



The Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations
Kanada Türk Dernekleri Federasyonu
La Fédération Des Associations Canado-Turques

2025 Federal Election
Policy Recommendations

Canada is strongest when it listens to its people — not only in moments of need, but in moments of vision.

The Canadian Turkish community has spent over a century contributing to the fabric of this nation. Quietly, steadily, and loyally, we have raised families, built businesses, supported public institutions, and nurtured cross-cultural understanding between Canada and Türkiye.

Today, we speak not out of purpose — to ensure that the path ahead reflects the values we all share: peace, fairness, and meaningful inclusion.

We believe that Canada's success is tied to the strength of its partnerships — both among its citizens, and with trusted international allies. As a G20 partner, a NATO ally, and a long-standing democratic republic, Türkiye and its people in Canada represent an opportunity to deepen that strength.

We cherish the principle that shaped modern Türkiye and echoes in every democratic society:

“Yurtta sulh, cihanda sulh” — Peace at home, peace in the world.

The policy proposals that follow are not demands. They are shared opportunities — to align Canada's values with its policies, and its commitments toward its communities.

They offer ways to improve integration, enhance bilateral cooperation, reduce barriers, and protect multicultural harmony for the benefit of all Canadians.

Let this be received in the spirit it is given: as a contribution from a community that believes in Canada, invests in Canada, and wants to build its future alongside all those who call this country home.

We are proud to be both Canadian and Turkish. And we stand ready — not just to participate in Canada's next chapter, but to help shape it.

Ali Demircan
President

About Us & Our Objectives

Turkish-Canadians are cognizant of their history in Canada, starting in the industrialization endeavour of Canada in the 1890s in Brantford, Ontario. They came in thousands and prospered until 1914. The migration of Turks to Canada took different turns throughout the next century.

Today, the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations is an umbrella organization representing 19 member associations stretching from Victoria, British Columbia to Halifax, Nova Scotia. The Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations (FCTA), established in 1985, has been connecting Canadian Turkish residents to celebrate and promote Turkish culture and heritage and to foster community activities. It is a non-profit and non-political NGO, providing observations which could bring about a positive outcome for everyone.

The FCTA, aims at supporting another layer of independent voices of Canadian Turkish residents in the Canadian social landscape and to see the positive reflections of this pluralism on Canada-Türkiye relations for the common good of two friendly nations.

Our Perspective

We believe that the Canadian ideal should never be taken for granted. It needs to be nurtured and defended intelligently and thoughtfully, when and where necessary. In Canada, we have the means to do this. Yet, Canadians' diligence and vigilance are required against actions to undermine our social harmony.

We perceive Canada and Türkiye as strong partners. We believe that, with technological advancements on board, there is every reason for both countries to further focus on strategic areas from energy to education, from agriculture to mining, including seamless defence industry cooperation.

We know that none of the above could not be materialized without ensuring proper connectivity between Türkiye and Canada. Increasing flight frequency holds the key to the connectivity required by the popular demand emanating from the ever-increasing interaction between Türkiye and Canada. The current number of 12 weekly flights from all destinations in Canada to Türkiye is utterly insufficient and has to be addressed without delay.

The FCTA wishes to establish and strengthen constructive relations in amity with all the communities in Canada to make our home and nation more resilient, stronger, and prosperous.

Our Projections

Canada is our home. Türkiye is where our original roots are, and today, we have our roots in our new home.

The multiculturalism of Canada gracefully not only allows us to not forget the Turkish language and customs but to nurture it. This is why we continue to observe Türkiye and wish the best for it.

We support and celebrate Canada's alliance with Türkiye in NATO for 73 years and the two countries' working relationship in G20, OSCE and the UN.

We expect from Canada its pursuit of maintaining a rules-based international order on a non-selective basis.

To make this more clear, we give importance to see an egalitarian attitude in the application of this principle towards different regions and regional crises, namely, the Middle East, Caucasia, Aegean and the Black Sea and against the destabilizing actions in these parts of the World.

In the same vein, we anticipate Canada's strong acknowledgment of:

- The volatile and difficult neighbourhood that Türkiye is located in and the magnitude of threats to its national security,
- The importance of fight against terrorism and the solidarity in confronting terrorist threats from PKK, in particular,
- The value of promoting a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in accordance with international law and avoiding lopsided approaches favouring Armenia over Azerbaijan,
- The damage that is inflicted on the interests of Canada by adopting populist positions, especially with regard to Armenian claims of so-called genocide, which is now being questioned by even the Armenian leadership itself,
- The contributions that Türkiye has been making to both regional and global stability and security by its mediation efforts, humanitarian assistance campaigns, economic development aids, and defense of international law and morality in its region and beyond,

- The benefits of Türkiye and Canada joining hands in strengthening economic and defence cooperation as well as solidifying solidarity in confronting common challenges.

