

July 25, 2023

Dear City of Courtenay Council,

This is a request to the City of Courtenay for a letter of support for the Multicultural and Immigration Services Associations of North Vancouver Island (MISA), known locally as the Immigrant Welcome Centre (IWC). IWC is seeking this letter of support to accompany our funding application to the Province of B.C. to expand our facilities for English language learners.

IWC has been instrumental in developing and providing services, programs and events to assist newcomers and their families as they adapt to our community and life in Canada. Local businesses and organizations benefit from the resources and support services that IWC provides to help us better understand, serve and connect with the immigrant population.

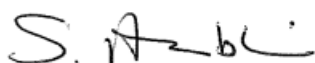
The 2021 Census shows an 8% growth in population (between 2016 -2021) for the City of Courtenay, which includes growth in the immigrant population (now at 12.3% of the population). Our research shows that finding work is one of the biggest challenges for newcomers in the Comox Valley - 25 percent of our survey respondents indicated that their current level of employment is lower than their skills and 18 percent are working in jobs that are unrelated to their skills.

Many newcomers benefit from the IWC's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. The LINC program is unique in that it teaches English language specifically for use in Canadian culture. This program helps newcomers improve their English language skills for life in Canada, removing barriers to meaningful employment and successful settlement such as language and unfamiliar Canadian culture and customs.

Participation in our LINC program has more than tripled since 2021; even with this growth we have many vulnerable clients on our waitlist. Due to the demand for language support, IWC is planning an expansion to create more classroom space.

The services, programs and events that IWC offer have a widespread benefit within our community, and we look forward to the expansion of services to increase public accessibility.

Thank you for considering our request for support,



Shams Alibhai – Executive Director