



MOSAIC

Together we advance an inclusive and thriving Canada.

Submission to Pre-Budget Consultations for Federal Budget 2023

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For over 45 years, MOSAIC has been committed to improving the lives of immigrants, refugees, and temporary foreign workers in British Columbia as one of the largest providers of settlement, family, employment, language, interpretation, and translation services in Canada. MOSAIC's mission is to enrich communities through services and advocacy, furthering the success and sense of belonging of newcomers and individuals from diverse backgrounds. We embrace the leadership role we play in delivering services that allow newcomers to reach their full capacity and be connected within the communities where they live and work.

MOSAIC welcomes the opportunity to share with the federal government our recommendations in the following areas aimed at improving the well-being and outcomes of newcomers in an inclusive and thriving Canada. These recommendations are based on our front-line experience, close collaboration with partner social service, community, and health organizations, and feedback analysed from hundreds of stakeholders connected to newcomer and immigrant populations.

Summary of Key Recommendations

- 1. Create a Federal Housing Strategy Connected to and Supporting Immigration Strategy**
- 2. Investment to Improve Health Equity for Newcomers**
- 3. Invest in Language Training for Immigrants, Temporary Workers, and Refugees**
- 4. Connect More Newcomers to Skills-Commensurate Employment**
- 5. Alleviate Financial and Administrative Burdens on Non-Profit Organizations**

1. Create a Federal Housing Strategy Connected to and Supporting Immigration Strategy

In 2022, for the second year in a row, Canada welcomed more permanent residents than ever before in our history – over 430,000. The Canadian government credited this approach to immigration with positioning Canada to have “one of the fastest recoveries from the pandemic” ([IRCC News Release, January 23, 2023](#)). At the same time, temporary foreign workers increased almost 20% in 2022 to 500,000 and international student numbers rebounded to pre-pandemic levels of over 620,000. This was acknowledged as a key component of the strategy to stabilize and bolster the labour economy. Yet all too often the supports necessary to settle newcomers effectively and allow them to participate in our economy and society are lacking in the key area of secure, affordable housing. Refugee newcomers face even greater challenges ([BC CHARMS Report, 2021](#)) Without this foundation, the ability to attract and settle skilled immigrants within our communities will be impeded.

MOSAIC recommends an increased commitment to addressing the systemic barriers to housing faced by newcomers, particularly women and racialized individuals, because of a lack of Canadian references, credit and rental history, work experience, but especially – the overall lack of affordable housing. We suggest that housing affordability could be promoted by continued federal leadership and increased funding that encourages provinces and municipalities to work together to increase the supply of affordable housing, specifically Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI). To address the additional barriers faced by newcomers in terms of references and experience, the federal government could encourage municipalities to require new residential developments to include affordable housing units dedicated for newcomers in their first 3-5 years in Canada.





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2. Investment to Improve Health Equity for Newcomers

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the extent to which our individual health is dependent on the health of everyone in our community. It has also highlighted that ethno-cultural communities were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic ([Canadian Medical Association Journal, August 2021](#)). As we reflect on the lessons learned through the pandemic, we call on the government to strengthen universal health care and the integration of social services with healthcare services to effectively address the underlying social determinants of health.

MOSAIC supports many of the Health Coalitions across Canada, such as N4 Network and the Canada Health Coalition, in calling upon our federal government, and all other levels of government, to collaborate and to improve the capacity of our public health care system.

Specific Recommendations:

1. Address existing health inequities by removing barriers to access, supporting research to inform policy, and scaling up services for marginalized and ethno-cultural communities.
2. Create a national standardized process of accreditation for internationally-trained doctors and nurses, and remove systemic barriers to allow employment in health professions to be based on objective, standardized evaluation of competence, regardless of place of education.

In our increasingly multicultural society, cultural awareness and safety is an integral component in many health care interactions. Members of immigrant, refugee, ethno-cultural and racialized communities experience social determinants of health that are shaped by in-equalities related to housing, education, employment and linguistic barriers. Culturally safe and trauma-informed approaches, including immunization education ([Immunization Uptake Project for Ethnocultural Communities funded by PHAC](#)), are vital to allow for connection to appropriate services and adherence to treatment. Providing services in ways that remove barriers, such as not requiring proof of immigration status and in a newcomer's first or preferred language, would have a significant impact on health outcomes.

We support the recommendations of health care advocacy groups, such as the [Canadian Health Coalition](#), "that the government increases investments to end the health care human resources crisis, beginning by delivering on the governing party's 2021 election promises to provide \$3.2-billion to the provinces and territories for the hiring of 7,500 new family doctors, nurses, and nurse practitioners". Building on this recommendation, MOSAIC further suggests that, given the current and ongoing shortage of health care workers in Canada, the government should expedite the accreditation of internationally-trained doctors and nurses by taking a leadership role in creating a national standard. This would reduce the difficulty that newcomers face navigating the discrepancies and idiosyncrasies of different provincial regulations and processes. Alleviating the healthcare human resources crisis through expedited accreditation of internationally-trained professionals and removing systemic barriers would have the dual effect of improving access to healthcare for all, while increasing skills-commensurate employment and more robust participation in the Canadian the economy for newcomer professionals. This is further detailed in MOSAIC's recommendation #5.





