



The education emergency

A high-profile conference underscores the urgent need for Canada to attract more international students. **Ajit Jain** reports



AJIT JAIN

From left: Lead organizer Husain Neemuchwala, Indian Consul General in Toronto Preeti Saran, Indian High Commissioner S M Gavai, Ontario Minister for Colleges and Universities John Miloy, Chinese Ambassador Lan Lijun and Chinese Consul General in Toronto Zhu Taoying at the conference

Speaker after speaker at the Synergy III education conference underlined the urgent need for Canada to attract more international students, especially from India and China.

The conference, organized jointly by the Canada-India Business Council, the Canada-China Business Council and International Center for Education with the support of the Canadian and Ontario governments, saw organizations like the Association of Community Colleges of Canada, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the Canadian Bureau of International Education and the Shashtri Indo-Canadian Institute participating.

The annual Synergy conference has in the past two years focused solely on Canada and India, and this year the scope was expanded to the other Asian giant.

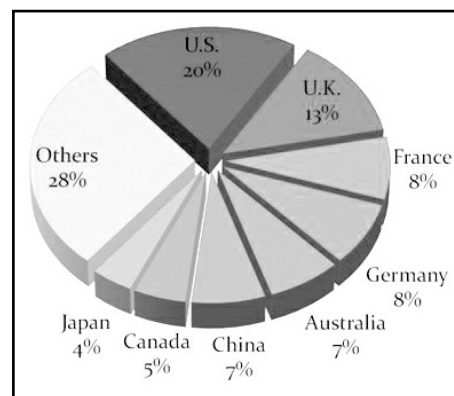
Present at the event September 17 at the Pearson Convention Center in Brampton, Ontario were Indian High Commissioner S M Gavai, Chinese Ambassador Lan Lijun, Ontario Minister of Colleges and Universities John Milloy, and dozens of senior academics.

"To be able to have that much power in one place and have virtually every stakeholder present who may have value to add in Canada's internationalization process was amazing," said Husain Neemuchwala, president, ICE, a key conference organizer. "Their participation is testament to the fact that the time to act is now."

Consider the numbers: There are 2.8 million international students now worldwide. By 2025, that number is projected to hit 7.2 million. So, all developed countries and brand name educational institutions are vying with one another trying to induce more international students to study in their country and institution. Institutions are even seeking out recruiters and offering them incentives and commissions.

Some reports say Australian universities are able to raise 50 percent of their budgeted money from enrolment of international students.

Global share of international students



SOURCE: UNESCO/OECD

Takeaways

- ◆ 8 million international students are expected globally by 2025.
- ◆ International students boost the Canadian economy by \$6.5 billion annually.
- ◆ Indian international students in Canada number anywhere between 4,000 and 7,500 annually.
- ◆ The figure for China is 42,000.
- ◆ Indian students inject \$225 million into the Canadian economy annually.
- ◆ Canada spends about \$1 million to promote itself as an education destination.
- ◆ High visa rejection rate is an issue in Canada.

In Canada, about 178,000 international students inject \$6.5 billion into the economy annually.

Varying figures were mentioned about the number of Indian students in Canada: High Commissioner Gavai put it at about 4,000. Jean-Philippe Tachdjian, deputy director, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Commissioner, said about 7,300.

Balbir Sahni, professor emeritus, Concordia University, agreed with Tachdjian. In 2008, Sahni — a key speaker at all the Synergy conferences and a prime mover of the education initiative — said precisely 7,314 international students from India came to Canada for higher studies.

Indian students last year contributed \$225 million in to the Canadian economy by way of tuition fees, living expenses, taxes paid for working on and off campus. Now, full time international students can work off campus and they are also allowed to stay and work in Canada for two years after they have graduated or have received a diploma from a community college.

But why does Canada fail to attract as many international students as, say, Australia?

Roy McLaren, chairman, Canada-India Business Council, said Australia invests \$50 million annually in promoting itself as an education destination as against Canada's allocation of about a million dollars, something that Tachdjian also stated in his presentation. "I have only a million dollars," Tachdjian said.

At Synergy, ICE announced several post Synergy initiatives including a high level education delegation led by McLaren to India in February 2010. Another is an event called 'unFAIR', which involves ICE taking university representatives to schools in India for direct talks with interested students.

"Virtually everyone at the conference center was in support of getting students from India to come but very few actually spoke about the benefits of such a program to India," said Professor Lalu Mansinha of the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario.

"It was the economic benefit they are looking for, treating education as a commodity."

He is director of the Ontario-Maharashtra-Goa student exchange program. He said the Australian example has also been misunderstood. "The participants forgot that Australia is a warm country," he said. "It is very close to India. They have become very efficient in giving admissions and issuing visas to students. They issue visas to parents of those children as well quickly. The whole tone of the conference should have been slightly different: What can we do not only to bring good students from India here but also to give back something to the Indian institutions? It should be two-way trade and not one-way like commodities."



