



MOSAIC

Together we advance an inclusive and thriving Canada.

Submission to BC Budget Consultation June 2023

Introduction

For over 45 years, MOSAIC has been committed to improving the lives of immigrants, refugees, and temporary foreign workers in British Columbia as one of the largest providers of settlement, employment, and language services in Canada. MOSAIC welcomes the opportunity to share our recommendations to improve the well-being and outcomes of newcomers in BC. These recommendations are based on our front-line experience, close collaboration with partner social service, community, and health organizations, as well as feedback from the newcomer communities.

Summary of Key Recommendations

1. **Waive the waiting period and minimum residency requirements for BC Healthcare for returning Seasonal Agricultural Workers, granting access upon arrival**
 2. **Increase the number of training seats as well as post-secondary institutions providing bridging programs for internationally educated nurses**
 3. **Provide dedicated funding for Anti-Racism Education in our schools and communities**
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1. **Waive the waiting period and minimum residency requirements for BC Healthcare for returning Seasonal Agricultural Workers, granting access upon arrival**

Migrant workers are essential to BC's economy, filling over [32,000](#) jobs in 2022, with agricultural workers being the most significant category. More than 80% of seasonal agricultural workers have been returning for more than 6 years and our farms are relying on experienced staff that return year after year. Yet, many are not eligible for provincial healthcare because they do not meet the threshold of residency or have to go through the waiting period every year they return to BC. Without access to public healthcare upon arrival, as is the practice in Ontario, seasonal agricultural workers are left to a patchwork of expensive and insecure private insurance plans that require them to cover medical cost upfront and navigate complicated reimbursement processes without availability of appropriate language support, often relying on the goodwill of employers, adding vulnerabilities to already precarious employment.

MOSAIC recommends that the Province waive the 3 month waiting period and minimum 6 month residency requirement for all returning agricultural workers as lack of access to BC Health coverage leaves them vulnerable to unanticipated medical costs and undermines their potential to have a positive impact to our economy. This would demonstrate the Province's acknowledgement of the critical agricultural labour they provide year-after-year and reduce costs to our healthcare system by alleviating the burden on emergency care.





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2. Increase the number of training seats as well as post-secondary institutions providing bridging programs for internationally educated nurses

Just two weeks ago the federal government launched the new [category-based selection](#) of skilled immigrants with health care professions being one of the top “in-demand” job categories. It is expected that upcoming draws will be prioritizing internationally trained health professionals. In order for the internationally trained health talent that we have already in BC, as well as the increased numbers that will be admitted through the targeted draws, to be able to practice and address the urgent and ongoing labour shortages, we need to invest into bridging programs that allow newcomers to apply their training in BC. MOSAIC calls upon the provincial government to increase the number of seats allocated to internationally trained nurses and expand the number of post-secondary institutions offering bridging programs. While the provincial government added 602 new nursing seats last year, only 35 were designated for internationally educated nurses, with only three postsecondary institutions in BC offering this type of program.

BC is projected to need an additional [26,000 trained-and-ready nurses](#) over the next 8 years. While we already have international talent in BC, it currently takes internationally educated nurses approximately two to six years to become a registered nurse in B.C. Investing in training seats and bridging programs would have the dual effect of improving access to healthcare for all, while creating more robust participation in the Canadian economy for newcomer professionals and prevent the loss of their highly-needed skills while they are forced to find low-paying employment outside their profession.

3. Provide Dedicated Funding for Anti-Racism Education in our schools and communities

The recent surge in hate crimes despite the increased awareness and continued efforts to combat racism calls for immediate action. Although the provincial government has taken considerable steps by conducting the [Inquiry into Hate during COVID-19](#) as well as launching the [K-12 Anti-Racism Action Plan](#), there is a dire need to act now in response to matters that are adversely impacting our communities every day. There are racist incidents occurring at our schools every single day. Within the Surrey School District, MOSAIC has been contacted by over 20 elementary schools just in the past few weeks to facilitate anti-racism workshops for all grade levels.

As the lead of Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network in Surrey and White Rock, MOSAIC recommends a designated funding envelope for BC schools to have anti-hate and racial equity educational workshops for K-12 students. Following up on our request to mandate anti-racism education in BC school curriculum, MOSAIC believes that immediate action is required to respond to everyday incidents at schools that need to be addressed while the adaptation or creation of curriculum is considered and implemented. While these learning opportunities are provided to students, there should be budget allocated for racial equity sessions for teachers, staff as well as parents so that the whole school community is informed and engaged.





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