

MEDIA RELEASE

Faculty Welcome Protections for BC's International Students, Cautions Need for Strategy

(For Immediate Release – Port Moody, BC, January 30, 2024) – The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) welcomes the [announcement for greater accountability and stronger protections for international students](#) in BC's post-secondary sector. The Honourable Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills Selina Robinson announced new measures including regulating private institutions through setting higher standards and minimum language requirements, and requiring public post-secondary institutions to post tuition levels for students.

The Province introduced these measures in response to the [federal government's announcement](#) that it will cap the number of international undergraduate student permits at 360,000 - a 35 per cent reduction from 2023. BC currently has 175,000 international students, 82,000 of whom are at public post-secondary institutions. The federal government aims to stabilize the number of students arriving in Canada and to alleviate pressures on housing and health care. The Province hopes to match future enrolments to the labour market needs like early learning, healthcare, and skilled trades. The Honourable Minister Robinson will work with the federal government to operationalize the new rules while protecting students from "bad actors" that exploit international students.

"We cautiously applaud the Province's plan to strengthen quality standards and protections for international students," says CUFA BC President Ken Christie. "We welcome the government's commitment that public post-secondary institutions will continue to operate and have the necessary resources to support domestic and international students. These measures bring clarity to institutions and students, and safeguard students from systemic exploitation."

"Public universities function in a fine balance. The new federal cap on enrolments is a blunt instrument to deal with a complex reality," says Executive Director Annabree Fairweather. "We need all levels of government to work together to implement an international education strategy that is sensitive to the local provincial context and minimizes disruption at our institutions during the roll-out of these new measures. We must not conflate the need for an international education strategy with government's agenda for the labour market."

BC's public universities deliver exceptional education that support students in their future careers. These institutions work hard to support students on campus, including offering on-campus housing and wrap-around services that support them throughout their education journey. International students are also an important part of the campus community.

It's for these reasons that international students come from all over the world to access our high quality education. They often want more from university than simply to serve government's limited focus on BC's projected labour market needs, which bias toward some disciplines and disadvantage other academic programs that are equally important to the



educational needs of students and society. We need a thoughtful strategy for international students that takes into account the right of individuals to choose their own education journey while also aligning with the academic mission of the public university.

We look forward to being an active partner with government in establishing a rational strategy for British Columbia's international student education in public post-secondary.

For further information or comment please contact CUFA BC Executive Director Annabree Fairweather at 604-367-5856 or executive.director@cufa.bc.ca.

CUFA BC represents over 5,500 faculty members, professional librarians, lecturers, instructors, and other academics at the five research-intensive universities in British Columbia, which include University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, Royal Roads University and University of Northern British Columbia.

CUFA BC celebrates fifty years of working closely with the member Faculty Associations at each institution. Our purposes are to support high-quality post-secondary education and research in British Columbia and to advocate for the interests of our members.

