City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To:	General Purposes Committee	**Date:**	October 13, 2026
From:	Wayne Craig General Manager, Planning and Development	**File:**	07-3300-01/2026-Vol 01
Re:	**Update on Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Funding Reductions and Eligibility Changes**		

Staff Recommendation

That a letter be prepared for the Mayor's signature addressed to senior levels of government, including the Prime Minister of Canada; the Premier of British Columbia; the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills; and Richmond's Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly, advocating for the reinstatement of funding for intermediate and advanced English language training and the development of a sustainable funding model that is informed by immigration targets and responds to newcomers' needs.

Executive Summary

This report outlines the ongoing impacts of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) settlement funding reductions, particularly the discontinuation of intermediate and advanced Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs, which has significantly limited access to English language training for newcomers seeking to pursue further education, employment and long-term settlement opportunities.

As settlement funding falls under the jurisdiction of senior levels of government, it is recommended that a letter be prepared for senior federal and provincial elected officials, including the Prime Minister of Canada and the Premier of British Columbia, advocating for the reinstatement of funding for intermediate and advanced English language training and the development of a sustainable settlement funding model that is informed by immigration targets and responds to newcomers' needs.

Staff Report

Origin

This report provides an update on recent IRCC funding reductions and changes to eligibility for IRCC-funded settlement services, and their implications for newcomer integration in Richmond.

On June 9, 2025, the report titled "Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Funding Cuts" was presented to Council, highlighting the impacts of IRCC funding cuts on settlement programs, local immigrant-serving agencies and Richmond residents.

Following the report, the City sent letters to the federal government on July 10, 2025, advocating for the reinstatement of IRCC funding for settlement programs in Richmond and the development of a sustainable funding model to ensure continued access to a range of newcomer supports amid changing immigration targets.

The City also submitted a resolution to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) in June 2025 (Attachment 1), requesting that the Province advocate to the federal government for the immediate reinstatement of IRCC funding for settlement programs. The resolution further called on the Province to advocate for the Government of Canada to engage with provincial and local governments, settlement service providers and recent immigrants to develop a long-term, stable funding model that ensures the continued delivery of settlement services and supports for newcomers, regardless of fluctuations in immigration targets.

In its response to the City, which was received on December 10, 2025 (Attachment 2), the federal government indicated that settlement service funding is determined by the projected number of permanent residents arriving in Canada. As fewer newcomers are expected to arrive between 2025 and 2028, the overall federal funding for settlement services has been reduced. Despite these reductions, the federal government advised that the full range of IRCC-funded settlement services remains available to eligible clients in Richmond.

In response to the City's UBCM resolution in April 2026 (Attachment 1), the Ministry of Post Education and Future Skills acknowledged local governments' concerns that changes to IRCC funding could negatively affect newcomers' access to supports essential for labour market participation and social integration. The Ministry specifically noted the discontinuation of IRCC-funded higher-level language programs and the potential long-term implications for newcomers' ability to secure high-skilled employment and maintain strong labour market participation.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2022–2026 Focus Area #1 Proactive in Stakeholder and Civic Engagement and Focus Area #6 A Vibrant, Resilient and Active Community:

> *1.2 Advocate for the needs of Richmond in collaboration with partners and stakeholders.*
>
> *6.4 Support vulnerable populations through collaborative and sustainable programs and services.*

Analysis

Background

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is the federal department responsible for managing immigration, refugee protection and citizenship. As part of its mandate, IRCC funds settlement organizations to deliver programs and services that help newcomers settle and adapt to life in Canada.

On October 24, 2024, the Government of Canada announced significant reductions to permanent resident admission targets under its 2025–2027 Immigration Levels Plan. The revised targets aimed to ease pressures on housing, infrastructure and public services while supporting sustainable, long-term population growth. Compared with the previous 2024–2026 plan, which targeted 500,000 permanent resident admissions annually, the revised plan set targets of 395,000 in 2025, 380,000 in 2026 and 365,000 in 2027.

