



Together we advance an inclusive and thriving Canada.

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

By: MOSAIC

Submitted by Olga Stachova
Chief Executive Officer
MOSAIC
ostachova@mosaicbc.org
1-236-485-1000

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- **Recommendation 1:** That the Government of Canada continue to provide long-term and sustainable funding to Employment and Social Development Canada's Migrant Worker Support Program.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the Government of Canada restore the funding for intermediate and advanced language training, especially programs aligned with workforce development.
- **Recommendation 3:** That the Government of Canada integrate language instruction with employment services to maximize newcomer potential and economic contribution.





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For almost 50 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.

Recommendation #1:

That the Government of Canada continues to provide long-term and sustainable funding to Employment and Social Development Canada's Migrant Worker Support Program.

As we face the largest economic challenge in recent Canadian history, it is essential to recognize that migrant workers fill labour shortages across many industries, including agriculture, construction, manufacturing, hospitality, and caregiving – all essential to sustaining Canada's economic growth. Employment and Social Development Canada has created a robust Migrant Worker Support Program (MWSP) that streamlines the cohesion of employers and temporary foreign workers (TFWs) in the face of economic uncertainty. With program funding slated to end March 31, 2026, we will lose the ability to support this valuable community.

The Primary Agriculture Stream has the highest number of approved LMIA's of all industries. In BC alone, agriculture is the largest industry employing temporary foreign workers, with over 13,000 workers hired in 2024, contributing to a revenue of nearly 5 billion.

In the booming construction industry, 7,160 TFWs were brought in between 2019-2023; while TFWs represent 2.1% of the general workforce across Canada, they make up 4.7% of the construction workforce in BC, demonstrating the high demand. The province will need 52,600 new construction workers by 2032 to avoid labour shortages, 30% of whom would come from outside of Canada.

Within the caregiving program, as of 2021 there are approximately 25,000 migrant caregivers across Canada. With the government's announcement in 2024 of the new caregiving model, those numbers may continue to rise as caregivers seek permanent residency.

Employment in BC's tourism and hospitality sector has been steadily growing since pre-COVID, with a 2.6% increase, however there is still estimated to be more than 106,000 jobs in the industry opening across the province up to 2028, many being filled by TFWs.

Migrant workers are an integral part of Canada's workforce, one that helps ensure food security, build housing and infrastructure, and provide care for loved ones, among countless other jobs they fill and services they provide – often low-skill and low-wage jobs that Canadians either are not interested in, available for, or qualified for. While Canada is aiming to reduce the number of TFWs over time, the





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dependency on this population is clear and efforts to support their working conditions, living conditions, and well-being is imperative.

Although migrant workers have rights written into Canadian laws, a lack of enforcement or systemic monitoring means their rights are not always protected or upheld. Work permit conditions make many TFWs dependent on their employer for housing, access to healthcare, and access to basic information about their rights, and many employers choose to keep migrant workers ignorant of their labour rights, so they won't know when their rights are being violated or have the knowledge or skills to advocate for themselves. Labour exploitation commonly experienced by migrant workers includes wage theft, excessive working hours, surveillance, lack of privacy, inadequate housing, racist encounters, gender-based violence, and in some cases TFWs become victims of human trafficking. Exploitation of migrant workers can fit a broad range of violations and abuses, all stemming from an employer's power over a worker's labour conditions and immigration status.

Since the launch of the pilot program in 2019, MOSAIC has worked alongside a network of organizations providing specialized support to over 170,000 migrant workers across BC. The Migrant Worker Support Program has enabled us to work hand in hand with employers, boards of trade, embassies and consulates, and other non-profit organizations to strengthen and streamline the support of migrant workers by providing them with one-on-one support, newcomer orientation, education about workers' rights, community connections, outreach, as well as emergency support for workers fleeing abuse, unsafe conditions, and natural disasters such as wildfires and floods. Migrant workers typically face barriers to accessing services due to their temporary status, and the MWSP fills this gap by directly meeting the overwhelming need for comprehensive support.

Migrant workers have shared that through the program they have gained the skills to recognize when their rights are violated and advocate for themselves and their peers in the face of those violations. Through one-on-one support, many migrant workers have also successfully applied for and received Open Work Permits for Vulnerable Workers, allowing them to leave an abusive workplace and find work elsewhere, and others have recovered thousands of dollars of unpaid wages or other entitlements through Employment Standards Branch settlements. These kinds of supports, that would not be possible without the Migrant Worker Support Program, have a positive impact on the economy, allowing more migrant workers to stay in Canada and getting them back to work sooner.

The MWSP's emergency fund has reached migrant workers in crisis across the country. Since its start in 2022, over 430 workers in BC have received emergency funds to help meet their immediate needs, in many cases providing them with critical assistance while facing desperate circumstances and helping to rehabilitate after leaving unsafe conditions. Furthermore, through collaboration with the MWSP network, over 3,800 workers have received emergency support in various other capacities, including evacuations during natural disasters, hamper kits, and emergency supplies for wildfire response, among many other urgent needs. MOSAIC currently represents migrant workers on the Integrated Disaster Council of BC and, through the robust MWSP network, was able to create an emergency task force in response to real-time emergencies in local communities across BC, initially set up during the 2023 wildfire season. These supports help alleviate the strain on first responders and government resources in times of crisis.

