

For Immediate Release

[Invited & Forgotten: International Students in Crisis](#)

MISSISSAUGA, September 22, 2021- Through the [Apna Health](#) collaboration, Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) and Indus Community Services (Indus), have partnered together to release a specialized report on International Students - [Invited & Forgotten: International Students in Crisis](#).

International students in the Region of Peel encounter many challenges and this report outlines some of the major issues, such as Labour Exploitation and Financial Difficulty, Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, Lack of Housing and Supports on Campus, Drug Trafficking and Legal Issues, and Mental Health, Addiction, and Suicide.

In 2018, 721,205 international students studied in Canada, comprising the largest number to date. Research conducted in 2019 shows that Ontario attracted the largest proportion of international students (43%), followed by British Columbia and Quebec (both at 19%). In 2019, India was the top source country for international students at the college level.

On average, domestic students in Canada paid \$6,822 in tuition fees, while international students paid four times that amount at \$27,613 for the same duration of study.

Since international students are legally allotted to work a maximum of 20 hours per week during school semesters, many end up precariously employed to make ends meet. Debt bondage and a lack of education around consent and legal rights has led to several incidents of workplace sexual harassment.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, many international students faced numerous challenges in their ability to afford rent and food, along with increased fears of being unable to complete their program requirements. These challenges escalated due to their distance from home and the lack of a familiar support network.

"This research study points to the benefits of international students in Canada while highlighting the challenges these students face...ranging from human sex trafficking, recruiting students to be drug mules, mental health issues leading to suicides, and exploitation by unscrupulous employers and landlords. We encourage you to read the report and join our struggle to bring these issues to the attention of all levels of government and academic institutions" says Baldev Mutta, CEO, [Punjabi Community Health Services](#).

"These young people not only deserve our support and protection but also need to be recognized as the future of our communities and essential to our progress as a society. This report reveals how a poorly envisioned patchwork of policies has contributed to the enormous neglect of vulnerable young people. I sincerely hope that government policy makers at all levels acknowledge these problems and commit to removing barriers for international students, while building a process that ensures their success" says Gurpreet Malhotra, CEO, [Indus Community Services](#).

“Public post-secondary institutions are hosts to many international students in Brampton. For example, Sheridan College has 6,000+ international students and Algoma University has 400+ international students. These learners are our local residents and as a Councillor, I have received numerous concerns related to student housing, mental health issues, human trafficking, and inappropriate behaviour in local neighbourhoods. Respected community agencies like PCHS and Indus provide important support services to international students. In their delegation, these agencies flagged serious issues and shared that they feel ignored by existing post-secondary institutions in Brampton” says Brampton Councillor Rowena Santos.

The barriers faced by international students when navigating the complex reality of living and studying in our country must be recognized in order to adequately support these individuals.

We are asking colleges, universities, community agencies, and the government to join the conversation and help us support the needs of our international students.

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Media Contact:

Dolly Singh, Manager, Strategic Development,
Indus Community Services
905-275-2369 Ext: 1252 / dsingh@induscs.ca