



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# IMPROVING SETTLEMENT SERVICES ACROSS CANADA

Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship  
and Immigration

Nick Whalen, Chair

JUNE 2019  
42<sup>nd</sup> PARLIAMENT, 1<sup>st</sup> SESSION

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Citizenship and Immigration**

**Nick Whalen  
Chair**

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## **NOTICE TO READER**

### **Reports from committee presented to the House of Commons**

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

has the honour to present its

## **TWENTY-SIXTH REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2), the Committee has studied settlement services across Canada and has agreed to report the following:





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## SUMMARY

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Newcomers from diverse backgrounds arrive in Canada every day. Settlement services offer immigrants a bridge into Canadian society, assisting them to start their lives in Canada with the proper information and supports needed to help them succeed and quickly feel at home.

Between January and May 2019, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration studied the current state of settlement services to determine how they could be improved. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) engages employers, sponsors and settlement services agencies to provide settlement services on its behalf. The Settlement Program is the largest in IRCC and there are over 500 organizations that are funded to provide settlement services. The diverse needs of newcomers are reflected in the types of services that are offered, such as language training, employment related services, and mental health supports.

This report is divided into nine sections. Section one provides an overview of settlement services and its funding.

Section two summarizes the most common services available to eligible newcomers. Pre-arrival services provide information abroad that help newcomers adjust their expectations and connect with employer networks. There are also different types of language training necessary to enter the job market or to obtain Canadian citizenship. Employment services are varied, such as mentorship or networking.

Section three describes specialized services that target specific vulnerable populations such as women and youth. To better serve vulnerable populations, organizations have come up with different ideas that are shared in this report.

Section four discusses how eligibility criteria may restrict access to settlement services.

Section five examines settlement services in rural areas. Immigration to Canada has generally benefited urban areas, but today's rural communities are seeking to attract and retain newcomers. They often face the challenge of having little support and flexible solutions are required.

Section six examines settlement services for francophone minority communities outside Quebec, and the challenges in providing a continuum of services in French to newcomers who are entitled to service in their official language.

Section seven identifies how welcoming communities and anti-racism efforts affect the relative success of newcomer integration.

Section eight explores funding models for service provider organizations, and the desire for stable and predictable multiyear funding.

Finally, section nine provides a brief overview of a formal evaluation conducted by IRCC of its settlement services in May 2017, and how agreements between IRCC and service providers include a component outlining desired outcomes.

Settlement services have and will continue to be developed locally to meet national objectives. Increasingly, there is a recognition that while best practices can be shared for evaluation purposes, programs will always need to be adapted to reflect the availability of community resources, provincial and territorial supports, and the ability of each local organization. Without stable and predictable funding, it is not possible for settlement services providers to fully develop programming and retain staff. Therefore, there is a role for the federal government in working with stakeholders to establish national standards and priorities, establish multiyear funding envelopes, and facilitate the customization of settlement programming that takes local realities into account.

This report highlights actions the federal government can take to improve settlement services in the different communities across the country, including in rural areas, as well as some initiatives on the international scene. The Committee recommends that Canadian best practices in settlement services be shared with other countries in the context of the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. The Committee also identifies a need for better coordination of interpretation services, in collaboration with all levels of government across Canada. Further, mobile settlement services and access to digital tools should be expanded in rural and remote areas to assist communities in their efforts to attract and retain newcomers.

# LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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*As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.*

## **Sharing Best Practices in Settlement Services with the International Community**

### **Recommendation 1**

**Recognizing Canada’s leadership and expertise in newcomer settlement and integration, that the Government of Canada look for opportunities, including through fora created by the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, to share best practices in the settlement sector with other countries..... 12**

## **Promoting Pre-Arrival Services**

### **Recommendation 2**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada examine how to increase the use of pre-arrival services, including by strengthening the communication provided to clients to elaborate on how the pre-arrival services would improve or facilitate settlement. .... 17**

## **Continue Funding Diverse Methods of Language Learning**

### **Recommendation 3**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to shorten wait times for language classes and fund a variety of language services, including computer-based language tools, so that newcomers’ different needs, including language proficiency and literacy skills in the first official language, can be accommodated. .... 22**

## **Increase Childminding Services**

### **Recommendation 4**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada collaborate with provinces, territories, municipalities and other stakeholders to enable more childminding services so that newcomers with young children can access settlement services, including language training..... 23**

**Support Programs that Provide Training and Job Placement**

**Recommendation 5**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to support and encourage innovation in settlement services, including programs in collaboration with employers and industry-led associations for training and job placement. .... 25**

**Improving Access to Interpretation Services**

**Recommendation 6**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada collaborate with provinces, territories, municipalities and other stakeholders to better coordinate the availability of interpretation so that newcomers have meaningful access to provincially and municipally delivered social services, including mental health care. .... 25**

**Removing the Stigma Attached to Accessing Mental Health Supports**

**Recommendation 7**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with settlement service providers to improve newcomers’ awareness of the mental health supports available in their community and to provide information in a supportive and culturally-sensitive manner that indicates that seeking such care is acceptable in Canadian society and should be destigmatized. .... 27**

**Funding for Initiatives to Meet the Specific Needs of Vulnerable Groups**

**Recommendation 8**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to improve the availability of targeted initiatives designed to meet the specific, real-life needs of vulnerable communities, including women, LGBTQ2 persons and youth to help them integrate successfully..... 36**



**Expanding the Availability of Settlement Workers in Schools**

**Recommendation 9**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to support and expand the Settlement Workers in Schools program, focusing on areas with the highest concentrations of vulnerable newcomer youth, to support those youth and their families. .... 37**

**Attraction and Retention of Newcomers in Smaller Communities**

**Recommendation 10**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada expand the availability of mobile settlement services in rural and remote communities, and the availability of digital tools, in order to provide services directly to newcomers where they settle, so as to encourage the attraction and retention of newcomers in smaller communities..... 48**

**Supporting Innovation and the Sharing of Best Practices Across Canada**

**Recommendation 11**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada support the settlement service provider ecosystem, by continuing to facilitate opportunities for innovation and the sharing of best practices between frontline organizations across Canada. .... 48**

**Ensure Quality and Effectiveness of French-language Settlement Services**

**Recommendation 12**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada ensure the quality and effectiveness of French-language settlement services delivered to newcomers in francophone minority communities. .... 50**

**Initiatives to Promote Cultural Diversity and Combat Racism**

**Recommendation 13**

**That the Government of Canada continue to develop initiatives to promote cultural diversity and combat racism in order to support newcomer integration. .... 52**

**Predictable and Stable Long-Term Funding for Service Provider Organizations**

**Recommendation 14**

**That the Government of Canada provide stable and predictable multi-year funding to organizations with a demonstrated track record of providing effective settlement services, to better support long-term planning and continuity of services. .... 54**

**Settlement Program Funding Commensurate with Immigration Levels**

**Recommendation 15**

**That the Government of Canada maintain settlement services program funding commensurate with immigration levels. .... 54**

**Developing More Effective Metrics for Settlement Outcomes**

**Recommendation 16**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to collaborate with all levels of government and other stakeholders, including Local Immigration Partnerships, in developing more effective metrics for settlement outcomes that take into account clients' specific needs. .... 57**



# IMPROVING SETTLEMENT SERVICES IN CANADA

## INTRODUCTION

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Every year, Canada welcomes more than 300,000 immigrants. This figure includes individuals in the economic, family, and refugees and protected persons classes of immigration. Starting in 2021, the government plans to admit a number of immigrants that is equal to 1% of Canada's population each year.<sup>1</sup> These newcomers need support in order to overcome the challenges they face on arriving in Canada and to successfully integrate into their new country.

Conscious of this fundamental need, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (the Committee) agreed on 6 February 2018 to undertake a study of settlement services for newcomers.<sup>2</sup> Between January and May 2019, the Committee heard 52 witnesses and received five briefs on this topic. The Committee members would like to sincerely thank all those who took the time to contribute to this important study.

This report covers settlement services that are provided to meet newcomers' needs and the specific services required by the most vulnerable newcomers. The report also reviews the eligibility criteria for clients and the unique factors involved in settlement in rural areas and francophone minority communities. Subsequently, the report includes observations on the role Canadian society plays in integrating newcomers. It then examines the funding of service provider organizations, and concludes with an overview of settlement services evaluation.