Roy McLaren, right, presents a memento to Indian High Commissioner S M Gavai

AJIT JAIN

'Canada has sadly fallen behind'

AJIT JAIN

Roy McLaren, chairman, Canada-India Business Council, will lead a 20-member education mission to India in February.

"Clearly, the interest and the momentum is now building," he said after the Synergy education conference in Toronto. "There's increasing interest in Canada-India education cooperation and that's reflecting from the number of people who attended the conference."

MacLaren, a former international trade minister and former high commissioner to the United Kingdom, said over 200 people attended Synergy III, "a substantial increase from the number of people who attended the first and the second year conferences. Also, the level of participation has increased. The fact that Ontario Minister for Colleges and Universities John Meloy was there reflects the degree to which provinces are now becoming increasingly interested in our initiative."

"I am interested in India," he continued, "and from my perspective Canada has done a bad job [*in*] encouraging students from India to come to Canada."

About 4,000 students from India study in Canadian universities and colleges annually, compared to about 42,000 Chinese students in Canada each year.

"Australia, by contrast, has done very well," McLaren said. He recently visited Australia, and saw the large number of Indian/Asian students there. Canada, he said, has "got a quite a bit of catching to do."

He said despite the official claims of international students injecting \$6.5 billion into the Canadian economy annually, he believed the amount "was much more."

During the conference, many speakers said the Canadian government should allocate more funds to promote brand Canada as an education destination in India and elsewhere across the globe.

"The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is under very limited budget and there are lots of restrictions on



New program helps Indian students get visa faster

AJIT JAIN

The Canadian high commission in New Delhi has started a pilot project for quick visa approval of Indian students seeking admission to 20 community colleges in Canada.

The Students Partner Program, designed in consultation with James Knight, president, Association of Community Colleges of Canada, and five other presidents of community colleges, came into effect in the spring. The ACCC and its 20 member colleges have received 1,500 student visa applications through the program already.

"I understand the approval rate from 30 to 35 percent has exceeded more than 70 percent," said Katrina Murray, vice-president, ACCC, the program coordinator.

Concerned with the high visa rejection rate, community colleges sent a 20-person delegation led by Knight to India in November 2008 for a meeting with the Canadian high commissioner to India and his staff.

"We were concerned about the general issue that not enough students are coming to Canada from India," Murray explained.



Katrina Murray

"The approval rate for Indian students who apply to go to a Canadian college is much, much lower than those applying to go to the universities. The third issue was, we realize Indian students generally do not know about the full range of programs offered by colleges in Canada, they don't know that you can get degrees, they don't know you can get post-graduate diplomas from colleges."

"We had a very frank and very constructive discussion with the high commissioner and Citizenship and Immigration staff there about those three issues and it was clear that the high commissioner was determined to do something about those concerns. So, it was decided together we should do something differently," Murray said.

Common reasons for rejections include missing documents, incomplete applications, fraudulent documents, an impression that the applicant is not a bona fide student, etc.

"When applications were submitted [*under the new program*] there was a document check-list to ensure all documents are in place," Murray said, "and each of

those participating colleges would commit to provide feedback to the high commission in Delhi about those students who actually show up in Canada and study in the respective colleges. And in return, the high commissioner undertook

Some key points

- Simplified but rigorous list of supporting documents
- Single point of contact in the visa office and at each partner institution
- Expedited processing of complete applications meeting the program criteria
- A simple feedback mechanism whereby the college or institute's single point of contact would provide, once each autumn, the 'in-good-standing- status (or not) of individuals issued study permits under the program.'

to increase the approval rate." "The colleges have really reacted to the pilot project very positively; they have gone a long way to ensure that everything is in order."

She will be in India in January to assess the program's success, and whether it can be made more broad-based with more colleges added.

AJIT JAIN

The Synergy 09 education conference September 17 saw a meeting of minds, and there's momentum now to put Canada on the map especially in India and China, said Jennifer Humphries, vice president, Canadian Bureau for International Education.

"Beyond that I think there was some sense regarding responsibility that we need to work together in terms of energizing the government of Canada — Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade as well as member organizations to which all Canadian institutions belong, notably our own organization, the CBIE, and the also Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the Association of Community Colleges of Canada and other organizations. That basically we are all in this together," she said.

"The students mobility area," she said, "is just exploding with interest. Canada could receive far more students from these countries [*India and China*] than we do now."

She agreed with what several other attendees said during the discussions: "Canada has to

invest a lot more [*in promoting its institutions worldwide*]. There are many Canadian institutions who have been lobbying for years to have more funding for



Jennifer Humphries

Can Canada cash in?

international students promotion."

The AUCC, she added, had asked for an allocation of \$20 million a year; the government gives a mere \$800,000 at present.

