



Representing the Districts of Kenora, Rainy River and Thunder Bay  
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Date: February 13, 2024

**Resolution 2024-01: That NOMA endorse the appeals of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Confederation College, and Lakehead University regarding the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada reforms to the International Student Program and that a similar letter be sent to Minister Miller, the Prime Minister, local MPs, MPPs, and opposition parties, Minister Dunlop, FONOM, and member municipal councils with copies to the Chamber, TBCEDC, Confederation College, and Lakehead University.**

Background:

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) recently announced major reforms to the International Student Program that will have significant impacts in our local communities. IRCC has introduced a cap of 360,000 new permits for 2024, a 35% reduction from 2023. While the rationale for this policy change is rooted in understandable concerns around housing and healthcare capacity, the impact of this on communities across Canada should not be underestimated.

Of particular grave immediate concern is IRCC's implementation of a moratorium on student visa processing until March 31, 2024 – the deadline for provinces to introduce a system to manage international student enrolments. This processing moratorium is creating much uncertainty about the outlook for not just September, but even spring enrolment. By halting processing, IRCC is jeopardizing the ability for Confederation College and Lakehead University to attract new students to the region. This is a critical time of year when students across the world decide where they will travel to study and temporarily call their home – a decision that profoundly impacts local businesses and communities. International students are vital contributors to our economy, labour market, and add diversity and vibrancy to communities. International students are vital to the City of Thunder Bay and the whole of northwestern Ontario.

Lakehead University currently has over 1,800 students studying in undergraduate and graduate degree programs at its Thunder Bay campus. This achievement is the result of a deliberate and responsible multi-year internationalization strategy to grow their international student population to 20% of total enrolment, or 2,000 students, by 2025. This strategy is focused on diversifying the student population in Northern Ontario, helping to offset declining regional demographics while attracting highly skilled talent into the region to support ongoing economic diversification in Northern Ontario.

International students contribute \$22B to the Canadian economy and the financial repercussions these caps are going to have will negatively impact NOMA communities. Over the past five years over 2,000 international students have graduated from Lakehead University, with 23% continuing to live and work in Ontario, including 11% in northwestern Ontario. The economic impact of Lakehead University in Northwestern Ontario is \$2.4B. In 2021, international student spending generated \$14.5 million in added income for our regional

economy and active alumni at Confederation College generated an additional \$12.2 million. It is estimated that 55% of international students remain in the region after finishing their time at Confederation College. The change could result in a 50% reduction in international enrollment at Confederation College. Confederation College anticipates the estimated financial impact of the changes to this year's enrolment alone will be \$7.5 Million. The economic impact for our region will also be compounded as Confederation College will be unable to run some programs as student numbers are reduced. A loss of this scale will jeopardize the ability for the college and university to deliver key programs and courses, which will not just impact international students but all students in northwestern Ontario and create a real challenge for our communities.

Recommendation:

WHEREAS that the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) recognizes the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) recent announcement regarding major reforms to the International Student Program will likely have significant impacts to our economy, local communities, our labour market, and regional diversity.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT NOMA endorse the appeals of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Confederation College, and Lakehead University regarding the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada reforms to the International Student Program.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT NOMA send a letter to the IRCC to reconsider the current approach to the cap on international student permits and participate in open dialogue with NOMA, Lakehead University, Confederation College, the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, and other key stakeholders to explore solutions that recognize the unique challenges faced by institutions in northern regions.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT a copy of this motion be forwarded to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Minister of Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Marc Miller, MP Patty Hajdu - Thunder Bay - Superior North, MP Marcus Powlowski – Thunder Bay - Rainy River, MP Eric Melillo – Kenora, Minister of Colleges and Universities Jill Dunlop, MPP Greg Rickford Kenora – Rainy River, MPP Kevin Holland – Thunder Bay - Atikokan, MPP Lise Vaugeois - Thunder Bay - Superior North, Lakehead University, Confederation College, Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission, Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities, the leaders of the opposition parties of Ontario, and all Clerks and CAOs of NOMA.

Moved By: Norm Gale, Thunder Bay City Manager

Seconded By: Jason Young, CAO of Atikokan

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President