

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget

By: TESL Ontario



Introduction:

Recent cuts to immigration settlement funding—combined with significant reductions in international student study permits—are already having a devastating impact on the language education sector in Ontario and across Canada. These changes threaten the livelihoods of thousands of language educators and jeopardize newcomers' ability to successfully integrate into Canadian society.

Language education is a cornerstone of successful settlement and integration. English proficiency enables immigrants to access employment, pursue education, and support their families in building successful lives in Canada.

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. CLB 4 is insufficient for navigating complex workplace communication or pursuing higher education and certifications, understanding prescriptions or medical instructions, risking serious health complications, and leaving new Canadians unable to contribute to their full potential, resulting in underemployment and lost tax revenue that could otherwise fund critical public services.

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.

In light of this, we respectfully urge the federal government to consider the following recommendations:

1. Restore and Sustain Funding for Advanced Language Training

- Reinstatement of federal funding for language training up to at least Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Level 7.

Rationale:

- CLB 7 reflects the real language demands of professional employment, post-secondary studies, continuing education, and certification programs.
- Funding limited to CLB 4 is insufficient and undermines newcomers' long-term integration and contributions to Canadian society.

2. Expand Access Through Cost-Effective, Flexible Delivery Models

- Support remote and hybrid learning options, particularly for intermediate and advanced learners.

Rationale:

- Virtual delivery can offer a cost-effective and scalable solution, improving access for learners in rural, remote, or underserved areas.

3. Strengthen Bridging and Transition Supports

- Invest in programs that assist learners transitioning from basic language training (Stage 1) into employment, post-secondary education, or self-directed study.

Rationale:

- Without these supports, many newcomers plateau before reaching their goals, limiting their integration and economic potential.

4. Stabilize Settlement Service Funding

- Ensure predictable, multi-year funding for settlement services to address increasing waitlists and staffing shortages.

Rationale:

- Stable funding enables programs to operate at full capacity and serve vulnerable, high-need populations more effectively.

5. Revisit Study Permit Reductions for International Students

- Reassess the scale and impact of recent study permit reductions.

Rationale:

- International students are a vital part of Canada's educational system and economy. Reductions have ripple effects on language programs, post-secondary institutions, and the long-term talent pipeline for the Canadian workforce.