The Migrant Worker Support Program helps relieve the burden for the federal government by accompanying migrant workers through all facets of their stay in Canada, including navigating the healthcare system, referrals to legal support, working with migrant workers to understand their rights, assisting with filing complaints and applying for new permits, and helping employers understand their



obligations, thereby addressing many of the questions and concerns that otherwise are brought forward to public service.

Continued funding of this program will allow the MWSP network to carry on its crucial work supporting the growth of Canada by providing otherwise inaccessible services to migrant workers as they fulfill essential jobs across all sectors of the economy, a role made more dire in this time of changes to the immigration sector and international economic uncertainty.

Recommendation #2 and #3:

We respectfully urge the Standing Committee on Finance to review funding for higher-level Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), specifically levels 5 through 8, commonly referred to as Stage 2 language training.

Stage 2 LINC classes are a vital bridge for thousands of newcomers transitioning from basic survival to long-term success in Canada. While cancelling these programs may yield modest short-term savings, the long-term impact on employment, productivity, and social integration will far outweigh any immediate fiscal benefit.

MOSAIC recommends:

- **Restoring funding for intermediate and advanced language training, especially programs aligned with workforce development.**
- **Integrating language instruction with employment services to maximize newcomer potential and economic contribution.**

Socio-Economic Impact

Stage 2 language classes provide essential supports that extend well beyond basic communication. They improve language proficiency, which has been shown to enhance employment outcomes. They serve as a bridge, guiding newcomers into high-productivity professions and educational pathways. They also foster socio-cultural integration by enabling fuller participation in community life. Eliminating these supports disrupts the settlement journey and weakens the economic and social contributions of thousands of high-skilled newcomers.

Low proficiency in English remains one of the most significant barriers preventing newcomers from securing and retaining employment that matches their skills and qualifications. Lower levels of language proficiency are consistently linked to reduced labour market participation and higher unemployment rates¹. Immigrants with limited language skills earn substantially less than those with higher proficiency,

¹ Kelly, P., Damsbaek, N., Lemoine, M., Fang, T., Preston, V., & Tufts, S. (2010). Language skills and immigrant labour market outcomes (TIEDI Analytical Report No. 11, pp. 1–12). Toronto, ON: Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative: <https://crdcn.ca/publication/language-skills-and-immigrant-labour-market-outcomes/>

even when controlling for education and experience². As noted by the Fraser Institute, “language proficiency is the most prominent factor explaining lower compensation among immigrants compared to Canadian-born workers³.” Without adequate language support, Canada risks underutilizing immigrant talent, leading to lost productivity and diminished contributions to the national economy.

The removal of Stage 2 language classes threatens to dismantle long-established pathways that help newcomers access high-skill, high-productivity employment in priority sectors. Many provincially funded employment training programs require a minimum Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) of 5 or higher. Admission into diploma and degree programs at public and private post-secondary institutions typically demand a CLB of 7 or above. Most regulated professions in key sectors—such as health, education, and the trades—require a minimum CLB of 6, with many demanding CLB levels of 8 or 9. Canada’s economic success depends on attracting high-skilled immigrants and supporting their transition into impactful careers, cancelling Stage 2 language classes removes a vital link in that pathway.

Beyond economic integration, language proficiency plays a critical role in shaping newcomers’ connection to Canadian society. Language proficiency is the strongest predictor of community engagement, and without it, newcomers often face isolation, limited access to services, and reduced participation in civic life⁴. These barriers also contribute to poorer health outcomes, placing additional strain on public health and social systems⁵. Furthermore, limited official language proficiency restricts civic participation, posing challenges to building inclusive communities. When newcomers are unable to fully engage in civic life, the result is a fragmented society with diminished collective capacity to address shared challenges.

Given the clear link between language proficiency and both economic and social integration of newcomers, Canada must prioritize the development of an employment-focused, streamlined, and pathway-based Stage 2 language learning program. Such a program should align language instruction with vocational goals, post-secondary access, and licensing requirements in regulated professions. By integrating targeted language training with wraparound supports, newcomers can more effectively transition into high-demand sectors and contribute meaningfully to the Canadian economy.

² Xu, L., & Hou, F. (2023). *Official language proficiency and immigrant labour market outcomes: Evidence from test-based multidimensional measures of language skills*. Economic and Social Reports, Statistics Canada. [Official language proficiency and immigrant labour market outcomes: Evidence from test-based multidimensional measures of language skills](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2011004/article/11559-eng.pdf)

³ Fraser Institute. (2023). *Enhancing the Labour Market Outcomes of Immigrants to Canada*. Retrieved from https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/enhancing-the-labour-market-outcomes-of-immigrants-to-canada_0.pdf

⁴ Nakhaie R. Language proficiency and sociocultural integration of Canadian newcomers. *Applied Psycholinguistics*. 2020;41(6):1437-1464.

⁵ Ng E., Pottie K., Spitzer D, Official language proficiency and self-reported health among immigrants to Canada, 2011: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2011004/article/11559-eng.pdf>