

January 21st, 2026

Hon. Lena Diab, KC

Minister for Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship

House of Commons, Ottawa ON, K1A 0A6

cc: Corey Hogan

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources

Member of Parliament for Calgary—Confederation

RE: Processing delays put graduate student families at risk

Dear Minister Diab,

I am writing to you as the representative for 7,700 graduate (master's and doctoral) students, a significant number of whom are international students, concerning the accelerating processing delays for study permits, Post-Graduate Work Permits (PGWPs), and Spousal Open Work Permits (SOWPs).

Survey data of our membership indicates that 70% of graduate students view study permit processing times as a major or severe problem, and 73% report the same for PGWP delays. These delays disrupt research timelines, restrict travel for academic work, and can create lapses in healthcare coverage, putting students' academic progress and well-being at risk.

SOWP delays are also separating graduate student families. Where a spouse is living in an unstable political, economic, or social environment, extended separation can elevate risks to their well-being and impose significant emotional and financial strain on their families.

We appreciate IRCC's commitment to the expedited (two-week) processing for new doctoral students and their accompanying family members, which recognizes that timely processing is essential to student success and family stability. Similarly, we respectfully request that IRCC make SOWP processing times faster for graduate students suffering from extended family separation. Supporting family unity enables these highly qualified individuals to fully contribute their skills to Canada's research and innovation ecosystem, strengthening Canada's long-term competitiveness and prosperity.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Irtaza Sohail

UCGSA President