Equal Humanitarian Support for Earthquake Survivors

Canada lent a hand to people in need following the devastating 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye. The TS2023 open work permit initiative provided short-term relief — but those who arrived in Canada under this program now face uncertainty and neglect.

Initially offered to Turkish citizens with family in Canada, the TS2023 measure was later extended to any Turkish citizen affected by the disaster. While this was a welcome step, it fell significantly short of meeting the long-term needs of those who fled one of the worst natural disasters in modern history. Unlike the 3-year open work and study permits granted to Ukrainians and Iranians — or permanent residency options provided to Haitians — Turkish citizens received a time-limited open work permit with no designated immigration stream, no follow-up plan, and no clear path to security or settlement.

In reality, TS2023 is not a visa class — applicants first obtained standard visas (such as visitor or student), and were then eligible to apply for an open work permit under the TS2023 policy while inside Canada. However, this lack of a formal category has created confusion within service delivery systems and limited access to support programs that are typically available to individuals under recognized humanitarian or immigration pathways.

Survivors are now under immense pressure, with expiring permits, limited access to supports, and no direction from federal authorities. The burden of care has fallen on community organizations like the FCTA, who are helping newcomers secure housing, employment, and trauma support — but without PR or a 3-year extension, these efforts are limited in impact.

At the same time, Turkish international students — not limited to earthquake survivors — are also facing significant setbacks due to recent policy changes. In recent years, Turkish students have constituted one of the fastest-growing international student populations in Canada, especially in colleges. However, new restrictions on work hours and lack of targeted support are reversing this trend.

International students affected by the earthquake are still paying full international tuition rates, despite their humanitarian status. Neither provincial governments nor universities have created mechanisms to reduce these costs or offer targeted aid. As a result, many students are being pushed out of the system — financially and emotionally.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- **Establish a Permanent Residency Pathway for TS2023 Open Work Permit Holders**
Model this on the PR options offered to Haitian nationals, or at minimum, extend open work and study permits for an additional three years.
- **Introduce Domestic Tuition Options for Earthquake-Impacted Students**
Grant domestic tuition rates to TS2023 students in line with humanitarian principles and parity with Canadian residents.
- **Reverse Barriers Affecting Turkish International Students**
Review and restore prior work eligibility rules for international students, particularly those from Türkiye, whose numbers are rapidly declining due to recent restrictions.
- **Fund a Targeted Federal Integration Support Program**
Include trauma counseling, settlement assistance, academic guidance, and employment supports, with delivery coordinated alongside trusted community organizations like the FCTA.

Protecting Communities from Discrimination and Promoting Inclusive Dialogue

The Turkish and Azerbaijani communities in Canada have been subject to increasing discrimination through distorted historical narratives and political bias. Certain interest groups undermine both the social harmony of Canadian society, and international peace.

Selective historical narratives and political biases have contributed to an increasingly discriminatory environment for Turkish and Azerbaijani Canadians. Canadian policies must reflect the values of fairness, balance, the rule of law and protection for all communities — especially in the face of politically motivated accusations. However, Canadian Turkish residents continue to face generalizations and stigmatization arising from contested historical claims, particularly around the events of 1915.

Despite Türkiye's long-standing call for a joint historical commission and dialogue, one-sided political positions in Canada persist. These views are increasingly out of

touch with developments on the ground — even Armenian leadership has begun to question the genocide narrative. Türkiye and Armenia have recently embarked on a normalization process aimed at improving bilateral relations without preconditions. As a result of this dialogue, direct flights resumed on February 2, 2022, and plans were agreed upon to open the border for third-country citizens and start air cargo trade by July 1, 2022.

Despite this progress, polarizing society in Canada — including motions and legislation that unilaterally assign blame — not only jeopardizes intercommunity harmony but risk undermining these sensitive international efforts. Biased actions also embolden extremism and harassment against Turkish and Azerbaijani Canadians. These narratives not only threaten social harmony in Canada but also undermine ongoing peace and normalization efforts in the South Caucasus region.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- Incorporate the perspectives of all involved communities on legislative resolutions that are of sensitive, historical nature
- Unilateral recognition of sensitive events that are still under scholarly debate, subject certain communities to discrimination
- Recognize and Support Ongoing Normalization Between Türkiye and Armenia
- This will domestically encourage healing and mutual understanding by supporting projects that bring together Turkish, Armenian, and Azerbaijani Canadians around shared values and peaceful coexistence.

