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March 2026 Newsletter

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CASSA's Membership!

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For more information contact qurat@cassa.ca or visit
www.cassa.ca/membership



CASSA Project Updates

South Asian Social Justice Network Project - Alberta

Capacity Building Session Highlights – Alberta & Quebec Networks

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participants from both provinces, creating a strong and collaborative space for dialogue, learning, and shared strategy-building.

The workshop focused on identifying key systemic challenges impacting South Asian communities. Participants shared frontline experiences, practical strategies, and explored opportunities for cross-provincial collaboration.

Both the Quebec and Alberta leads facilitated a highly engaging session that yielded meaningful insights and clear next steps to strengthen regional partnerships. The strong turnout reflects our network members' growing commitment to collective advocacy and community-driven solutions.



Alberta Network Engagement & Advocacy

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meeting, he expressed strong support for CASSA's National Expansion Project and encouraged establishing a new branch in Alberta.

He emphasized the important role advocacy organizations play in addressing the needs of diverse communities and strengthening support systems across the province. This meeting marks a positive step forward in expanding CASSA's presence and impact in Alberta.



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QUÉBEC SOUTH ASIAN SOCIAL JUSTICE NETWORK

South Asian Social Justice Network Project - Quebec

Following our first convening of 2026 on Wednesday, February 25th—where we mapped out the critical barriers and material realities facing our communities—we are pleased to announce the integration of four vital partner organizations into our network: Teesri Duniya Theatre, Amal Centre for Women, The Refugee Centre, and Brique par Brique.

These partnerships represent a deliberate effort to move beyond siloed advocacy. By bridging cultural production, frontline feminist crisis support, refugee advocacy, and radical housing justice, we are establishing a multidisciplinary framework for community care in the province.

Our upcoming SASJN-Quebec Forum this June in Montreal will serve as a primary site for this cross-sectoral work. We are moving toward a model of social justice that is grounded in the politics of representation and the urgent need for community care frameworks. We look forward to further defining this collective mandate with our partners and the broader community.

Advancing Justice for South Asian Communities in B.C

We're excited to share that the South Asian Social Justice Network (SASJN) in BC is moving forward with renewed focus and strengthened provincial engagement.

We are strengthening our provincial presence and preparing for a year focused on meaningful

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province in the coming days.

If you are a community member or organization in BC and would like to connect, collaborate, or share emerging priorities, we would love to hear from you. Please email our Director of Development at Ridah@cassa.ca to receive more information on how you can join the network.

Taking the Honour Out of 'Honour-Based Violence' Project

CASSA, United Way Greater Toronto's South Asian Community Advisory Council (UWGT's SACAC), and the Women's Mosque of Canada have successfully concluded our three-year project, *Taking the Honour Out of 'Honour-Based Violence'*. Funded by the Leading Social Justice Collective (LSJC) in partnership with the University of Toronto's School of Cities and UWGT, the project explored how honour-based violence (HBV) affects South Asian communities in Canada, shaped by cultural, gender, migration, and structural factors.

Our research centred survivors, LGBTQ2+ individuals, service providers, and subject-matter experts across the GTA. We completed a comprehensive literature review offering historical and cultural context, prevalence and incidence rates, existing laws, and initiatives. Original data collection captured lived experiences and perspectives, informing both a full report and abridged summary. Insights from this work shaped our train-the-trainer sessions

To access the reports, please visit: <https://www.cassa.ca/taking-the-honour-out-of-honour-based-violence/>

If you are interested in us providing a tailored training session for your organization, please contact HBV@womensmosque.ca

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CASSA is leading a three-year community-based research project titled Breaking Barriers: Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for South Asian Newcomer Women. This project is funded by United Way Greater Toronto and supported by partner organizations including Punjabi Community Health Services, South Asian Women's Collective, and Laadliyan.

This research focuses on the experiences of South Asian newcomer women—particularly immigrants and refugees who have arrived in Canada within the past five years—and the challenges they face when accessing sexual and reproductive health services. The project will generate evidence to inform the development and advocacy of more culturally safe, trauma-informed, and equitable healthcare services. Specifically, this will include producing a public-facing report, launching a social media campaign, and delivering training sessions for service providers on anti-oppressive and culturally safe care practices.

