

South Africa kisses thousands of doctors, professionals and businesses goodbye

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“While I can’t confirm that South Africa is facing a brain drain in my sole capacity, I can say you are **seeing an exodus of professionals in the healthcare sector**,” said Avramis.

He noted the NHI scheme is one of the main reasons why South African healthcare workers are leaving, with many of them not willing to wait and find out what the scheme will mean for their livelihoods in South Africa.

“There’s a lot of anxiety and mistrust among healthcare workers regarding the NHI – and doctors, who are the tip of the spear in medicine, and nurses, who are the backbone, are professionals who work hard and want to get paid well for their services,” said Avramis.

“And in this competitive global market, if there’s the ability for them to migrate to a better-paying market, they will do that,” he said.

Commenting on the reasons these doctors and nurses are choosing Canada, Avramis said the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada recognises South Africa’s healthcare education – meaning they don’t need to get re-certified.

“It’s pretty much a plug-and-play scenario for them,” he said.

Regarding the other types of immigration, Avramis said the most popular is inter-company transfers (people moving within multinational companies) and using the opportunity to take their families with them.

He also noted there has been a big increase in business owners wanting to move their businesses to Canada, often through the start-up visa program.

Again, Avramis noted Canada is a popular destination for South African business professionals because the country recognises all the major local university qualifications – while similar spoken languages and lifestyles are also major draws.

Unfortunately, Avramis said this trend of South Africans exiting the country is expected to continue amid high unemployment, poor economic growth, as well as uncertainty around the 2024 elections and new legislation such as the NHI.

He added that this office had only recorded over 500 immigration enquiries from South Africa before the Covid-19 pandemic, and this number had increased almost tenfold within five years.