



Invited & Forgotten: International Students in Crisis

----- Project Partners -----



Social Planning Council of Peel

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ABSTRACT

International student enrolment has been on the rise within Canadian colleges and universities, having increased 68% between the years of 2014-2018 alone (Government of Canada, 2020). The province of Ontario facilitates and fosters the abroad experience of nearly 50% of these enrollments (El-Assal, 2020), with Sheridan College for example (with two of its main campuses being located in Mississauga and Brampton) being composed of over 30% international students (Colpitts, 2018). There are numerous reasons as to why international student enrollment is on the rise within Canada. It is recognized that international education can support Canada meet current and emerging labour-market challenges (Government Canada, 2020). In 2018, about 53,700 international students became permanent residents and valued members of Canadian society. This report aims to analyze the policy interventions, supports, and services in place to attract international students to Canada and foster a successful postsecondary experience. This report particularly focuses on Peel Region within Ontario to analyze how the lived experiences of individuals who seek postsecondary study abroad are supported by the systems in place within this area, and the potential implications of service gaps for this demographic in regard to psychological and physical health, quality of life, safety etc.



1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Between the years of 2014 to 2018, Canada saw a 68% increase of international student [1] enrolment within postsecondary institutions. In the year of 2018, 721,205 international students studied in Canada, being acknowledged in government reports as the largest number to date (Government of Canada, 2020). However, as of 2019, 404,000 international students gained study permits within Canada, showing a 13% increase from the year prior (El-Assal, 2020). International students are regarded within government reports as being a large source of revenue and human capital within our country (Government of Canada, 2020). As of 2019, 58,000 international students became permanent residents within the country (Aiello, 2020), with 34% of individuals who gained immigrant status doing so through the Canadian Experience class (a stream of immigration mainly directed towards students and foreign workers) (El-Assal, 2020). This is an increase of 7.4% from the year prior, as approximately 54,000 international students transitioned to permanent residency in 2018. International student enrolment provides immense economic growth and stability within our country (\$21.6 billion in 2018, and approximately 170,000 middle income jobs supported), but as well as stated within government reports, it increases innovative thinking, integrates new skills, and allows for the development of global relationships (Government of Canada 2020). One of the largest reasons for attracting international students to Canada, however, is global competition. It is predicted that by 2025, the demand for international education will increase to 7.2 million postsecondary international students (Smith, et al., 2013). Therefore, Canada must get ahead in attracting this global revenue in order to ensure that it maintains its position as a top destination.

Postsecondary institutions within the country also have their own motives for attracting international students to study within Canada. One suspected reason being due to the shrinking number of domestic students entering postsecondary schooling, causing institutions to seek sources of enrolment elsewhere (El-Assal, 2018). This reason has been further validated with findings that whilst Canada's population as a whole has increased 11% over the past decade, the demographic aged 18-24 has only increased by 4% (El-Assal, 2020). The average age of postgraduate students according to Statistics Canada in 2017 was 24 (Canadian Postsecondary Enrolments, 2017). However, a proven reason to prioritize this initiative is that in contrast to decades prior, postsecondary education is no longer publicly funded, it is now less than 50% funded by the government despite increases in enrolment throughout the years. As public funding has continued to decrease throughout the years, institutions initially looked to increased domestic student enrolment within the years of 2007 and 2008. However, this did not fill the financial gap adequately as inflation of tuition fees was discouraged by the government. Therefore, institutions began looking to international students to bring in more financial stability, and approximately 10 years following revenue through student fees had increased by 218% (Usher, 2019). During this time period, the government of Canada made alterations to the direct entry system allocating more points to individuals who have attended postsecondary schooling within the country to have priority in gaining permanent residency (Chen, et al., 2020). It has been found that international students who study in Canada are among the best candidates for permanent residency due to their familiarity with the customs, recognized high education and a perception of having a heightened proficiency of the language (Assal, 2018).

[1] The term “international students” includes non-permanent residents and those with a study permit.



1. INTRODUCTION

The province of Ontario attracts nearly 50% of all international students coming to study in Canada (48% in 2019) (El-Assal, 2020). Of the international students who choose Canada as their place of study, more than 50% are from India and China (Government of Canada, 2020). The two main reasons that international students reported choosing Canada particularly being that it was non-discriminatory (reported by 79%), and safe (reported by 78%) (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 2018). For Sheridan College alone, international students represent over 30% of the student population. Sheridan has over 22,000 students with 6,800 being international and coming from over 80 countries (Sheridan campuses are located in Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville). Todd Letts, Brampton's Board of Trade CEO, stated in an interview with Mississauga News that international students have a very positive impact on the Brampton economy (Colpitts, 2018). However, with international recruitment and enrolment increasing, allotting postsecondary institutions in 2018 a \$3.25 billion dollar increase in comparison to 9 years prior, it leaves to question if the proper supports and services are being put in place for these individuals. For individuals being sought out from their countries of origin to study in Canada, primarily Ontario, and especially for the purpose of this report, Peel Region, one's ability to integrate into society given the supports and services they are offered must be analyzed in order to adequately address safety, comfort and physical/psychological health in the short- and long-term. The World Health Organization's work on the social determinants of health has revealed immense evidence to validate that one's health and quality of life are in fact socially determined (Shankar et al., 2013. p. 1).

1.2 Social Policy Relevance of the Project

- Valuing Diversity (Equity, Access, etc.)
- Developing Socially Inclusive Communities
- Building Healthy Communities
- Building Community Capacity

1.3 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to develop effective strategies for addressing socioeconomic health issues faced by the international students in Peel at the micro, mezzo and macro levels.

1.4 Research Questions

The three research questions that informed this report are as follows:

- What are the issues that international students face in Peel?
- What are the socioeconomic and health characteristics of international students in Peel Region?
- What are some of the best ways to address the socioeconomic health issues faced by this demographic?

1.5 Main Audience for the Report

The primary audience for this report is service providers in Peel, particularly those providing services to international students. The information provided is intended to improve the delivery of socio-economic and health related services to the international students in Peel. Some of the content in this report may also be useful for policy makers in Peel.



1.INTRODUCTION

1.6 Organization of the Report

This report has been organized into four sections. As the first section, this introduction provides background information relevant to the content of the report. The second section provides the methodology that was used to obtain the information conveyed in this report. The third section includes information on the findings from secondary sources regarding issues faced by the international students in Peel, reflections from the secondary sources, existing social action strategies and gaps in existing strategies. The final section presents the conclusion and recommendations based on the information presented in previous sections.

2.METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methods

The purpose of this report is to address systemic barriers facing international students through analyzing current secondary data sources (published within the last 10 years) to better understand the complexities of oppressive, and neglecting practices that are in place in order to address them on a micro, mezzo, and macro level. Literature utilized to inform this report was accessed through google and the Ryerson University online library and includes government publications, statistics, news reports, peer-reviewed academic journals, and empirical studies.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Various frameworks have been developed for international student-related planning and policies. The report is based on our learnings from existing social welfare methodology (Chappell, 2010). The proposed framework intends to provide a holistic analysis of the international students' issues mainly at the micro level in Peel.

In the micro level, the report aims to identify the issues faced by international students and help individuals and enhance their social well-being. In the meso (mezzo) level, it demonstrates how we can improve conditions such as introducing new programs or changing company policies within organizations for international students. In the macro level, the framework points to broader social aspects and political issues that may involve seeking change in legislation or social policy. Please note that this report has limited scope to analyze the data at the mezzo and macro levels.