The witness testimony canvasses a wide variety of services offered across the country in large urban, suburban, small urban, rural and remote settings. Communities looking at new ways to help newcomers integrate may find this report to be a useful resource.

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1 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], [2019–2021 Immigration Levels Plan](#), 31 October 2018.

2 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMM), [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 6 February 2018.



# BACKGROUND: SETTLEMENT SERVICES IN CANADA

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## OVERVIEW OF THE SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

The Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Settlement Program is intended to “support newcomers’ successful settlement and integration so that they may participate and contribute in various aspects of Canadian life.”<sup>3</sup> IRCC issues calls for proposals in order to reach funding agreements with organizations that submit proposals so that they can deliver settlement services to newcomers. Various types of organizations are eligible to deliver settlement services:

- not-for-profit organizations;
- educational institutions (including school boards, districts and divisions);
- provincial, territorial and municipal governments;
- international organizations;
- businesses (such as employers hiring newcomers and private language schools); and
- individuals.<sup>4</sup>

IRCC funds five types of settlement services:

- Needs Assessment and Referrals;
- Information and Orientation;
- Language Training and Skills Development;

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3 IRCC, *Evaluation of the Settlement Program*, November 2017, p. vi.

4 IRCC, “[Eligible applicants](#),” *Call for proposals 2019: Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Programs funding guidelines*.



- Employment-Related Services; and
- Community Connections.<sup>5</sup>

Needs Assessment and Referrals (NARS) includes a comprehensive evaluation of the person, the creation of a personalized settlement plan, referral to various types of services available in the community to support integration and periodic follow-ups.

Information and Orientation services provide information on various subjects that are important to settlement, such as housing, health care, finance and the legal system, and are delivered online, on paper or in person.<sup>6</sup>

Language Training and Skills Development includes assessments of language ability for placement in English-as-a-second-language (ESL) or French-as-a-second-language (FSL) classes.

Employment-Related Services include job search assistance, employment skills development (including essential skills), support for credential recognition or licensure, opportunities to gain experience in Canada, and job-related mentoring and networking.

Lastly, Community Connections encompasses initiatives that build bridges between newcomers and their host communities and support their integration into society.<sup>7</sup>

The Settlement Program also funds six kinds of support services that improve access to settlement services:

- care for newcomer children;
- transportation;
- translation;

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5 IRCC, "[Funding](#)," *Partners and Services providers*.

6 The Committee heard that newcomers are informed about signing up for the Canada Child Benefit program. CIMM, [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1545 (Dustin Mymko, Community Development Officer/Settlement, Cartwright Killarney Boissevain Settlement Services, Roblin-Cartwright Community Development Corporation). A witness stated that the Canada Child Benefit program has helped newcomers pay rent where housing costs are a concern. CIMM, [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1610 (Mario Calla, Executive Director, COSTI Immigrant Services).

7 IRCC, [Call for proposals 2019: Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Programs funding guidelines](#).

- interpretation;
- disability support; and
- crisis counselling.<sup>8</sup>

IRCC-funded settlement services are provided to immigrants and refugees with permanent residence status, as well as to their spouses and children. Temporary residents, such as international students and temporary foreign workers, do not have access to these services, nor do refugee claimants. Individuals cease to be eligible for these services once they have obtained Canadian citizenship.

In addition to the settlement services provided once immigrants arrive in Canada, IRCC funds some organizations to provide these services beforehand, while immigrants are still in their country of origin. These pre-arrival services are available only to permanent resident applicants outside Canada with appropriate documentation.<sup>9</sup>

Indirect settlement services are also funded under the program. They include the Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) and Réseaux en immigration francophone (RIF) initiatives (the latter serve francophone communities outside Quebec). Both are designed to improve coordination of services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration and do not provide direct services to newcomers.<sup>10</sup>

More than one witness noted that the Canadian system of settlement services for newcomers is recognized around the world as a model that has a proven track record.<sup>11</sup> Its success has been attributed in part to effective co-operation and coordination

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8 IRCC, *Evaluation of the Settlement Program*, November 2017, p. vi.

9 These documents include “an IRCC invitation letter to obtain pre-arrival services; a Confirmation of Permanent Residence letter; a passport request letter that indicates Permanent Resident visa issuance; an IRCC request that an applicant for permanent residence complete medicals; a Single Entry Permanent Resident Visa; or a Permanent Resident Visa pick up notification letter.” Government of Canada, *Get help before arriving in Canada – Pre-arrival services*, 15 January 2019.

10 IRCC, *Evaluation of the Settlement Program*, November 2017, p. 40.

11 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1605 (David Manicom, Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Integration, Department of Citizenship and Immigration); and *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1530 (Mario Calla) and 1630 (John Shields, Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Ryerson University, and Interim Director, Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement, As an individual).



between the various levels of government and the network of service providers.<sup>12</sup> David Manicom, Assistant Deputy Minister at IRCC, made the following comments:

I think the model through which we work closely in co-planning with the provinces using community-based service providers through grants and contributions funding arrangements creates a network embedded in our towns and cities that is somewhat unique. I don't think our network of service providers, which leverage many hundreds of thousands of volunteer dollars, for example, volunteers, could be replicated by government if we had to start from scratch. I think we've inherited a wonderful network of community-embedded expertise, which is a great contributor to our success story.<sup>13</sup>

As such, the Committee recommends:

### **Sharing Best Practices in Settlement Services with the International Community**

#### **Recommendation 1**

**Recognizing Canada's leadership and expertise in newcomer settlement and integration, that the Government of Canada look for opportunities, including through fora created by the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, to share best practices in the settlement sector with other countries.**

### **Overview of Newcomer Integration**

IRCC reported that Statistics Canada's latest data suggest the Settlement Program is effective in helping newcomers integrate. For example, the department pointed out that most of the employment growth in Canada – 66% of the increase between 2016 and 2017 – was a direct result of immigrants. The department also cited the most recent Labour Force Survey, conducted in December 2018, which shows that employment rates for immigrants are generally consistent with the national average. Moreover, the unemployment rate among core working-age immigrants was 5.7% in 2018, the lowest it has been since at least 2006.<sup>14</sup>

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12 Ibid.; CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1540 (Ahmed Hussein, Executive Director, The Neighbourhood Organization); and *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1650 (Garry Green, Senior Manager, Business Development and Community Services, Toronto District School Board).

13 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1605 (David Manicom).

14 Ibid., 1550.



## Funding of Settlement Services

The Settlement Program is IRCC's largest grant and contribution program,<sup>15</sup> accounting for nearly \$715 million in spending in 2017–2018.<sup>16</sup> IRCC stated that it funded over 500 organizations to provide settlement services to some 460,000 clients in 2018–2019. The department also reported that, by the end of fiscal year 2019–2020, the government will have increased settlement funding by 32% compared with 2015–2016.<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that Quebec has different responsibilities from the other provinces in terms of immigrant and refugee selection abroad.<sup>18</sup> Under the *Canada–Quebec Accord on Immigration*,<sup>19</sup> the Government of Canada provides targeted transfer payments to Quebec, and in return, the province provides comparable settlement services.<sup>20</sup>

The figure below shows the distribution of IRCC contributions across the various categories of Settlement Program services between 2011 and 2016.

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15 IRCC, *Evaluation of the Settlement Program*, November 2017, p. 1.

16 IRCC, *Details on Transfer Payment Programs of \$5 Million or More*, 20 November 2018.

17 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1555 (David Manicom).

