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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Student Associations Across Alberta Unite in Call for Extended Increase of Off-Campus Work Hours for International Students

As the April 2024 deadline looms, student associations representing over 200,000 Albertan students join forces to call on the federal government and Minister Marc Miller to permanently lift the work hour cap on International students.

“International students deserve the same freedoms to work that are afforded to domestic students” says University of Lethbridge Students’ Union President, Maleeka Thomas. “Limiting students’ ability to work off-campus has big downsides. Not all jobs can be worked with limited hours, hindering students’ chances to gain valuable experience in their relevant fields. Additionally, students already employed full-time may be forced out of their current jobs.”

In 2018, international students contributed \$22.3 billion to the Canadian economy, supporting 218,577 jobs¹. We also know that international students fill critical labor shortages, with 1 in 3 working in either construction or healthcare/education sectors². Any cap that prevents students from working 40 hours a week will make it harder for students to seamlessly transition into co-op programs or work terms, especially given the intense amounts of bureaucratic red tape students face when trying to do their co-ops. Allowing more work hours to accommodate individual needs empowers students to effectively manage expenses, alleviate family burdens, acquire pertinent experience, and make meaningful contributions to our communities.

Students’ Associations also caution that reinstating the cap might force already desperate students into precarious situations or cause students to lose full-time employment in roles they already have. This can lead to an increased vulnerability to exploitation, with students potentially falling victim to wage theft or even greater instances of harassment due to overreliance on part-time work.

Additionally, there may be a heightened reliance on campus resources such as campus food banks, as students grapple with the financial challenges associated with the increased cost of living, high tuition, and, now, reduced work hours. In 2023, 70% of the U of A’s Campus Food Bank clients were international students. Removing the ability for those students to work as many hours as they need to sustain themselves will simply push them further into poverty.

¹ [Global Affairs. Economic impact of international education in Canada - 2020](#)

² [Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. Abacus Data - 2023](#)

“Many students will still need to work forty hours a week but they will do it for cash under the table – without adequate job protections” says the Chair of the Alberta Students’ Executive Council, Celia Sutton. “Given that the affordability and cost of living pressures that cause international students to work more hours haven’t gone away, international students need the same opportunities afforded to all other students.”

An increase in student working hours has also been shown not to affect academic performance and the value of students having the agency to choose what's right for them cannot be understated. Nearly half of all international students (45%) are employed part-time, and 1 in 5 students are employed full-time (20%). International students also report strong academic averages, with 2 in 3 students earning an A grade or higher (+80%)³, levels that corresponded evenly with domestic students.

Students’ associations across Alberta urge Minister Miller to permanently lift the international work hour cap in order to maintain a reasonable level of financial wellbeing for students, to support students’ agency, and to support their ability to access equal opportunities while undertaking their studies in Canada.

Signed:

Alberta Students’ Executive Council
Athabasca University Students’ Union
Students’ Association of MacEwan University
Students’ Association of Mount Royal University
University of Alberta International Students’ Association
University of Alberta Students’ Union
University of Lethbridge Students’ Union

For media availability please contact:

Alberta Students’ Executive Council: ed@albertastudents.ca
University of Alberta Students’ Union: aaa@su.ualberta.ca
Students’ Association of Mount Royal University: president@samru.ca
Students’ Association of Olds College: saocpres@oldscollege.ca

³ [Canadian Alliance of Student Associations. Abacus Data - 2023](#)