Framework for International Students (Level of Changes and Related Interventions)

Micro Level - Issues

Internal Barriers:

- Mental, sexual, and reproductive health
- Language and culture shock
- Housing & accommodation
- Academic issues
- Financial problems
- Tuition costs

External Barriers:

- Sexual harassment
- Internalized racism
- Discrimination
- Employment
- Impact of COVID-19

Micro Level - Interventions

- Individual counselling
- Family therapy
- Social support services

Meso (Mezzo) Level - Issues

- Social isolation and discrimination
- Access to information
- Supports for individual cultures
- Housing support and counselling
- Career planning, mentoring and job readiness
- Specialized services

Meso (Mezzo) Level - Interventions

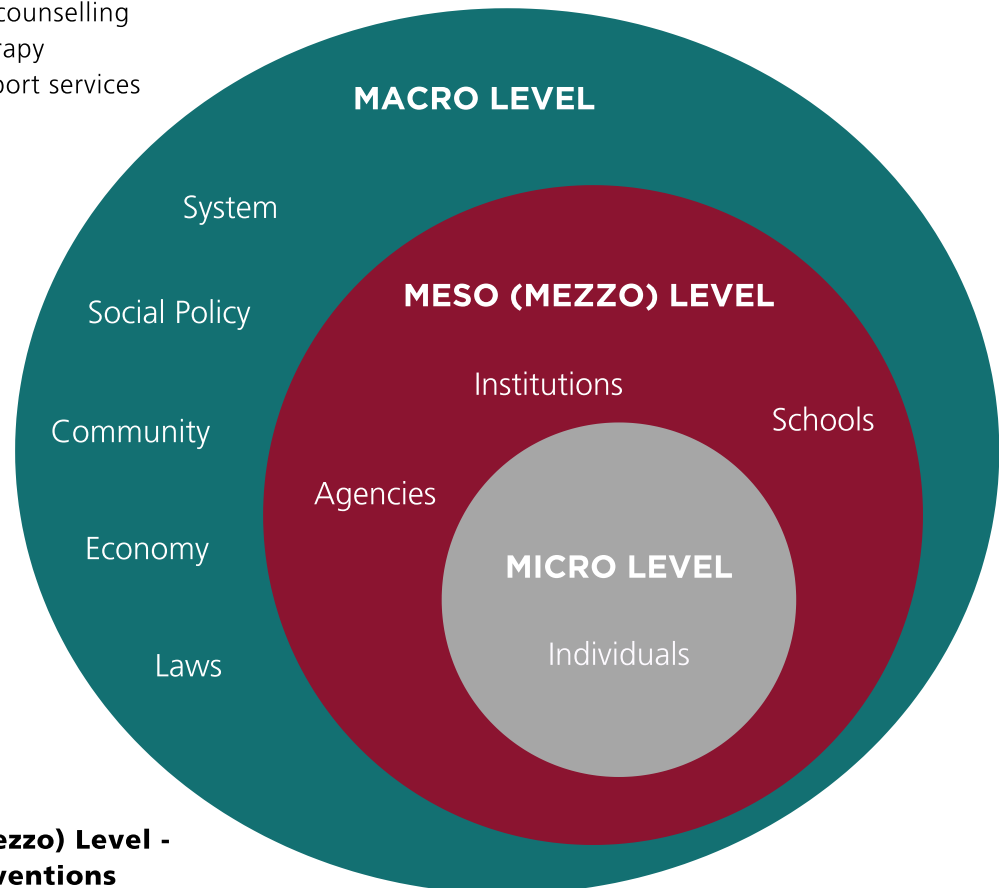
- Advocacy and faculty support
- Up to date information or resources & basic info on physical, mental and spiritual needs
- Representatives of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds
- Orientation on Canadian laws and rights
- Career planning, mentoring and job readiness training
- Specialized counselling services

Macro Level - Issues

- Collaboration
- Funding and resources
- Housing support
- Lack of knowledge about community services, Canadian laws, rights, regulations and policies

Macro Level - Interventions

- Institutional collaboration
- Lobbying the government
- Tax breaks to landlords
- Development of an international students' hub





3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: SECONDARY SOURCES

The purpose of this section is to identify various issues faced by the international students in Peel, along with reflections from the secondary sources, existing social action strategies, and gaps in existing strategies. The findings in this section were collected from various secondary sources.

3.1 Statistics About International Students from Secondary Sources

- According to the Statistics Canada, there were 214,383 international students studying in Canada in 2016-2017 [2].
- It is recognized that the majority of international students in Canada were from Asia (64%) and the top three source countries for international students in Canada were China (32%), India (15%) and France (8%) in 2016-17 [3].
- The research conducted by Statistics Canada (2019) shows that Ontario attracted the largest proportion of international students (43%), followed by British Columbia and Quebec (both at 19%) [4].
- In 2019, India was the top source country for international students at the college level [5].
- Between 2009 and 2015, international student enrolment in postsecondary programs almost doubled (Year 2009: 84,582 vs Year 2015: 166,242) [6].
- The Peel District School Board has been welcoming international students for more than nine years. The partners include University of Toronto Mississauga and Sheridan College [7].
- In 2016, there were 22,970 non-permanent residents [8] in Peel. It was comprised of 1.7% of Peel's total population (Table 1).
- In 2018, there were 147, 880 study permit holders in Toronto CMA (Figure 2) which included Peel's figure.
- In 2019, the top three source countries (Figure 3) with study permit holders in Canada were India (219,855), China (141,400) and Korea (24,180).
- Between January 2020 and June 2020, the top three source countries (Figure 4) with study permit holders in Canada were India (32,045), China (24,710) and Korea (6,055).

[2] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/81-604-x/81-604-x2019001-eng.pdf?st=PSoq9Jpz>

[3] *ibid.*

[4] *ibid.*

[5] *ibid.*

[6] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2019070-eng.pdf?st=PU7FkcSv>

[7] <https://www.peelschools.org/parents/register/international/Pages/default.aspx>

[8] Non-permanent residents' includes persons from another country who have a work or study permit or who are refugee claimants, and their family members sharing the same permit and living in Canada with them.

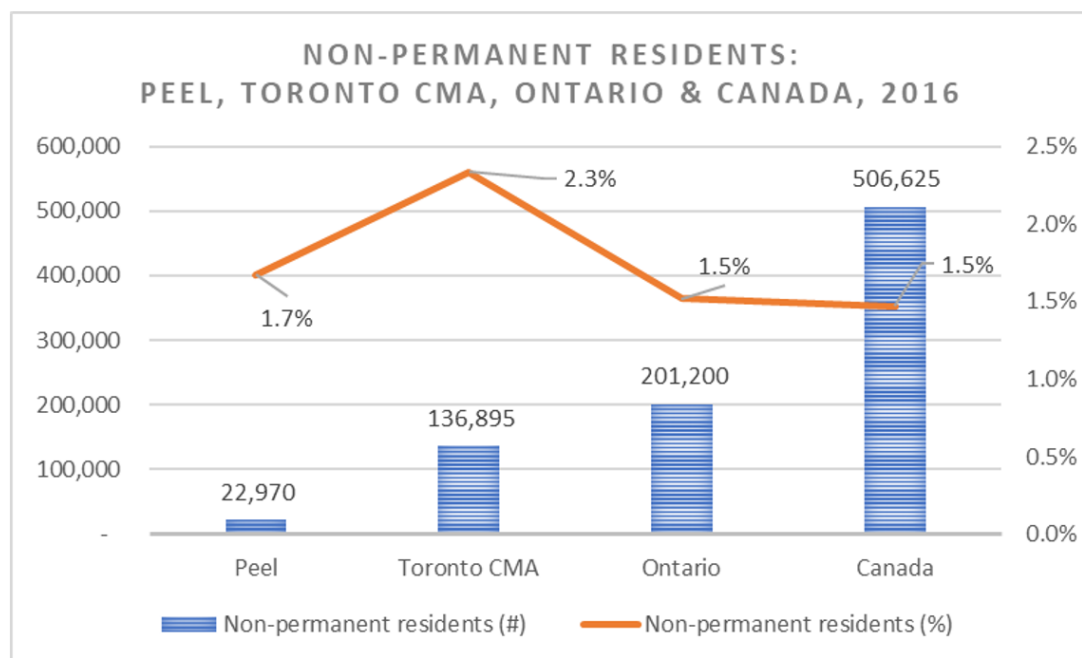


TABLE 1
Immigrant Status: Peel, Toronto CMA, Ontario & Canada

Number (#)				
	Peel	Toronto CMA	Ontario	Canada
Non-immigrants	642,835	3,020,405	9,188,815	26,412,610
Immigrants	706,835	2,705,550	3,852,145	7,540,830
Non-permanent residents	22,970	136,895	201,200	506,625
Total	1,372,640	5,862,850	13,242,160	34,460,065
Percentage (%)				
	Peel	Toronto CMA	Ontario	Canada
Non-immigrants	46.8%	51.5%	69.4%	76.6%
Immigrants	51.5%	46.1%	29.1%	21.9%
Non-permanent residents	1.7%	2.3%	1.5%	1.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Canada, 2016