Following the 2024 announcement, immigrant-serving organizations across Canada were informed of changes to IRCC funding to align with the projected number of permanent resident admissions. One program affected by these reductions is Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), which provides free English language training to eligible adult newcomers. IRCC has introduced a phased restructuring of LINC programming, prioritizing foundational language skills while discontinuing intermediate and advanced level instruction:

- **Stage 1 Basic Language Ability:** Foundational language classes remain a priority, supporting newcomers with limited English proficiency in developing basic communication skills. Completion of Stage 1 level helps newcomers meet the language requirement for Canadian citizenship.
- **Stage 2 Intermediate Language Ability:** These classes were discontinued effective September 1, 2026. They helped newcomers develop the English skills needed to communicate beyond basic needs, participate in group discussions and understand materials such as news articles.
- **Stage 3 Advanced Language Ability:** These classes were discontinued effective September 1, 2025. They helped newcomers develop the English proficiency needed for academic study and high-level professional work environments.

In March 2026, IRCC announced changes to the eligibility requirements for economic class permanent residents. Economic class immigrants are selected based on their skills, qualifications and potential to contribute to Canada's economy. The main categories of economic immigrants in Canada are skilled workers, business immigrants and provincial and territorial nominees. Skilled workers make up the majority of Canada’s economic class permanent residents. They are individuals whose education, work experience and other qualifications align with the needs of the Canadian labour market. Effective April 1, 2026, economic class permanent residents can access IRCC-funded settlement services for up to six years after obtaining permanent resident status. Effective April 1, 2027, this period will be reduced to up to five years. Previously, permanent residents could access IRCC-funded settlement services regardless of how long they had held permanent resident status, subject to applicable program eligibility requirements. These changes may limit newcomers’ access to language training, employment support and other settlement services, particularly for those who require longer-term support to establish themselves in Canada.

The discontinuation of Stage 2 and Stage 3 LINC classes, combined with the new time limits on eligibility for settlement services, has raised concerns about newcomers' ability to achieve meaningful labour market integration and social inclusion. Without access to free intermediate and advanced level English instruction through LINC, newcomers may need to pay for private language training to develop the language skills required for further education, professional accreditation and employment in skilled occupations. These additional costs may create financial barriers, particularly for newcomers who are unemployed, underemployed or working in low-wage jobs.

Impacts of IRCC Funding Cuts on Settlement Services in Richmond

A number of Richmond-based service providers have been affected by IRCC funding reductions, resulting in discontinued services, reduced programming and staff layoffs. These reductions have disrupted newcomer programming across Richmond, limiting access to culturally responsive services and reducing agencies' capacities to provide comprehensive, wrap-around supports.

Prior to the 2024 announcement, seven organizations received IRCC funding to deliver settlement services in Richmond: Back in Motion, Chimo Community Services (Chimo), Richmond Family Place, Richmond Multicultural Community Services (RMCS), Richmond School District No. 38, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and ISS*of*BC. Currently, only four organizations, Back in Motion, Richmond School District No. 38, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and ISS*of*BC, receive IRCC funding to deliver settlement programs in Richmond, with only S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and ISS*of*BC offering LINC programs.

Although Chimo, Richmond Family Place and RMCS no longer receive funding from IRCC to deliver settlement services, they continue to provide programs and support to newcomers. However, reduced funding has forced these organizations to scale back programming and lay off staff, further limiting their capacity to address newcomers' diverse settlement needs.

These service gaps are expected to widen further. ISSofBC recently informed the City that, effective April 1, 2027, it will discontinue its LINC program in Richmond and cease local operations as part of an effort to streamline its services across the Lower Mainland. As a result, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. will become the sole provider of LINC classes in Richmond.

To date in 2026, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has offered 22 LINC classes serving 396 students, while ISS*of*BC has offered 11 LINC classes serving 170 students in Richmond. These programs play an important role in supporting newcomers' English language learning and settlement. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has indicated that it intends to maintain the current number of LINC classes after April 1, 2027. However, it remains to be seen whether the existing level of programming will adequately meet the needs of Richmond's newcomer population, particularly in light of the loss of a longstanding service provider.

