

Faculty Welcome Commitment for International Students in BC, But Where's the Strategy?

(For Immediate Release – Port Moody, BC, March 6, 2024) – The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) welcomes commitment from the [BC government to support public post-secondary institutions](#) as they implement federal changes for international undergraduate students. However, CUFA BC continues to express concerns about the long-term, rational strategy for international student education in the province.

“We are grateful to Minister Beare and Premier Eby for prioritizing stability at BC’s public institutions. There’s an opportunity at this moment to build a post-secondary education strategy that supports public institutions and international students,” says President Ken Christie.

“International students who enrol in public universities are more than an economic commodity. There are people’s livelihoods at stake, and these changes erode the credibility of our universities to attract and retain students.”

“These new measures risk interrupting access to education, and especially valuable opportunities for undergraduate research and progression from undergraduate to graduate studies,” says Executive Director Annabree Fairweather. “We would like to see the Province advocate for better federal policy changes informed by facts and strategy in the public interest, not only for expanding the exemption to meet government’s narrow agenda for the labour market.”

Starting March 4, 2024, the Province will begin issuing provincial attestation letters to eligible post-secondary institutions to allow international applicants to apply to study in BC, a requirement introduced by the federal department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Under the new federal regulation, the Province was allocated 83,000 undergraduate study permit applications, of which they anticipate 50,000 will be accepted. The Province will distribute 53% of these attestation letters to public post-secondary institutions and 47% to private ones. The Province is advocating for the federal government to expand the list of exemptions to areas it identifies as in-demand, such as trucking, early childhood education, and health services.

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 typically want more from university than simply to serve government’s limited focus on BC’s projected labour market needs, which has 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 the Province in establishing a purposeful and rational strategy for BC’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 over 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.

