

January 21, 2025

Background:

LINC is the current iteration of federal government programming that under different titles goes back to the late 1960s and early 1970s. It provides tuition-free language instruction for new adult immigrants. For all of that time, Vancouver Community College has been the largest host for English programming in British Columbia. Whichever wave of immigrants it was—from Viet Nam, China, Hong Kong, eastern European, former Yugoslavia, Afghani, Syrian—they all went through VCC. They then went on to other programming at VCC or at other colleges or universities, or back to work or home, better equipped to deal with our English-centred society. They were welcomed and introduced to Canada properly.

Funding for the program has come straight from the federal government through the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. It has devolved into a contract/request for proposals system with providers like VCC making direct proposals to the agency the Ministry tasked with administering the program. In 2019/20, VCC was successful in securing a five-year arrangement, as usual, the largest in BC. It now has more than 800 students. A year ago, under the posted specifications for programming, VCC made what it thought was going to be a normal bid for renewal of the arrangement for a period starting in April, 2025. There was no indication or warning of a change in approach.

VCC's bid for training from April 2025 was denied. The stated reasons for the non-renewal made no sense to us. One for example, was wanting training to go to smaller centres. That's fine, but with 800 students here in Vancouver and with many waiting to start, obviously there's a massive need here for the training and from what we have heard very few smaller scale providers in the Lower Mainland) were even able to secure their own renewals.

WE NEED TIME TO RECONSIDER, TO DO THINGS PROPERLY

At least 30 faculty are getting their layoff notices, the VCCFA and others are requesting a moratorium on these cuts—at least for another year. We can engage with funders to find a better way. These students deserve to be treated respectfully. If their programming is to be cut, then it behooves the provider, the federal government, to provide proper notice and to find a proper and just transition path. It's hard to imagine any other group of 800 adult students being treated this way. It can't be because they are immigrants that people think this type of treatment is acceptable, can it?

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VCCFA