

2023-2 Ensuring Health Coverage and Settlement Services for International Students

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WHEREAS International Students with temporary immigration status (study permit/post-graduate permit) continue to be ineligible for many of the services made available to immigrants and refugees.

WHEREAS Ukrainians coming to Canada under the Canada Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program (a form of temporary immigration status), are receiving comprehensive support from the Federal Government and the Government of Manitoba, not provided to other newcomers with temporary immigration status, including International Students.

WHEREAS due to the systemic discrimination experienced by International Students, their successful integration is severely impeded. There is ample evidence to suggest that discrimination and a lack of support for International Students negatively affect their educational outcomes, access to jobs, financial security, mental and physical health, and sense of belonging, to name a few.

WHEREAS the lack of access to provincially funded health care coverage severely constrained International Students from accessing medical services. This benefit was taken away from International Students in 2018, when the Manitoba Health Card was revoked from them, obliging them to use private health care services contracted by the University that provide limited coverage. This coverage, in turn, is promptly revoked from International Students following their graduation, leaving them without health coverage for months until they receive their post graduate permit through IRCC.

WHEREAS the lack of health care coverage has gender-based impacts as it is particularly detrimental to International Students who require health care due to pregnancy. Having to incur very high out of pocket costs for regular prenatal check ups, medical care during childbirth and postnatal care contributes to considerable stress and anxiety and results in International Students being unable to access necessary health care, undermining the health of both mother and child.

WHEREAS health care institutions and regional health authorities in Manitoba routinely contact Canada Border Services Agency when International Students are required to pay for health care expenses. This practice is in violation of their right to privacy and confidentiality and puts them at risk of detention and deportation and resulting harm.

WHEREAS mental health support services are not easily accessible for International Students as they require long waiting times (months) and/or require additional payment as it is not included in the private health insurance plans provided to them.

WHEREAS other provinces in Canada, such as Saskatchewan, Alberta, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Northwest Territories, have implemented the provision of free/public health care to International Students, and we can learn from their examples.

WHEREAS young and vulnerable International Students arrive in Canada, a foreign country to them, without any present support from family/friends on site. International Students are faced with a lack of settlement services from their landing date to the date of their graduation, when settlement services are most urgently required to support successful integration.

BE IT RESOLVED that MANSO urges the Government of Manitoba to expand provincial health care coverage to all residents, including International Students, regardless of immigration status.

BE IT RESOLVED that MANSO promotes the adoption of Access Without Fear policies across the health care system so that international students and others with precarious immigration status can access health care without the threat of detention and deportation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government of Manitoba meets with the settlement sector, student unions, educational institutions, and relevant stakeholders, to discuss and develop a holistic strategy to provide consistent, long-term, and adequate support and stable funding for International Student settlement services and health coverage, with the aim of ensuring that all new International Students can access these supports and continue in their academic careers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MANSO advocates for Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada to expand eligibility for settlement services to include residents with temporary immigration status, including International Students.

Sources

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