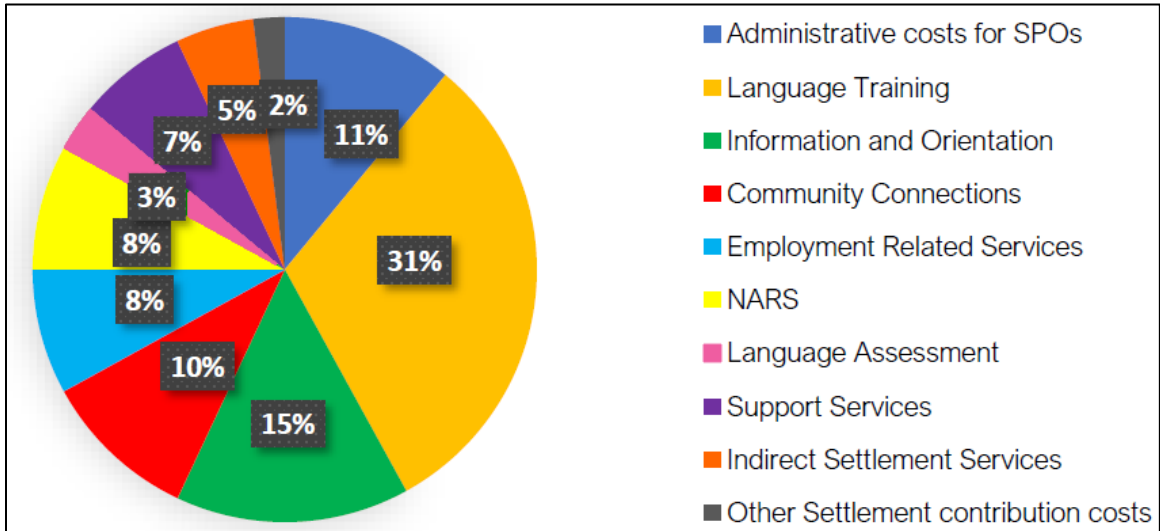
18 Government of Canada, *Quebec cases*, 18 September 2017.

19 Government of Canada, *Canada–Quebec Accord Relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens*, 5 February 1991.

20 Julie Béchar, *Immigration: The Canada–Quebec Accord*, Publication No. 2011-89-E, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, 5 April 2018.



**Figure 1: IRCC Contributions for the Settlement Program,  
2011-2012 to 2015-2016**



Source: J. Praznik and J. Shields, *An Anatomy of Settlement Services in Canada: A Guide*, 3 July 2018, p. 25, citing data from IRCC, *Evaluation of the Settlement Program*, November 2017, p. 53.

\*The acronym NARS contained in Figure 1 stands for Needs Assessment and Referrals. SPOs stands for Service Provider organizations.

## SERVICES AND NEWCOMER NEEDS

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The settlement services and support services most discussed by witnesses during the study included pre-arrival services, language training, employment-related services, interpretation services and short-term counselling.

### PRE-ARRIVAL SERVICES

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada offers pre-arrival services for newcomers to be informed about life in Canada before they arrive. These services are available to future permanent residents, who are made aware of the programs in writing when they receive their approval in principle.<sup>21</sup> The Committee heard that immigrants and sponsored refugees have anywhere between 12 and 24 months to prepare for arrival to Canada.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, these services are currently under-used, perhaps because newcomers have already arranged employment or are coming as a sponsored spouse.<sup>23</sup>

### Permanent Residents in the Economic Streams or Family Class

Pre-arrival services for permanent residents in the economic stream or in the family class are not mandatory.<sup>24</sup> They can include online and in-person sessions on various aspects of life in Canada such as early support with foreign credential recognition, career planning and job search; opportunities to connect with Canadian employers, even before departure; and bridging to post-arrival settlement services in whichever community they choose to settle in. Such programs help newcomers prepare for the Canadian labour market and give them a better grasp of the different communities across Canada.<sup>25</sup>

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21 Approval in principle is when the applicant has met the eligibility criteria for the immigration program (i.e. Federal Skilled Worker), and only a few background checks remain, such as a medical exam.

22 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1725 (Abdulla Daoud, Executive Director, The Refugee Centre).

23 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1630 (David Manicom).

24 *Ibid.*, 1725 (Queenie Choo, Chief Executive Officer, S.U.C.C.E.S.S).

25 *Ibid.*, 1645.



There are 16 different organizations offering pre-arrival in different ways. Some are occupation specific, such as the B.C. Construction Association.<sup>26</sup> The Active Engagement and Integration Project, delivered since 2008 by S.U.C.C.E.S.S., is one example of pre-arrival services. Offered in person in China and South Korea, there are also offered online to candidates in India and the Philippines.<sup>27</sup> Funded from September 2015 to December 2018, the Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Canada offered pre-arrival services that included individualized needs assessments, which were used to connect newcomers to a local RDÉE Canada branch in the province or territory of destination and to local settlement service providers. The RDÉE Canada offered diverse online resources, such as fact sheets, webinars and virtual job fairs.<sup>28</sup> Since 80% of their clientele were in regulated professions, RDÉE Canada developed tools to inform newcomers of the requirements to enter the labour market based on where they intended to settle.<sup>29</sup> The results showed that 75% of the newcomers assisted this way were gainfully employed within the first six months of their arrival.<sup>30</sup>

Professor Shields told the Committee that pre-arrival services are “one of the best practices today ... because it gives immigrants much more information before they arrive. It demystifies some of the experiences they’re going to have. It gives them awareness as well of some of the services that are available once they arrive within Canada.”<sup>31</sup>

## Observations and Recommendation

The Committee heard that pre-arrival services were beneficial to newcomers, but that many future permanent residents did not avail themselves of them. Better explaining the value and raising awareness of these services could increase their use. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

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26 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1605 (Katie Rosenberger, Executive Director, Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC). COSTI Immigrant Services also provides pre-arrival services. CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1625 (Mario Calla).

27 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1645 (Queenie Choo).

28 Ibid., 1655 (Jean-Guy Bigeau, Chief Executive Officer, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Canada).

29 Ibid., 1720 (Roukya Abdi-Aden, Administrator, National Cooperation, Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Canada).

30 Ibid., 1655 (Jean-Guy Bigeau).

31 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1710 (John Shields).

## Promoting Pre-Arrival Services

### Recommendation 2

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada examine how to increase the use of pre-arrival services, including by strengthening the communication provided to clients to elaborate on how the pre-arrival services would improve or facilitate settlement.**

## Resettled Refugees

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has provided pre-departure orientation sessions to 127,000 refugees coming to Canada since 1998. The IOM's Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) program helps refugees anticipate integration challenges and manage their expectations. Facilitators cover a range of topics such as housing, health, money management, the role of settlement service providers, education, and rights and responsibilities. The sessions are held in the participant's mother tongue, and to encourage participation, childminding and meals are provided, as well as travel and accommodation allowances when required.<sup>32</sup> The COA focuses on the skills and knowledge needed for the first six months in Canada.<sup>33</sup> It provides general information about foreign credential recognition, as the sessions may have participants going to different provinces or attending without yet knowing their destination.<sup>34</sup> IOM provided language training to refugees pre-arrival between 1990 and 1998, however this was discontinued.<sup>35</sup> During fiscal year 2017-18, 76% of eligible refugees participated in COA sessions,<sup>36</sup> and the Committee heard that IOM will continue to provide these services.<sup>37</sup>

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32 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 January 2019, 1635, 1640 (Matthew Cecchetto, Liaison Officer, Canadian Orientation Abroad, International Organization for Migration).

33 Ibid., 1705.

34 Ibid., 1715.

35 Ibid., 1710.

36 Eligibility in this context was defined as meeting the age requirement. This statistic was calculated based on the number of refugees that were transported to Canada by IOM and trained that year. CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 January 2019, 1705 (Matthew Cecchetto).

37 Ibid., 1710.



## LANGUAGE TRAINING

In 2018-2019, more than 100,000 newcomers accessed language training services.<sup>38</sup> Language skills are necessary for successful settlement in communities<sup>39</sup> and important to enter the labour market.<sup>40</sup> For certain newcomers, basic skills in an official language reduces their isolation.<sup>41</sup> As Heather Hart, Assistant Superintendent, School District 41, Burnaby School District, told the Committee:

Language training benefits newcomers by helping them develop the skills to successfully integrate and contribute to Canada, both socially and economically. Language is social currency.<sup>42</sup>

## Assessments

Before taking a language class, newcomers are assessed to be placed in the appropriate class level. Service providers use the Canadian Language Benchmarks test and its literacy test (CLB-LBT).<sup>43</sup> Students are assessed on reading, writing, listening and speaking. During training, assessment is based on the completed tasks in the students' binders. Not only does the instructor evaluate the student's performance but there are self-evaluations and peer evaluations.<sup>44</sup> Christine Buuck, Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration and International Education, Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, told the Committee that their faculty developed over 160 assessments that were posted to the national platform for teachers of English as a Second Language, Tutela, funded by IRCC.<sup>45</sup>

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38 Ibid., 1555 (David Manicom).