Access to intermediate and advanced English language training is also increasingly limited following the discontinuation of Stage 2 and Stage 3 LINC programs. Back in Motion is currently the only provider of intermediate-level language training in Richmond through its Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants (CPSI) program, funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and IRCC. The program offers language upgrading as part of its support for immigrants seeking employment in careers aligned with their qualifications; however, access to this training is limited to participants pursuing employment in specific sectors or industries. Back in Motion has also reported declining program participation, as many newcomers do not meet the minimum English proficiency requirement for admission to the CPSI program.

As a result, newcomers who have completed Stage 1 LINC classes but need to further develop their English skills have limited options beyond fee-based language courses. The cost of these courses may create an additional barrier for newcomers seeking to improve their English proficiency to pursue further education, expand their employment opportunities and support their long-term settlement goals.

Local Supports for Newcomers

Richmond has the highest proportion of immigrants in Canada with approximately 60 per cent of its population born outside the country and is the fourth-largest recipient of recent immigrants in British Columbia. Between 2016 to 2021, Richmond welcomed 13,705 recent immigrants. As a result, IRCC funding reductions and changes to settlement service eligibility disproportionately affect Richmond's newcomer population by limiting access to essential supports needed to establish themselves and participate fully in the community.

The Council-adopted Cultural Harmony Plan guides the City's efforts to support Richmond's diverse newcomer population by working with community partners to identify and reduce barriers to newcomers' full participation in the community. The City is also an active member of the Richmond Local Immigration Partnership (RLIP) network, a community planning network that brings together immigrant-serving organizations to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for newcomers.

The following section highlights programs and services available in Richmond that support newcomers' English language development, employment and settlement, including those supported by the City:

- **City of Richmond Immigrant Mentorship Program:** Since 2025, the City has partnered with the Immigrant Employment Council of BC to deliver this program, which connects newcomers with City staff mentors to help them navigate employment barriers and pursue opportunities aligned with their skills and qualifications.
- **Richmond Public Library:** The Library offers English conversation circles for adults and youth through partnerships with organizations such as the Richmond School District's Settlement Workers in Schools program.
- **Community Associations and Societies:** Various Community Associations and Societies offer introductory English language programs at City recreation centres. For example, English Conversation programs are offered for adults aged 55 and older at City Centre Community Centre, South Arm Community and West Richmond Community Centre, and seasonal English Beginner 55+ classes are offered at the Minoru Seniors Centre.

While these initiatives provide valuable opportunities to practice English, develop basic language skills and build social connections, they do not replace formal language instruction. Informal learning opportunities, such as conversation circles, generally do not provide the formal language-level assessment or recognized Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) credentials required for entry into certain programs, including Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants. As a result, newcomers who need to improve their English proficiency before accessing further education or employment supports may face gaps in available services.

As federally funded LINC programs fall outside the City's jurisdiction, the City's role is primarily to support newcomers through local initiatives, partnerships and advocacy. Continued advocacy for the restoration of IRCC funding is therefore essential to help ensure that Richmond's newcomer population has access to the language training and settlement services needed to participate fully in community life and pursue education and employment opportunities.

Advocacy to Senior Levels of Government

Pursuant to Council direction, letters will be prepared for the Mayor's signature and addressed to senior levels of government, including the Prime Minister of Canada; the Premier of British Columbia; the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills; and Richmond's Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly, advocating for the reinstatement of funding for intermediate and advanced English language training and the development of a sustainable funding model that responds to newcomers' needs.

The letters will emphasize the need for IRCC to develop a sustainable funding model for settlement service providers that considers not only the projected number of newcomers arriving in Canada, but also the ongoing demand for services among immigrants already residing in the community. This includes continued access to language training and other supports that are essential for labour market participation and social integration.

Budgetary Implications

None.

Conclusion

The City remains committed to working with government and community partners to build a welcoming and inclusive Richmond where newcomers can thrive. Recent IRCC funding cuts and eligibility changes have reduced access to essential settlement services, particularly intermediate and advanced language programs that support labour market integration and social inclusion. As immigration and settlement services remain primarily a federal responsibility, the City will continue to advocate for the reinstatement of funding for these programs. Sustained federal funding is essential to ensure Richmond can respond to newcomers' evolving needs and support their successful integration into the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Somerville, Director, Community Social Development

Report Contributors

This report was prepared by Dorothy Jo, Program Manager, Social Planning and reviewed by Recreation & Sport Services and Richmond Public Library.