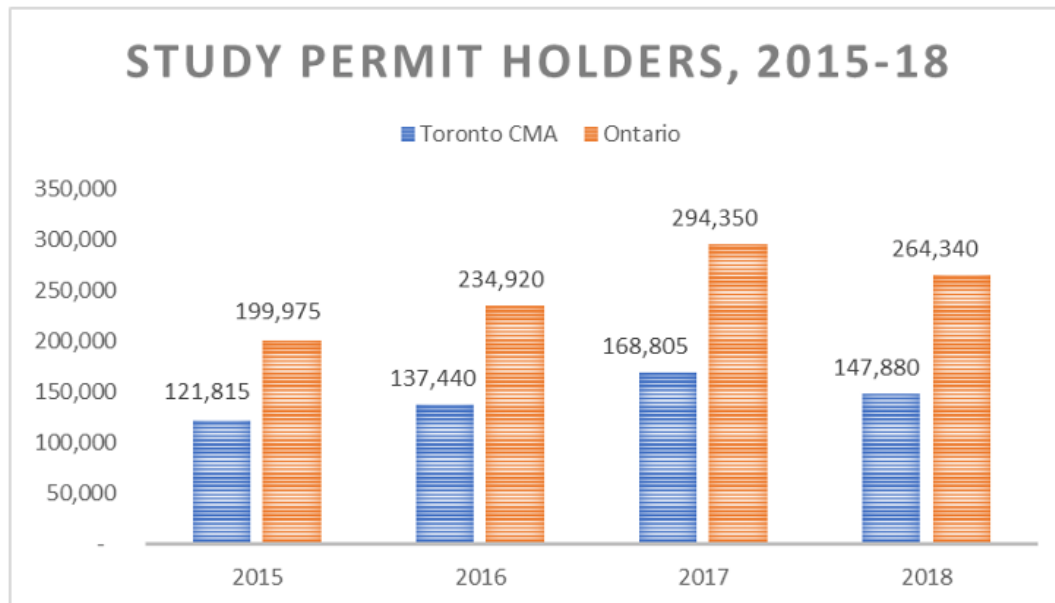
FIGURE 1



Source: Statistics Canada, Census Canada, 2016



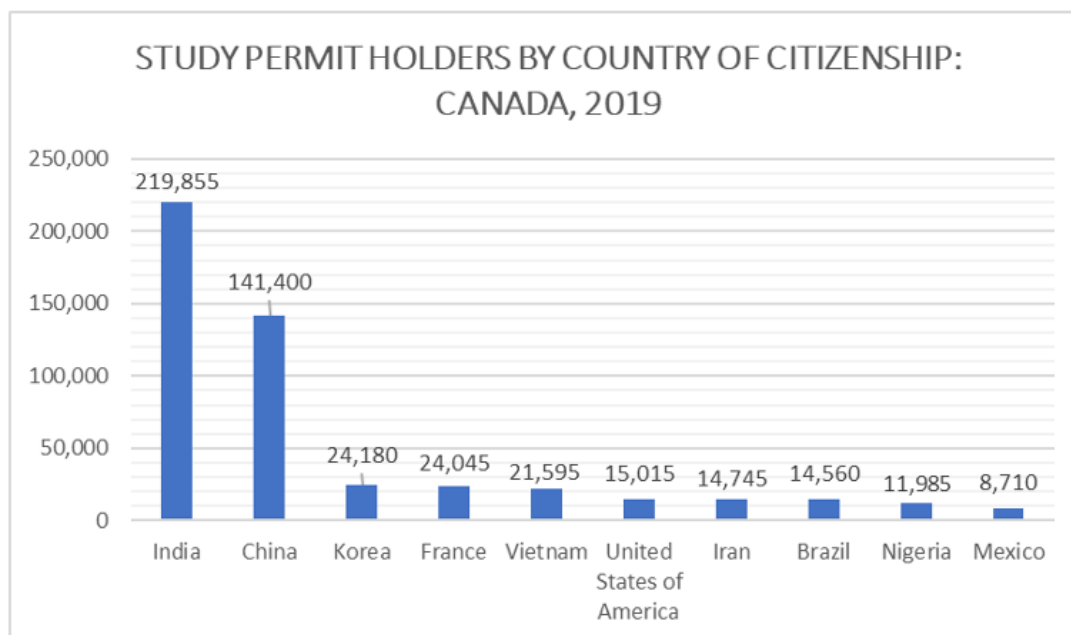
FIGURE 2



Source: IRCC, April 30, 2018, Retrieved from:

<https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/31ef4cab-d2b3-4dba-8e91-48fe64211ec5>

FIGURE 3

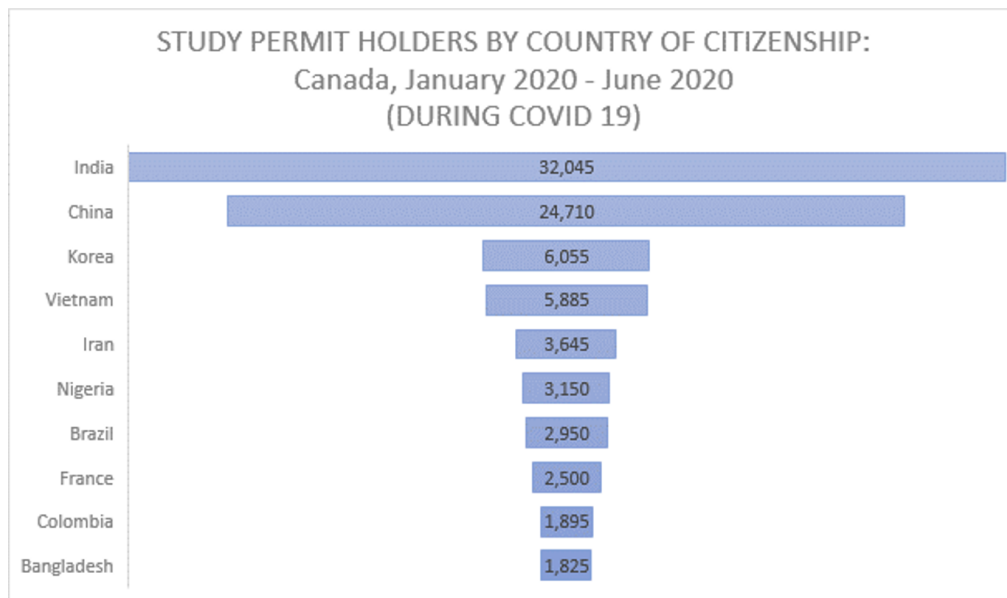


Source: IRCC, December 31, 2019. Retrieved from:

<https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/31ef4cab-d2b3-4dba-8e91-48fe64211ec5>



FIGURE 4



Source: IRCC, June 30, 2020, Retrieved from:

<https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/31ef4cab-d2b3-4dba-8e91-48fe64211ec5>

3.2 Issues Faced by the International Students in Peel

The international students in the Region of Peel seem to encounter many challenges. These challenges or barriers can be characterized into two broad categories: internal barriers and external barriers. Internal barriers pertain more directly to the individual, while external barriers are more directly related to society as a whole.

3.2.1 Internal Barriers (The Individual's Barriers)

Tuition Costs

Findings from a report published in 2020 found that between the years of 2018-2019, domestic students in Canada, on average, paid one-quarter (25%) of the fees that their international counterparts paid. The average tuition fee for domestic students being \$6,822 in comparison to \$27,613 that international students paid within the same time frame (Chen & Skuterud, 2020). However, there are additional common costs that have been found to be associated with international study in Canada. Findings from a study published in 2017 analyzing data from an anonymous college in Ontario college showed that international student enrolment between the years 1995-2014 had an annual increase of 10.9%, with the number of international students utilizing the assistance of an educational agent annually increasing by 13.4%. From 1995-2007, 30% of international students used an educational agent to seek schooling in another country, and by 2014, 60% of international students used an agent. An educational agent is a third party within the recruitment process that assists in advising and enrolment for individuals looking to study abroad. According to findings from this college within Ontario, an agent costs 15% of international students \$500 or less, 13% \$5,000 or less, and for only 25% of this demographic this service is free on top of their tuition fees. The expectations of using an agent for these students have been found to be seeking immigration advice and guidance in regard to rules and the system in general, however, only 55% of agents have been found to actually assist in this regard (Legusov, 2017).



Financial Problems

Financial issues facing international students have always been a complex challenge, as these students have had to prove they have sufficient resources to support themselves during their stay within the country while going through the immigration process (Smith, et al., 2013). However, international students interviewed within an article published by CBC News stated that they did not have to prove to the provincial or federal government they had sufficient financial resources to support themselves within the country following their first year of schooling (Ricci, 2019).

International students are only allowed to work 20 hours a week during the time in which classes are in session within a semester (excluding winter break, spring break and summer break). Working more than the allotted hours per week is reported to be becoming more common as the number of international students rises but support remains stagnant. International students employed by companies that are allowing them to work more than these allotted hours have been reported by said students to have treated them inhumanely, specifically in regard to sexual harassment in the workplace, and getting paid less than minimum wage for the work done (Ricci, 2019).

