

Minister  
of Immigration,  
Refugees and Citizenship



Ministre  
de l'Immigration,  
des Réfugiés et de la Citoyenneté

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Ottawa, Canada K1A 1L1

The Honourable Kevin Sorenson, P.C., M.P.  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Public Accounts  
131 Queen Street, 6th Floor  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Sorenson:

On behalf of the Government of Canada I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for its report entitled, "*Report 3, Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada*" and I am pleased to provide the Government's Response to the Committee's recommendations.

The Government Response supports the Committee's four recommendations and identifies initiatives planned or already underway which respond to the Committee's report and to the Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees. For example, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has made improvements to how it manages waitlists for language training, and clarified service expectations with respect to language training and language assessments in contribution agreements with service provider organizations.

I note that when the Deputy Minister for IRCC, Ms. Marta Morgan and other officials appeared before Committee, members of all parties acknowledged the hard work of the Department in ensuring the success of Operation Syrian Refugees. It was a whole of government initiative of which we can all be proud.

I would like to also take this opportunity to once again thank you and the members of the Standing Committee for your work.

Yours sincerely,

Ahmed Hussen, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Enclosures

**Government of Canada Response the Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts,  
“Report 3, Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
Canada, of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”**

## **Introduction**

The Government thanks the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (PACP) for its report entitled “Report 3, Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

The proposed Government Response supports the Committee’s four recommendations and identifies initiatives planned or already underway which respond to the Committee’s report and to the Report of the Auditor General of Canada on Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees.

Building on the work of the Auditor General of Canada, the Committee’s Recommendations are as follows:

1. That, by 31 July 2018, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts the updated Chapter 2 (Planning) of its Grants and Contributions Manual.
2. That, by 31 July 2018, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts a report detailing the progress and enhancements to be made to its iCARE system and other possible options to better manage the information available on language training waitlists for refugees, including a timeline for making these enhancements.
3. That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts two reports on the requirements for (1) information and orientation services providers, as well as needs assessment and referral services providers, by 31 May 2018; and (2) support services and employment-related services providers by 30 November 2018.
4. That, by 30 April 2018, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts a report detailing its Outcomes Monitoring Framework and its performance information profile for the Syrian refugee initiative.

## **Background**

On November 24, 2015, the Government of Canada announced its commitment to welcome 25,000 privately sponsored and government-supported Syrian refugees to Canada by February 29, 2016 and a total of 25,000 government-supported Syrian refugees by December 31, 2016. Canada has achieved both objectives, resettling more than 50,000 Syrian refugees. This was a massive coordinated national and international effort that included collaboration with provinces and territories, municipalities, non-governmental organizations, private sponsors, service provider organizations, and Canadians. The Government of Canada relies on these partners to support resettled refugees’ integration into Canadian society.

For Operation Syrian Refugees, the Government committed \$910 million for identification, overseas processing, and transportation to Canada as well as resettlement and settlement of Syrian refugees. More than \$535 million was allocated for the resettlement, settlement and integration program, including for supports under the Interim Federal Health Program. This funding resulted in:

- Additional spaces in Language for Newcomer Classes (LINC) focused on literacy and Canadian Language Benchmark levels 1 to 4;
- Enhancements to address the capacity of service provider organizations to identify refugee mental health needs and how best to address them;
- Enhanced support services for women, including increased childcare spaces, and additional conversation circles specifically for women and mothers covering specific topics such as Canadian laws, culture and expected responsibilities as members of Canadian society; and
- Additional workers in the Settlement Workers in Schools program, including additional Arabic-speaking settlement workers.

IRCC has undertaken or funded a number of lessons learned exercises related to Operation Syrian Refugees, including a rapid impact evaluation, and co-funding of a number of research projects with the Social Science and Humanities Research Council. IRCC is using the findings of these exercises to inform settlement program improvements, including for Syrian refugees.

Overall, Syrian refugees accessed settlement services at a higher rate than other refugees who arrived in Canada during the same period. They also received health care coverage in Canada under the Interim Federal Health Program.

### **Summary of the Committee's Recommendations and Government Response**

*The timely delivery of funds to service providers (Addressing recommendation 1 of the Committee report)*

The report recommended that IRCC present to the PACP an updated Chapter 2 (Planning) of its Grants and Contributions Manual by July 31, 2018. IRCC agrees with this recommendation and work is underway to address the Office of the Auditor General recommendation to improve planning and approval processes to ensure the timely transfer of funds. The updated grants and contributions manual will be shared with the Committee via the Clerk of the Committee by July 31, 2018.

A key element of IRCC's success in managing its grants and contributions is ensuring that funds are made available on a timely basis, are aligned with the demand for services, and that due diligence in its disbursement is exercised. The Department has started to review and make improvements to its planning and approval processes to ensure the timely transfer of funding to service providers. For example:

- A separate Settlement and Integration Sector was created in September 2017 to provide



a single point of accountability for the strategic vision and oversight of the Department's settlement and integration policy, programs and operations including the disbursement of funds. This will also support the Department's commitment to ensuring that newcomers to Canada receive timely, high quality settlement services.

- In January 2018, the Department also shared the 2018-2019 settlement funding information with regional offices. This was done several months earlier than in previous years to facilitate better planning for disbursement of funds to service providers. Moving forward, the intent is to share budget information well in advance to improve forward planning.

As the planning process is further refined, IRCC will determine and implement the required updates to guidance documents on grants and contributions management, including the manual and other guides, and procedure documents on spending authority for grants and contributions.

