

# Ensuring Accountability and Transparency for Students



International  
students in  
Canada...

Account for **23%**  
of post-secondary  
enrolment

Contribute **\$22B**  
to the economy  
each year

Support **170,000**  
jobs annually

**Canada's international student system is in transition.** Since 2015, the number of post-secondary international students in Canada has surged. Unfortunately, services and accountability mechanisms have not increased in tandem, straining both international students and the education and immigration systems they rely upon.

In this context, unethical recruitment practices have been allowed to flourish. Student housing has not kept pace with rising demand. And there is a significant imbalance in the number of opportunities to transition to permanent resident status compared with the number of international students and graduates who want to become permanent residents.

Almost daily, media outlets report on student exploitation, their vulnerability to misinformation and fraud, and the impact of poor and limited housing options that have left a disturbing number of students homeless. Canada has witnessed an alarming rise in the use of food banks and deaths by suicide among international students.

The Canadian Government has responded by introducing a series of policy changes that will reduce the number of study permits each year, increase the amount of money required for prospective students to be eligible for a study permit, and reduce access to post-study work permits. These changes will impact the size of the international student program, but international students will remain in need of accurate information, settlement services, and clear pathways to permanent resident status. A multi-sector approach can effectively meet that need.



**International  
student  
well-being  
depends on:**

Access to clear,  
accurate, and  
transparent  
information



Enhanced  
accountability  
mechanisms  
and oversight  
in the post-  
secondary  
sector



Regulation  
of education  
agents in  
the post-  
secondary  
sector



An expanded  
scope for  
settlement  
services



Streamlined  
permanent  
resident  
pathways  
for students

Ensuring Canada's reputation as a top international education destination that values integrity and accountability will require a multi-sectoral approach to design and deliver change in five key areas. The federal government, provincial and territorial governments, post-secondary institutions, and student organizations must work together to partner on a range of meaningful interventions.

### Students need guaranteed access to clear, accurate information.

To counter recruitment scams and other deceptive tactics, policies are needed to ensure international students' access to clear, accurate, transparent information at every point along their higher education journey, from pre-arrival to time spent in Canada. This requires:

- **Collaboration among Post-Secondary Institutions and Relevant Federal and Provincial and Territorial Governments** to ensure consistent and transparent information about international education opportunities in Canada.

### Cross-Sectoral collaborators must work together to enhance accountability and oversight mechanisms.

The complex nature of the international student sector requires a comprehensive accountability framework involving oversight by multiple stakeholders. This entails:

- **A Regulatory Framework:** The framework must include incentives for post-secondary institutions to invest in recruitment systems and practices that maintain the highest level of integrity. This framework must identify practices that constitute misconduct and detail consequences up to and including revocation of designated learning institute status.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Roundtable:** A collaborative roundtable must be established to design, implement, and oversee accountability measures relevant to international student recruitment by post-secondary institutions and to the provision of services once students arrive. Robust compliance, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms must be a central priority of the roundtable.

### Education agents must be subject to regulation and enforcement in case of misconduct.

Education agents play a crucial role in international student recruitment. Nearly 50 percent of international students in Canada are referred to their institutions through agents. However, the increased prevalence of unethical practices and fraudulent activities of education agents and their subcontracted agents raise concerns about the credibility and accountability of the current system.

Without robust monitoring and enforcement by a dedicated regulatory body, the existing problems in the recruitment field will persist. Change requires:

- **Establishment of a Dedicated Regulatory Body** to oversee education agent aggregators and their subcontracted agents. This body would enforce regulatory standards, maintain a registry, and require agents operating in Canada to be licensed. Violations of standards of practice should result in removal from the registry and revocation of their licensure.
- **Collaboration with Sending Countries:** Development of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with governments of top sending countries and Canadian post-secondary institutions can establish impactful compliance, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms. These MoUs would facilitate international cooperation and align regulatory efforts to address misconduct and maintain ethical standards.

### International students must be included in the scope of services provided by the settlement sector.

International students and graduates have skills and training that Canada needs. They must be set up for success if they decide to stay in the country as potential immigrants, and be supported in the same way Canada supports other prospective immigrants in both the short and long term. A plan for success will include:

- **Provision of Adequate Resources** to ensure equitable access to settlement and employment services.
- **Collaboration among Post-Secondary Institutions and All Levels of Government** to provide international students with supports including financial assistance, health services, and the other resources that are necessary for them to succeed in their studies.

### Permanent residence pathways for international students must be streamlined.

To fully harness the potential of international students as partners in our collective economic growth and recovery, our immigration policies need to ensure sound recruitment and retention measures that include:

- **Comprehensive Eligibility Criteria for Permanent Resident Status:** The government must develop criteria for permanent resident pathways specifically designed for international students and graduates. These criteria should consider factors such as the work experience acquired by international students during their studies, as well as the work experience obtained in any National Occupational Classification (NOC). This inclusive approach would reflect the diversity of skills and talents that international graduates bring to Canada's labour market. ■