



Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA)

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## **Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of Federal Budget 2025**

**The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies**

## **List of Recommendations:**

**Recommendation 1:** Provide stable and predictable multi-year funding to organizations with a demonstrated record of accomplishment of providing effective settlement services, to better support long-term planning and continuity of services.

**Recommendation 2:** Reform the IRCC funding mechanisms, to better reflect regional diversity, newcomer complexity, secondary migration, and support equitable access to essential services.

**Recommendation 3:** Provide funding to include the immigrant and refugee serving sector in housing and healthcare initiatives.

**Recommendation 4:** Expand eligibility for IRCC-funded services to include temporary residents including Temporary Foreign Workers and International Students.

**Recommendation 5:** Designate targeted funding for newcomer-specific employment services, including skills training, job placements, and employment readiness programs, delivered through SPOs with expertise in settlement and integration for meaningful employment.

**Recommendation 6:** Clarify and coordinate roles across departments, including IRCC and ESDC, to ensure funding streams are not duplicative or contradictory, and to close service gaps.

## About AAISA

The Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) is a provincial organization dedicated to supporting Alberta's immigrant and refugee-serving sector. For more than 45 years, AAISA has provided resources, training, and a collaborative governance structure that empowers more than 60 member agencies to meet the diverse needs of newcomers.

Our vision is to advance an inclusive and welcoming Alberta by building the capacity of the immigrant and refugee-serving sector. We focus on ensuring that agencies are equipped to deliver essential services, including legal, health, financial, and other supports critical to successful newcomer integration. Through research-informed advocacy, professional development, and strategic partnerships, AAISA enables the sector to effectively address emerging challenges and foster equitable opportunities for newcomers across Alberta.

## The Immigrant and Refugee-Serving Sector

High numbers of newcomers will continue to arrive in Canada to support critical labour shortages in key sectors, like healthcare, despite the federal government's recent reduction in immigration numbers.<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada's own findings show newcomer arrivals are instrumental to contributing to Canada's economic growth across industry and provinces. It is also well documented that newcomers who access settlement supports have better outcomes and support and contribute to communities than those who do not.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, anti-immigrant sentiment is on the rise. Due to flawed understandings of newcomers' impact on Canada's affordability crisis, a growing number of Canadians are skeptical of the immigration system and newcomers' contributions. These narratives are harmful and open vulnerable groups of newcomers to considerable risk.

The findings are clear: our communities and economy are stronger and healthier when they are welcoming to and inclusive of newcomers; newcomers are better equipped and participate quicker when they receive

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada (2025). Immigration matters in health care. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/campaigns/immigration-matters/growing-canada-future/health.html>

<sup>2</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2023). 2023 Settlement Outcomes Report: Data-driven Insights for the Future of the Settlement Program. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/settlement-resettlement-service-provider-information/2023-settlement-outcomes-report/2023-settlement-outcomes-report-part1.html#outcomes>

settlement support; and the growing climate of anti-newcomer sentiment poses undue risk to newcomers and the sector. What is also clear, Canada's immigrant and refugee-serving agencies must be supported.

Canada's immigrant and refugee-serving agencies do monumental work. Our 60+ member agencies employ thousands of Albertans and serve newcomers across urban and rural communities. From providing settlement assistance and employment training to supporting credential recognition and community integration services. These agencies work directly with employers, educational institutions, and all levels of government to ensure newcomers can quickly contribute to Alberta's growing economy in trades, healthcare, technology, and other high-demand sectors. These agencies are an essential part of our economy, transforming newcomers into contributing members of civil society and Canadian communities.

Our following recommendations strengthen the supports provided to newcomers in sustainable ways to ensure we collectively build communities that fulfill our potential.

### **Recommendations 1-3: Funding Stability that Meets the Shifting Needs of Newcomers**

The current federal settlement funding model, guided by IRCC's National Settlement Funding Formula, allocates resources to service provider organizations providing settlement services based on historical landing data, where newcomers first arrive in Canada. This model fails to account for modern complexities, like secondary migration. This is particularly true for Alberta, where a sizable number of newcomers relocate interprovincially to Albertan cities from other provinces or interprovincially between Albertan cities shortly after initial arrival. The result are gaps in necessary supports between where services are funded and where they are needed. Much of the gaps in settlement, language or employment supports are due to flaws in the funding formula.

Interprovincial secondary migration to Alberta is unlikely to decrease as the province is a key destination due to economic opportunities, relative affordability, and existing community networks. Funding models anticipate this to continue as, since the pandemic, Alberta has received and is

expected to receive a disproportionately large number of interprovincial migrants compared to other major cities like Vancouver and Toronto.<sup>3</sup>

The consequence is many Albertan immigrant and refugee-serving agencies are relied on to serve disproportionate numbers of newcomer populations without proportionate federal funding needed to meet demand. Organizations are currently overburdened with long waitlists, limited programming capacity, and high rates of staff burnout. An added burden to these regional disparities is that the current formula is slow to respond to modern and quickly emerging trends and emergency situations.