Participants can contribute through our community survey (<https://forms.gle/Lrh5rr2hkp16B1dK7>), community focus group (<https://forms.gle/wubfKdJa6FAuLge86>), and subject matter expert consultation. For more information, please review our flyers.

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SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
FOR SOUTH ASIAN NEWCOMER WOMEN

Are you a South Asian Newcomer Woman in Canada?

Tell us about your experiences accessing sexual and reproductive health services.

First 25 participants will receive a \$25 honorarium!

TAKE A SURVEY

<https://forms.gle/Lrh5rr2hkp16B1dK7>



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**SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
FOR SOUTH ASIAN NEWCOMER WOMEN**

Call for Participants: Community Focus Group

Breaking Barriers: Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for South Asian Newcomer Women

The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) is leading a community research project to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services—particularly prenatal and postnatal care—for South Asian newcomer women in Ontario. The project is funded by United Way Greater Toronto and supported by partner organizations, including Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS), South Asian Women's Collective (SAWC), and Laadliyan.

We invite South Asian women to participate in a **2-hour community focus group** to share their experiences and ideas for improving culturally safe and equitable healthcare.

Who We're Looking For

We are seeking approximately 20 participants who meet the following criteria:

- Identify as a South Asian woman (e.g., Afghan, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Indo-Caribbean, Nepali, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan, Tamil, etc.)
- Between the ages of 18 and 64
- Live in Ontario, especially in the GTA, York, or Peel regions
- Have experience with or concerns related to sexual and reproductive health services in Canada
- Are a newcomer, refugee, international student, permanent resident, or Canadian citizen

What to Expect

- **Duration:** 2 hours
- **Format:** Zoom or in-person
- **Honorarium:** \$50 via e-transfer, e-gift card, or physical gift card
- **Services:** Translation and interpretation available upon request
- **Additional:** In-person attendees receive up to \$20 travel reimbursement and light refreshments.
- **Next Steps:** Complete pre-screening form to confirm your eligibility at <https://forms.gle/wubfKdJa6FAuLge86>. **Once confirmed**, you'll receive a **Letter of Information and Consent Form**. After completion, we'll follow up with available dates and times.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the Community Research Ethics Office (Project #461).

Interested or have questions? Contact Mahdiba Chowdhury (mahdiba@cassa.ca) and Samaha Kureshi (samaha@cassa.ca).



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Call for Subject Matter Experts

Breaking Barriers: Improving Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for South Asian Newcomer Women

The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) is leading a community research project to improve access to sexual and reproductive health services—particularly prenatal and postnatal care—for South Asian newcomer women in Ontario. The project is funded by United Way Greater Toronto and supported by partner organizations, including Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS), South Asian Women's Collective (SAWC), and Laadliyan.

We are inviting professionals to join a **45–60 minute virtual consultation (via Zoom)** to help identify systemic barriers and shape solutions for culturally safe and equitable care.

Who We're Looking For

We are seeking approximately 20 participants who meet the following criteria:

- Professionals working in healthcare (e.g., doctors, nurses, social workers), policy-making, academia, or community organizations
- Based in Ontario, especially in the GTA, York, or Peel regions
- Experience with or research on South Asian immigrant/refugee women and sexual and reproductive health, including prenatal/postnatal care
- Able to speak to systemic barriers and gaps affecting access to timely, culturally appropriate care

What to Expect

- **Duration:** 45–60 minutes
- **Platform:** Zoom
- **Honorarium:** \$100 (via e-transfer)
- **Services:** Translation and interpretation available upon request
- **Next Steps:** Once you express interest, we'll send you a **Letter of Information** and **Consent Form**. After completion, we'll follow up with available dates and times.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the Community Research Ethics Office (Project #461).

Interested or have questions? Contact Mahdiba Chowdhury (mahdiba@cassa.ca) and Samaha Kureshi (samaha@cassa.ca).