One student interviewed for the previously mentioned CBC News article reportedly worked 164 hours in a time span of two weeks during his time off from school in order to be able to afford his programs expenses. Other students within the article stated that it is not uncommon to see international students falling asleep in class and/or on transit due to the implications of working and trying to meet financial obligations to study in this country (Ricci, 2019).

Housing & Accommodation

Balpreet Singh, a representative from the Legal Counsel for the World Sikh Organization of Canada, has concerns regarding the availability of housing for international students and the ability to find it, particularly when it comes to affordable housing (Colpitts, 2018). On average, of the 75 Canadian international students who participated in a survey conducted by Calder et al. in 2016, the majority had moved twice since the beginning of their studies, and over half had experienced problems with their housing accommodations in the year prior (affordability of accommodation being reported as the most significant problem). More than half of the students who participated in the survey did not know where to access help with their accommodation. Faculty who participated in the survey as well acknowledged that many international students don't have enough knowledge regarding their rights and available supports to them, therefore some rent from landlords that provide "basically a hole in the ground that students may be willing to take for any cost" (p. 100).

Within the survey, housing was found to represent a large portion of expenses that international students paid during their studies. Nearly half (32 of the participants) reported spending 30% of their money on housing. (Calder, et al., 2016). An international student quoted within a CBC 2019 article stated that in his first year of postsecondary schooling in Canada he stayed within a one-bedroom apartment located in a basement with three other students at the price of \$400.00 a month (Ricci, 2019).



Academic Issues

It has been found within a study based upon data from a publicly funded postsecondary university in Ontario from the years 2004-2015 that secondary grades from past schooling are not the best overall indicator of students' future quality of schooling and success while attending schooling internationally. This indicator is found to not be adequate at predicting success due to differing curriculums and language barriers. The study found that international students underperform in comparison to domestic students (Chen, & Skuterud, 2020). These findings not only highlight the inadequacy of current practice guiding international student recruitment and enrolment, but also emphasize the need for support and services to help assist them once in Canada. Ultimately, intellectual measures are not sufficient in gauging how they will integrate and perform within the Canadian post-secondary education system.

In a 2015 study conducted by El Masri et al., analyzing 11 Ontario Universities, social support and services are the most promoted area of focus for international students but staff participants felt that these services could go further to address their needs. Staff stated that there is even a need for improvement of social events in order to integrate international students and domestic students together. In a web search of the 11 universities that participated in the study, 99% had been found to have available social support for international students, 85% had available academic support for international students, and less than 70% had professional support for international students (El Masri et al., 2015). With the one service area that is most consistently being promoted to international students by universities in Ontario being reported by staff to be inadequate in delivery, it leaves one to question the support that is in place for this demographic as a whole.

A 2011 report entitled "Going Global: Supporting Ontario's International Students" found that support for international students within postsecondary institutions is not consistent (Smith et al., 2013). Responses from university personnel to the survey conducted by Calder et al. show that university faculty recognize the need for international students to have further assistance with information resources (Calder et al., 2016). Additionally, university staff who participated in the aforementioned survey by El Masri et al. (2015) stated that there is a need for support and guidance in course selection within the early stages of integration. These findings from multiple sources show a clear need for more standardized support for international students provided by the postsecondary institution they are attending. This was further validated by the findings from El Masri et al. in which only 40% of university staff respondents tried to identify potential factors that may hinder an international student's ability to gain permanent residency. A potential reason for this may be due to the fact that staff do not have enough interactions with international students to be able to respond to this question and speak to their lived experience within the institution (El Masri et al., 2015).



Mental, Sexual and Reproductive Health

In a study cited by Ingle International (n.d.) of 43,000 Canadian university student participants, 30% reported feeling “very lonely” in the last two weeks, 66% reported feeling this way within the past year, and 44% reported feeling an inability to function due to feelings of depression within the past year. For international students in particular who are in a new country and seeking to learn new ways of living, these stressors are likely heightened. International students within Canada who participated in the survey conducted by Calder et al. (2016) were in high agreement with one another that stressors associated with housing affect their physical health, mental health, and studies. In addition, stress related to racism has been proven to have a large impact on one’s adrenal system which can lead to many physical and mental health implications including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity etc. (Shankar, et al., 2013). It is found that lack of sexual health education and stigma surrounding sexuality is leading to a rise in unplanned pregnancies and adoptions from within the international student community (Induscs, 2020).

Language & Culture Shock

Although international students may know the dominant language within Canada, they may not be used to it being used regularly within a setting nor are they used to slang (College, 2019). Without adequate support, one can face language barriers with peers and university staff that can affect academic performance and one’s participation in educational and professional settings (Chaudhury, 2018). For international students, it has been found that common causes of depression and anxiety include culture shock and homesickness, thus showing a clear need for support to navigate cultural differences and integrate into Canadian society (Ingle International, n.d.).

A 2012 study with 209 international student participants from Canadian universities found that one’s region of origin was a large predictor of success while attending school as an international student in Canada. Overall, individuals from Africa and the Caribbean were found to adjust better overall than those from the Middle East and China (Chaudhury, 2018). As stated, more than 50% of the international students who come to study in Canada are from India and China (Government of Canada, 2020).

3.2.2 External Barriers (Social or Societal Barriers)

Discrimination

Health and quality of life are socially determined; therefore, studies show that racism has been known to lead to higher amounts of stress that can affect an individual psychologically and physiologically (Shankar et al., 2013). For international students, the preliminary concept of attending school in Canada with higher tuition and lower financial support fosters a dominant systematic ideology of marginalization and disregard for their unique needs (Xiao, 2020). Upon entering the postgraduate school system in Canada, further findings have discovered that interactions with peers often contribute to feelings of isolation as well. A survey conducted in 2014 by the Canadian Bureau of International Education found that only 44% of international students surveyed reported having domestic students as friends (El Masri et al., 2015).



In 2018, following numerous violent attacks documented to have occurred around the Brampton Sheridan College campus, news outlets urged the public to refrain from taking a discriminatory stance. News articles released by Mississauga News and the Brampton Guardian shared a similar stance on the unfolding of these occurrences within the community, and the discriminatory climate in which they took place. Both news sources discussed how international students were implicated in these attacks on social media, despite the majority of assaults not involving Sheridan students at all. The authors of these articles urged the public to reflect on the fact that wrongful accusations against international students for violent attacks around the Sheridan College campus in Brampton fosters a negative perception of individuals and immigration in general within the community (Colpitts, 2018; Rosella, 2018).

Authors such as Houshmand et al. have implicated Canada in denying its racist tendencies through claiming multiculturalism and looking to the United States as a depiction of racism. However, racism has been found to be present within Canadian systemic practices and ingrained in institutions such as universities. The 2014 study conducted by Houshmand et al. at an anonymous university in Canada found that a large theme reported by over half of the respondents was feelings of being ignored and excluded by their peers (7 out of the 12). In addition, the study found that international student participants felt as though their values and beliefs were disregarded, that their intellectual capacity was associated by others with their racial identity, and that they were made to feel invisible (Houshmand et al., 2014).

Internalized Racism

When coming from a different country, one can feel alienated and marginalized. Therefore, international students are likely to stick to those who are culturally similar to them and tend to not socialize outside of that familiar grouping (College, 2019). A study conducted by the University of Guelph found that perceptions of discrimination experienced by international students can lead to feelings of being unvalued and belittled (Chaudhury, 2018).

In the aforementioned 2014 study by Houshmand et al., one of the twelve international student participants reported being made invisible by a woman who was of the same culture as her (Chinese) but Canadian-born. Internalized oppression is the act of minorities oppressing other minorities, such as domestic visible minorities acting discriminatorily towards international racialized people due to the desire to act in accordance with the dominant discourse and practices within the institution and society. As a result of being new to the Canadian culture, a possible consequence of international students trying to cope with oppression, discrimination and racism is through internalizing these negative messages (Houshmand, et al., 2014).

Sexual Harassment

As international students are legally allotted to work a maximum of 20 hours a week during school semesters, many have had to work in precarious conditions in order to meet their financial needs. This includes settings in which workplace sexual harassment has been reported to have taken place (Ricci, 2019). It is recognized that there exists a lack of education surrounding consent and sexual harassment.



Employment

Research informing this report has found numerous factors which negatively affect international students' ability to gain employment in Canada whilst in school and after graduation. Firstly, findings have shown that most companies within Canada are hesitant to hire international students due to uncertainty around regulations (Thais, 2020). Secondly, within Canadian workplaces, foreign names have lower chances of being called back pre/post-interview (Chen et al., 2020). Lastly, in a federal survey conducted by the Canadian Bureau of Education, only 43% of international student respondents stated that they were employed, and of the majority who were not employed, over half (56%) reported having challenges finding a place of work. The most common challenge reported for not being able to find employment was a lack of work experience (52%) (Canadian Bureau of Education, 2018).