39 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 4 February 2019, 1545 (Jess Hamm, Executive Director, Saskatchewan Intercultural Association); and [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1545 (Angela Mowbray, Acting Manager, Language Program, Westman Immigrant Services).

40 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 4 February 2019, 1600 (Ahmed Hussein).

41 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1645 (Lily Kwok, Executive Director, Calgary Chinese Community Service Association).

42 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1610 (Heather Hart, Assistant Superintendent, School District 41, Burnaby School District).

43 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1545 (Angela Mowbray).

44 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1610 (Heather Hart); 1620 (Garry Green).

45 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1640 (Christine Buuck, Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration and International Education, Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning).

For its economic immigration and citizenship applications, IRCC requires a third-party standardized language assessment such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).<sup>46</sup> Victoria Sellar, Assistant Director, Partnerships and Policy, Cambridge Language Assessment, IELTS, stated that “the IELTS test is a high-stakes test that underwent a rigorous accreditation process with the Government of Canada.”<sup>47</sup> Garry Green, Senior Manager, Business Development and Community Services, Toronto District School Board, argued that for the purposes of citizenship applications, the CLB levels validated by the Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS) Assessment centres should also be recognized by IRCC.<sup>48</sup>

## Types of Language Training

The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, taught in classrooms with curriculum based on the LINC guidelines in line with the Canadian Language Benchmarks, is the traditional language program funded by IRCC.<sup>49</sup> The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) has been offering the LINC program since 1992, serving approximately 5,000 learners per year, with 250 childminding spots. The TDSB shared best practices with the Committee, including employing trained instructors certified in teaching English as a second language and portfolio-based learning assessment (PBLA) and having students sign a contract in their preferred language that outlines their class schedule and expectations.<sup>50</sup> From September 2017 to June 2018, the Burnaby School District also ran a pilot to demonstrate the benefits of a blended model that included online platforms and formal classes.

Students noted from this that they developed knowledge and confidence in using technology for language learning and settlement needs....They could do advanced learning online to better prepare for face-to-face classes and learn new vocabulary and pronunciation. Flexible schedules allowed students to maintain much-needed employment while learning English ... Teachers noted a higher level of student engagement in learning and retention, better attendance rates due to flexibility in

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46 The only other recognized test is the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELP), administered by a subsidiary of the University of British Columbia.

47 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1700 (Victoria Sellar, Assistant Director, Partnerships and Policy, Cambridge Language Assessment, International English Language Testing System).

48 Garry Green, Toronto District School Board, *Written response to a request for information made on 3 April 2019*, p. 4.

49 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1735 (Olga Stachova, Chief Executive Officer, MOSAIC); *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1635 (William Sinclair, Executive Director, St. Stephen’s Community House); *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1610 (Heather Hart); and *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1640 (Christine Buuck).

50 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1620 (Garry Green).



online learning and childminding, and improved student access to settlement and language with increased opportunities for blended learning. They felt it empowered the students in both English-language learning and technology skills. As one of the LINC students put it, it's the best method for learning in a modern society.<sup>51</sup>

Combining employment and language training has proven to be effective.<sup>52</sup> Carl Cadogan, Chief Executive Officer, Reception House Waterloo Region, explained that his organization provided instruction at two work sites.<sup>53</sup> LINC in the workplace has also been piloted by the Conestoga College of Technology and Advanced Learning.<sup>54</sup> As Brian Dyck, National Migration and Resettlement Program Coordinator, Mennonite Central Committee Canada noted,

Language learning is different for many different people. I think developing different strategies for different learning styles is an important thing to think about. Some people learn better while they're at work. Having programs where language can be learned in a work setting is one good practice I've seen.<sup>55</sup>

For skilled workers, there are other tools. S.U.C.C.E.S.S. has created an online employment training support for those already working or attending skills training who need additional help to attain proficiency.<sup>56</sup> Enhanced language training targets skilled immigrants who come to Canada with already 14 to 16 years of education. With this support, they can settle into good jobs.<sup>57</sup> Lastly, occupation specific language training (OSLT) prepares newcomers to find work in their professional fields. Currently, OSLT covers sectors such as health sciences, business, technology, human services and skilled trades, as well as 35 occupations.<sup>58</sup>

For those who need to improve their language skills, two programs were described to the Committee. The food program at the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House allows

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51 Ibid., 1610 (Heather Hart).

52 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 January 2019, 1555 (David Manicom).

53 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1630 (Carl Cadogan, Chief Executive Officer, Reception House Waterloo Region).

54 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1645 (Christine Buuck).

55 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 4 February 2019, 1735 (Brian Dyck, National Migration and Resettlement Program Coordinator, Mennonite Central Committee Canada).

56 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 January 2019, 1650 (Queenie Choo).

57 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1535 (Mario Calla).

58 Ibid., 1645 (Christine Buuck).



participants to feel safe practicing English in the kitchen.<sup>59</sup> In the Waterloo region, refugee families are paired with local volunteers where they meet weekly to participate in activities such as sharing meals and practicing English. This provides newcomers with a sense of belonging.<sup>60</sup>

Two programs in Calgary were also developed to break social isolation, taking learners that could not be placed within ESL or LINC classes. Working with the Chinese and Afghan communities, the Stepping Stones program employs facilitators who are bilingual and who do not hesitate to speak in the learner’s mother tongue if necessary during an English class. The computer-enhanced ESL literacy courses introduces them to the use of technology.<sup>61</sup>

## Barriers to Language Training

Waiting lists,<sup>62</sup> childcare and literacy needs<sup>63</sup> have been the most often cited challenges to obtaining language training. There is also the competing need to join the workforce and earn income.<sup>64</sup>

On 30 January 2019, Mr. Manicom told the Committee that IRCC has been striving to reduce waiting lists for those with the greatest need, those in the lower levels of the language spectrum. As a result, for those who fall into this category “waiting lists are about 49% smaller than they were a year ago.”<sup>65</sup> In light of the current waitlists for LINC classes in the Kitchener-Waterloo Region, Mr. Cadogan recommended a flexible approach to the delivery of language training.<sup>66</sup>

When newcomers come to Canada with low literacy levels, a different approach must be used, such as the Stepping Stone program. At Westman Immigrant Services, in Brandon, Manitoba, there is a family literacy program where students can attend class with their

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59 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1540 (Jocelyne Hamel, Executive Director, Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia).

60 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1630 (Carl Cadogan).

61 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1640 (Nazifia Hakemy, Program Coordinator, Calgary Chinese Community Service Association).

62 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1630 (Carl Cadogan) and 1545 (Angela Mowbray).

63 *Ibid.*, 1545.

64 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1720 (Noureddine Belhocine, General Manager, Maison Internationale de la Rive-Sud).

65 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1625 (David Manicom).

66 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1625 (Carl Cadogan).



infants. This program was developed to assist newcomers who could not place their children in childcare.<sup>67</sup> Ms. Hart told the Committee that there are significant waitlists for childminding.<sup>68</sup> Licensed childcare in the same location as where the parents are taking their classes is important for newcomers, particularly for those who have experienced the trauma of conflict and war.<sup>69</sup> Andy Foster, Project Coordinator, Arden Language Centre, spoke about trauma as a barrier to learning a new language.<sup>70</sup>

Combining employment and language training was also discussed above as a best practice, as newcomers struggle to choose between learning a language or earning an income. Abdulla Daoud attributed the success of Quebec's French-language program to the stipend students are paid weekly.<sup>71</sup> Mrs. Foster also pointed out that the income support of one year provided for those coming from refugee camps was not sufficient, noting that "the timeframe given to learn English to enter the workforce was not long enough."<sup>72</sup>

## Observations and Recommendations

The Committee heard there are various types of language training to help newcomers, who arrive with different levels of literacy, to successfully integrate into the job market. There are still waiting lists for various language training programs and not enough childcare services. Knowing the importance of language training for settlement and integration of newcomers, the Committee recommends:

### Continue Funding Diverse Methods of Language Learning

#### Recommendation 3

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to shorten wait times for language classes and fund a variety of language services, including computer-based language tools, so that newcomers' different needs, including language proficiency and literacy skills in the first official language, can be accommodated.**

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67 Ibid., 1545 (Angela Mowbray).

68 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1635 (Heather Hart).