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Digital Story-Telling Campaign

CASSA is looking to connect with Black-led and Indigenous-led organizations to partner on a "Digital Storytelling Campaign" project funded by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to uplift stories from Black and Indigenous communities through short videos, podcasts, and digital graphics.

This work will be community-led, co-designed, and partners will be recognized as co-creators.

Honorarium included

If your organization is interested, please email ridah@cassa.ca and/or samaha@cassa.ca

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CASSA IS LOOKING
TO CONNECT WITH

BLACK & INDIGENOUS-LED ORGANIZATIONS

to partner on a "Digital Storytelling Campaign" project funded by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to uplift stories from Black and Indigenous communities through short videos, podcasts, and digital graphics.

IF YOUR ORGANIZATION IS
INTERESTED PLEASE EMAIL

Ridah@casssa.ca
or
Samaha@cassa.ca



Opportunities

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Epilepsy & Seizure First Aid Public Education Workshops

Offered in-person, over Zoom, teleconference and hybrid.

Please email leah@epilepsytoronto.org for further information.

Presented By



Session will cover:

- ✓ Myths and Misconceptions about Epilepsy
- ✓ Difference Types of Seizures
- ✓ Epilepsy Toronto's Services
- ✓ Treatment
- ✓ Seizure first aid
- ✓ Client stories

www.epilepsytoronto.org

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)[RSS](#)The flyer has a light pink background with a subtle bokeh effect. It is decorated with cherry blossom branches and lanterns in the corners. The Evergreen logo is at the top center, with the locations MARKHAM, STOUFFVILLE, and THORNHILL listed below it. The event title 'CHERRY BLOSSOM AFTERNOON TEA' is in large, bold, black serif font. The date and time are in a smaller, bold, black sans-serif font. The main text is in a black serif font, describing the event's offerings. The ticket price and contact information are in a bold, black sans-serif font. The venue name and address are in a black serif font. The contact information for Evergreen Hospice is in a black sans-serif font. The registered charitable number is at the bottom right in a small, italicized, black sans-serif font.


MARKHAM STOUFFVILLE THORNHILL

YOU'RE INVITED!

**CHERRY BLOSSOM
AFTERNOON TEA**

**SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2026
12:00 PM TO 4 PM**

Join us at Angus Glen Golf Course for a delightful afternoon, featuring delicious tea, sandwiches, desserts and celebrations. You will be served a decadent afternoon tea service, alongside a gorgeous fashion show by Peppertree Klassics, and a silent auction. There will also be a Live Auction featuring a trip to Young Island Resort in the Caribbean! This is a great gift idea for a special birthday, an early Mother's Day celebration, or just an excuse to get together with friends and family. Best of all, by joining us you will be helping Evergreen support those in our community coping with a life-threatening illness, caregiving or grief.

Tickets are \$125 per person.
**For more information visit evgcares.org or
contact us at info@evgcares.org / (416) 499-2185.**

Angus Glen Golf Course
10080 Kennedy Rd. Markham, ON L6C 1N9

Evergreen Hospice
201-5762 Highway 7 East,
Markham, ON L3P 1A8
TEL: 416 499-2185
info@evgcares.org
www.evgcares.org

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HARBHAJAN RANAUTA LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP



\$1500

APPLY AT [HRLEGACY.CA](https://hrlegacy.ca)
DEADLINE: MARCH 30, 2026

FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS OF SOUTH ASIAN DESCENT
DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH AND
ADDICTION SUPPORT IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

 [@hrlegacyfdn](https://www.instagram.com/hrlegacyfdn)

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RESEARCH PROJECT

+ EXAMINING THE PRIMARY CARE PREFERENCES OF SOUTH ASIAN-ORIGIN COMMUNITIES

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU IF YOU:

- SELF-IDENTIFY AS BELONGING TO SOUTH ASIAN-ORIGIN COMMUNITIES
- ARE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER
- CURRENTLY LIVE IN ONTARIO
- ACCESSED PRIMARY CARE SERVICES WITHIN THE PAST FIVE YEARS

The banner features a dark blue background with white and teal text. It includes a teal heart icon with a white pulse line on the left and a teal plus sign on the right.