*Information Available on Language Training Waitlists (Addressing recommendation 2 of the Committee report)*

The Committee recommended that IRCC present to the PACP a report detailing the progress and enhancements to be made to its Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE) system and other possible options to better manage the information available on language training waitlists for refugees, including a timeline for making these enhancements by July 31, 2018. IRCC agrees with the recommendation and work is underway to address the recommendation. IRCC will update the Committee on progress made to better manage language training waitlists, including for refugees by July 31, 2018.

IRCC is also enhancing its iCARE system to facilitate better tracking and reporting of waitlists and facilitate referrals by and across language service providing organizations. These updates were informed by a Department-led waitlist validation exercise held in the summer of 2017 and involved language service providers. IRCC is using the findings of the validation exercise to inform how the iCARE system will be further enhanced.

The Department has also taken action to address the demand for language training and facilitate better tracking and reporting of waitlists and referrals. For example, over the last two years the Department has provided targeted funding for just under 10,000 new language training seats at English as a Second Language (ESL) literacy and basic levels (Canadian Language Benchmark levels 1-4) to meet the needs of refugees, including Syrian refugees. Additional investments have also been directed towards increased support services, such as childcare and transportation that facilitates newcomers' participation in language training. The Department will continue to provide targeted funding for additional language training support, where demand is highest.

Additionally, in April 2018, the Department issued updated guidelines for language service providers that aim to strengthen referral and waitlist management practices and improve waitlist data and accuracy. These guidelines were updated in consultation with several language service providers to ensure clarity and consistent interpretation of the waitlist guidelines at the organizational and regional level.

The Government will continue to make use of waitlist information to track waitlist patterns locally, monitor service provider compliance with the waitlist guidelines, and ensure that language service providers are referring clients to courses with language training availability within their organizations and community at large.

*Service Expectations (Addressing recommendation 3 of the Committee report)*

The Committee recommended that IRCC present PACP two reports on the requirements for:

- 1) Information and orientation services providers, as well as needs assessment and referral services providers, by May 31, 2018; and
- 2) Support services and employment-related services providers by November 30, 2018.

IRCC agrees with this recommendation and the importance of having clear service expectations in contribution agreements. Work is underway to address the recommendation. IRCC has requested and received agreement to update the Committee on service expectations in contribution agreements, for information and orientation and needs assessment and referral services service provider organization by June 14, 2018 rather than May 31, 2018, as initially requested by the Committee. It will also update the Committee on support services and employment-related services providers by November 30, 2018.

The Minister of IRCC is committed to ensuring value-for-money in the delivery of all its grant and contribution programs. As the Committee noted, IRCC has already set clear service expectations for language service providers delivering language training and language assessment services. These expectations are included in the April 2017 to March 2020 contribution agreements.

Building on service expectations developed for language training and assessment services, IRCC is also on track to begin implementation of more robust service expectations for other settlement services including information and orientation, needs assessment and referral services, and Community Connections this spring, and for support services and employment-related services providers this fall. These expectations will be communicated to service providers and implemented through amendments to existing agreements throughout the current funding cycle.

*Outcomes for Monitoring Framework and the Performance Information Profile for the Syrian Refugee Initiative (Addressing recommendation 4 of the Committee report)*

The Committee recommended that IRCC present a report to them detailing its Outcomes Monitoring Framework and its performance information profile for the Syrian refugee initiative by April 30, 2018. IRCC agrees with this recommendation and has completed its response to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada audit. The Government has submitted its Outcomes Monitoring Framework and performance information profiles on the Syrian refugee initiative to the Committee.

At the outset of the Syrian refugee initiative, IRCC developed a comprehensive Outcomes Monitoring Framework as well as a performance information profile of the Syrian refugee initiative. These documents compiled sources of performance measurement information and data linkages that were put in place, which enable the Department to provide key results on Syrians in



areas such as: settlement service usage; early labour market participation; life satisfaction; sense of belonging; civic participation and social connections; mental health; and others.

In January 2018, IRCC updated its Outcomes Monitoring Framework and re-developed the performance information profile for the Syrian refugee initiative. The Outcomes Monitoring Framework is anchored in a multi-year approach and based on multiple sources of performance information, including:

- Ongoing data collection and analysis of IRCC-funded settlement service usage through the iCARE system (e.g. language assessments and training, needs assessments and referrals, and employment services);
- Synthesizing and reporting on the 27 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council-IRCC cofounded Syrian research projects, with findings on specific Syrian settlement issues, challenges, and successful practices shedding light on Syrians' settlement experience;
- Designing an annual settlement outcomes survey for all settlement clients, including the Syrians, to be launched in the spring of 2018, which will provide timely and regular outcomes information on this population's settlement experiences in areas such as knowledge of the Canadian labour market, employment, knowledge of Canada, use of official languages, and participation in Canadian society;
- Strengthening its data through linkages with new data sources related to Syrian refugee settlement outcomes that will provide valuable new insight into Syrians' settlement, including linkages with Statistics Canada data and provincial data. This data linkage work is currently underway and IRCC is negotiating data-sharing arrangements with the provinces to enhance the flow of performance information between jurisdictions.

The special performance information profile updated for the Syrian refugee initiative combines resettlement and settlement outcomes and identifies the metrics which will be used to measure the outcomes of the Syrian refugee initiative, and data collection. Together, these efforts will provide timely and increasingly comprehensive results for Syrians in 2018 and for the years to come. It will also support IRCC's ongoing performance measurement, policy and program innovation and course correction, information sharing with partners, and substantive public reporting on the integration of Syrians and their children.