69 Ibid., 1610.

70 Ibid., 1650 (Andy Foster, Project Coordinator, Arden Language Centre).

71 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1735 (Abdulla Daoud).

72 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1650 (Andy Foster). Permanent residents can access language training until they are citizens.

## Increase Childminding Services

### Recommendation 4

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada collaborate with provinces, territories, municipalities and other stakeholders to enable more childminding services so that newcomers with young children can access settlement services, including language training.**

## EMPLOYMENT-RELATED SERVICES

As already noted, the economic integration of newcomers is an essential component of immigration. Jean-Guy Bigeau, Chief Executive Officer, RDÉE Canada, highlighted that such integration is done when newcomers find jobs that are commensurate with their skills:

We believe that the success of immigrants' arrival in Canada is measured when they obtain a job that matches their skills and can contribute to the economic growth of their communities and host country.<sup>73</sup>

Most service providers offer employment-related services such as résumé writing and coaching for interviews. However, Chantal Desloges, Senior Partner, Desloges Law Group, noted that in her experience, the skilled professionals that immigrate to Canada find these services too basic. These immigrants succeed with mentorship and with co-op placements.<sup>74</sup> For Olga Stachova, Chief Executive Officer, MOSAIC, the lack of Canadian work experience remains one of the most significant barriers to employment, with employers continuing to be risk-averse to hiring a newcomer. She proposes that co-op placements, internships and employer incentives would greatly assist newcomers to find suitable employment.<sup>75</sup> Mario Calla, Executive Director, COSTI Immigrant Services, explained that the programs with the best outcomes focused on the specific needs of the newcomer:

This specialization includes providing Canadian context, such as how to go about a job search in Canada, understanding the Canadian corporate culture, expectations of Canadian employers, connecting with Canadian professional networks and so on. The

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73 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1655 (Jean-Guy Bigeau).

74 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1705 (Chantal Desloges, Senior Partner, Desloges Law Group, As an individual).

75 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1715 (Olga Stachova).



point is that one needs to bridge the knowledge gap between the newcomer's frame of reference and the Canadian context.<sup>76</sup>

Ms. Stachova also emphasized that some newcomers may require a different approach if they present with complex employment needs. Her organization uses intensive case management, to help individuals identify their skills and abilities, and find employers who are willing to make accommodations and adapt their job requirements.<sup>77</sup>

Among some of the good examples that the Committee heard about, the Career Paths program in British Columbia supports newcomers with recognizing credentials, getting additional training and eventually employment. MOSAIC delivered a pilot program with the BC Care Providers Association, with employers allowing the graduates to apply what they had learned.<sup>78</sup> James Grunau, Executive Director, Journey Home Community Association, told the Committee that his organization tries to provide connections to employment training programs, assisting newcomers to make community connections.<sup>79</sup>

For newcomers who are entrepreneurs, settlement service providers can provide information and referrals.<sup>80</sup> IRCC has funded programs specifically for newcomer entrepreneurs to link them with mentors in the community, to give in-class training to help them work through the expertise in how to create companies in Canada.<sup>81</sup>

## Observations and Recommendation

The Committee heard that newcomers have different needs in order to reach full employment: some need connections and a network, others need more support. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

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76 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1530 (Mario Calla).

77 Ibid.

78 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 4 February 2019, 1735 (Olga Stachova).

79 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1655 (James Grunau, Executive Director, Journey Home Community Association).

80 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 4 February 2019, 1535 (Ahmed Hussein).

81 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 30 January 2019, 1605 (David Manicom).

## Support Programs that Provide Training and Job Placement

### Recommendation 5

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to support and encourage innovation in settlement services, including programs in collaboration with employers and industry-led associations for training and job placement.**

## INTERPRETATION SERVICES

IRCC funds service providers across the country to offer translation and interpretation services.<sup>82</sup> These funds are used by the settlement service organizations to provide their programs.<sup>83</sup> However, outside settlement agencies there is a lack of interpretation services.

Many witnesses, in British Columbia and in Ontario, spoke specifically about the lack of interpretation in medical situations.<sup>84</sup> Although hospitals are funded provincially to offer interpretation services, doctors are not always using them. A person going to a doctor's office would not have access to those services in any case. Most often, children or the person accompanying the newcomer, must perform this task.<sup>85</sup>

## Observations and Recommendation

The Committee heard that the lack of interpretation services creates a barrier until newcomers acquire the language skills needed to be able to navigate Canadian society on their own. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### Improving Access to Interpretation Services

#### Recommendation 6

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada collaborate with provinces, territories, municipalities and other stakeholders to better coordinate the availability of interpretation so that newcomers have meaningful access to provincially and municipally delivered social services, including mental health care.**

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82 Ibid., 1620.

83 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1620 (Joy Escalera, Manager, Settlement Program, Westman Immigrant Services).

84 Ibid., 1625 (Sabrina Dumitra, Settlement and Integration Manager, Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC); 1630 (Carl Cadogan); and *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1720 (Zdravko Cimbajjevic, Human Rights Advocate, As an individual).

85 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1550 (Joy Escalera).



## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

IRCC has sought to increase its ability to provide mental health supports such as crisis counselling.<sup>86</sup> Joy Escalera, Manager, Settlement Program, Westman Immigrant Services, explained that this type of support service is needed as it is “inevitable that all newcomers experience culture shock which can lead to mental health issues. Some of our newcomer clients have also experienced significant trauma.”<sup>87</sup> Ahmed Hussein, Executive Director, The Neighbourhood Organization, told the Committee that mental health issues were experienced by many Syrian refugees who were resettled in Toronto. With additional resources, their organization was able to provide mental health services or crisis services which were incorporated into the service delivery.<sup>88</sup> Mr. Cadogan recommended that IRCC fund initial mental health assessments and supports for clients who suffer from severe trauma.<sup>89</sup>

Mrs. Foster told the Committee that students with post-traumatic stress disorder could not focus on learning English. She recommended that people be made aware of what services are available to them.<sup>90</sup> Acknowledging the need for increased support for mental health for newcomers and refugees, Zdravko Cimbaljevic, Human Rights Advocate, explained that many come from countries where mental health issues are an embarrassment and hidden from family members. Newcomers suffering from mental health issues need to know “that it is okay” in Canadian society.<sup>91</sup>

Having facilitators that can provide culturally sensitive support counselling delivered in the newcomers’ mother tongue has proven to be helpful. Ms. Escalera suggested that

[i]ncreased access to professional development for our staff and a greater availability of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed practice, with language support within the community, would help to address the specific mental health needs of newcomers.<sup>92</sup>

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86 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1615 (David Manicom). Mental health and well-being is the sixth customized service sought in the [2019 Call for proposals](#).

87 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1550 (Joy Escalera).

88 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1600 (Ahmed Hussein).

89 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1545 (Carl Cadogan).

90 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1725 (Andy Foster).

91 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1720 (Zdravko Cimbaljevic).

92 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1550 (Joy Escalera).

## **Observations and Recommendations**

The Committee clearly heard that newcomers needed mental health supports. Once these are in place, newcomers need to know that they are available and that there is no shame attached to using these services. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **Removing the Stigma Attached to Accessing Mental Health Supports**

#### **Recommendation 7**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with settlement service providers to improve newcomers' awareness of the mental health supports available in their community and to provide information in a supportive and culturally-sensitive manner that indicates that seeking such care is acceptable in Canadian society and should be destigmatized.**





## SPECIFIC SERVICES FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

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A number of witnesses emphasized the importance of developing specialized settlement services for the most vulnerable groups of newcomers.<sup>93</sup>

In its 2019 call for proposals for settlement services, IRCC asked for proposals for projects that deliver customized settlement services in specific areas. One of those areas was supports for client groups facing unique barriers, including vulnerable youth, women, seniors, refugees, members of the LGBTQ2 community and persons with disabilities.<sup>94</sup>

The Committee heard a great deal about the supports specific to women and youth, but little about the other categories of vulnerable newcomers, such as seniors, persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ2 community. This seems to confirm the need to develop initiatives that address their needs.

### FOSTERING INTEGRATION OF WOMEN

Some witnesses reported that newcomer women often follow a different integration pathway than newcomer men. Many of them make their husband and children's integration the priority and only later start their own process of integration.