The Australian government, Humphries pointed out, has allocated \$50 million annually. That, she said, explains why Australia gets such a large number of international students.

"I have to be careful as these figures are really slippery to get the precise number," she added. "So, I am a bit hesitant. My understanding was that it [*Canadian government allocation*] was \$2 million for two years and that never got to \$4 million. Some promotion is now being done by provinces like Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and more recently Manitoba and a few others. Quebec is doing a lot of promotion as well."

Why is Ottawa dragging its feet? "There's a growing awareness in the government," Humphries said, "but there's an issue: Just precisely how important it is in terms of Canada's overall prosperity, and also where the jurisdiction lies. I think there's a greater sense now that the federal government must take leadership role

but I think it is also falling within the crack. There is the question of who in the federal government will lead, who will champion? Will it be foreign affairs, will it be international trade, will it be human resources development, or will it be citizenship and immigration? We think there's a growing awareness and there's a sense that oh my goodness there is a huge contribution to the economy [*from international students*] despite the fact that we have a bit of downturn in the economy and may be our employers are not hiring as much."

In her presentation on 'Trends in International Student Mobility - Canada-China-India,' Humphries said there were

2.9 million international students internationally in 2006. 'By 2025, an astounding 8 million students are projected to be studying outside their home country which is truly amazing when you think that only a few years ago, there were barely a million international students.'

Definitions of international vary, Humphries added. 'If you include primary and secondary students and language school students, Canada might be somewhat higher in the data,' she said. 'If you include students on short-term exchanges, under six months, the data will shift considerably.'

She said till a few years ago, 'Australia was consistently behind Canada. Now it's consistently ahead.' Many countries, she added 'have become much more business-like in their approach to international students.'



INFORMATIONAL SEMINAR

Sunday, October 4th, 2009

1:30 PM

Sheraton Parkway Toronto North

600 Highway 7 East Richmond Hill, Ontario

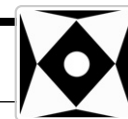
Hotel Telephone: (905) 882-3101

We also have a booth at the Toronto International University Fair

Time: 11:00 AM — 4:00 PM

Location also: Sheraton Parkway Toronto North

Visit www.xavieru.org or call (888) XAVIERU (928-4378)



The Canada, India, China triangle

AJIT JAIN

Balbir Sahni, professor emeritus of economics, Concordia University in Montreal, is the father of the three Synergy education conferences organized so far.

September 17, like in the previous two conferences, his keynote speech set the tone for the discussion.

'There has to be a quantum jump in promotion of Canada brand' as an education destination, he emphasized. 'Promotional efforts have to be stepped up because students/scholars and further institutional linkages will depend upon our reputation, compared to other competitors,' he said.

The government spending for the promotion of Canadian institutions abroad, especially in countries like India, should rhyme with 'the billions of dollars spent by international students in Canada.'

Many speakers noted that Canada spends just \$1 million annually in promoting Canadian education abroad, while international students studying in Canada contribute up to \$6.5 billion annually.

At another recent education conference in Ottawa organized by the Canadian Bureau of International Education, S J S Chhatwal, former Indian high commissioner to Ottawa who is chair of the India-Canada Focus group, pointed out that countries like Australia are doing a great deal of publicity in the Indian media but Canada is conspicuous by its absence.

'It has to be a quantum jump in terms of promotion,' Sahni reiterated to *India Abroad*. 'Indian universities do not know how good Canadian universities are. And if at all they know, they don't know more than five institutions. Our task, therefore, is to make sure they know all Canadian insti-

tutions.'

He said he was "delighted to hear" International Trade Minister Stockwell Day mention in his message to the Synergy III conference that international students inject 'upwards of \$6.5 billion to the Canadian economy every year' and that Indian students 'spent over \$225 million on Canadian educational services [*in 2008*]; education is now Canada's fourth largest export sector to India'.

"But we should convey to him [*Day*] that we need a lot more sources," Sahni said.

Last year Canada received a total of 79,509 international students of which only about 4 percent came from India and 17 percent from China.

The Chinese government has a permanent, full-time representative in Ottawa who has contacts with educational authorities in all Canadian provinces.

"Not so in case of India," Sahni said. "A senior Indian diplomat from Ottawa deals with this subject and he has lot more other things on hand."

Also in India there's not much support to send students to Canada, Sahni stated.

Indian High Commissioner S M Gavai said 55 percent of Indian students who go abroad for higher education go to the United States, only 4 percent come to Canada.

"Go back to the history of China-Canada relations," Sahni said. "Canada was the first country to recognize China. The US came later. If you look at the programs which Canadian International Development Agency had administered through the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada and the Association of Community Colleges of Canada, those were focused programs."



Balbir Sahni

AJIT JAIN

The problem of brand Canada

AJIT JAIN

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's recent report on education says it is a \$6.5 billion industry.