Strengthening Bilateral Economic and Strategic Cooperation

In an era of international trade wars, rising protectionist trends and shifting geopolitical dynamics, Canada must diversify its global economic relationships. Türkiye, a G20 member, is a strong partner.

The implementation of US tariffs on Canadian products brings about three key issues: disruption of significant Canadian export sectors, investor and market uncertainty as a result of economic instability, and straining of existing integrated supply chains due to rising costs and longer production times. Subsequently, increasing costs in producing Canadian goods decreases the competitiveness of Canadian products abroad. Thus, Canada must forge new economic relationships to prevent further increases in production costs, and to diversify target markets.

Canada-Türkiye trade volume, which is currently 4 billion dollars, has inherently a much greater potential in view of the fact that the combined size of the two countries' GDP is around 4 trillion dollars. The two countries must commit to increasing the annual trade volume up to much desired levels as the trade patterns of the two countries complement each other in a number of industries. Enhancing people-to-people contact and business mobility are the keys to that.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- Reinvigorate Free Trade Agreement Negotiations with Türkiye. Restart the JETCO meetings.
- A Free Trade Agreement would reduce tariff-related barriers and greatly benefit the agricultural, energy, and advanced manufacturing sectors.
- Support cooperation on defense technologies
- This will enhance bilateral investments and allow Canadian companies to tap into Türkiye's rapidly growing and advancing defense industry.

Promoting Regional Peacebuilding & Stability

Türkiye, a vital NATO Ally and defense technology hub, is located in a highly volatile and conflict-ridden neighbourhood.

The Government of Canada recognizes the joint effort of Canada and Türkiye in “defending democratic values and global security within the framework of international law and global security.” Türkiye reciprocates this sentiment by stating that “cooperation within the framework of NATO, developments in Ukraine, Syria, Caucasus, and the fight against terrorism constitute the most significant dimensions of bilateral relations.” As such, Türkiye is a vital player in geopolitical developments in its neighboring regions where it has acted as a mediator in the Black Sea Grain Corridor Talks and the Armenia- Azerbaijan Conflict Negotiations.

Türkiye is an Indispensable Ally

Türkiye has:

- The second-largest military in NATO, securing the alliance's southern flank.
- Been a reliable partner in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, and the Black Sea in various military and humanitarian missions.

- Played a vital role in counterterrorism, energy security, and regional stability.

It is in the best interest of Canada to reinforce this partnership rather than weaken it as desired by certain interest groups seeking to undermine it.

Key Policy Recommendations:

- Work with Türkiye in Humanitarian and Stabilization Efforts in Ukraine, Gaza and Syria
- Canada and Türkiye have a complementary partnership through Canada's humanitarian diplomacy and Türkiye's operational capacity. After all, Türkiye ranks first in humanitarian assistance compared to its GDP in the world.
- Maintain and enhance the rules based order through
- Upholding solidarity in confronting all forms of terrorism, PKK, in particular,
- Equal and non-selective application of international law with an egalitarian attitude.

Strengthening Everyday Inclusion for the Canadian Turkish Community

Diplomacy and trade matter, as well as a strong sense of inclusiveness that remains indispensable. For Canadian Turkish citizens and residents, the success of multiculturalism is not just measured in speeches or symbolism, but in systems that work, policies that include, and barriers that are removed.

If Canada values its relationship with Türkiye, and if it takes pride in its identity as a multicultural democracy, then it must also commit to ensuring that the daily experiences of Canadian Turkish individuals reflect fairness, accessibility and respect.

Key Federal Recommendations:

- Enhance Air Connectivity Between Canada and Türkiye

Air travel plays a vital role in fostering people-to-people ties, advancing economic cooperation, and supporting academic, cultural, and diplomatic engagement between Canada and Türkiye. However, the current air service framework between the two countries remains significantly underdeveloped relative to the growing demand and depth of the bilateral relationship.

Challenges Identified:

- Members of the Canadian Turkish community experience limited and costly air travel options, which hinder mobility and cultural continuity.
- With bilateral ties expanding in business, tourism, education and diplomacy and with thousands of Canadian Turkish residents maintaining active connections to family and heritage, the current number of direct flights is drastically insufficient.
- The Government of Canada should facilitate the increasing of flight frequencies and opening additional routes through Transport Canada`s talks with Turkish Airlines, Air Canada and relevant stakeholders. This is not just a commercial issue. It is about economic opportunities, cultural connections and meeting the real mobility needs of a growing population.

