



**TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
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The Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
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Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding Funding Cuts and Their Impact on Canada's Language Education Sector

Dear Minister Miller,

I am writing on behalf of TESL Ontario, an association representing more than 4600 language education professionals, to express our deep concerns about the recent cuts to immigration settlement funding among the substantial reductions in international student study permits. These changes are already having a devastating impact on the language education sector in Ontario and across Canada, threatening not only the livelihoods of thousands of language educators but also the ability of newcomers to successfully integrate into Canadian society.

The Critical Role of Language Education in Integration

Language education is a cornerstone of newcomer settlement and integration. For immigrants, English proficiency is essential to accessing job opportunities, advancing careers, and supporting their families' success in Canada. It provides newcomers with the tools to:

- Participate meaningfully in the workforce, filling labor shortages and maximizing their professional credentials.
- Access essential services, such as healthcare, education, housing, and legal aid, empowering them to advocate for themselves and their families.
- Develop financial literacy skills to navigate Canada's banking, taxation, and financial systems, helping them manage their finances effectively and plan for long-term stability.
- Support their children's education and actively participate in school activities, strengthening family ties to academic success.
- Build connections within their communities, fostering social inclusion and cultural integration.

Language proficiency equips immigrants with the confidence to access opportunities, advance their careers, and contribute fully to Canadian society. Cutting support for language programs undermines these outcomes, creating barriers that disproportionately affect newcomers and their communities.

Consequences of Recent Funding Reductions

The recent funding reductions, particularly the planned cessation of support for Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) levels 5 and higher after September 2026, will leave many newcomers without the tools they need to thrive. Specific impacts include:

- **Barriers to Employment:** CLB 4 is insufficient for navigating complex workplace communication or pursuing higher education and certifications. Without advanced language training, foreign-trained professionals are relegated to low-paying jobs that do not utilize their expertise.
- **Strain on Public Systems:** Newcomers unable to understand prescriptions or medical instructions risk serious health complications, adding pressure to Canada's healthcare system through preventable emergencies.
- **Social Isolation and Mental Health Challenges:** The loss of access to community-building opportunities exacerbates mental health struggles and social exclusion among immigrants.
- **Economic Loss:** Without adequate language skills, immigrants are unable to contribute to their full potential, resulting in underemployment and lost tax revenue that could otherwise fund critical public services.
- **Increased Inequity:** These changes widen the gap between those fortunate enough to afford private language instruction and those reliant on publicly funded programs like LINC, leaving vulnerable populations further disadvantaged.

Impact on Educators and the Sector

The funding cuts also jeopardize the livelihoods and continued career development of thousands of English language educators, many of whom are immigrants themselves. These educators are highly dedicated and knowledgeable professionals who play a critical role in helping newcomers successfully integrate into Canadian society. They not only teach language skills but also create a vital support system, fostering community connections and helping learners navigate life in Canada.

With fewer resources, instructors face larger class sizes, reduced one-on-one instructional time, and increasing demands to accommodate learners with special needs. These challenges may force many talented teachers to leave the profession, taking with them their collective knowledge and the essential support networks they have built for their students.

Broader Economic and Social Impacts

Immigration is critical to Canada's population growth, economic expansion, and global competitiveness. Canada relies on skilled immigrants to fill labor shortages, drive innovation, and ensure sustainability. By cutting funding for advanced language training, the government risks:

- Worsening underemployment and reducing tax revenue, which in turn affects funding for other critical public services.
- Deterring highly skilled immigrants, who may opt for countries that provide more robust settlement and language training supports.

- Leaving industries across Canada underutilized and uncompetitive due to the growing gap between available talent and workplace requirements.

These impacts harm not only newcomers but also the broader Canadian economy, which relies on fully integrated immigrants to remain competitive in a globalized world.

Mitigating the Impact and Securing Canada's Future

Funding of language education and language educators must be reframed as an investment in Canada's future, benefiting both newcomers and the nation as a whole. We recommend:


1. **Restoring funding for advanced language training (CLB 5 and higher)** to support employment-focused and professional language skill development. At minimum, funding should prioritize CLB 7, levels which better reflect the language requirements for professional employment, post-secondary education and certifications.
2. **Increasing settlement service funding** to address growing waitlists and ensure organizations can meet the needs of vulnerable communities.
3. **Revisiting reductions in study permits for international students**, whose contributions are vital to Canada's education sector and economic growth.
4. **Expanding programs to bridge the gap between CLB 4 and employment readiness**, ensuring learners can successfully transition to meaningful careers or higher education.
5. **Supporting professional development for instructors**, equipping them with the tools to effectively navigate a changing and increasingly demanding teaching environment.

Canada's reputation as a welcoming and inclusive nation is built on a foundation of strong settlement supports, including language education. These programs are essential not only for helping newcomers integrate and thrive but also for strengthening Canada's economy and communities. Without adequate funding and resources, we risk undermining these goals and losing the significant social and economic benefits that immigrants bring to our country.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your representatives to discuss these urgent issues further and explore solutions that prioritize the success of newcomers, educators, and the sustainability of the language education sector.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



Allison Keown
Executive Director
TESL Ontario