



No Fees in Universal Healthcare Toolkit

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Background

In August 2019, when all BC residents were expecting to celebrate a prominent full elimination of Medical Service Plan (MSP) premiums by January 2020, the government announced a new fee that only applied to international students.

This celebration turned into shock and anger, when the BC government announced this new fee known as the **International Students Health Fee (“ISHF”)** that increased costs for international students to \$75 per month/per person. This fee was implemented without consultation with students or residents in BC.

The principle of universality of the Canada Health Act requires that “all residents of a province or territory be entitled, on uniform terms and conditions, to the publicly funded health services



covered by provincial/territorial plans”. The ISHF is a clear violation of this principle and is negatively impacting international students.

The justification for this ISHF used by the BC government is false. Besides, this fee is discriminatory and unfair to international students! We urge the BC government, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education to remove the unfair and irrational ISHF. There should be NO fees in “Universal Healthcare”!

Read more about the details [here](#).

Why It's Unfair

- **Double-contribution** to healthcare funds by students with labour income in BC;
 - The funding for healthcare was switched from MSP to the Employer Health Tax (EHT) and ISHF. So, many international students with labour income are contributing twice for health care, once via paying ISHF and secondly by their employers' payment via EHT.
- Imposes a **huge financial burden** on international students, especially the ones with families;
 - The family plan in the previous MSP was removed (up to \$150/month per family) and there is no family plan in ISHF (\$75/month per person). So, a household with two children on study permits now must pay an extra \$1800 a year, in addition to the \$1800 a year for the parents' ISHF; with three children an extra \$2700 a year, and so on.



- Neglects **billions of dollars of international students' economic contribution** to BC's development;
 - The primary argument for the new fee provided by the B.C government that international students need to help fund the public health system is false! For example, in 2018 international students contributed \$3.989 billion in GDP, \$2.454 billion in labour income, and \$392.9 million in income tax. This is in addition to the millions in indirect taxes through economic activity such as renting apartments (which generate property tax revenue) that international students pay.
- Neglects international students role in **subsidizing post-secondary education**;
 - Canadian universities and colleges are increasingly relying on international students to manage the budget shortfalls due to the inflation adjusted and decrease in public post-secondary education funding ([reference](#)). If the MSP fee was absorbed by universities or the province, international students would still be **subsidizing post-secondary education**. How? By subtracting domestic tuition fees, the provincial funding per FTE (full-time equivalent) student contribution and the international student MSP fee from international tuition fee, there is still a surplus that universities are accumulating from international students.
- Adds **administrative burden** exacerbated by the confusing rollout of the policy
 - The old MSP system was eliminated because it was too complicated to keep track of charges and payments, which led to a high non-compliance rate. However, the ISHF replicated the original problems with MSP, an issue exacerbated by the confusing rollout of the policy. If the administrative burden of



MSP was too inconvenient to keep around, the same should be true of the ISHF.

What Can Be Done About It?

International students and allies in B.C. such as yourself need to come together and **demand the elimination of the unfair International Student Health Fee** from the B.C. government.

Take Action!

- 1) Sign on to the [petition](#)
- 2) [Email your MLAs and Ministers](#)
- 3) [Submit a selfie to our photo campaign](#)
- 4) Follow [@msu.at.sfu](#) and share the campaign [graphics](#) on your social media.
- 5) Share this toolkit with your friends/colleagues/peers and ask them to email their MLAs and Ministers

Template message you can use:

"Hey there, I need your help in raising the issue of the International Student Health Fee (ISHF) that is disproportionately affecting international students and families in B.C."

This is exclusionary and unjust to international students and families as no other residents pay any health fee. The ISHF cost \$75/month (\$900/year) for each study permit holder. So, parents on study permits who also have 2 children on study permit, for example, will have to pay an extra \$1,800/year for their children on top of their own ISHF fees.



If you have a couple minutes, please 1) sign on to the [petition](#); 2) copy/edit the email templates to urge the BC Provincial Government to eliminate ISHF; 3) follow and share on Instagram and Facebook @msu.at.sfu

Action toolkit - <https://bit.ly/ishftoolkit>

Email template here - <https://bit.ly/ishfemailtemplate>

More Info and Resources

1. [Changes to BC International Student Health Fees: What are the Issues? Authored by Matt McDonald, 2019-2021 Director of External Relations, The Graduate Student Society at Simon Fraser University](#)
2. [ABCS 2019 Open letter Re: International Student Contributions to Medical Services Plan](#)
3. [Sanctuary Health International Student Health Fee Briefing Note](#)