But international mobility of students is not only important from a financial aspect, said Jean-Philippe Tachdjian, deputy director and trade commissioner, DFAIT, at the Synergy III education conference.

'It is more sort of immigration as we see a huge number of Chinese-Canadians and Indo-Canadians, who originally came to Canada as international students, stayed behind,' he said.

Canada is behind the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia in terms of growth of international students, he said: 'In 2006-2007, we saw 6 percent growth, while in Australia growth was

69 percent; in the UK 41 percent growth and the US, despite 9/11, registered 27 percent. Canada was in the fifth position. It has now dropped to the seventh position as the most desirable destination for international students.'

The diplomat attributed Canada's slide to the lack of promotion of brand Canada as an education destination and the lack of a coordinated marketing strategy. Some work, he said, is being done by the Canadian missions abroad but compared to, say, Australia which spends \$50 million annually in promoting its institutions, Canada spends a meager sum.

'I have only a million dollars,' Tachdjian said. Canada, he said, has an 'excellent education system, but the problem is the message is fragmented.'

Education is a provincial subject and so there's no federal education minister, there's

no education representation at the cabinet table, Tachdjian noted.

Compared to China — which sends 42,000 students to Canada annually, including about 4,100 students from Hong Kong — India lags behind, sending about 7,500 students to Canada. Chinese students make Canada richer by \$1.3 billion every year. The corresponding figure for Indians is \$225 million.

'That makes it the number four Canadian export to India,' Tachdjian said.

People in the Indian government know about the quality of the Canadian education and 'what we have to offer but the problem is there's complete lack of knowledge amongst the general population and that comes from the fact we don't have adequate money for promotion,' he added. 'You can have a great brand but if nobody knows about it, it is not going to be of much help.'

Asked about the high rate of rejection of student visas, Tachdjian said, 'We are working with Citizenship and Immigration Canada.'

Day highlights importance of Synergy

AJIT JAIN

'I am pleased to greet the participants of Synergy III, which this year addresses two of Canada's largest trade partners for educational services — China and India,' said International Trade Minister Stockwell Day in a message to the one-day conference in Toronto September 17.

Day said he's aware of how 'the enhancement of educational linkages between Canada and these countries entail sustained engagement of all stakeholders and the support of the public and private sectors.'

Day, who is in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, for the opening of a new Canadian trade office there, referred to his first official visit to India in January when he met Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Day referred to Canada's eight trade offices now functioning in India, marking Canada's second largest presence globally in terms of the number of trade offices. He called it one of many examples 'of the increasing Canadian engagement in India, which is firmly rooted in the vibrant Indo-Canadian community and strong historical ties between the two countries.'

He said the Conservative government in Ottawa has 'identified India as an important trade partner, due to its rapidly growing economy and the opportunities presented by the sheer size of its marketplace. Innovations in science and technology have greatly increased the demand for higher education in India, and today a growing number of both Canadian and Indian education institutions are showing a greater degree of interest and appetite for bilateral academic collaboration.'

International students, he noted, 'turn to Canadian schools as a source of knowledge, innovation and creativity. In fact, international students are attending Canadian institutions in record numbers, over 175,000 per year — more than doubling their enrolment levels in the last decade. More than half of these students come from Asia.'

He said international students studying in Canada inject 'upwards of \$6.5 billion to the Canadian economy every year.' Of this, Indian students 'spent over \$225 million on Canadian educational services' in 2008, making education 'Canada's fourth largest export sector to India.'

Chinese students, he added, 'spent over \$1.3 billion on Canadian educational services' in the same year.

The minister revealed that in December, Canada is making 'the first coordinated recruitment initiative of PhD students in India and China. While seeking to attract the best and brightest graduate students to Canadian institutions, these students will earn post-graduate degrees which, in turn, may enhance the capacity of the Chinese and Indian education systems.'

As an added incentive for them to opt to come to Canada, he added, 'these students will also be eligible to partake in the recently launched Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship program, which offers 500 scholarships in the areas of sciences, humanities, natural sciences, engineering and health.'



Stockwell Day



Why India needs foreign universities

AJIT JAIN

In education India has basic problems — problems of quality as well as quantity, said Indian High Commissioner S M Gavai.

In his keynote address at the Synergy 09 education conference September 17, he said India has 'first class institutions' like the Indian Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Management, but they 'have limited capacities, so they can't really cater to our requirements.' He emphasized that there is a 'huge' demand for such institutions of higher learning but the IITs and the IIMs 'cater to very small segment of students who seek admissions.'

Just 7 percent of Indians between 18 and 24 years attend universities.

'We need to augment this number at least to 15 percent. We have to achieve that by 2015,' he said.

For that, India will need about 1,500 universities.

