

November 29, 2024

The Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Ottawa, ON

Dear Minister Miller:

I am writing to address the Government of Canada's recent changes to the international student program and the evolving policies surrounding it. I am concerned that broad policy measures could have unintended, long-term consequences for Canada's economy and affect SFU's ability to play a critical role in closing Canada's talent gap through workforce training, innovative research, and fostering economic growth.

International students bring incredible ideas and diversity of thought to our classrooms and campuses as well as being an economic driver for universities and the economy. These policy decisions, while well-intentioned, were implemented without consulting post-secondary institutions and are already causing dire consequences across the sector, not just for universities, but for students as well.

SFU and post-secondary institutions around the country want to keep providing a world-class education, creating innovative programs and using our resources in service of our communities. But we can only do so if we are included as partners in the decision-making process—not viewed as part of the problem.

While we agree on the need to address bad actors and to increase housing supply for students and Canadians alike, it is crucial to approach these challenges with care and consideration. Canada's talent gap is widening, and domestic productivity continues to lag global competitors—a decades-long issue exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. SFU and other research universities are uniquely positioned to help address these challenges. Through partnerships with industry, we drive innovation, create economic opportunities, and prepare students for the jobs of the future.

SFU's impactful initiatives include the B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation, our Clean Hydrogen Hub, and professional graduate programs aligned with industry needs, such as data science and cybersecurity. Additionally, the SFU School of Medicine, set to open by 2026, will address British Columbia's urgent need for family physicians while delivering a community clinic that will connect more than 30,000 residents to improved primary care.

Moreover, under our Housing Master Plan we are investing and delivering affordable housing and childcare for students that is reducing pressure in the community. In recent years we have opened 865 beds for students on the Burnaby campus, meaning more students have on-campus housing and won't have to rent in the local market. This

brings the number of on-campus student beds to more than 2,450. The next phase of student housing will open in fall 2027, creating additional accommodations for 445 students and a 160-space childcare centre.

SFU is committed to adapting our programs to meet evolving industry needs, conducting groundbreaking research, and providing students with a world-class education. To succeed in these efforts, collaboration between government and institutions is essential. We stand ready to work with you, and can support with offering practical, evidence-based solutions to the issues at hand, including the possibility of developing a trusted institution framework that will help remove bad actors from the system. But again, in order to do so, we need to be seen as partners and included in this process.

Minister Miller, I implore you to bring SFU and other post-secondary institutions into the conversation as soon as possible. Together, we can mitigate potential risks, avoid further unintended consequences, and build a sustainable path forward for international education and Canada's broader economy.

By working collaboratively, we can ensure that institutions like SFU continue to develop the next generation of Canadian leaders and innovators.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joy Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joy Johnson FRSC FCAHS
President and Vice-Chancellor
Simon Fraser University

With copy to:

*Dr. Harpreet S. Kochhar, Deputy Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Hon. Terry Beech, P.C., M.P., Minister of Citizens' Services and MP for Burnaby North-Seymour*