firstcall CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCACY SOCIETY SINCE 1995

[Date]

The Honourable Lena Metlege Diab Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Government of Canada Ottawa, ON

Dear Minister Diab,

Re: Call to Reinstate Funding for Immigrant Settlement Services in British Columbia

As organizations concerned with the healthy development and well-being of young children, the Early Childhood Development Roundtable of First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society, is writing to you to regarding the government's multi-year reductions to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funding for immigrant settlement services in British Columbia, and the effects this will have on newcomer families with children in British Columbia. We urge the Government of Canada to reinstate funding for affected programs.

We add our voices to those of many of the affected organizations as well as BC's provincial and municipal leaders who have expressed their dismay with these cuts and called for their immediate reinstatement.[1]

Research consistently demonstrates that the early years are a critical period for children's cognitive, social, emotional, and language development. For newcomer families facing language barriers, social isolation, economic pressures, and the challenges of adapting to a new country, access to settlement and family support services can significantly influence children's developmental outcomes and long-term success.

Settlement services help BC newcomers develop language and parenting skills, connect with their new communities and essential services, and assist with mental and wellness support. Additionally, they help newcomers connect with employers, where they can participate fully in the workforce, benefiting both their own families and the broader economy.

In short, settlement services are among the best financial investments governments can make.

Based on federal immigration data and BC's historical share of newcomer arrivals, an estimated 15,000–20,000 immigrant families with children aged 0–6 have settled in BC over the past three years. **These families continue to require language, literacy,**

[1] Union of BC Municipalities, Reinstatement of Federal Funding for Settlement Programs *https://www.ubcm.ca/convention-resolutions/resolutions/resolutions-database/reinstatement-federal-funding-settlement*

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parenting, and settlement supports to ensure successful integration and positive outcomes for children.

Surveys of organizations throughout BC have documented significant impacts resulting from the millions of dollars in funding reductions that took effect in 2025. To date, dozens of organizations have reported losing all or part of their IRCC funding, resulting in:

- Programs eliminated entirely or reduced dramatically, including long-established services that had operated successfully for up to 30 years
- Hundreds of staff layoffs and reductions in hours for remaining staff
- Fewer service locations and growing waitlists
- Significant strain on non-settlement programs

The consequences are already being felt by newcomer families and refugees with young children. Families with young children have lost access to early childhood literacy programs, parenting supports, nutrition services, counselling, and community integration activities. Language learners have seen in-person classes reduced or eliminated. In some northern BC communities, newcomers are now expected to access settlement services from organizations located several hours away, creating significant barriers for those seeking assistance with housing, school registration, employment, banking, transportation, and language development.

Particularly concerning is the impact on vulnerable newcomer families with young children. Programs such as the Immigrant Parents as Literacy Supporters (IPALS) initiative helped newcomer parents strengthen their children's early literacy skills while supporting family integration and language development. Over a ten-year period, IPALS served more than 4,500 immigrant and refugee families in 19 communities across British Columbia through partnerships with schools, libraries, settlement organizations, and community agencies. The loss of such programs represents a significant setback for children and families during critical stages of development and settlement.

We recognize that the federal government has lowered immigration targets. However, settlement needs do not simply disappear because future immigration targets have been reduced.

Families who have arrived in British Columbia in recent years continue to require support to fully participate in our communities, workplaces, and economy. Reducing settlement services at a time when newcomers are still arriving and integrating risks undermining the very outcomes that Canada's immigration system seeks to achieve.

Settlement services are among the most cost-effective investments governments can make. They improve employment outcomes, strengthen language proficiency, support educational success, reduce social isolation, and foster community cohesion. The long-term costs of withdrawing these supports for children and families may ultimately exceed the short-term savings achieved through funding reductions.

We call upon the Government of Canada to:

1. Restore funding for affected immigrant settlement programs in British Columbia;
2. Review the impact of recent funding decisions on vulnerable newcomer populations, including refugees, women, children, and residents of rural and northern communities;
3. Work collaboratively with settlement organizations, provinces, municipalities, and community partners to ensure that newcomers continue to receive the support necessary for successful integration.

Canada's immigration system has long been recognized internationally not only because of the newcomers it welcomes, but because of the supports provided to help them succeed. We believe that restoring funding for settlement services will strengthen communities, support economic growth, and reduce the downstream costs of failing to provide preventative supports.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further and to work collaboratively toward solutions that ensure all newcomers and their children have access to the supports they need to thrive.

Sincerely,

[Organization]

Copies:

Honourable Patty Hajdu Federal Minister of Jobs and Families
BC Members of Parliament
BC Cabinet and Members of the Legislative Assembly

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