'It is a huge requirement,' he said. 'It will require lot of

resources to be dedicated to education. Obviously India can't do this on its own. We need foreign expertise. We need foreign universities to come.'

India's Knowledge Commission, he said, has made some very radical and far reaching recommendations in the education sector. The Indian Parliament, he said, is expected to discuss within the next few months legislation that will allow foreign universities to open campuses in India.

For India, he said, 'it is a very, very revolutionary change as for many years the education sector has been restricted. There has been lot of resistance to allowing foreign players into the country. It requires major change in our mindset in order to get this legislation through. [Indian] Minister of Human Resource Development Kapil Sibal also has shown lot of interest in higher education. He has made very clear that we are absolutely determined to see this through. We want to open up this sector.'

Despite the limited number of Indian students in

Canada, he said, 'there's a great deal of interaction between Indian institutions of higher learning and Canadian universities in areas of research, exchange of faculties and exchanges of papers, other programs.'

So, there are huge opportunities for Canada and India, he said. 'Apart from attracting more students from India, cooperation between universities is for joint research programs, which can really be ramped up. [India's] University Grants Commission has made a presentation to the government. In a paper that I saw, as many as 130 projects between Canadian and Indian universities of higher learning have been detailed.'

Though most participants lamented that brand Canada — as an education destination — is weak globally and that students in India hardly know of Canada's world class institutions, Gavai called it 'a very strong brand.' But, he admitted, it 'is not being sold aggressively in India, particularly in the sphere of higher education.'

Gavai referred to the education mission that Roy McLaren, chairman, Canada-India Business Council, will lead to India in February 2010. The Indian high commissioner also pointed out that the International Center for Education, under leadership of Husain Neemuchwala, is opening representative offices in India and that the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada has asked the Canadian government for a partnership in higher education with India.

'Education,' Gavai emphasized, 'is a sunshine sector for close cooperation between India and Canada which will be of mutual benefit.'



S M Gavai

INDIA ABROAD

'India has been a significant partner for us'

AJIT JAIN

The George Brown College in Toronto, with 22,000 full time students and 50,000 continuing education students, on an average gets 250 to 350 Indian international students annually.

The college has partnership programs in Mumbai and Delhi.

"Our work has been quite active internationally, but India has been a significant partner for us and a growing importance to us from a variety of points of view," said Loraine Trotter, dean, George Brown, who was among the 28 speakers at the Synergy 09 conference September 17, which was jointly sponsored by the Canada-India Business Council, the Canada-China Business Council and the International Center for Education with support of the federal and Ontario governments.

"We send faculty to India which allows us to develop our faculties of knowledge of international business and international factors like fashion or designs, or graphics," said Trotter, who travels to India often and is planning another trip after Christmas. The George Brown vice president, academ-

ic is also going to India next month.

"India is an important partner and ever more so with each passing year," Trotter said. "Certainly we do recruiting and we have a number of very, very effective partners in India who send us students and many of them are working with us under the new government program that relates to getting visas approved, etc."



Loraine Trotter

When asked about the issue of large-scale rejection of students visa applications in India, Trotter referred to a recent pilot project that the Canadian high commission in Delhi has launched in collaboration with 20 Canadian community colleges that is being coordinated here by the Association of Community Colleges of Canada.

"The feedback that I have about the new government visa program is that it is an effective way of managing the visa process and this program is quite successful," Trotter said. She called it strategically "a very smart move for the government to look at the Indian market, recognize its importance, and address what had been an unhappy experience for students and academic institutions, in

How China does it

AJIT JAIN

Knowledge plays an important role in competitiveness in today's world and human resources have become a strategic resource to promote social and economic development, said Chinese Ambassador Lan Lijun.

In his keynote address at Synergy 09, he said China has made gigantic achievements in education since the reform and opening up of the sector 30 years ago. China, he emphasized, cherishes the tradition of respecting teachers and prioritizing education.

'At present [the Chinese] educational system, largest in terms of its scale, has 260 million students and 13.53 million teachers,' he said.

Education from age 7 to 15 is now compulsory for all Chinese, higher education has been popularized, vocational education has been expanded and equity in education has been enhanced, said.

He reeled off statistics to underline just how important the education sector is in China: In 2008, he said, the enrolment for higher education was 29 million, an increase of 23.3 percent from the previous year; the total enrolment for secondary vocational school reached 8.12 million and child enrolment is becoming a new growth policy.

In 2008, China had 594,000 schools, of which there were 260,000 universities and colleges and adult centers of educational institutions 'thus ensuring the public access to education and all people sharing the outcome of educational development in China,' he said.

China, he continued, 'has established education and reforms programs with 188 countries. We also signed agreements for academic degree and certificates with 34 countries and regions. And China has 1.4 million of their students studying abroad. By the end of 2008, China had 305 Confucius Institutes and classrooms in 78 countries and regions.'