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3. Increase Investment in Language Training for Temporary Workers, and Modernize Modalities to Reflect Current Needs of Immigrants, Refugees and TFWs

Organizations engaged in delivering the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program are inundated with requests for language training from clients currently ineligible for the program, such as those on temporary work visas. According to data collected through our LINC intake form in the last half of 2022, 53% percent of the intake submissions were from ineligible clients who identified as temporary residents.

While there is demonstrated need for temporary work permit holders to have improved language skills in order to fill employment demands, the options for these clients remain informal (conversation circles) or expensive (private language schools) and are both limited and ineffective. With the anticipated increase in temporary work permits as a key part of Canada's employment strategy, the positive outcomes for our economy and society of providing free, funded and flexible training in official languages to temporary workers should not be under-estimated.

In addition to expanding eligibility, MOSAIC recommends improving the modality and delivery methods of language training to better fit the needs of newcomers. Clients participating in the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program often need to combine 'survival' or trade related employment while trying to participate in LINC. These survival jobs, with their long hours and strenuous labour, make participating in a traditional language program extremely challenging. Given the need to financial support their families these newcomers often make the choice of sacrificing their language development for the sake of the short-term survival job.

Over 40% of newcomers who exit MOSAIC's LINC program do so because the fixed hours, in-person schedule and format do not meet their needs, creating poor attendance and/or the need to prioritize employment. If LINC is to be a integral part of a vibrant post-pandemic economic recovery, then more flexibly scheduled programming that allows for participants to combine work and language development are needed.

A flexible language training model that incorporates asynchronous, remote learning allows clients to participate according to their own schedule and has proven effective at overcoming multiple barriers such as: trauma, low education and digital literacy, lack of access to transportation, and health challenges.





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4. Connecting More Newcomers to Skills-Commensurate Employment

While there are programs to attract and support skilled immigrants coming to Canada (such as IRCC's Express Entry program and Planning for Canada pre-arrival support program), there are still barriers in obtaining one's professional credentials in Canada and obtaining skills-commensurate employment due to lack of work experience in Canada. The eligibility for these programs and supports excludes two significant categories of newcomers – work and study permit holders.

Therefore, we recommend:

1. Additional funding for pre-arrival programs that focus on specific skilled occupations that are in high demand in Canada (e.g. healthcare professions, skilled trades), who are living abroad but approved as Permanent Residents, to facilitate their pathway and integration into these target occupations upon arrival in Canada.
2. For existing employment programs, open eligibility criteria to include work and study permit holders.
3. Streamline the accreditation process for internationally-educated healthcare professionals.

In particular, we draw attention the recent report entitled *The Myth of Canada*, “occupational exclusion harms not only Internationally-Trained Physicians (ITPs) and their families, but also the public and the existing overburdened healthcare system...during an unparalleled public health crisis”.

As highlighted in our Recommendation #2, streamlining the accreditation process and removing barriers to the skilled employment of internationally-educated doctors, nurses and other health professionals would have a dual and exponential effect on both access to health care for Canadians from all walks of life and on the capacity to effectively settle immigrants in skilled occupations allowing them to thrive.

5. Alleviate Financial and Administrative Burdens on Non-Profit Organizations

Beginning with the [Blue Ribbon Panel](#) in 2006 and including the 2019 Senates report entitled [Catalyst for Change](#), the Government has made ongoing efforts to streamline the administrative burden and improve the effectiveness of the non-profit sector. However, much remains to be done. The pandemic destabilized the organizational capacity of the non-profit sector and highlighted the need to invest in long-term strategic and operational plans. The short-term, project-based nature of government funding and burdensome reporting requirements do not allow for continuity of services and force non-profit organizations to spend significant amount of time on writing grant applications or reports to funders rather than focusing on service delivery. The sector is facing unprecedented levels of staff burnout and retention challenges, which are directly linked to the ever-increasing administrative burden of securing and managing government funding and lack of flexibility that contribution agreements allow to respond to actual emerging needs among communities served. While valuable progress has been made, MOSAIC recommends that the Government re-engage in their commitment to reform the Grants and Contributions program and to engage in meaningful partnerships with organizations across the sector to simplify the burdensome reporting requirements and encourage multi-year and core funding. Investments to alleviate the funding gaps experienced by the non-profit sector are also critical. Without this, organizations may be forced to allocate stretched resources away from program delivery or narrow their objectives.