A student's grades, however, have been found to be an indication of starting salary within a position, this being based upon confidence in the decision-making of past teachers and professors who have gotten to know the student better than the interviewer (Chen et al., 2020). This shows a clear need for a student to feel supported and build relationships with faculty in their postsecondary institution. However, these supports do not seem to be in place. It has been found that many universities do not advertise job listings on or off campus (El Masri et al., 2015). Following the completion of schooling, university staff survey respondents from the 11 universities within Ontario stated that alumni services for international students are not offered (these services would include aid in networking, insurance, banking, etc.) (El Masri et al., 2015). The Canadian Bureau of Education's 2018 report states that 54% of international student respondents within their survey had accessed occupation supports in their institution of study; however, only 19% stated that they were very satisfied with the support (Canadian Bureau of Education, 2018).

A group discussion conducted by Indus Community Services (August 2020) identified that fear of the system and student short cuts may lead to exploitation as students work under the table jobs or fake English testing, which leads to more issues down the road such as not passing school or finding trouble retaining meaningful employment. Students may be overworking to survive, which can lead them to miss classes and eventually drop out of school with an incomplete education.

Impact of COVID-19

Due to the impact of COVID-19, many post-graduate students faced numerous challenges in their ability to afford food and housing, and developed fears about not completing their program requirements. For international students, these challenges escalated due to their distance from home and the lack of a familiar support network. However, Sheridan College is one institution that recognized the unique needs of all students and aimed to address them at the time. Ritika Dubey, an international student from India, was quoted by the Brampton Guardian in an April 2020 article in relation to her experiences during the early stages of the pandemic and the assistance Sheridan College provided her in getting through the tough times. She stated that she was fearful of financial insecurity after being laid off from her part time job and was doubtful of her ability to complete her semester requirements and graduate, but did not wish to seek assistance from her parents. Following the closure of the physical classes and campus amenities at Sheridan College, the school recognized the unique concerns and challenges being faced by many students and took steps to improve financial assistance, enhance the food bank, initiate a loaner laptop program (for those who were having technology problems accessing online classes), provide additional tutoring, and allow students to stay in campus residence if they did not have any other place to go (Frisque, 2020).



According to an article published by CTV News in July, the Federal Government of Canada is focusing on the needs of international students that have a long-term goal of obtaining a post-graduate work permit within the country. These students will be allowed to put their hours of online learning towards obtaining this work permit, but only if a minimum of 50% of their program is completed within Canada. In addition, the government is allowing international students who have been hindered in their ability to submit all relevant documentation to study in Canada due to the pandemic, to begin their studies within their country of origin (Aiello, 2020).

Some of potential service gaps identified by Indus Community Services during the group discussion with the international students in August 2020 include:

- Financial - Exclusion from CESB, volunteer incentive program etc.
- Housing - Exacerbated by COVID-19 and closure of on campus housing
- Health Care - Issues around difficulty gaining access to healthcare without OHIP card including COVID testing and pregnancy related care, lack of assistance from community health centers who turn away students who may require help, and lack of consistency in care
- Mental Health - Stress of being a vulnerable member of our community & existing mental health issues

3.3 Reflections from the Secondary Sources

Numerous resources within this report spoke to the importance of social support for international students. Yun Kyng Woo, the international student advisor at Ryerson University in Toronto, stated that during an international student's time studying at university, approximately one third will not make a domestic friend. Maricuz Rodriguez, the tri-mentoring facilitator at this university, stated that the formation of social connections for international students is key to their integration (Green, 2018). Educators are a large factor in the success of international students. As mentioned prior, educators' assessments of students have a large influence in determining one's starting salary at a new job (due to the perception that educators got to know them better than the interviewer would) (Chen & Skuterud, 2020). Educators have been recognized as potentially being an aid to students who are suffering from mental illness if they know the symptoms and behaviors associated (Ingle International, n.d.).

Findings from the literature review show that there is a clear need for more information services within postsecondary institutions to assist international students. In the study conducted by El Masri, et al., 76% of university staff respondents stated that there is a large need for clear and updated information provided to international students. The needed information outlined by staff included settlement services, resources related to policies, procedures etc. (El Masri et al., 2015). According to a report released by Ryerson University in 2018, inconsistency persists across Canada in regard to resources and services provided by international student offices (Green, 2018). The need for these services to be relevant to individuals who are new to the country can be validated in the reasoning why many choose to utilize an educational agent (for information on laws, navigating the system and immigration rules) (Legusov, 2017). In a study analyzing the challenges faced by international students within Canadian colleges, reports of feeling inferior and embarrassed were associated with not understanding the school system (Shankar et al., 2013). Not having proper access to information can affect a student's ability to find affordable housing, fair employment, mental health resources, etc. Adequate services and supports are imperative for the success of international students within Canada.



Studies such as Green, K., 2018, and Frisque, G., 2020., discuss resources that were put in place within Sheridan College and George Brown College located in the GTA and Peel Region that could assist in informing other institutions on supportive measures that proved to be successful. All of these supports could help inform faculty within institutions on how to properly support international students on a micro level to ensure their challenges are being acknowledged and their needs are being heard.

Currently the government of Canada is competing on a global level to recruit international students. It has been acknowledged in government reports that “Competitor countries in this sector recognize the long-term benefits of international education. They have upped their game, and to remain competitive, we upped our game too.” (Government of Canada, 2020, p. 5). In addition, institutions are competing with one another to recruit these students, utilizing resources such as education agents as a means of recruiting faster and more efficiently (Legusov, 2017). It leaves to question how a supportive environment can be fostered for these individuals if the entire focus is concentrated on gaining more students instead of caring and attending to the people who are currently in our country.

Currently a group called Migrant Workers Alliance for Change assists international students like Jobandeep Singh Sandhu (who was in violation of his allotted work hours), and others to have their cases heard and disputed on a policy level through petitioning and participating in meetings across the country (Ricci, 2019). Several studies (Green, 2018 & Legusov, 2017) have documented that the complex immigration policies in place within Canada reflect a need for change and increased support. This information would be helpful for the federal government in informing future strategies.

3.4 Existing Social Action Strategies

The Government of Canada set a target in 2014 to increase the proportion of international students within the country by 2022, and that goal was achieved by 2017 (Assal, 2018). In 2016, the federal government altered the direct entry system into Canada, which prioritized individuals with Canadian postsecondary education and gave them relatively higher chances during the processing phase (Chen & Skuterud, 2020).

The International Education Strategy is the current action plan to promote Canada's long-term global competitiveness and allow the country to remain within the top ranks of global learning. This strategy aims to build on pre-existing systems within Canada and bring in more international students. New actions outlined within the strategy include: strengthening online support and digital marketing of schooling in Canada for international students, increasing involvement in matters of international students by the federal government, launching a direct online applications process for some countries, and granting more scholarship funding for international students (Government of Canada, 2020).



3.5 Gaps in Existing Strategies

Given the desire of the new International Education Strategy to maintain global ranking and even increase international student enrolment, it can be questioned to what extent students' well-being is being put at risk for the sake of global competition. Within a study investigating the data from one Ontario college between 1995-2014 findings show the college enrolment increased 10.9% while the proportion of international students who utilized agents increased annually by 13.4%. Educational agents are third party businesspeople with the objective of recruiting individuals from other countries to increase personal revenue. It is suggested that an approximate amount agent is paid per recruited student ranges from \$2,000 to \$3,000. This practice has been integrated and increasingly used by postsecondary institutions due to the pressure to compete federally and provincially to maintain and enhance enrolment (Legusov, 2017). The prevalence of educational agents being used in common recruiting practice may decrease with the integration of new online application processes in some countries however, further gaps still persist.

As mentioned, the student's prior secondary grade point average may not be the most adequate means of assessing their suitability for international schooling. This gap in current/future practices is particularly important given the new digital marketing advertising within other countries that will draw young adults from abroad to study in Canada without explaining the objective complexity of being away from home, experiencing culture shock, and adapting to different learning styles and curriculums etc.