An IRCC official told the Committee, "[s]tatistically the newcomer group that does least well with employment is visible minority newcomer women."<sup>95</sup> Mr. Manicom explained that they "often face multiple barriers to employment, including gender, race-based discrimination, precarious or low income, and lack of social networks, affordable child care and so forth."<sup>96</sup>

Indeed, numerous witnesses told the Committee that child care services are absolutely vital to women's uptake of settlement services. Most newcomer women have young

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93 See, for example, CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1650 (Queenie Choo); and *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1640 (William Sinclair).

94 IRCC, "[Customized services](#)," *Call for proposals 2019: Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Programs funding guidelines*.

95 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1605 (David Manicom).

96 *Ibid.*



children and will not participate in programs unless they have access to high-quality child care services that they trust. The fact that child care services often have a waiting list and that many do not offer spaces for infants results in a delayed access to settlement services by women.<sup>97</sup> Some witnesses suggested that making it easier for grandparents to come to Canada could be part of the solution, as grandparents could help with child care and thereby facilitate the economic integration of parents, particularly mothers.<sup>98</sup>

Last December, IRCC launched a pilot project to solicit proposals for projects to help visible minority newcomer women obtain employment and gain a foothold in the labour market. One of the organizations that appeared before the Committee was enthusiastic about this initiative and reported that it had submitted a proposal.<sup>99</sup>

Furthermore, the Executive Director of the Afghan Women’s Organization pointed to the need for investments in culturally appropriate mental health services for all women, particularly refugee women.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, the Executive Director of the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters discussed the needs of immigrant women pertaining to domestic violence. For example, she mentioned the necessity of funding women’s shelters to “address the needs of immigrant, refugee and trafficked women” and explained that shelters “need specially trained staff” to work with them.<sup>101</sup> She added that Canada needs “housing programs geared to the needs of immigrant and refugee women fleeing violence” and “programs that increase the awareness of men with respect to the effects of domestic violence upon themselves and their children.”<sup>102</sup>

## Best Practices

A number of organizations described their best practices for supporting newcomer women.

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97 See, for example, CIMM, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1545 (Angela Mowbray) and 1550 (Joy Escalera).

98 See, for example, CIMM, [Evidence](#), 4 February 2019, 1715 (Olga Stachova); and [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1645 (Chantal Desloges).

99 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 1 April 2019, 1625 (Diana Gibbs, Development Manager, New Circles Community Services).

100 Ibid., 1705, 1710 and 1725 (Adeena Niazi, Executive Director, Afghan Women’s Organization).

101 Ibid., 1705 (Jan Reimer, Executive Director, Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters).

102 Ibid.

## **New Circles Community Services: A Store That Opens Doors**

For instance, the organization New Circles Community Services told the Committee how its free gently used clothing store in Toronto serves as a doorway to a range of programs and could be a model for other Canadian cities. Newcomers (especially women) initially visit the store for clothing for themselves and their families. Later, they often start to volunteer at the store, which gives them skills and experience and helps them build a social network to escape their isolation.

Newcomer women are offered two training programs for a short time in the middle of the day so that participants can drop off or pick up their children from school or child care. The first is offered in partnership with the Retail Council of Canada and enables women to acquire retail and customer service skills through work experience at the clothing store. The second is a joint program with Centennial College that provides office skills training and includes an internship. The organization reports that 70 women enrol in this program every year, and six months after completion, 70% of them have found employment or enrolled in further training. The organization also offers participants social support groups and a case management program.<sup>103</sup>

## **The Afghan Women's Organization: A Gradual Approach**

The Afghan Women's Organization told the Committee about its gradual approach to reaching women from all backgrounds, including the most isolated ones. The organization typically starts by meeting with women inside their homes to offer them basic information and encourage them to take part in its programs. The Executive Director, Adeena Niazi, said that many women are housebound, so the first step is to invite them to women-only groups: "It's based on our experience of many years, realizing that some of the women will never come out of their homes if not for women-only classes or programs." These programs enable them to meet women who participate in other programs, and they gradually connect with society more broadly.<sup>104</sup>

However, Ms. Niazi noted that her organization cannot offer any programs during the summer and some women have to wait a year to get into the programs because of a lack of funding.<sup>105</sup>

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103 Ibid., 1620 (Rosie Smythe, Executive Director, New Circles Community Services).

104 Ibid., 1705, 1710 and 1725 (Adeena Niazi).

105 Ibid.



## The Neighbourhood Organization: Support for Entrepreneurship

The representative of The Neighbourhood Organization explained that his organization provides support for entrepreneurship among newcomer women in Toronto. Programs geared to women have been designed to foster “economic development, entrepreneurship and [connections] to the other established women in the community.”<sup>106</sup> For example, the organization supported refugee women in its neighbourhood who wanted to set up a catering service. They have been very successful, and their customers now include some major institutions. The organization also developed a relationship with the Ontario Science Centre so that a group of newcomer women could negotiate a contract with the centre to develop costumes for a show that tours the globe.<sup>107</sup>

## COSTI Immigrant Services: Women of Courage

The Executive Director of COSTI Immigrant Services, which operates in the Toronto area, told the Committee about its Women of Courage program, which the organization offered until its provincial funding ended recently. The program was mainly intended for women who have been in violent relationships and out of the labour market for long periods. The witness explained that the program enabled women to share their experience, to understand that it was not their fault and to build their confidence. The women identified a career path, and Humber College offered them a condensed training program in fields such as bookkeeping. Not only did all the participants find a job after the program, they said that “it was about their future in terms of the level of confidence they built through this process.”<sup>108</sup>

## YWCA: An Intersectional Gender Lens

YWCA Canada shared information about a number of its member organizations’ initiatives that take an intersectional gender lens to outreach work. For example, the Metro Vancouver YWCA launched Pathways to Leadership, a pre-employment program that addresses the specific needs of single mothers who are immigrants or refugees, regardless of their immigration status. The program offers a combination of classroom sessions and mentoring. The Hamilton YWCA offers physical activities and outings for

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106 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1555 (Ahmed Hussein).

107 Ibid.

108 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1540 (Mario Calla).

Syrian refugee women and seniors who speak Punjabi. Also, the Toronto YWCA offers tailored certificates to newcomer women who want to start their own business.<sup>109</sup>

## SUPPORTING YOUTH

Witnesses outlined to the Committee some of the difficulties newcomer youth face, particularly teenagers. Many have problems with language acquisition, which creates academic barriers. They sometimes also experience difficulty with social integration and isolation, especially when they are not surrounded by their ethnocultural group. In addition, they often take on significant responsibilities, such as serving as an interpreter and translator for their family, taking care of their brothers and sisters, doing a lot of work at home and sometimes holding a part-time job to help their family make ends meet.<sup>110</sup>

### Language Learning

Hena Izzeddin, a young Syrian refugee who came to Canada three years ago, said that ESL classes are the service that has helped her the most since she arrived.<sup>111</sup> For school-aged youth, ESL or FSL classes are given at school by the provincial government. The Boys and Girls Clubs representative stated that schools try to provide as much assistance as possible to youth who arrive and speak neither official language, but they are overwhelmed by the amount of work required.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, the representative of the Huron County Immigration Partnership said that in her rural Ontario region most schools do not even offer ESL classes.<sup>113</sup>

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109 YWCA Canada, Brief, 22 May 2019, pp. 3–5.

110 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1650 (Colleen Mooney, Executive Director, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada); *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane, Immigration Liaison, Huron County Immigration Partnership); and *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1535 (Gemma Mendez-Smith, Executive Director, Four County Labour Market Planning Board).

111 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1650 (Hena Izzeddin, Student).

112 *Ibid.*, 1645 (Colleen Mooney).

113 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane).



## Settlement Workers in Schools

Witnesses described the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program as follows:

[A] comprehensive school-based settlement program that maximizes the integration and settlement of immigrant and refugee students and their families through a seamless and systemic delivery model, recognizing that schools are natural community hubs and often a first contact for newcomers.<sup>114</sup>

Witnesses spoke very favourably of SWIS services. They explained that school is often the first point of contact for newcomer families, and it can be used to reach an entire family and arrange its access to services and help it integrate.<sup>115</sup> Schools have staff who can provide guidance and support to students and their families.<sup>116</sup>

However, SWIS are not in place everywhere. Two witnesses from the Huron-Grey-Perth-Bruce region in southwestern Ontario reported that no schools in their region have SWIS.

