country, and not just a few particular institutions, must be the beneficiary.

Canadian universities and colleges are also trusted partners in development. I was pleased to learn that the well-established partnership between the Canadian International Development Agency [CIDA], the AUCC, and the universities and colleges has been reconfirmed recently with the renewal of the Educational Institutions Program in CIDA's Partnership Branch.

Universities possess the skills and know-how needed to contribute to sustainable development. Universities are concerned with the promotion of Canadian values and they are ardent defenders of human rights, social equity and good governance. Universities, in their constant effort toward internationalization, provide ideal opportunities for young Canadians to learn about and get involved in development co-operation.

Our Foreign Policy Statement recognizes the need to involve more Canadians in this field. It also recognizes the need to increase awareness among Canadians of the accomplishments and merits of international co-operation. I trust we can count on the close co-operation of universities and colleges in this regard.

I know that the AUCC wishes to gain access to CIDA's new Open Bidding System. I am pleased to note that preliminary discussions have taken place. We will hold formal consultations in the months ahead and I am confident that we will arrive at some type of understanding soon.