Lastly, an article published in 2017 by Xu, L. documented the experience of an individual who had been found guilty of coming to Canada through a fake marriage thirteen years prior, and subsequently attended Canadian post-secondary schooling as a permanent resident. This individual was among 29 others who had been found guilty of the same crime at the time. However, the article stated that this is likely not as common anymore due to new immigration policies and ways of entry (Xu, 2017). However, a further article published by the Toronto Sun in 2017 stated that the desire to immigrate to Canada is increasing within the Punjabi community, leading to many individuals resorting to extreme methods, including human trafficking and violation of federal laws. The author went on to provide evidence by recounting a conversation she overheard while standing at a bus stop in Brampton. The conversation occurred between a couple of younger women, one of whom mentioned that she was having her entire schooling experience provided for free by a family in India (her home country), in return for her marrying their son and bringing him to Canada. Within the news article, the author highlights this emerging trend as a means of gaining entry into the country, and emphasized that fake marriages within the Punjabi community are becoming notorious (the article does not provide any concrete statistical information to inform these statements) (Flora, 2017). It can be argued that the promotion and glamorization of Canadian post-secondary schooling, and the Canadian lifestyle as a whole, can lure individuals to gain entry in any possible way.



4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, integrating international students into Canadian society for the purpose of equitable benefit is not as simplistic as policy makers and postsecondary institutions make it seem. The lived experiences, challenges, and barriers faced by international students when seeking to navigate the complex reality of living and studying in our country must be recognized in order to adequately support these individuals. Currently, psychological and physical well-being is neglected at the expense of capital gain. Instead of being absorbed in the competition for economic and societal gain, our systems should prioritize the needs of individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Micro Level - Issues

Internal Barriers:

- Mental, Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Language
- Cultural Shock
- Housing & Accommodation
- Academic Issues
- Finance Problems
- Tuition Costs

Micro Level - Strategies/Interventions

The following agencies have a wide variety of culturally appropriate services to support international students.

Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS):

- **Addiction Services:** Services are provided for alcohol and drug addiction clients. Home detox services, along with individual and group counselling programs, are also provided.
- **Mental Health Services:** Face to face and group counselling programs are provided.
- **Services for Seniors:** Individual and group counselling and wellness programs are provided. This program also provides the Langar on Wheels program to feed frail seniors.
- **Youth and Parents Program:** Services related to conflict, mental health, and cultural conflict are provided to teens and parents in one-on-one and group programs.
- **Family Enhancement:** Face to Face and group programs are provided to individuals who may require short-term education on anger management and sexual harassment issues. Domestic Violence clients are provided education and information and referred to other specialized programs based on need.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Micro Level - Issues

External Barriers:

- Sexual Harassment
- Internalized Racism
- Discrimination
- Employment
- Impact of COVID-19

Micro Level - Strategies/Interventions

Indus Community Services:

- Newcomer Services: English Language Training (LINC), Employment Services, Services for International Students, Intersections (2SLGTBQ+ Newcomer Support), Community Connections, Entrepreneurship Program, and Information and Referral Services.
- Family Services: Child, Youth and Parenting (CYP) Program, Community Mental Health Support Services - Housing and Support Peel (HASP), Family Court Support Services, Saath Program, the MASSI Project, and ACES (Advocacy, Counselling, Empowerment and Safety) program for women.
- Health Services: Adult Day Services, Senior Wellness Program, Caregiver Support Groups, SWAGAT, Assisted Bathing, Foot Care, and Friendly Visiting Program.

Other possible solutions include developing a strong network:

- Talk to friends, relatives, teachers, and community members.
- Meet people who share similar interests.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Meso (Mezzo) Level - Issues

Social Isolation and Discrimination

Meso (Mezzo) Level - Strategies/Interventions

- There should be voluntary agencies that would advocate on behalf of international students who face employment discrimination and other types of discrimination.
- An intervention to combat the social isolation and discrimination faced by international students (from faculty, students, and the community) due to language and cultural barriers would be based around having more faculty support within the institution. This would work as a preemptive measure to allow students to have a domestic ally within the academic setting to help them get accustomed to Canadian culture, act as support when needed, direct them to access services and support within the school, and encourage them to integrate into the postsecondary institutional community.
 - This intervention could take place through having a number of faculty representatives within each area of study within the institution who only facilitate and teach small first year classes (in which a portion of the international students are placed), and for the duration of the student's time at the school, they can keep in contact with this faculty member as a mentor.

Access to Information

- The intervention that should be taken in order to best meet the needs of international students in facilitating access to information is in mandating institutions to have international student offices that are easily accessible and up to date on information pertaining to immigration, individual's rights, and other local supports.
- International student offices should be standardized and monitored for their level of support in aiding international students during this time of integration, and in assisting them to access proper resources such as housing, employment, and becoming knowledgeable on events and services taking place within the institution.
- Counselling should be provided by the postsecondary institution to enable support for the student and allow them to express whatever barriers or stressors they are facing.
- Community non-profit agencies should provide basic information on physical, mental and spiritual needs of international students.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Meso (Mezzo) Level - Issues

Supports for Individual Cultures

Meso (Mezzo) Level - Strategies/Interventions

- Within their international student offices, institutions should hire representatives of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, particularly alumni and or faculty of minority ethnic origins that can help assist, mentor and support the unique needs of international students who seek assistance from them. Given that over 50% of international students in Canada are from India and China, it seems imperative that the representatives within this office have lived experiences or ability to understand the culture shock which these students face.
- International student offices should be equipped with staff/alumni from similar ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to accurately reflect the diversity of their student populations.

Housing Support and Counselling

- Within the orientation for international students ensure that they know their rights in regard to housing (number of tenants allowed in a unit), the average price of housing within the area, and provide references for local housing support. The institution as well should reach out to the community (for example through email, flyers and radio ads) informing them of new international students within the area, and the benefits of renting a room to said student.
- Counselling should be provided by the postsecondary institution to provide support for the student and allow them to express whatever barriers or stressors they are facing.

Career Planning & Job Readiness

- Secondary and postsecondary institutions should provide effective career planning and job readiness training as an integrated part of the curriculum.
- In order for the student to have the best learning environment, they must feel supported within the institution and their unique experiences should be acknowledged (this proves to be a better predictor of academic success than GPA). Without having the proper support in place, international students can feel discouraged when interacting with faculty, peers, and the community at large, potentially triggering feelings of isolation .
- A study has documented that the success of international students relies on the integration of individuals into the post-secondary culture as it pertains to domestic students, faculty, and the overall community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Meso (Mezzo) Level - Issues

Specialized Services

Macro Level - Issues

Collaboration between governments, academic institutions and non-profit organizations

Funding & resources for international students & settlement agencies

Housing support for international students

Lack of knowledge about community services Canadian laws, rights, regulations and policies

Meso (Mezzo) Level - Strategies/Interventions

- The local service providers should offer specialized counselling services to international students on topics such as health care, reproductive health, legal, domestic violence, sexual harassment, addictions, etc.

Macro Level - Strategies/Interventions

- The collaboration and open communication should be between institutions, and the federal and provincial governments to inform proper services and interventions to aid international students in accessing their rightful support when coming to this country.
- A study recommends an institutional collaboration to share information and knowledge through helpful networks.

- Lobby the government to extend financial supports given to international students.
- Government should fund programs that provide paid placements in order to address the issue of Canadian experience for international students.
- Lobby the government to designate settlement services funding for international students.

- The federal and provincial government should provide benefits through tax breaks to community members that rent rooms, units, or houses to international students. This would assist in providing more affordable and centralized housing accommodations for international students, and allow the government to accurately monitor the housing needs for international students.

- Lobby the government to create a central hub for international students. It would facilitate access to health, social, cultural, recreational and other resources they need together in one spot.
- Providing counselling to individuals and forming the foundation of a supportive outlet within the institution will not only allow for the institution and the government to become aware of complexities and nuances regarding illegal actions to be taken in order to gain entry to the country, but also assist the students in become informed on legal immigration pathways.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Literature Reviews from 2013-2020

Author/Year	Location	Participants	Methodology	Findings	Recommendations
Aiello, R. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/changes-coming-for-international-students-beginning-canadian-studies-online-1.5023897	Canada	International students.	Policy Review.	New measures that assist with international students completing schooling in Canada as a result of the pandemic.	Government making an effort to minimize current challenges that affect international students' schooling due to the pandemic.
Assal, K. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.bramptonguardian.com/opinion-story/8584501-why-are-international-students-flocking-to-canada/	Brampton	International students.	Exploratory analysis as to the reason why international students choose to come to Canada.	Canada has become a top choice for foreign education due to its reputation of being welcoming and allowing international students to work.	Need more cost-effective settlement supports and need to provide more education to potential international students about the array of immigration streams they can partake in to become an international student.
Calder, et al. (2016). Retrieved from https://journals.sfu.ca/cjhe/index.php/cjhe/article/view/184585/pdf	Canada	International students within a university in Western Canada, as well as faculty recruited to participate in the survey (due to a snowball effect).	Semi-structured interview questions emailed to participants.	International students identified difficulties in obtaining adequate housing. Faculty members identified difficulties in properly supporting these students.	Change must involve students and faculty as well. There exists a need for more information sharing and greater focus on integration.
Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2018). Retrieved from https://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Student_Voice_Report-ENG.pdf	Canada	Canadian International Students within Colleges and Universities	Survey	International students' levels of satisfaction with work plans, employment, housing etc.	Some challenges identified include differences in work culture, finding employment, and Canadian employers' views towards international work experience.