Moreover, the representative of the Huron County Immigration Partnership recommended that SWIS be available wherever settlement services are offered: “If the parents are receiving services, the youth should be as well.”<sup>117</sup>

## Innovative Ways of Supporting Youth

Some witnesses told the Committee about existing programs that could inspire settlement services directed at newcomer youth.

### Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House: Social Entrepreneurship

Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House in Vancouver established a social entrepreneurship program for youth in which they prepare chutney using reclaimed fruit and vegetables. This program is open to all youth, but many participants are newcomers. The program gives them the opportunity to make some money, learn skills and start integrating into the labour market.<sup>118</sup>

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114 English Language Learners Consortium, Reference document submitted to the Committee on 3 April 2019, p. 3.

115 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1615 (Val Windsor, Chair, English Language Learners Consortium) and 1640 (Jennifer Reddy, School Trustee, British Columbia School Trustees Association, Vancouver School Board).

116 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1550 (Joy Escalera).

117 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane).

118 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1600 (Jocelyne Hamel).

## Fredric Roberts Photography Workshops

Fredric Roberts Photography Workshops offer eight days of professional-level training to high-school-aged youth, 10 boys and 10 girls at a time, in developing countries and to newcomer youth in cities such as Toronto. The students learn to take photographs, but also to “tell important stories in their communities.” About 18 to 24 months after their initial training, each group of students helps teach 20 new students.<sup>119</sup> The founder of the workshops, Fredric Roberts, explained the vision behind his project as follows:

While it is critical to give new arrivals the basic skills they need to survive, I believe we also need to give them the foundation for a higher vision of life, not just survival, but a sense of creative freedom and the confidence to change their communities and the world. It lights their way to a better path and a better future.... It gives them a voice and permanently empowers them.<sup>120</sup>

## Boys and Girls Clubs

The Boys and Girls Clubs provide services to over 200,000 youth at 700 service points across Canada. Colleen Mooney, Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa, explained that her work focuses on giving youth a sense of belonging.

Our work ... focuses on ... helping children and youth adapt, giving them the opportunity to improve or acquire language skills, and giving them a sense of community. As families settle, clubs help with full integration and a feeling of belonging.<sup>121</sup>

Boys and Girls Clubs also offer programs specifically for immigrants, such as the Newcomer Youth Advancement Program, which serves as “a launch pad for youth to build skills, develop friendships and support networks, and gain self-confidence.”<sup>122</sup> Ms. Mooney said this program “offers academic engagement, help in finding employment, leadership development, civic engagement, recreational sports and more.”<sup>123</sup>

Ms. Mooney shared her vision for youth integration with the Committee. In her view, “[i]nvesting in newcomer youth when they arrive is a more effective and less expensive way to encourage successful integration than implementing reactive measures to

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119 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1600 to 1605 (Fredric Roberts, Director, Fredric Roberts Photography Workshops).

120 Ibid.

121 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1610 (Colleen Mooney).

122 Ibid., 1615.

123 Ibid.



address negative behaviours,” and the government would be well advised to “give some thought to how existing programs, such as the youth employment strategy or the Canada service corps, can be bolstered to better engage newcomer youth.”<sup>124</sup>

## THE LGBTQ2 COMMUNITY

The Committee heard little testimony about the needs of newcomers who belong to the LGBTQ2 community, a diverse community with varied needs. However, one human rights and LGBTQ2 rights advocate drew the Committee’s attention to a particular segment of that community: transgender individuals. In his opinion, transgender refugee claimants should be given access to medical care and psychosocial support immediately, as forcing them to wait until their hearing before continuing their medical and hormonal treatment can negatively affect their mental health.<sup>125</sup>

## OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee heard a great deal of evidence regarding the harm done to many newcomers – particularly women and youth – (but also newcomers in rural areas and refugee claimants as noted elsewhere in the report) who do not have access to settlement services when they need them. The Committee was inspired by what it heard about promising practices to help newcomer women and youth integrate and was pleased to learn that IRCC now provides funding specifically for these kinds of projects. The Committee also believes it is critically important to support newcomer youth and their families through the education system. Therefore, to continue encouraging these initiatives to proliferate, and expanding these findings to include other vulnerable groups, the Committee recommends:

### Funding for Initiatives to Meet the Specific Needs of Vulnerable Groups

#### Recommendation 8

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to improve the availability of targeted initiatives designed to meet the specific, real-life needs of vulnerable communities, including women, LGBTQ2 persons and youth to help them integrate successfully.**

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124     ibid.

125     ibid., 1740 (Zdravko Cimbaljevic).



## **Expanding the Availability of Settlement Workers in Schools**

### **Recommendation 9**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to support and expand the Settlement Workers in Schools program, focusing on areas with the highest concentrations of vulnerable newcomer youth, to support those youth and their families.**



## EXPANDING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CLIENTS

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The evidence heard by the Committee revealed a strong consensus. Over a dozen different witnesses highlighted the problem that many newcomers are not eligible for IRCC-funded settlement services.<sup>126</sup> Only individuals with permanent residence status who are not yet Canadian citizens are eligible for these services. Foreign students, temporary foreign workers and refugee claimants (including children) are not eligible. Yet many witnesses pointed out that a significant portion of these groups eventually obtain permanent residence, after spending years in Canada without access to settlement services to help them integrate.

All the witnesses who discussed this topic urged the federal government to expand the eligibility criteria so that foreign students, temporary foreign workers, refugee claimants and Canadian citizens have access to settlement services.<sup>127</sup>

A number of witnesses used the same key word in their calls on the government: it should be more “flexible” in funding settlement services. John Shields, Professor at Ryerson University, summarized the situation as follows:

IRCC should reconsider its stringent eligibility requirements for federally funded settlement services. Those who are most disadvantaged by this policy include refugee claimants and international students, and this is particularly important with respect to express entries.

So many express entry applicants and successful express entry recruits are from international students as well as temporary foreign workers. These are mostly visible minority migrants, often with limited social and human capital, who are already facing great barriers in settlement. Many immigrants and refugees who become Canadian citizens may still need further support in the long term in terms of their settlement. Better funding and facilitating the social inclusion of these groups would greatly decrease their vulnerability.<sup>128</sup>

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126 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1630 to 1635 (John Shields); *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1535 (Jean Johnson, President, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada); 1545, 1550 (Dustin Mymko); 1615 (Kristin Crane); *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1650 (Queenie Choo); *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1550 (Joy Escalera); 1600 (Sabrina Dumitra); 1640 (William Sinclair); *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1615 (Val Windsor); 1640 (Jennifer Reddy); 1645 (Heather Hart); and Canadian Chamber of Commerce, *Brief*, 17 April 2019, p. 3.

127 Ibid.

128 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1630 (John Shields).



Dustin Mymko, Community Development Officer responsible for settlement services in a rural Manitoba community, explained how the eligibility criteria affect rural areas in particular:

Expanding the definition of eligible clients to include temporary foreign workers, who need help as much as and sometimes more than permanent residents, and moving the end point past the arbitrary cut-off of citizenship would go a long way to helping our newcomers, especially in rural communities where other secondary supports like cultural communities are rare.<sup>129</sup>

Some witnesses also pointed out that losing access to settlement services after obtaining Canadian citizenship hurts women more than others.

In our experience in particular, we see a need among immigrant women who have spent their initial years in Canada, after arrival, focused on their family responsibilities rather than looking for work. They come to us now ready to join the labour force and face the same barriers as someone who may have just arrived—language capacity and lack of Canadian experience, current skills and social networks—but as Canadian citizens they are not eligible for this type of funding even though with support from us they have exactly the same potential to make the positive contribution that women newcomers have.<sup>130</sup>

The organizations that deliver settlement services emphasized how difficult it is to deny services to newcomers with major needs, for reasons that seem arbitrary. Some said they can provide certain services to them using funding from the provincial government or the private sector, but they noted that this creates uneven access to services based on province of residence. Others said they offer unofficial assistance, but they still have to make eligible clients their priority and cannot provide a full range of services to ineligible individuals.

