

Statement

TESL Ontario Urges Adjustments to Immigration Funding and Language Education Cuts

TESL Ontario is deeply concerned by the recent federal decisions to cut immigration settlement funding among the ongoing reduction of international student study permits. These sweeping changes threaten to unravel the critical infrastructure that supports newcomer integration and language education across Canada. Language training programs are not merely services; they are lifelines, enabling newcomers to acquire the skills they need to thrive in their new communities, contribute to the economy, and build meaningful connections. By targeting Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels 5 and higher for defunding after September 2026 and slashing international student study permit approvals by 45%, these measures jeopardize the future of newcomers and the dedicated educators who serve them.

These funding reductions have resulted in the closure of key language training sites, significant job losses, and longer waitlists for language programs that were already struggling to meet demand. For instance, the Toronto District School Board has been forced to shut down five federally funded English training sites, reducing capacity by 28%. Across Canada, numerous organizations have faced drastic funding cuts, with some losing their funding entirely. Compounding these challenges, a 45% reduction in international student study permit approvals has destabilized post-secondary education programs, including a pipeline for future English language educators. In an already unstable employment sector, the loss of vital employment opportunities caused by these cuts will leave many language educators—many of whom are immigrants themselves—facing heightened insecurity about their future.

TESL Ontario urges the government to reconsider funding for advanced language training, restore settlement service funding to address growing waitlists, and revisit the reductions in study permits for international students. These measures are critical to meeting the urgent need within immigrant communities for vital language education programs that are essential for successful integration into Canadian society. Such programs equip newcomers with the skills needed to participate in the workforce, navigate daily life, and build meaningful connections in their new communities. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring the success of newcomers, safeguarding Canada's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive nation, and preserving the social and economic contributions immigrants bring to our country. We stand ready to collaborate with policymakers to develop sustainable solutions that prioritize both the integration of newcomers and the vitality of the language education sector.