



**TEACHERS OF ENGLISH  
AS A SECOND LANGUAGE  
ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO**

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The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

**Subject: Concerns About Language Education Cuts—A Call for Collaboration and Constructive Action**

Dear Minister Metlege Diab,

On behalf of TESL Ontario, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. We look forward to your leadership on issues that profoundly affect newcomers to Canada and the professionals who support their successful integration.

TESL Ontario is a non-profit professional association representing more than 4,600 language education professionals across Ontario. Our members include instructors, program administrators, and researchers who play a vital role in helping immigrants build the language and cultural fluency required to thrive in Canadian society. Their work is essential to the success of Canada's immigration strategy, and to the social and economic strength of the country.

I am writing to express our deep concerns about the recent cuts to immigration settlement funding among the already 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 learners rely on these programs to support their success in Canada, as one learner explained:

*“The funding cuts will limit my access to classes I rely on. Without support, I may have to stop learning English. It will slow down my progress and hurt my future goals. This education is my bridge to a better life—losing it would set me back.”*  
Learner – Yurii P.

*Others shared:*

*“If I didn’t have access to English classes, I would struggle to study, find work, and communicate with others in Canada. I would feel isolated and less able to support my family.”* Learner— Abdul A.

*“The funding cuts will affect me and many other newcomers who rely on English classes to succeed. Without access to these programs, it will be harder for us to learn, find jobs, go to school, and be part of the community. These classes gave me the tools to improve my life, and without them, many people will feel lost and left behind.”* Learner — Abdul A.

### 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.

The human cost of these cuts is best understood through the voices of those affected:

*“The funding cuts will affect me a lot. For example, I can't pay for the English lesson program myself, and I can't join the free adult high school because I have to work during the day.”* Learner — Anna S.

*“English education has played a big role in my life by helping me communicate confidently, access better job opportunities, and connect with people from around the world. If funding is cut... it could affect not just individual futures, but also community integration, job readiness, and the ability to participate fully in society.”* — Anonymous Learner

*“That will be deeply concerning, as [cuts] limit access to essential language education for newcomers. These classes help immigrants integrate, find jobs, and participate in society.”* Learner — Khadija M.

One educator put it this way:

*“If funding is cut, my classroom will lose more than resources—we’ll lose momentum, hope, and access. Many of my learners rely on free or low-cost language programs as their only bridge to education, employment, and integration.” — Anonymous Educator*

### **Impact on Educators and Sector Stability**

TESL Ontario is also deeply concerned about the impact these cuts are having on language educators—many of whom are immigrants themselves. These dedicated professionals are not only teachers; they are mentors, connectors, and cultural guides.

Without investment in this workforce, we risk losing the collective knowledge and support systems that these experienced educators provide to learners across the country.

The consequences for our teaching workforce are real and growing. As one experienced instructor described:

*“The funding cuts are already creating uncertainty for educators... With fewer resources and less job security, many passionate and qualified teachers are being let go — which directly affects the support that learners receive. What worries me most is the long-term effect: if TESL is no longer seen as a stable or valued profession, fewer people will choose to pursue it.” Educator— Amandeep S.*

### **Broader Social and Economic Consequences**

Canada relies on immigration to drive population growth, fill labour shortages, and remain globally competitive. Language training is fundamental to unlocking newcomers’ potential and ensuring they become contributors to the Canadian economy—not casualties of underemployment.

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.

Educators have been clear: these cuts are not just a blow to language training—they are a setback for Canada’s social and economic future. As several shared:

*“The hope that these funding cuts take away from newcomers is unbelievably devastating. These funding cuts create a glass ceiling... and distrust in the government of Canada.” Educator — Karlie H.*

*“We must give all residents of Canada an opportunity to learn the English in order to help them succeed. Funding cuts to language programs rob these individuals of their dreams and the financial independence that comes with speaking the language of the majority.” — Anonymous Educator*

*“Some students may never get another chance to study English, and their ability to find work, access healthcare, support their children in school, or even do simple things like go grocery shopping or talk to a neighbour will be affected. These cuts don’t just hurt newcomers—they hurt our communities.” — Anonymous Educator*

Failing to support language acquisition at higher levels will widen inequality and undercut the benefits of immigration, including tax contributions, innovation, and economic development.