Recommendations:

- The Government of Canada, in coordination with Transport Canada and Turkish civil aviation authorities, should prioritize expanding the bilateral air services agreement to enable increased flight frequency and capacity.
- Turkish Airlines, while a key partner, should not be the sole operator of routes; Canada should actively encourage additional carriers to enter the market, thereby fostering competition and offering greater accessibility.
- Additional direct flights between Canadian cities (e.g., Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto) and major Turkish destinations (e.g., Ankara, Izmir) should be launched to reflect the demographic realities and evolving mobility needs of both countries.

This initiative would not only address the growing needs of Canadian Turkish citizens and residents but also contribute to broader bilateral objectives in trade, tourism, education, and diplomatic outreach. Expanding and diversifying air connectivity is an essential step toward realizing the full potential of the Canada–Türkiye partnership.

Ensure Canada's Foreign Policy Supports Peace and Stability Beyond Its Borders

Engage in balanced policies that help stabilize the Caucasus and support ongoing peace initiatives.

Acknowledge and publicly support ongoing dialogue between Türkiye and Armenia towards full normalization.

Support and Fund Intercommunity Dialogue and Cultural Exchange Initiatives

Avoid categoric acts of making judgments on historical events that are historically and legally disputed, especially when they contribute to stigmatization, discrimination, and the fuelling of tension between communities.

Encourage healing and mutual understanding by supporting projects around shared values and peaceful coexistence.

Promote academic freedom and balanced education of historical events in schools.

Expand Turkish Language Access Across Key Federal Services

Access to services in one's mother tongue is not a luxury; it's a right in a multicultural society.

We call for enhanced federal support for Turkish language interpretation and translation, particularly in immigration services, senior care, youth mental health, and social programs. As Canada supports community-based service delivery, it must ensure that Canadian Turkish residents are not left behind due to language barriers.

Formally Recognize the Turkish Heritage Month at the Federal Level

Turkish Heritage Month, celebrated in October across Canada, is a meaningful occasion to honour the contributions of Canadian Turkish communities and to share the richness of Turkish culture and heritage with all Canadians. We respectfully request that the Government of Canada formally recognize Turkish Heritage Month at the federal level — with dedicated programming, symbolic inclusion, and funding support through Canadian Heritage.

The Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations, on behalf of a diverse and rapidly growing community of over 150,000 Canadian Turkish residents — including individuals with roots in Türkiye, East Turkestan (Uyghurs), Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and others — has long advocated for this recognition. Canadian Turkish individuals contribute meaningfully to every sector of Canadian society: healthcare, education, engineering, skilled trades, small business, academia, entrepreneurship, and public service.

The historical presence of Turkish people in Canada dates back to the 1880s. While early settlers faced unjust treatment during World War I — including designation as 'enemy aliens' under the War Measures Act — their legacy lives on. The Turkish

Cemetery Plot at Mount Hope Cemetery in Brantford, Ontario stands as a solemn and enduring testament to their sacrifices and contributions.

As of the 1960s, Canadian Turkish cultural and community associations began to flourish, starting with Montreal in 1964, Toronto in 1965, and Ottawa in 1971. These community hubs have played a critical role in preserving language, traditions, and intergenerational unity — while fostering civic participation and integration within Canada’s multicultural framework.

Canada and Türkiye share over a century of diplomatic engagement and are both NATO allies of 73 years, G20 members, and partners in UN peacekeeping. From shared history at Gallipoli to recent memorial collaborations in St. John’s and Çanakkale, the bonds between our nations are deep, historic, and persistent.

The official recognition of Turkish Heritage Month, the work for which is already underway would send a powerful message to current and future generations — acknowledging their place in Canada’s national story and strengthening mutual understanding through the celebration of culture, resilience, and shared legacy.

Recognize Türkiye’s Driver’s Licenses in Canada

Turkish citizens arriving in Canada must often repeat the full licensing process, despite years of safe driving experience. This creates unnecessary financial and logistical burdens for newcomers and is inconsistent with how Canada treats licenses from many other OECD countries.

Türkiye is a trusted NATO ally and G20 member with internationally recognized licensing standards. The federal government should work with provinces and territories to establish a mutual driver’s license recognition agreement with Türkiye, as exists with countries such as France, Germany, and South Korea.

This would:

- Reduce systemic inequity and eliminate barriers for skilled newcomers
- Improve access to employment and mobility, especially in suburban and rural areas
- Respect the prior experience and dignity of new Canadian Turkish residents
- Demonstrate a reciprocal approach in Canada–Türkiye bilateral relations