An agreement between Beijing and Ottawa ensures the Chinese Ministry of Education's close contact with Canada's national and provincial education authorities, with a view to promote students and scholar exchange programs, information sharing, joint research and academic seminars.

About 42,000 Chinese students are currently studying in Canada.

'Canada today is the major destination for Chinese students to study abroad,' said Lan. 'The key factor is friendship among our two peoples. There are programs of bilateral educational exchanges and there's need to take these to a new height.'



Lan Lijun

AJIT JAIN



Saran stresses on untapped potential

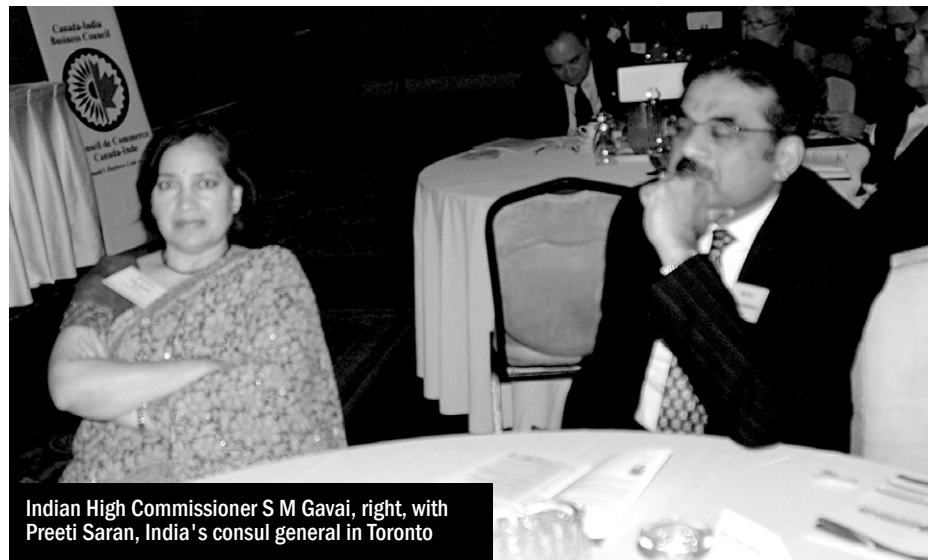
AJIT JAIN

Education is an important sector with immense untapped potential in Canada-India bilateral relations, said Preeti Saran, India's consul general in Toronto, at the Synergy education conference September 17.

India, she pointed out, was on the verge of allowing foreign universities to open their campuses in India.

'Canada can be an important partner in utilizing this opportunity,' she said, 'given the obvious advantages it enjoys: A well developed education system, world class institutions of higher education and an enabling environment of tolerance and pluralism that provides a comfort level for Indian students and faculty.'

India she said, 'enjoys a demographic advantage vis-à-vis the Western world, which is faced with an aging population with imminent adverse dependency ratios. The development of educational synergies to meet the economic and developmental needs of the global world between India and Canada is therefore immense. Canadian institutions can share the synergies that exist between us to spread the orbit of education and secure for the world a



Indian High Commissioner S M Gavai, right, with Preeti Saran, India's consul general in Toronto

INDIA ABROAD

mobile, portable workforce in increasingly seamless global borders.'

Canadian institutions, she noted, 'could create a recognizable brand, and step up their outreach efforts in student recruitment or collaborative linkages. By understanding

the underlying value structure of the Indian education system, Canadian institutions could tailor the needs to the Indian environment with a global agenda.'

Concerted efforts, she continued, 'could be made to increase the number of Indian students pursuing their post-secondary education in Canada from the current figures of 4,000 [annually].'

To augment this number, 'it is imperative that mutual recognition and equivalence of degrees and transparency in regulatory structures in the higher education system are worked out,' she added. The 'need for a new kind of partnership — a global alliance — on global education is hard to exaggerate.'

She said India has 450 universities with 22,000 colleges and that India has 'one of the world's youngest skilled workforce' with the country producing 2.5 million university graduates a year, including 400,000 engineers and 200,000 information technology

professionals

She said she was 'confident that Synergy III will build upon the spectacular success of the two precursor events held in 2007 and 2008 respectively, which helped build a strong network of educational institutions on both sides.'

'International boundaries have become porous'

AJIT JAIN

'Progressive organizations, progressive businesses around the world have realized the critical importance of working across borders,' said John Miloy, Ontario minister of colleges and universities, in his keynote presentation to the Synergy III conference.

'The biggest challenges of our time — economic, social or environmental — cannot be addressed by a single country working in isolation. India, China and Ontario are leading by example when it comes to collaborative efforts that would lead our communities to the future.'

This, he noted, 'is being adopted by the new generation of students who are coming forward to recognize that international boundaries have become porous.'

As an example, Miloy said studying at Oxford University and at the London School of Economics in England, gave him 'greater insight on my own country.'