Endorsed by Serena Lusk, CAO

Att. 1 UBCM Resolution and Response: Reinstatement of Federal Funding for Settlement Programs

2 Response from the Government of Canada's Ministerial Enquiries Division

NR118 Reinstatement of Federal Funding for Settlement Programs — Richmond

Whereas Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), as of April 1, 2025, has reduced or discontinued funding to organizations providing immigrant and refugee settlement programs in communities across British Columbia in response to reductions in federal immigration levels planned over the next three years;

And whereas the reduction and discontinuation of federal funding for settlement programs immediately reduces the availability of and access to services and supports that are vital to the social and economic integration of approximately 200,000 recent immigrants currently living in British Columbia (2021 Census):

Therefore be it resolved that UBCM request that the Province advocate to the federal government to immediately reinstate Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada funding for settlement programs to BC organizations that were funded in 2024 for a multi-year period;

And be it further resolved that the Province be requested to advocate to the Government of Canada to conduct an engagement process with provincial and local governments, community-based service providers of settlement programs, and recent immigrants to inform the development of a long-term, stable funding model that ensures continued provision of supports that help newcomers to thrive in Canada, regardless of fluctuations in immigration targets

RESPONSE: Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills

The Ministry of Post Secondary Education and Future Skills shares local governments' concern that the recent changes to settlement program funding by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) will have a detrimental impact on newcomer access to supports essential to their labour market participation and social integration in British Columbia. This includes IRCC's decision to discontinue higher-level language programming, and the resulting long-term implications for newcomers to secure high-skilled jobs and maintain strong labour market participation.

Through various intergovernmental channels, the Ministry continues to articulate these concerns to IRCC and is actively engaged in raising awareness of the impacts of these funding changes with the federal government as well as advocating for solutions that ensure the best outcomes for newcomers and the Province. This includes urging the federal government to ensure that a wide variety of perspectives, such as community organizations and other levels of government, are engaged. The Ministry remains committed to ensure newcomers in British Columbia have equitable access to the supports they need to contribute to British Columbia's workforce and thrive.

Copied & distributed to all Councillors
Date: Dec 10, 2025
Initials: GB
cc: Serena Lusk
SMT
Jason Kida
Kim Somerville

His Worship Malcolm D. Brodie
Mayor
City of Richmond
mayorea@richmond.ca

2025-01363989

Dear Mayor Brodie:

Thank you for your correspondence dated July 10, 2025, addressed to the Honourable Lena Metlege Diab, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, expressing your interest to meet with the Minister and discuss funding for settlement and integration services in Richmond. I have been asked to respond to your concerns, and I apologize for the delay in responding.

Regarding settlement services funding, the total amount available is determined by the number of permanent residents expected to arrive, as outlined in the Multi-Year Levels Plan. Since fewer newcomers are projected to arrive in 2025–2028, there is an associated decrease to the overall federal settlement services envelope. Additional information about Canada's immigration levels, including the recently announced 2026-2028 Immigration Levels plan, can be viewed at: Canada's immigration levels - Canada.ca.

Regarding funding for settlement services in Richmond, all proposals from service provider organizations went through a thorough review process. Funding decisions reflect the expected permanent resident arrivals and the number of clients served. Additionally, these decisions aim to streamline services, reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and ensure value for money. Despite these reductions, the full suite of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funded settlement services remains available to eligible clients in Richmond, in both official languages.

The Government of Canada recognizes the significant role municipal governments play across the country in the successful integration of newcomers. Integration is a collective responsibility of all levels of government, and IRCC remains committed to collaborating with municipalities and exploring opportunities to strengthen such collaboration.

With regard to your request to meet the Minister, Arash Rahmani, Senior Advisor in the Office of the Minister, may be contacted at: arash.rahmani@cic.gc.ca.

Thank you for expressing your concerns. I trust that this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

G. Holmes
Ministerial Enquiries Division

This electronic address is not available for reply.