APPENDICES

Canadian Postsecondary Enrollments. (2017). Retrieved from https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/171207/dq171207c-eng.htm	Canada	Postsecondary students.	Federal Census.	Enrolments in Postsecondary Institutions between 2015-2016.	(For informational purposes only).
Chaudhury, A. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.ousa.ca/blog_continent_away	Guelph, Ontario	International students.	Study of prospective employers.	Perception of discrimination by international students leads to feelings of being underappreciated.	Need for international students to form connections within the community. Engaging with international students regarding the barriers they face is critical to adequately support them.
Chavoshi, S., Wintre, M. G., Dentakos, S., & Wright, L. (2017). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/docview/1902069120?pq-origsite=summon	Canada	International students attending a Canadian university (that meets the criteria of being an ethnically diverse institution) were sent an online survey.	Identifying characteristics of international students can correlate with positive adjustment to Canadian society.	Demographic variables such as age, gender etc., did not create large variance in responses. Social support, region of origin, and parental support did highlight a difference.	Need for universities to re-examine students' needs and increase supports for international students within their schools.
Chen, Z. J., & Skuterud, M. (2020). Retrieved from https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/article/752242	Ontario	Data on students from a publicly funded university in Ontario.	Data analysis to gauge students' success in school programs.	International students' performance in classes is dependent on instructors.	When analyzing students' course grades, one must also factor in both the characteristics of the student as well as the instructor.
College, E. (2019). Retrieved from https://www.etoncollege.ca/struggles-of-an-international-student-in-canada	Canada	International students	Surveys	International students face challenges in seeking gainful employment while having difficulty adjusting to the social and linguistic expectations in Canada.	It is helpful for international students to seek jobs that are in demand. It is a supportive measure for schools to facilitate events that encourage students to socialize and meet one another.



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Colpitts, I. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.mississauga.com/news-story/8983084-record-student-enrolment-at-sheridan-includes-thriving-international-student-registration/	Mississauga	International student attending Sheridan College and Dean of International Students.	Qualitative interviews with the two representatives of the college.	Concern about influx of students and corresponding availability of services.	Colleges should be more selective in who they admit so they can allocate sufficient resources to provide appropriate supports and services.
El- Assal. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.cicnews.com/2020/02/642000-international-students-canada-now-ranks-3rd-globally-in-foreign-student-attraction-0213763.html#gs.cztjk3	Canada	International student.	Quantitative data.	Study permit holders in Canada	The positive economic impact that international students are having on the country.
El Masri, A., Choubak, M., & Litchmore, R. (2015). Retrieved from file:///Users/madisonwilson/Downloads/TheroleofOntariouniversitiesintranslatinggovernmentpolicyintoinstitutionalpractice%20(2).pdf	Ontario	University staff from within different areas of Ontario.	An anonymous survey posted on an online platform accessible to Ontario university staff.	To gauge Ontario university programs and services for international students at the systems level.	Universities need a more student-centric approach.
Flora, S. (2017). Retrieved from https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/question-column-a-new-troubling-trend-for-international-students-coming-to-canada	Canada	An anonymous woman in Brampton Ontario.	An observational study of a woman in Brampton.	Individuals from other countries are forced to resort to various means as a way of securing Canadian citizenship.	The system is being misused to gain entry.
Frisque, G. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.bramptonguardian.com/news-story/9954648--it-literally-pushed-me-to-the-edge-of-breaking-down-sheridan-student-amid-covid-19-pandemic/	Brampton	Administrators and students of Sheridan College in Brampton, Oakville, and Mississauga.	Interviews with Sheridan College staff and students.	A recognized profound impact of COVID-19 on Sheridan College students.	Students' needs are changing and evolving with COVID-19.



APPENDICES

Government of Canada. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.international.gc.ca/education/strategy-2019-2024-strategie.aspx?lang=eng	Canada	International students.	Policy and statistical analysis.	International Education Strategy (2019-2024).	The education sector within the country will grow due to this new strategy and so too will the economy, through competition, diversity, and innovation.
Green, K. (2018). Retrieved from https://theeyeopener.com/2018/12/international-students-face-barriers-to-settling-and-employment-in-canada-says-rye-study/	Toronto	International students	Policy review.	The format of Canada's immigration procedure is complicated.	It is important that domestic students be welcoming to international students and empathize with their unique circumstances.
Houshmand, et al., (2014). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/docview/1547256112/fulltextPDF/930F31C05CE24646PQ/1?accountid=13631	Canada	International students.	Interviews	How international students cope with racial microaggressions.	Institutions have an obligation to protect students from discrimination.
Ingle International, (n.d). Retrieved from https://blog.ingleinternational.com/mental-health-what-it-means-for-international-students-and-how-you-can-help/#:~:text=International%20students%20can%20be%20affected,typically%20present%20themselves%20in%20adolescence	Canada	International university students in Canada.	Surveys	International students are affected by mental health issues and are not always as extroverted as they are assumed to be.	Educators can have an impact through supporting and advocating for students.



APPENDICES

Legusov, O. (2017). Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1131154	Ontario	Data on international students from one anonymous institution in Ontario.	Empirical data analysis of information from 1995-2014, investigating the differences of those who had used an educational agent.	During this time, the enrollment of international students rose 10.9%, while the proportion of those who used an educational agent rose 13.4%.	Educational agents are becoming a dominant factor in the increase of international students within Ontario postsecondary schools. We must examine the benefits of direct recruitment of international students.
Peel Multicultural Council. (2018). Retrieved from http://www.peelmc.ca/	Peel Region	Newcomers to Canada.	Support through settlement and integration services.	Provide tools and resources to form a healthy and integrated society.	Supporting new immigrants to Canada to ensure that their success is the community's success.
Ricci, T. (2019). Retrieved from https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/international-students-speak-out-about-why-they-work-more-hours-1.5162316	Ontario	International students.	Interviews with current and graduated international students, and a representative from the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change.	International students have no choice but to work more than the work hours their permit allows to pay their fees and bills.	Need for more support and policy changes.
Rosella, L. (2018). Retrieved from https://www.bramptonguardian.com/news-story/8700167-fight-video-sheridan-college-speaks-out-on-senseless-violence-near-brampton-campus/	Brampton	International students attending Sheridan College in Brampton.	Interview with Sheridan college president as well as video footage analysis of a violent attack.	Misrepresentation that international students attending Sheridan College in Brampton are contributing to the increase in violent crimes.	The importance of not jumping to conclusions and recognizing our biases.
Shankar, J., Ip, E., Khalemo, E., Couture, J., Tan, S., Zulia, R., & Lam, G. (2013). Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3799536/?tool=pmcentrez&report=abstract	Canada	Visible minority and indigenous students at a community college in Western Canada.	Semi-structured interviews.	Obstacles faced during schooling had lasting impacts on health.	Need for a more inclusive post-secondary schooling system.



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Smith, C., Whiteside, B., Blanchard, S., & Martin, C. (2013). Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/doi/full/10.1002/se3.20005	Ontario	International students.	Analysis of policy, programs, and supports within Ontario universities.	Success of international students is dependent on the culture of the university they are attending.	Ontario universities should focus their efforts on health and wellness, student living, academic support, transition, and cultural sensitivity.
Thais, R. (2020). Retrieved from https://newcanadianlife.com/what-are-the-difficulties-international-students-face-in-canada/	Canada	International students.	Experiential analysis.	International students face far more issues than what is perceived.	Interaction with peers and friends is one way in which international students can overcome some of these key challenges.
Usher, A. (2019). Retrieved from http://higherstrategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/HESA-Spec-2019-Final_v2.pdf	Canada	Canada in the international perspective.	Quantitative methods.	The Canadian Postsecondary Education System.	Public funding for scientific research is important.
Xiao, M. (2020). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ryerson.ca/docview/2424130372?pq-origsite=summon	Canada	Chinese international graduate students, faculty from their school, and staff from their department of study.	Literature review and interviews.	How to increase Chinese international students' engagement and experience while they are attending schools abroad.	Need to deconstruct the western dominant ways of understanding student engagement.
Xu, L. (2017). Retrieved from https://studentimmigration.ca/former-international-student-explains-lied-stay-canada/	Canada	International students	Interview	International students gaining entry to the country as permanent residents through illegal marriages.	It is recommended for individuals to follow the law and gain entry in accordance with the law.



