

Ottawa

Room 930, Confederation Building
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Tel/Tél: 613-992-6030
Fax/Télec: 613-995-7412



Jenny Kwan

Member of Parliament for Vancouver East
Députée de Vancouver-Est

Constituency

2572 East Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V5K 1Z3
Tel/Tél: 604-775-5800
Fax/Télec: 604-775-5811

March 12, 2025

The Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Via email: Minister@cic.gc.ca

Dear Minister Miller,

Open Letter re: Cuts to Settlement Services and Resettlement Assistance Program Funding

I write to voice serious concerns about your Liberal government's sudden, irresponsible cuts for newcomer services funding across Canada. Longtime settlement service and resettlement assistance program providers, with deep connections in the community and expertise in delivering services, have been notified that as of April 1, 2025, not all program funding will be renewed – or that their contracts were not renewed at all.

It has been alarming to learn that respected and experienced service providers and NGOs are left scrambling, with a very short window to consider their options – whether that be program cuts, closures, staff reductions, layoffs, or other negative impacts – and devastating to consider what the impacts would be for newcomers and refugees who rely on the hard work of these NGOs and providers and their staff, not to mention broader impacts on the community.

I am hearing that organizations are being told differing, even contrary reasons for the funding cuts. Some have been told that your government wants to refocus on funding for Francophone minority communities and rural, remote and Northern communities, a tale that is undermined by the fact that longtime, trusted providers in rural, Northern and remote communities have had their funding slashed or eliminated, and at least one Francophone service provider I am aware of did not have their contract renewed. Others have been told that it is due to a reduced demand for services – even though many providers have in fact seen huge increases in demand for services and long waitlists.

The funding formula for settlement services has long been calculated on a basis of looking at the previous three years' PR landing plus projected landing for the coming two years, so this makes no sense in light of the record numbers of new permanent residents in Canada over the last three years. Organizations anticipated that there could be some future cuts but not that they would be faced with cuts ranging from 4% up to 80% of their contract in the first year.

Jenny.Kwan@parl.gc.ca
JennyKwanNDP.ca

About 22 organizations in BC have completely lost funding, and many note that this will have undeniable and heightened impacts on newcomer women and children. Contracts to provide literacy support, employment training programs, paid work experience opportunities, and Early Years Refugee children's programs have been completely lost to our communities. These are critical connections for ensuring successful resettlement for vulnerable women and their families. In rural and remote communities, the in-person programs are often especially crucial for women and children to prevent isolation and bridge into local employment. Eliminating these programs is not the action of a feminist government.

Other organizations all across the country who have been offered only reduced funding are reeling. Some have no idea how they will execute the contracts that they have received because of the level of cuts. Many are still facing the prospect of laying off employees in a workforce that, I note, is largely made of women and racialized workers, many of whom have dedicated years of service to their organization. Impacted organizations are struggling to find the resources to pay those dedicated workers severance. I am also hearing grave concerns that there is no transition plan for clients. Some organizations have shared fears about how the sudden wind-down of programs due to non-renewed contracts may damage the trust and relationship that they have built with clients and vulnerable communities, and that their staff are faced directly with the frustration of the people they serve in having these services disappear.

It is baffling that you unilaterally changed five-year contracts stipulated in the Call for Proposal (CFP) to three-year funding contracts. I note that service provider organizations who followed the CFP procurement process in good faith were never informed of this change until they received their initial funding proposals. This has the effect of multiplying the administrative cost burden of service provider organizations by two thirds as they now have to come up with a new proposal for this change and will have to undergo the CFP process again in two years. All these impacts will be borne by the sector due to funding decisions that are entirely out of their control – but, Minister, within yours.

Equally baffling is the complete elimination in 2026 of the Stage 2 LINC programs. This is official language learning that is key to ensuring employability and integration for newcomers. It means that language learning programs will fail to even deliver the Canadian Language Benchmark requirements that your own government sets for economic immigrants to be eligible for Express Entry.

For decades Canada has avoided recession due to the contributions of newcomers who fill critical job shortages in communities throughout the country and provide family, community, and social care of incalculable value. Yet Liberals are now uniting with the Conservatives in pandering to xenophobia and attempting to divide working people by scapegoating migrant workers for your own decades of policy failures.

Frankly, when coupled with the cuts in the Immigration Levels Plan, it adds up to a shocking about-face on the part of your government. By simultaneously reducing permanent resident targets, slashing the settlement services and language classes that newcomers depend on, your government is knowingly exacerbating the inefficiencies of our immigration system. This will be further impacted by slashing 3,000 IRCC staff.

As you know, many of the streams are already faced with severe processing delays. We have seen little to no improvements on the processing times of the vast majority of the streams. For some it's worse. For example, spousal sponsorship applications outside of Quebec jumped from 12 months to 24 months. Applications for parents/grandparents have frozen for 2 years and the average processing time for

Parents/grandparents applications is at least 2 years. Refugees who are fleeing persecution are in dire straits, privately sponsored refugees' wait time is over 3 years, frustrating compassionate Canadians who want to help and putting the lives of those who need to get to safety at risk. For too long, families have had to suffer the pain and anguish of being separated from their loved ones. Cuts to IRCC staff will only further prolong that pain.

Your government's about-face changes to Canada's immigration levels plan was done without properly consulting stakeholders, experts or analyzing the long-term economic fallout. The PBO projects that reduced immigration targets "would reduce nominal GDP...by 37 billion on average over the next three years."

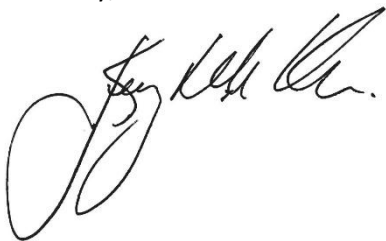
It seems that you are throwing immigrants and newcomers under the bus in hopes of picking up a few political points, while tacitly echoing the exclusionary anti-immigrant rhetoric and false scarcity myths perpetuated by Trump and his right-wing followers. This is wrong and this will cause long term harm to newcomers who your government admitted to this country and the dedicated community organizations that serve newcomer needs.

New Democrats call on you to immediately cease and desist in implementing these funding cuts to settlement service providers and restore the full spectrum of settlement services and language training offered in communities and reverse the non-renewal of contracts for longtime and trusted service partners.

Failing that, at the very minimum, I urge in the strongest terms that you push back the implementation of these cuts; to work cooperatively with services providers and the entire sector to properly plan smooth transition of client services, and to make provisions and funding adjustments to ensure that organizations are able to meet their legal and fiduciary obligations – as employers to provide severance payments, buyouts or benefit packages, as leaseholders to avoid penalty, and other such responsibilities.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Kwan', written over a large, stylized circular flourish.

Jenny Kwan
Member of Parliament for Vancouver East
NDP Critic for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship