Vancouver Community College

Board of Governors

November 8, 2024

The Honourable David Eby
Premier of British Columbia
Office of the Premier
P.O. Box 9041
Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Sent by email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Dear Premier Eby,

Re: International Student Policy Changes Threaten B.C. Colleges and Provincial Economy

On behalf of Vancouver Community College (VCC) and the Board of Governors, I extend my warmest congratulations to you on your recent election victory. We have deeply appreciated your support for our Campus Plan, and warmly remember your participation in our unveiling for the Centre for Clean Energy and Automotive Innovation (CCEAI). The good news is that this plan is now underway and will:

- create affordable residential housing with up to 2,500 mixed-use housing units.
- provide teaching and experiential learning for as many as 1,400 students each year in important clean energy fields that are in high demand, and support British Columbia's training, labour market, and environmental goals for a clean and sustainable future for next generations.
- create 1,407 direct and 672 indirect jobs related to the construction of the CCEAI and will transform the Broadway and Great Northern Way corridor.
- provide social, community and commercial infrastructure.

However, we are writing today regarding a grave threat to the post-secondary sector and the B.C. economy. Recent policy changes announced by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) are having both direct and consequential impacts on international students applying to VCC. The direct factor is the number of international students who will be eligible for student permits and post-graduation work permits

(PGWP), this has a disproportionate impact on colleges. The unintended consequence is the uncertainty and instability, already resulting in application levels dropping well below the new caps, and provincial labour market needs not being addressed.

The impact on colleges across B.C. is enormous, and the broader predicted impact could reduce the annual spending by international students from $7.5B to $4B annually for the B.C. economy.

We believe this urgent situation calls for immediate action by your government. Specifically, we ask that you:

1. Prioritize in your mandate letter to the new Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills a directive to immediately take the necessary steps, working with other provincial counterparts to develop an appropriate strategy to expand the PGWP eligibility.
2. As Premier, ask for this issue to be placed on the next agenda of the First Ministers' Meeting.

Please be assured that VCC, as a key partner in B.C.'s labour market development and a leader in the college sector, has realistic remedies to offer that would mitigate this dire threat to B.C.'s colleges and economy.

Yours sincerely,

Joey Hartman
Chair, Board of Governors
Vancouver Community College

cc:

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