Wellesley Institute is conducting a research study which aims to understand primary care preferences in South Asian-origin communities.

In this research, you will be asked to participate in a focus group that will last about 90 minutes.

If you are interested in participating in this study or would like more information, please contact:

Yu-Ling Yin, Co-Principal Investigator,
yuling.yin@wellesleyinstitute.com or 416-972-1010 ext. 257

If you have any general questions about the study, please contact Dr. Brenda Roche, Principal Investigator, brenda@wellesleyinstitute.com or 416-972-1010 ext. 257

We are seeking up to 100 participants.

In appreciation of your time, you will receive \$40 e-gift card.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Toronto Metropolitan University Research Ethics Board [REB protocol number 2025-470] and is funded by the Ministry of Health.



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Examining the primary care preferences of South Asian-origin communities

Wellesley Institute is a research and policy institute that works to improve health and health equity in Toronto. The researchers at Wellesley Institute conducting this study are Dr. Brenda Roche (Principal investigator), Jemal Demeke (Co-PI), Farzana Akter (Co-PI), Dr. Augustine Okoh (Co-PI), and Yu-Ling Yin (Co-PI). Yu-Ling Yin will lead the project focusing on South Asian-origin communities. This research has been funded by the Ministry of Health.

The research project aims to understand primary care preference of South Asian-origin communities across Ontario. We are conducting focus groups with individuals who have lived experience to understand their preferences in primary care, identify opportunities for improvement, and make recommendations that help enhance primary care to better meet communities' needs.

We are also conducting a parallel study on Black communities in Ontario, led by Jemal Demeke.

To participate, you must be:

- **Self-identify as belonging to South Asian-origin communities**
- **Be 18 years of age or older**
- **Live in Ontario**
- **Accessed primary care services within the past 5 years**
- **Be able to participate in a virtual focus group in English, with optional language support available, and comfortable with audio recording**

What will I do?

We are recruiting up to 100 individuals from South Asian-origin communities to participate in the focus groups. Focus groups will be facilitated primarily in English. In addition, a limited number of focus group sessions with South Asian-origin community participants will be planned with language-specific support, where a bilingual co-facilitator or interpreter may be present to support a particular language group (e.g., Punjabi, Hindi, Tamil, Urdu, or Gujarati), based on recruitment needs. Language support will be session-specific and

[Wellesleyinstitute.com](https://wellesleyinstitute.com)

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provided only for the language identified in advance for that focus group. The focus group will take up to 90 minutes and will be conducted virtually. The discussion will be audio recorded via Zoom and transcribed for analysis. Participants will receive a \$40 incentive for their time.

You will be asked to complete a brief socio-demographic survey before the focus group.

We will be conducting focus groups between **February 1** and **May 30**. For some focus groups, language support may be available through a bilingual co-facilitator. Some options coming up are:

- Option 1: Feb 25, 2:00-3:30 pm (*English*)
- Option 2: Feb 26, 2:00-3:30 pm (*English*)
- Option 3: March 3, 3:30-5:00 pm (*English with Bengali language support*)
- Option 4: To be determined based on participants' availability (*English with Hindi language support*)
- Option 5: To be determined based on participants' availability (*English with Tamil language support*)
- Option 6: To be determined based on participants' availability (*English with Punjabi language support*)
- Option 7: To be determined based on participants' availability (*English with Urdu language support*)

If you would like to participate but none of these times work for you, please reach out to the research team and we will try to accommodate.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you are interested in participating in this study or would like to learn more, please contact Yu-Ling Yin, Co-Principal Investigator, who is leading recruitment and focus groups for South Asian-origin communities: yuling.yin@wellesleyinstitute.com or 416-972-1010 ext. 257

If you have any general questions about the study, please contact Dr. Brenda Roche, Principal Investigator: brenda@wellesleyinstitute.com or 416-972-1010 ext. 257

**Toronto
Metropolitan
University**

This project has been approved by Toronto Metropolitan University REB (2025-470). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Board at rebchair@torontomu.ca.