He referred to two students from the University of Waterloo who founded the Canadian chapter of Engineers Without Borders about nine years ago. They are 'working with students and engineering professionals from around the world, helping the communities, developing countries to gain

access to electricity and fresh water — just one example of students from different countries working together making a difference for all,' Miloy said. He referred to a partnership between the University of Waterloo and the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay.

'Students from around the world are working on nanotechnology research that will have important effect on our communities,' he said. 'International researchers are working together in the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research.'

Ontario universities, he said, receive an average of 8,500 Chinese students and 1,700 students from India annually.

'The future looks bright for this continuing level of cooperation between Ontario, India and China partly as a [result of a] number of agreements signed by Premier [Dalton] McGuinty on his various missions to these countries over the last five years.'

The 21st century, he said, 'will belong to all those who care to compete in a global economy, one in which borders are increasingly blur, timezones are meaningless and languages are no barrier, where ideas, knowledge and skills are important.'

He welcomed Ontario's relationship with India and China, calling them the 'most important countries on earth.'



John Miloy, Ontario minister for colleges and universities

AJIT JAIN

'Canada has sadly fallen behind'

◀ Page 5

spending," McLaren said. "Certainly the federal government should do more in this sector."

At the Quebec-Canada Forum in Montreal September 21, Quebec Premier Jean Charest announced that he would issue an open invitation to all international students who get their degree or diploma from any Quebec university or college to apply for permanent residence in the country. Quebec has special arrangements with the federal government on immigration matters.

McLaren said, "I agree with what Charest has stated but the question is

whether the federal government is willing to bring such a program for the country as a whole and not just for Quebec. It should be countrywide."

While inaugurating the Synergy conference, McLaren said, 'Promoting Canada-India, Canada-China education relations as part of our more general business initiative, and Canada has sadly fallen behind. Other developed countries like Australia and the US are active in providing educational services to Indian students. I think the same is true of China even though I myself am not an expert on relations with China. So, I will say in both countries we have great opportunities to develop our linkages.'

'India has been a significant partner for us'

◀ Page 8

terms of the old visa process."

Katrina Murray of the ACCC believes since the pilot project was launched, the students visa approval rate has doubled.

"It is essentially a program where we are able to nominate partners," said Trotter. The program is run by the ACCC and in this project a number of private colleges are now able to nominate partners and those partners will send in visa applications under a new format that has quite a different requirement than the old format."

George Brown, Trotter said, has "tended to focus more in the north in

Punjab. Many folks in Punjab have families here and some knowledge of Canada."

The university has four partnership programs running in India: With the Institute of Hospitality Management in Mumbai, the Chitkara Educational Trust in Chandigarh, with the Institute of Apparel Management in Gurgaon, Haryana and with the Saifee Hospital in Mumbai.

In her presentation at the education conference, Trotter said George Brown has 16.5 percent of the international students enrolled in Ontario colleges, with key source countries being China, Korea, India, the Caribbean, Japan, and Russia.

FOR PROMOTING CANADIAN EDUCATION BRAND, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD AN ALLOCATION OF ONLY \$1 MILLION TOWARDS AN ACTIVITY THAT GENERATES \$6.5 BILLION



Husain F Neemuchwala

The lead organizer of the Canada-India-China education conference spoke to **Ajit Jain**

Synergy 09, a one-day education conference organized September 17 in Toronto jointly by the Canada-India Business Council, the International Center for Education and the Canadian and Ontario governments, was the third of a series. The two earlier Synergy conferences in 2007 and 2008 were focused on Canada and India from the perspective of education. China was included for the first time this year as the organizers believe the issues are the same for the two Asian giants.

The event saw over 200 registered participants — from educational institutions, top associations of universities and colleges, and representatives of the federal and Ontario governments. Indian High Commissioner S M Gavai and Chinese Ambassador Lan Lijun traveled from Ottawa to speak at the conference.

“To be able to have that much power in one place and have virtually everystake holder present who may have value to add in Canada’s internationalization process, was amazing,” said Husain F Neemuchwala, founder director, ICE, the lead organizer. “I am thankful to those that generously lent their time, prepared presentations and made an effort to ensure a successful event.”

How successful was this conference?

It was very successful and there’s an encouraging response from the participants. Several people wrote to us to talk about what they are doing towards internationalization of education with Canada and India. So, this was an excellent platform to allow universities and colleges to showcase their achievements, discuss their accomplishments and also talk about some challenges that we all face.

What are those challenges?

One is visa challenges for international students interest-

ed in studying in Canada. Canadian colleges and universities are obviously not as efficient and that explains why students visa rejection rate in India is very high. Medical checks are compulsory. Canada branding [*as an education destination*] is another concern that was widely mentioned. Some Canadian universities and institutions are known outside the country but Canada collectively is missing from the international stage because there isn’t an international strategy. So from a brand awareness perspective we need to have good brand presence.

