



For Immediate Release

## **Indus Community Services (Indus) announces the creation of the 'International Students Task Force'**

MISSISSAUGA, April 8, 2020

The corona virus pandemic has led to challenging times in Canada and abroad.

Take International student Manbir (*last name withheld at students request*). He arrived in Brampton from India on March 16<sup>th</sup>, to pursue a 2 year post-graduate Diploma in Computer Science at a College in Montreal. The college advised him not to come to Montreal, but to continue to stay in Brampton. He is managing with the money he brought with him. "Friends helped with accommodation and I am living in a basement apartment with 3 other students. I am eager to go to Montreal and start my studies", says Manbir.

For many like, Manbir, the pandemic has affected their studies and work plans, and as universities and colleges have emptied, for some, it may not be safe or feasible to return to their country of origin. Many students are isolated, financially strapped and lonely, some with no family or friends, and no support networks, they are vulnerable and could fall prey to long-term issues such as mental & physical health challenges, hunger, and worsening financial challenges.

While some post-secondary institutions are providing limited emergency bursaries to help impacted students, more must be done.

Indus recognizes the challenges that these students are facing and is creating the '**International Students Task Force**'. The Task Force will focus on finding students the supports they need to access emergency funding through the CERB, Ontario Works or the potential return of tuition. It will also provide settlement counselling, housing assistance, documentation and resources to enhance personal safety and security.

"It is very important that all levels of government and post-secondary learning institutions recognize their responsibility to these vulnerable young people at this very difficult time." said Varinder Sembhi, Board Chair of Indus Community Services.

When the government introduced the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) for those affected by COVID-19, students interpreted the benefit to say that they could apply, but were surprised to learn that the

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benefit is only available to workers who had income of at least \$5000 in 2019, or in the 12 months prior to their application.

Ontario is by far the largest beneficiary of foreign students in Canada. In 2019, it hosted some 48 per cent of Canada's international student population—nearly 307, 000<sup>1</sup> of them. Many of them will hope to become Permanent Residents. "It is imperative that our communities and institutions work together to provide some form of financial and public health support during this precarious situation," said Gurpreet Malhotra, CEO of Indus Community Services.

For now, students like Manbir can do nothing, but wait and hope that the situation returns to normal in the near future. Indus will continue to support our international students in Peel and provide them with the needed support and guidance during the difficult days ahead.

To learn about how you and Indus can help, please call us at: 905-275-2369 (Mississauga) or 905-459-4776 (Brampton) or email at: [info@induscs.ca](mailto:info@induscs.ca)

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1. Source: <https://www.cicnews.com/2020/02/642000-international-students-canada-now-ranks-3rd-globally-in-foreign-student-attraction-0213763.html#gs.3a3jr0>