Wellesley Institute

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Punjabi Community Health Services

Volunteer Board Member Opportunity Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) Two (2) Positions Available

About PCHS:

For over 35 years, Punjabi Community Health Services (PCHS) has been a pioneering, community-based, charitable organization serving Punjabi-speaking and diverse, equity-seeking populations.

PCHS provides culturally responsive services in:

- Mental Health & Addictions
- Senior Care & Caregiver Support
- Health Promotion & Prevention
- Domestic Violence & Family Support
- Parenting & Youth Services
- Homelessness Prevention Support
- Newcomer Settlement

PCHS is recognized for its innovative Integrated Holistic Service Delivery Model and is accredited by:

- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF International)
- Imagine Canada

This is an opportunity to contribute to an organization shaping community health outcomes across culturally diverse communities.

Role of a Board Member

As a Volunteer Board Member, you will provide strategic oversight and governance leadership to ensure PCHS achieves its mission, sustains funding, and strengthens community impact.

Key Responsibilities

- Provide strategic leadership and governance oversight
- Attend monthly Board meetings (third Wednesday, 6:00–8:00 p.m., virtual or in-person)
- Participate in the annual all-day Board Retreat
- Attend key events:
 - Annual General Meeting (September)
 - Friends of PCHS (late November/early December)
 - International Women's Day Gala (March)
- Participate in CARF accreditation surveys (every three years)
- Serve on a committee (4–6 virtual meetings annually)

General Expectations

- Attend at least 75% of Board meetings
- Review agendas and materials in advance
- Understand PCHS programs, policies, and financial oversight responsibilities
- Ensure the prudent use of all organizational assets, including financial resources and goodwill.
- Participate in governance education and Board performance assessment
- Act as an ambassador for PCHS



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Punjabi Community Health Services

- Support fundraising efforts and share networks to expand donor engagement

This is not an operational role. It is a governance role that requires strategic thinking, accountability, and a commitment to community impact.

Who Should Apply?

We welcome applicants with experience in:

- Governance and policy
- Finance and audit
- Healthcare or mental health systems, including health promotion and prevention
- Legal, risk management, or compliance
- Fundraising and philanthropy
- Community leadership

Individuals who are passionate about health equity and culturally responsive care are strongly encouraged to apply.

Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to submit their resume to the Nomination Committee at:

hr@pchs4u.com by **March 05, 2026**.

The Committee, led by Board Chair Arshdeep Phagoora, will interview selected candidates.

For more information, including Annual Reports and Financial Statements, please visit:

<http://www.pchs4u.com>

If you are ready to contribute your leadership to a respected, accredited, and growing community organization, we encourage you to apply. Strong governance builds strong community outcomes.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion Statement: PCHS is committed to diversity in its workplaces and welcomes applications from all visible minority groups, women, Aboriginal persons, 2SLGBTQ, persons with disabilities, among other self-identified diverse groups. We also provide accessible employment practices that comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act ('AODA'). If you require accommodation for a disability during any stage of the recruitment process, please notify Human Resources at hr@pchs4u.com

Use of AI: We use an applicant tracking system (ATS) to organize applications and improve efficiency. Every application is comprehensively reviewed by our recruitment team to ensure a thorough assessment of your experience, skills, and potential. AI is not used to make hiring decisions.

Disclaimer: PCHS only posts jobs on verified platforms and **never** requires candidates to pay fees. To apply safely, please send your resume directly to hr@pchs4u.com. Do not submit personal information through any other website or link.