It is up to us individually to take responsibility and action. We can’t rely on the federal government. They don’t run individual institutions as individual institutions have power, the power of many working in their favor as opposed to relying on the federal government to open doors for us.

In real terms what have the Synergy conferences achieved?

More and more delegations are now going back and forth. One concrete result is the signing of the Ontario-Maharashtra-Goa agreement for bilateral exchange of students; a group of 17 IIT [*Indian Institute of Technology*] students were invited by the British Columbia government for three-month research and study in BC universities [*India Abroad, September 25*]; also a group of 50 MBA students from Mumbai-based S P Jain Institute were recently at the Schulich School of Business, York University.

As more missions go from Canada to India and hopefully come from India here, we will see proliferation of these activities and will develop into something bigger. It is up to each individual institution to take the lead and allocate resources.

For promoting Canadian education brand, the federal government had an allocation of only \$1 million towards an activity that generates \$6.5 billion.

With meager sums of money we can’t achieve what other countries are achieving. Even though we have a better educational system but education is not the federal subject in Canada. It is more provincial. So, it comes down to individual institutions to promote their names outside the country. We want to succeed and brand Canada to succeed.

Total revenue from international students is \$6.5 billion?

Yes, \$6.5 billion dollars annually is the revenue earned in Canada from tuition fees from international students and other expenses, parents visiting them, taxes they pay when they work on campus or off campus.

And \$1 million is allocated to promote Canada as an education destination?

That has now been reduced to \$800,000. You get different versions, depending on who you talk to. But the common denominator is brand Canada is not being promoted properly. Of course, individual Canadian institutions are doing their work in raising the country’s profile outside.

Why do so few Indian students come to Canada? The number of Chinese students here is very significant.

The number of students from China coming each year is about 42,000. If more students are put in the funnel, more of them will get the visas. More Chinese students are coming to Canada for English language studies. They come for short-term and long-term studies.

Fewer than 4,000 Indian students come to Canada. The lack of brand Canada in India is a disadvantage. There are not a whole lot of Indian students coming to Canada for language studies. We [*Indians*] already speak English. We already have that language skill. A lot of students would otherwise be part of that figure. In case of China, a lot of language students come here. There are large number of

WITH MEAGER SUMS OF MONEY WE CAN’T ACHIEVE WHAT OTHER COUNTRIES ARE ACHIEVING

students from China, Korea and Japan who come here for English language studies and they come for short period — and under six months you don’t need a student visa. All you need is authorization.

What else emerged from the conference?

The issue of education was in the backburner; now it is front and center. People are talking about it, as opposed to backroom whispers. We have reached the boiling and tipping point. Something needs to be done now, sooner than later. And from that perspective Synergy on education is key. Activities like the education delegation to India in February that will be led by Roy MacLaren, chairman, Canada-India Business Council, will be the key. We will be going to Delhi, Ahmedabad and Bangalore. We are now working also with other stakeholders — the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the Association of Community Colleges of Canada, etc.

The discussion was how can we work together; Synergy was an excellent demonstration of how people can work together. At Synergy you had every stakeholder: The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute was there, as also Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce, and there was participation of C-IBC and the Canada-China Business Council. So, everybody who meant something or who has a stake in an education corridor was there.

Asha Luthra, president, ICCC — who may not have a direct stake in education — came for the conference for a common cause. In the room there were notable organizations and guests, including the Indian high commissioner and Chinese ambassador, the Ontario minister for universities and colleges. There were former Canadian ambassadors and hordes of political dignitaries. International Trade Minister Stockwell Day sent a lengthy message. So, this murmur has now become a loud noise. [*That*] education is the link that binds two cultures, two entities. It is also a great catalyst. It helps bring revenue. It is an uplifting social cause.

Keynote speaker Professor Balbir Sahni sort of set the tone for the conference.

He has always set the tone, including at earlier two Synergy conferences. He set the tone for the debates that followed during the conference. We need to do more. The internationalization strategy doesn’t involve only recruiting. Recruiting of students is just one component. There are other strategies: Exchanges, linkages, two-way flows, offshore campuses. There are several other ways of promoting internationalization. There has to be a multi-pronged approach to that, looking at long-term solutions as opposed to band-aid, short term [*ones*].

One of the strategies that we have is talking about February 2010 mission to India, which will be the follow-up to our initiative last year when colleges and universities came with us likeminded potential partners between Canada and India to strike relations with them in terms of recruiting, in terms of exchanges, in terms of cohorts delivering programs.

We are in the planning stages of a follow-up to this event by translating words into action and setting up an action group in various internationalization areas — such as recruiting, partnerships, exchanges and so on — headed by a volunteer chairperson and we will have quarterly activities.