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MAYOR PATRICK BROWN

October 31, 2024

The Honourable Marc Miller, PC, MP
Minister of Immigration
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

The Honourable Nolan Quinn, MPP
Minister of Colleges and Universities
5th Floor, 438 University Ave
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

The Honourable David Piccini, MPP
Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
14th Floor, 400 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

RE: Brampton calls to end the exploitation of international students

Dear Ministers,

We are pleased to see the announcement that Canada will reduce its annual intake of temporary residents, including international students, by approximately 445,000 people total, over 2025 and 2026. The City of Brampton has been calling for a cap on student visas, but this is only part of the solution – more must be done to help international students who are already here and trapped in vulnerable circumstances.

As the fastest growing big city in Canada, Brampton is home to more than 700,000 people, including thousands of international students. We are proud of these students and recognize their significant contributions to our city's culture and economy. However, we also recognize many international students face financial challenges, housing insecurity and a lack of adequate institutional support making them prime targets for exploitation and trafficking. Specifically, we are gravely concerned that female students have been exploited by not only predatory landlords but human traffickers, leading to cases of unwanted pregnancies, mental health crises and even suicide.

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The solution to these issues must come from all levels of government. The City of Brampton is willing to do everything we can to assist, but unfortunately, we do not have the authority to address many of the root causes at the municipal level – action from the provincial and federal governments is needed.

On October 23rd, 2024, the City announced bold actions aimed at tackling the exploitation and human trafficking of international students, in recognition of the severe vulnerabilities many of these students face both in Brampton and across Canada.

A resolution put forward by Community Services Chair Rowena Santos was recently approved by our Council. It focuses on strengthening local protections, community-driven solutions, and advocating for systemic change at the provincial and federal levels to ensure the safety and well-being of Brampton's international student population.

As part of this motion, City staff will explore improvements to the Residential Rental Licensing (RRL) program to better protect international students, raise awareness about human trafficking and address illegal practices within the rental market. Additionally, Brampton will work with community partners to develop a culturally sensitive pilot program to provide wrap-around services, including housing assistance, mental health support, employment resources and anti-trafficking interventions tailored to the unique needs of international students.

The provincial government should mandate colleges and universities to provide comprehensive orientation programs for international students before their arrival in Canada. We also request for the province to answer our calls to fairly adjust the "Heads and Beds Levy" on institutions and base it on the student's place of residence. We are also asking the federal government to fund a community-based pilot program and to further enable approved local service organizations to provide needed services for international students.

In addition to our request for the provincial and federal government to endorse Brampton's International Students Charter, the City is also calling on the federal and provincial governments to review policies that exacerbate the vulnerabilities of international students. Current visa restrictions on work hours force many students into unsafe employment, while conditions related to deportation are weaponized by traffickers. Brampton is urging for legislative changes, including increasing legal working hours, removing deportation conditions tied to "sex work" and expanding access of local support programs to international students.

Our community has worked hard to address the challenges faced by international students, but we do not have the power or financial resources to do it alone. We urgently need the help of the provincial and federal governments. Together, we can create real, lasting change.



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I have attached our recent motion ratified by Council.

Sincerely,



Patrick Brown
Mayor



Rowena Santos
Regional Councillor



Gurpreet Malhotra
CEO, Indus Community Services