## **Recommendations & Solutions**

While we understand the need for fiscal prudence during these uncertain economic times, we urge your ministry to reframe the funding of language education—and the professionals who deliver it—not as a cost, but as an investment in Canada’s future. Supporting language training benefits not only newcomers, but the workforce, the economy, and our communities as a whole.

To that end, we respectfully recommend the following actions:

### **1. Restore and Sustain Funding for Advanced Language Training**

We **strongly recommend** restoring funding for language training up to **at least CLB 7**, a level that better reflects the language proficiency required for professional employment, post-secondary education, continuing education pathway programs, and certification programs. CLB 4 is insufficient for these goals, and removing access to higher levels risks undermining newcomer integration and reducing the long-term economic and social contributions of immigrants.

*“Fund up to CLB 7 at least to ensure learners are able to move on to college programs/high school credit to get back to the profession that they came here to do.” — Anonymous Program Administrator*

*“Flexible (online and virtual) options for CLB5+ should be a viable solution. It will allow [IRCC] to cut costs... while still providing support to higher level learners.” — Anonymous Program Administrator*

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

Consider supporting remote delivery options for intermediate and advanced learners. Online programs—where appropriate—can offer a cost-effective alternative to in-person delivery while maintaining access for learners in underserved or remote areas.

*“At a minimum, IRCC should provide funding to even one organization to run Stage 2 courses online that learners from any area across Canada could join.” — Anonymous Program Administrator*

### **3. Increase Flexibility for Service Provider Organizations (SPOs)**

Allow SPOs greater discretion in how they allocate their budgets. If programs can deliver Stage 2 programs within their existing allocations, they should be supported in doing so. Blanket cuts limit local responsiveness and eliminate access even where capacity still exists.

*“Funders should give flexibility to SPOs to continue Stage 2 classes if they can fit it in their current budget rather than completely eliminating it.” — Anonymous Program Administrator*

#### **4. Strengthen Bridging and Transition Supports**

Develop programs that help learners transition from Stage 1 into workplace training, post-secondary education, or self-directed learning. Without these supports, many newcomers will stagnate just short of their goals.

*“Bridging Stage 1 learners into independent learning once their program eligibility ends. Preparing them to be autonomous learners.” — Anonymous Program Administrator*

#### **5. Stabilize Settlement Service Funding**

Waitlists are growing, and many programs are operating at reduced capacity despite strong demand. Stable, consistent settlement funding is essential to maintaining access, especially for vulnerable and high-need learners.

*“Give multi-year contracts so that some sustainability in a program can be implemented.” — Anonymous Program Administrator*

#### **6. Support the Professional Development of Language Educators**

Language instructors are at the forefront of newcomer integration, yet they face growing challenges—larger class sizes, increasingly complex learner needs, and rapidly evolving teaching demands. Sustained, funded professional development is essential to equip educators with the tools they need to adapt and thrive. By investing in their professional growth, IRCC strengthens the capacity of Canada’s language teaching workforce, an investment that directly supports more effective, inclusive, and successful immigration outcomes.

#### **7. Revisit Study Permit Reductions for International Students**

International students contribute significantly to Canada’s education system and economy. A reassessment of current study permit reductions is needed to avoid unintended consequences for post-secondary institutions, language programs, and the future of the Canadian workforce.

TESL Ontario welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with IRCC in developing sustainable, learner-centered solutions. The feedback from our program administrators demonstrates that efficiency and access do not need to be mutually exclusive, there are paths forward that preserve core services while responding to fiscal realities.

Minister Metlege Diab, the decisions made now will shape the futures of thousands of newcomers and the sustainability of our profession. TESL Ontario would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your staff to share insights from the field and explore constructive paths forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



**Allison Keown**  
Executive Director  
TESL Ontario