

CANADA INDIA  
FOUNDATION



## CIF appeals to PM Trudeau to include International students in the CESB program

Toronto: (02 May 2020) Canada India Foundation (CIF) has appealed to Prime Minister Hon. Justin Trudeau to include international students in the Canada Emergency Student Benefits (CESB) program announced on 22 April.

In a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, CIF lauded the federal government for the innumerable policy decisions taken in the last four weeks to alleviate the adverse economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Canadians.

However, the Foundation's leadership expressed dismay at the exclusion of the international students from the purview of the CESB program.

Under the CESB, the federal government pledged to provide \$1,250 per month for eligible students from May through August 2020, and \$1,750 for students with dependents and those with permanent disabilities.

The CESB program is meant for post-secondary students and recent graduates who are ineligible for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) or for Employment Insurance (EI), but who are unable to find employment due to COVID-19.

“The federal government must include international students to come under the ambit of the CESB because their circumstances are materially not different from those of local students,” **Anil Shah, Chair, CIF**, said.

He added that by not doing so, Canada is ignoring the contributions that international students make to its economy and to its post-secondary education system.

In the communication to the Prime Minister, CIF drew attention to the dire situation of the international students. Their academic programs have been disrupted, their internships that are to start in summer have been rescheduled or cancelled altogether. The imposition of lockdown has deprived them of their subsistence wages as most businesses have shuttered down, and social distancing requirements have resulted these students living in cramped tenements. There is no way out because they can't return home.

The Foundation also provided statistical information available in the public domain pertaining to the international students in Canada and their role in the Canadian economy.

According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the population of international student grew by 13 per cent in 2019 compared to the previous year, marking double-digit growth, to reach a staggering 642,000. International student population has grown six-fold over the past 20 years; in the last decade alone, it has tripled.

Pertinently, this growth has been driven by students from India. Over 2,25,000 of international students in Canada are from India. The growth of Indian students to Canada was just under 350% since 2014.

**Satish Thakkar, National Convener, CIF**, emphasized the contribution of these students to the Canadian economy. "Financial contribution of international students in Canadian economy around \$22 billion, and it supports over 170,000 Canadian jobs, by supporting them at this very critical time we will encourage future flow of international students from all over the world" he said.

Providing a wider perspective to the international students' indisputable position in the Canadian economy, Mr. Thakkar said, "They meet the shortage of skilled workers, by working part time while studying and working full time after completing their studies."

In 2019, the Canadian Experience Class an immigration pathway designed for international students and foreign workers accounted for 34% of new immigrants in Canada.

Since the lockdown was introduced in Ontario, Canada India Foundation has proactively been helping international students from India who are facing financial and other challenges because of the lockdown.

**Pankaj Dave, National Co-Convener, CIF**, said, "Our Foundation immediately understood and took cognizance of the disastrous impact of COVID-19 on international students. We have been conducting extensive outreach to help them. But what will really help them is financial assistance. We urge the

federal government to understand the plight of these international students and help them by including them in the CESB program.”

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