



**AUCC Submission to the
Government of Canada's Consultation
on a Canada-India
Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement**

April 6, 2009

Introduction

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) welcomed the announcement in January 2009 of the Government of Canada's intent to initiate discussions toward an enhanced economic partnership agreement with India. The potential for growth in this trade relationship is substantial and AUCC believes that the higher education sector can be instrumental in creating stronger links between Canada and this emerging partner.

AUCC is pleased to present this submission as a contribution to the Government of Canada's public consultation process on the scope of the possible agreement announced by the Honourable Stockwell Day, Minister of International Trade.

Academic and Research Cooperation as a Foundation for the Bilateral Relationship

AUCC believes the planned discussions towards the economic partnership with India represent a platform upon which Canada can pursue a constructive dialogue with our Indian counterparts in higher education to increase cooperation between Canadian and Indian universities and ultimately contribute to the prosperity of both countries.

Higher education activities such as two-way flow of students, academic exchange, knowledge exports and international research collaboration are an essential underpinning to a successful overall economic partnership with India and ultimately are drivers for Canada's international competitiveness.

Academic exchange partnerships, whether they entail faculty or student exchange, are a crucial component of building links between the two countries. AUCC agrees with the recommendation in *India and Canada: A New Era of Cooperation*, the CEO Roundtable report commissioned by both governments, which states:

“Exchanges between Canada and India should be enhanced, particularly with respect to students and other people-to-people linkages. As one CEO participant noted, “Students are our best ambassadors and greatest promoters.”

Canadian universities have been increasing their promotion and recruitment efforts to take advantage of the growing demand amongst the increasingly mobile Indian student population to seek their education overseas, particular at the graduate level. While Indian nationals currently represent a growing proportion of our international student population on campus, there is room here for growth in these numbers. India is currently the fourth largest source country, providing over 2500 students at all levels of study at the university level.

Attracting the best and brightest of the growing pool of Indian students to study in Canada's universities has a two-fold benefit for Canada whether they choose to return home upon graduation or put their expertise and knowledge to work in Canada. When they return home after graduation, many become business, governmental, academic and cultural leaders, creating international networks that strengthen Canada's economic and diplomatic ties there. If they

choose to stay, they bring significant economic and societal benefits to Canada as a future source for highly qualified people that can supply the skilled labour market/workforce.

Canadian universities are increasingly becoming more globally oriented in providing educational programs and services abroad (i.e., knowledge exports). With their reputation of high quality education, our institutions are well placed to take advantage of the growing potential in the Indian market of this expanding sector of export, especially in the area of institutional partnerships such as joint degree programs.

India's burgeoning science and technology environment is also a potential source of stimulus to Canada's own research sector and economic competitiveness. As India and its institutions continue to build their domestic capacity in R&D, Canada's universities, with their increasing activities in international research collaboration, are poised to tap into this all-important network of researchers and their innovative capacities in the priority areas of the Canada-India S&T agreement as well as other broad areas in the social sciences and humanities.

India: A Priority for Canadian Universities

For Canadian universities, India has emerged as a key country in their efforts to enhance their internationalization strategies. AUCC's 2006 survey shows India as a top priority among member institutions for pursuing both academic partnerships and research collaboration links, ranking either number one or two among all non-OECD countries for virtually all Canadian universities.

To be sure, there is much already to be built upon, given the long tradition of cooperation between Canadian and Indian universities in both development activities and academic exchange. Still, our members recognize that there is great potential for developing even closer ties.

Of all the countries in which Canadian universities have been active in the last 30 years, India ranks number two in terms of total number of development projects undertaken with approximately 130. As regards university exchange programs, currently there are over 40 active international exchange agreements between Canadian and Indian universities, involving approximately 20 Canadian universities and 35 Indian institutions. The sectors include: engineering and technology; natural sciences; and business administration among others. The Canadian university community is also a key partner in the activities of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI) with over 25 universities as members.

Additionally, Canadian universities also have a very strong presence in the activities related to Canada-India Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation signed in November 2005. Researchers from Canadian universities were integral partners in most of the first round of funded projects worth \$17 million announced under the S&T agreement in June 2008.

Building on this past and on-going relationship, Canadian universities are now looking forward to a new era of international education and they recognise the need to focus on India as part of their strategies. Our members are increasingly targeting their outreach resources in India in the

pursuit of partnerships, increased numbers of Indian students, especially at the graduate level, and exchange agreements. As an example, university leaders have figured prominently in several recent high level political missions to India, both federally and provincially.

Most recently, in November 2008, AUCC, in partnership with DFAIT, led a significant delegation of Canadian university presidents and other senior representatives to participate in the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Higher Education Summit, where Canada was the partner country. At the time, AUCC also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Indian Universities to serve as a platform for more structured dialogue between the university communities in both countries.

This is in addition to the many extensive missions to India our member institutions have pursued to develop closer ties as part of their own India strategies which include targeted fundraising, scholarship programs and outreach with Indian diaspora communities in Canada. Many of the institutions which are active in India came together recently in Banff, Alberta in February 2009 for a workshop to develop strategies to overcome the obstacles to greater success in expanding their activities in India.

A National Strategy for Canada-India Higher Education and Research Cooperation

While there have been improvements in areas of immigration measures, investments in branding and marketing through DFAIT's Edu-Canada initiative and the creation of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship Program, there is merit in considering a targeted approach in the form of a higher education strategy for India.

In particular, there is a need for concerted effort and resources in promotion and marketing to raise the profile of Canada as a destination for study for the growing pool of Indian students to be comparable to the numbers attracted from China. Likewise, more support for targeted scholarships is also an effective means of enhancing these efforts, as is ensuring an effective study permit system to facilitate the recruitment activities.

In addition, attracting, developing and retaining research talent in Canada will increasingly require opportunities for Canadian researchers to partner with their international peers in pursuit of global research excellence. India is emerging as another crucial location for this type of collaboration. As called for in AUCC's 2008 pre-budget submission, an initiative along the lines of an *International Research Collaboration Excellence Fund* to enhance Canadian universities' ability to engage in international research collaboration with partners in the academic, not-for-profit, private, and public sectors in key countries such as India would build on existing federal support and the government's commitment to promote global excellence. New mechanisms to support the exchange of post-Doctorate and early career researchers in Canada and India should also be explored.

To take advantage of this increased engagement and commitment on the part of Canada's universities, there is a need for federal leadership to support their efforts through a coordinated initiative and resources to promote Canada-India cooperation in higher education and research and thus lay the foundation for a successful overall economic partnership.