The newcomer sector has diverse and specialized expertise in the areas of housing and healthcare which are aligned with the federal government's priority areas outlined for 2025. It is beneficial to the federal government to appropriately leverage the sector's ability as they work to enhance these systems. However, the sector's capacity to be at these tables is at risk due to an unstable and declining funding envelope.

***To address these issues, we recommend the federal government to:***

- **Recommendation 1: Provide stable and predictable multi-year funding to organizations with a demonstrated record of accomplishment of providing effective settlement services, to better support long-term planning and continuity of services.**
- **Recommendation 2: Reform IRCC funding mechanisms, to better reflect regional diversity, newcomer complexity, secondary migration, and support equitable access to essential services.**
- **Recommendation 3: Provide funding to include the immigrant and refugee serving sector in housing and healthcare initiatives.**

## **Recommendation 4: Eligibility for IRCC-funded Services**

In the most recent levels plan, the government is prioritizing temporary resident to permanent resident pathways, which is to be applauded. However, this creates a gap in the supports available to these newcomers since they can only receive IRCC-funded services once they are

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<sup>3</sup> Parsons, M. (2024, June 19). Population special: People continue to flock to Alberta. ATB Financial. [https://www.atb.com/company/insights/the-twenty-four/alberta-population-update-first-quarter-2024/#:~:text=People%20continue%20to%20flock%20to,been%20outpacing%20the%20national%20average;Roach,R.\(2024,June26\).Demographicdirections:Alberta'spopulationprojectedtokeepgrowing.ATBFinancial.https://www.atb.com/company/insights/the-twenty-four/population-projections-to-2048/](https://www.atb.com/company/insights/the-twenty-four/alberta-population-update-first-quarter-2024/#:~:text=People%20continue%20to%20flock%20to,been%20outpacing%20the%20national%20average;Roach,R.(2024,June26).Demographicdirections:Alberta'spopulationprojectedtokeepgrowing.ATBFinancial.https://www.atb.com/company/insights/the-twenty-four/population-projections-to-2048/)

permanent residents. The integration of IRCC-funded services and its benefits to temporary residents and their integration journey are well documented. Many displaced Ukrainians arriving under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) were able to access a range of supports not commonly provided to temporary residents, like language training, employment support, and orientation, have better outcomes in terms of integration, employment and social inclusion.<sup>4</sup> This adaptation was a successful innovative solution. Given the new direction of the government, now is the perfect time to reconsider eligibility requirements.

***To address this issue, we recommend the federal government:***

- **Recommendation 4: Expand eligibility for IRCC-funded services to include temporary residents including Temporary Foreign Workers and International Students.**

### **Recommendation 5-6: Employment Programming for Newcomers**

Highly skilled and educated immigrants and refugees continue to face systemic barriers obtaining credential recognition and accreditation despite Canada's dependence on them for a strong socio-economic future and to fill essential employment gaps. This along with limited access to programmes, like language-for-work training, opens population to economic risk and discrimination. Employment services are a critical component of successful newcomer integration, enabling individuals and families to build sustainable livelihoods and contribute meaningfully to the Canadian economy. However, funding for employment services tailored to newcomers often falls between jurisdictional gaps, resulting in inconsistent access and service delivery across the country.

IRCC historically funded employment-related services for newcomers. However, its recent decision in 2024 to remove some newcomer-employment services disadvantages agencies who have the skills necessary to provide these services. We appreciate the government's intention to avoid duplication and better align with broader workforce policy. Funding is available through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) or provincial ministries of labour. However, these streams are often not

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<sup>4</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2023). *2023 annual report to Parliament on immigration*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2023.html>

designed with the unique needs of newcomers in mind and are limited in accessibility for immigrant and refugee-serving organizations.

This funding fragmentation means that service providers are frequently unable to offer comprehensive employment supports such as job placements, employment readiness, or sector-specific skills training. Without dedicated and stable funding, organizations struggle to build or sustain the kind of employment programming that addresses both the structural barriers newcomers face, and the labour market gaps Canada needs to fill.

***To address this issue, we recommend the federal government:***

- **Recommendation 5: Designate targeted funding for newcomer-specific employment services, including skills training, job placements, and employment readiness programs, delivered through SPOs with expertise in settlement and integration for meaningful employment.**
- **Recommendation 6: Clarify and coordinate roles across departments, including IRCC and ESDC, to ensure funding streams are not duplicative or contradictory, and to close service gaps.**