



Honourable Marci Ien
Minister for Women and
Gender Equality and Youth

Honourable Carla Qualtrough
Minister of Employment,
Workforce Development and
Disability Inclusion

March 17, 2023

Dear Minister Ien and Minister Qualtrough,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to share feedback about the Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ) program on behalf of funding recipients and youth in my community. This program is valued by a wide mix of organizations and provides important learning opportunities for young people. However, as I met with organizations, businesses and youth who received CSJ funding this summer, I heard consistent concerns with the program. Employers and youth shared three main concerns which impact the efficacy of the program – Late application and decision timelines, low wages, and requirements of the application and reporting process.

1) Notifying successful organizations sooner

The most consistent feedback I heard from CSJ employers was that CSJ application and decision timelines are too late in the spring, making it difficult for them to plan summer positions and hire qualified staff. Many post-secondary students are seeking jobs that run from May to August, and some students were hesitant or chose not to apply for CSJ positions that started later, once funding was confirmed. Almost every employer I met would like to see the CSJ application and funding timelines revised to align with post-secondary schedules, so they can post positions in time to attract qualified staff. I recommend the CSJ team begin their process several months earlier and notify organizations about their funding before the end of March. This would allow employers to hire students to start at the end of April or beginning of May, when many students are available for work.

2) Raising wages for CSJ-funded staff

Although CSJ acts as a wage subsidy, many organizations in Kitchener Centre rely solely on the grant funding to create quality summer work experiences for youth. With some employers unable to supplement wages, youth have found it exceedingly difficult to afford living costs in the region on the salary provided. Some are unable to live in the region and need to work virtually or commute long distances to their jobs. We also heard concerns that CSJ wages fail to reflect the academic and professional experiences of staff, with high school and post-secondary students receiving the same or similar pay.

3) Simplifying application and reporting processes

English language learner employers have found the CSJ application process complicated and inaccessible. Employers would like increased web accessibility tools to help guide them through the application, to better support equity-deserving groups and those unfamiliar with government language and processes. Even organizations and businesses experienced with the CSJ process shared that the application and reporting requirements were complex and time-consuming, adding to the administrative burden of those who already have limited capacity. At least two local organizations decided not to apply for funding in 2021 because they didn't feel the funding would be worth the administrative cost.

Canada Summer Jobs is a valuable program that supports the work of many organizations and businesses and creates valuable employment opportunities for youth. With improvements to application timelines, processes, and compensation, the program could provide even more benefit to employers and students across Canada.

Please let me know when you would be available to meet and discuss these recommendations in more detail. I look forward to working with you to strengthen this valuable program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Morrice".

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