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Appendix 2: Justice and Freedom - Anti-Human Trafficking Program

Human Trafficking is a growing challenge within Canada and it has now gained increased attention with more foreign-born/at-risk individuals falling prey to it.

Indus Community Services' Justice and Freedom project aims to create new tools to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration, thereby bolstering the capacity within the Region of Peel to offer meaningful, comprehensive, and coordinated supports. Our program is targeted towards foreign-born at-risk populations, victims, and survivors of human trafficking whose circumstances may also be further complicated by precarious immigration status.

Our primary focus is labour exploitation, domestic servitude, and debt bondage. Indus also provides direct support with a settlement lens, in order to assist the needs of the foreign-born at-risk population and survivors of human trafficking.

The Case of International Students

Governments, educational institutions, overseas family members and college recruiters facilitating the admission process (especially in South Asia) often paint a rosy picture of life in Canada. Since these perspectives overly glamourize Canadian lifestyles, many people are convinced by the idea of immigrating to the country in hopes of a better education and quality of life. In most of these cases, the students coming to Canada are unaware and not adequately prepared for the struggles they will encounter in a new country. The lure of a high standard of living and quick monetary gain is enticing and quite often leads to subtle and overt exploitation in various forms.

Initially, consultants might promise a fixed amount for helping students immigrate but they can charge heavily for every additional service they provide. Educational consultants and college recruiters often demand exorbitant fees (both in Canadian dollars as well as local currencies), thus tapping into a highly lucrative industry with the largest market of youth in various countries, including India, Pakistan, Nigeria, and others.

To elaborate, migration in Canada happens in different ways and may involve fraud and deception as immigration consultants and intermediaries take advantage of populations looking to start a new life abroad:

1. Education – International students
2. Caregiving services – brought in for parental caregiving
3. Domestic Servitude – to help as babysitters
4. Social Relationships - by fake / forced marriages



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Education

Depending on where the students are coming from, their familial support systems will generally vary. Tuition fees data shows that students coming from urban cities have access to more resources and parental support as opposed to students immigrating from rural villages. For those with less privileged backgrounds, survival in Canada becomes a difficult reality, as evident by the following:

1. Illegal/unreported employment (e.g. students working over the official limit of 20 hours per week and being paid below minimum wage).
2. Overall challenges with paying for food, rent, and college tuition.
3. Language barriers as students are made to sign false IELTS papers to gain admission but end up dropping out or failing due to a lack of English proficiency.
4. Unaccredited private colleges offering incentives (e.g. lower tuition fees) to recruit international students.
5. Impact of COVID-19 for students relying on part-time jobs to afford themselves.

As they become more vulnerable in Canadian society, international students get drawn into the 'systemic exploitation' route. This may occur in two forms:

- Sexual exploitation: by the locals/landlords (for 'free rental' living) or by truck drivers (who drive students through the Hamilton - Windsor belt). A lack of money and adequate contraception may lead to unwanted pregnancies in these circumstances. Moreover, social stigma, inaccessibility to health coverage, lack of support systems, etc., have often led students to further isolation and greater vulnerability.
- Labour exploitation: by employment agencies and temporary/contractual employers who hire students to clean shopping malls, work in warehouses. etc., where they work overtime but the rest of their pay is pocketed by the employers through fictitious accounts and loopholes in the system.



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Caregiving Services

Most clients/students who come to Canada for such work are often sourced from rural areas (within Asian countries such as India and the Philippines). Since babysitting/caregiving is expensive, most individuals who come under this sector end up being exploited and with language barriers, find it increasingly difficult to advocate for themselves.

Coming from a background of acute poverty, abuse, intergenerational debt bondage, and social instability can lead people to accept lucrative offers made by traffickers who may be known to them from their villages. This trafficker may agree to take the individual for free, pay for their airfare and upon landing in Canada, hold such individuals in debt bondage.

Once in Canada, their papers and travel documents are confiscated. Such vulnerable individuals are kept in pathetic living conditions, given very less food, and earn little to no pay while working incredibly long hours.

Domestic Servitude

Foreign-born individuals with or without documentation are forced to live with their employer and illegally work long hours without any compensation. Since their mobility and socialization with outsiders is severely restricted, this form of abuse can go unnoticed for long periods of time.

For documented foreign-born individuals, the monetary benefits provided by the government continue to be drawn by the household members of the employer. For those who are trafficked internationally, there are no records of their presence in Canada. This puts them in an extremely vulnerable position, as the employer can threaten to hand them over to the authorities if they refuse to comply.

Social Relationships

In some cases, individuals or families pay major amounts of money to immigrate to Canada on fake marriage certifications (with forged names and identities). Poverty and debt bondage continue to be the primary reasons for undertaking such routes.

Once the individual arrives in Canada, they are treated as bonded labour and virtually lack any form of achieving financial independence. They may be taken to live in remote areas with less social interaction. The cycle of abuse is perpetuated by immediate as well as extended family members.



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Data To Support Human Trafficking

It is interesting to note that police-reported cases of human trafficking only capture the “tip of the iceberg.” It is well-known that human trafficking is highly underreported in Canada.

- Though quite a bit of work has been going on in the area of sexual exploitation, there is very little reported in the field of labour exploitation of foreign-born at-risk individuals.
- Ontario is a hub for Human Trafficking with approximately two-thirds of all reported cases of human trafficking on Canada.
- Police-reported cases of human trafficking have increased approximately 200% over the past 6 years.

According to Statistics Canada:

- The number of human trafficking incidents reported in 2019 marked a 44% increase from the previous year.
- In Canada, 95% of human trafficking victims were girls and women.
- Ontario accounted for the highest (62%) of Canada’s human trafficking incidents in 2019.
- About 1 in 3 human trafficking incidents involve another crime.
- As per Human Trafficking National Coordination Centre (HTNCC), between 2005 -2017, merely 5% of the cases reported were of international trafficking for forced labour. This number has gone up manifold now.
- In Canada, labour exploitation has been rampant under Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP), including low-wage Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), and Live-In Caregiver program (LCP).
- A 2014 study found that Mexican/Caribbean farm workers comprise a vulnerable group with repatriation for medical/surgical reasons (41.3%) or external injuries including trauma & poisoning (25.5%).
- A survey of migrant workers under the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) found instances of exploitation by withholding immigration documents/threat of deportation (18%), physical violence (15%), and threat of reporting to immigration authorities (50+%).

It is pertinent to note that these statistics capture only the surface of a layered and complicated issue. Most of this information is collected by discussions, focus groups, and interviews with individuals who are facing various challenges and barriers to settling and successfully integrating in Canadian society.



ENDORSEMENTS

"Peel Newcomer Strategy Group welcomes increased attention to the issues faced by international students, and the opportunities for ensuring their greater inclusion and support in Peel and communities across Canada. The well-being and success of international students should be considered no less than part of our community's well-being and success. Thank you to Indus Community Services, Punjabi Community Health Services and the efforts of partners in this report for elevating the profile of international students."

*- Jessica Kwik
Director, Peel Newcomer Strategy Group*

*"The report, *Invited and Forgotten: International Students in Crisis*, is an important document that outlines the plight of far too many international students who come to Canada full of hope and potential. We all have a responsibility to ensure that these vulnerable young people are welcomed and protected. We would want the same for our own children. I join with PCHS and Indus Community Services in a call to action for all levels of government to address this issue and ensure that we have a coherent policy framework and resources that support success."*

*- Sharon Mayne Devine
CEO, Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin*

"PCHS and Indus worked together to shed light on the plight of international students. This research study points to the benefits of international students in Canada while highlighting the challenges these students face while completing their studies. The challenges are very serious, ranging from human sex trafficking, recruiting students to be drug mules, mental health issues leading to suicides, to exploitation by unscrupulous employers and landlords. We are hoping that all levels of government will start to acknowledge that these young people are the future of Canada and need to be looked after while they are studying. We encourage you to read the report and join our struggle to bring the issues faced by the international students to the attention of all levels of government and academic institutions."

*- Baldev Mutta
CEO, Punjabi Community Health Services*

*"International students are an incredible boon to the Canadian and local economies. These young people not only deserve our support and protection but need to be recognized as the future of our communities and essential to our progress as a society. This *Invited and Forgotten* report details some of the terrible ways that a poorly envisioned patchwork of policies have led to the enormous neglect of vulnerable young people who may well be living next door. I sincerely hope that government policy makers at all levels recognize their role in creating these problems and are motivated to remove barriers to service and build a process that assists newcomers and sets them up for success."*

*- Gurpreet S. Malhotra
CEO, Indus Community Services*