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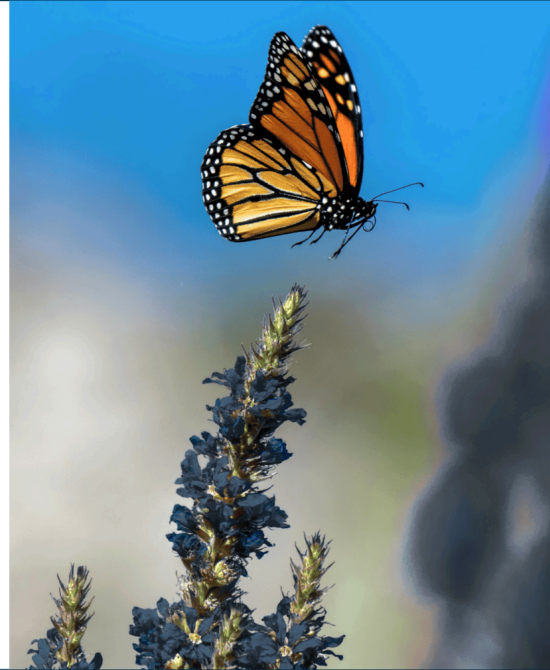
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Practice For BIPOC Community Members

Growing, Still is an exploration of growth that stillness can bring us through embodied movement and meditation practice. Practicing our capacity to pause, be still, notice, and then choose a response can support:

- Coping with discomfort with greater ease
- Increased understanding of what we need to heal wounds
- Revealing what has been hard to hold alone
- Exploring readiness for change
- Connecting with community
- Finding ways to sit supportively with change and challenge



Niya Bajaj, C-IAYT, Yoga Therapist
Aanchal Anand, Registered Psychotherapist

February 10th: Love
(Heart Health Month)

March 10th: Brain Health
(Brain Health Awareness Month)

April 14th: Caregiving
(National Caregiver Day)

May 12th: Mental Health
(Mental Health Week)

June 9th: Anxiety
(Action Anxiety Day)

July 14th: Self-Care
(International Self-Care Day)



Pay what feels accessible for you, knowing that higher contributions help make the program affordable for those with financial need.

 **Second Tuesday, Monthly**
Feb 10 - July 14

 **7:00 - 8:30 PM EST**

 **Sliding Scale:**
\$30-\$50 per session

 **Zoom**



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THERAPY



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In the News

[Internal reports shed light on lewd comments and behaviour at Canada's border agency](#)

A series of reports into cases of sexual harassment raise questions about the workplace culture at the Canada Border Services Agency, where internal investigations found inappropriate comments were tolerated and filing official complaints was discouraged.

[Estimated 12 Palestinian students accepted to U of T face difficulties securing a study visa](#)

There are currently over 130 graduate students who have received offers of admission to Canadian universities, but cannot complete the biometrics assessment required for a Canadian study visa. The Palestinian Students and Scholars at Risk (PSSAR) network is a nonprofit organization that has helped Palestinian students facing barriers to higher education following the destruction of Gaza's universities. It helps connect Palestinian students with institutions abroad by forming a direct line of communication between professors and students from Palestine who share similar research interests.

[How Toronto hopes to revolutionize its school food program](#)

Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow is a step closer to realizing one of her top priorities, after the city won an international innovation challenge that will help it create a community food hub pilot project. In the document laying out the mayor's 2026 budget, the first initiative mentioned is the city's school food program, touting an expansion of a free morning meal from 73 to 228 schools. The ultimate goal is to achieve a universal lunch program by 2030.

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International Experience Canada (IEC) Type 58 work permits. The IEC is a youth mobility program through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). It allows people aged 18 to 35 from countries with an IEC agreement to work in Canada for up to two years.

[Immigration could soon account for all of Canada's population growth](#)

With Canada's population growth now essentially flat, the country could be heading toward an unprecedented situation where population growth is driven entirely by immigration, one expert says.

[Canadian man stuck in ICE detention centre for 4 months, awaiting deportation hearing](#)

The family of a Canadian man detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement is pushing for his release from a Texas detention centre. Curtis Wright, 39, was born in Edmonton, but has lived in the United States for almost 30 years, where his parents, fiancée and three children also reside.

[She was recruited by Quebec. Now she may not be able to stay under new immigration rules](#)

Florence Bollet Michel's score has sat unchanged for months in the database of people looking to settle permanently in Quebec — and it's about to take a dip. Bollet Michel is one of thousands of applicants to the province's new economic immigration pathway, the Skilled Worker Selection Program, or PSTQ, which ranks people on a points-based system that works off evolving government priorities.

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