Notably, many witnesses described the serious needs of refugee claimants, who often wait years for a decision on their status, during which time they cannot obtain settlement services.<sup>131</sup>

Refugee claimant children are educated in provincial education programs, but do not have access to settlement services at school. Witnesses from British Columbia explained that, in many school districts in the province, the number of people who receive services who do not meet IRCC's criteria has "been steadily increasing over the years, to the

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129 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1550 (Dustin Mymko).

130 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 1 April 2019, 1625 (Diana Gibbs).

131 See, for example, CIMM, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019 (James Grunau and Loren Balisky, Executive Director, Kinbrace Community Society).

point that they outnumber the eligible newcomers in many districts.”<sup>132</sup> They described how, in concrete terms, this means two students in the same class who have similar settlement needs are receiving different levels of service and how distressing it is to support one student and his or her family more than another.<sup>133</sup>

To show how important it is for refugee claimant youth to receive settlement support, these witnesses presented a testimonial from Myriam, an honours political science student at McGill University who earned two major scholarships that have enabled her to study in France.

If VSB [Vancouver School Board] staff followed the discriminatory protocol and deprived me of the crucial services I received, I do not know where I would be today.

When I came to Canada I did not speak English, lacked prior formal education, and my family and I suffered from the trauma of migration and family separation. These were some of the issues amongst many others that we were facing in our new country.

However, at VSB ... the supports I received from EIYP (Engaged Immigrant Youth Program/SWIS) with my day to day needs such as understanding school system, feeling welcomed, making friends, getting involved, and receiving homework support... empowered me not just to learn English and excel academically but [to] volunteer and start new programs in my community (English Welcome Club) in my city in order to empower other youth like myself.

However soon I learned that in fact, the support I was receiving was technically not for me because I was a refugee claimant therefore not qualified to receive these essential supports so crucial for my success. VSB staffs helped me regardless of caring about my status, and I am grateful for their courage because it took my family 3.5 years to receive a refugee status which meant I would get qualified for these support after leaving high school.<sup>134</sup>

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132 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1620 (Val Windsor); 1645 (Jennifer Reddy) and 1645 (Heather Hart).

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., 1640 (Jennifer Reddy).



## SETTLEMENT IN RURAL AREAS

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Multiple witnesses told the Committee that rural communities need to attract and retain newcomers to offset their declining populations and meet their substantial labour force needs. Therefore, settlement services are crucial for these communities.<sup>135</sup>

Dustin Mymko, Community Development Officer responsible for settlement services in a Manitoba rural community, explained to the Committee that, until recently, a number of small rural communities had only one person working to deliver settlement services, often part time. But, according to Mr. Mymko, the federal government decided in 2019 that IRCC would no longer fund this model and communities would have to partner with larger settlement service provider organizations in neighbouring towns. He viewed this change positively, hoping that it would reduce the administrative burden and expand the range of services offered in small communities.<sup>136</sup> For example, he said these partnerships will make the larger organizations' expertise available to them, which will save time and resources when creating new programs:

With this partnership, we feel that we're not going to have to reinvent the wheel all the time. I've been trying to get a local conversation circle/group going in our community. I really don't know how to do that. We've been doing it by trial and error. I know Brandon has had success with those programs. They're going to train me up on how to get one going. Time's going to be spent more efficiently.<sup>137</sup>

### RURAL AND NORTHERN IMMIGRATION PILOT AND 2019 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The witnesses from rural areas also approved of the new Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot, which was developed to spread the benefits of economic immigration to smaller communities throughout Canada.<sup>138</sup> The Canadian Chamber of Commerce applauded this new program, which it believes is an example of decentralizing

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135 CIMM *Evidence*, 10 April 2019 (Kristin Crane and Dustin Mymko); and *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1535 (Gemma Mendez-Smith).

136 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1545 (Dustin Mymko).

137 *Ibid.*, 1625.

138 IRCC, *Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot: About the process.*



immigration selection processes in order to create “local solutions built by communities for communities that address community workforce needs.”<sup>139</sup>

However, some witnesses said the exacting eligibility criteria, such as a population limit of 50,000 and a minimum distance from a major urban centre, prevented communities that fall within the program’s objectives but are slightly too close to a city or have a few too many residents from participating in the program.<sup>140</sup>

Witnesses said the eligibility criteria also need to account for the state of the labour market. For example, a community that has a lot of jobs to fill and a low unemployment rate and that nearly meets the population and geographic location criteria should have access to the program, as it needs help to boost its economic vitality.<sup>141</sup>

Besides the pilot project, IRCC included in its 2019 call for proposals for settlement services “[s]mall-centre, remote [and] northern ... services” among the customized service areas for which the department solicited projects.<sup>142</sup>

## SETTLEMENT CHALLENGES IN RURAL AREAS

Among the challenges to settlement in rural areas, the witnesses cited the lack of transportation, housing and language services. They also described how the volunteer sector plays a major role in rural communities, but it has a limited capacity to meet the settlement-related needs of newcomers.

### Lack of Transportation and Housing

Witnesses told the Committee how a lack of transportation and affordable housing in rural areas can make newcomer settlement difficult. Residents of most rural areas need to travel great distances, but access to public transit is limited. Moreover, these areas do not often have a large stock of affordable housing. The witnesses argued that IRCC’s funding to support transportation in their communities fails to meet the demand.<sup>143</sup>

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139 Canadian Chamber of Commerce, *Brief*, 17 April 2019, p. 1.

140 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1555 (Kristin Crane); and *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1610 (Gemma Mendez-Smith).

141 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1610 (Gemma Mendez-Smith).

142 IRCC, “*Customized services*,” *Call for proposals 2019: Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Programs funding guidelines*.

143 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1550 (Joy Escalera); *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1620 (Kristin Crane); and *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1540 (Gemma Mendez-Smith).



## Lack of Language Services

Access to services is also more limited in rural areas. For example, witnesses said it is very difficult to find an interpreter in many rural communities. When an interpreter needs to travel more than an hour and travel expenses are added to the cost of the service, it can become very expensive.<sup>144</sup> One witness recommended that organizations that provide interpretation services receive funding to cover travel costs so that these services remain affordable for rural communities.<sup>145</sup>

In addition, witnesses reported that the availability of ESL classes is inadequate in many rural communities. Some of them receive no IRCC funding to offer these classes, and those that do say they do not have the resources to meet newcomers' needs.<sup>146</sup>

## The Importance of Volunteers – And Their Limitations

In many rural communities, the volunteer sector fills the gap by teaching ESL to newcomers.<sup>147</sup> Witnesses praised the commitment of volunteers and the high level of personalized support they offer.<sup>148</sup> However, volunteers are not trained or adequately equipped to replace the settlement services that communities need.<sup>149</sup> A number of witnesses suggested that training be offered to volunteers to better prepare them to help newcomers.<sup>150</sup> Some witnesses stated that this training could be given by itinerant settlement service providers.<sup>151</sup>

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144 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1625 (Sabrina Dumitra) and [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane).

145 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1540 (Kristin Crane).

146 *Ibid.*, 1535; [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1640 (Gemma Mendez-Smith); [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1650 (Andy Foster); and [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1545 (Angela Mowbray).

147 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1640 (Gemma Mendez-Smith); and [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1650 (Andy Foster).

148 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane); [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1640 (Gemma Mendez-Smith); and [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1650 (Andy Foster).

149 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane); and [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1640 (Gemma Mendez-Smith).

150 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane); 1605 (Dustin Mymko); [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1650 (Andy Foster); and [Evidence](#), 1 May 2019, 1640 (Gemma Mendez-Smith).

151 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane); and [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1650 (Andy Foster).



## ITINERANT SETTLEMENT SERVICES: A BEST PRACTICE

Kristin Crane, Immigration Liaison, spoke to the Committee about the itinerant settlement services she helped establish in her region, which she labelled a best practice. In Huron County, Ontario, private sponsorship of refugees has increased the number of newcomers. These sponsored families then communicate with friends and relatives living in urban areas, and the latter decide to join them. Ms. Crane, who coordinates the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) in the county, said the county had few services to meet these refugees' substantial needs. She put in a great deal of effort to persuade IRCC to fund itinerant settlement services for Huron County, starting in 2017. These services are provided by the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario.

Ms. Crane described the itinerant settlement services model as a service that goes to newcomers, overcoming the lack-of-transportation barrier. In addition, she said it does not require maintaining physical buildings, appointments are set up as needed, and the location is chosen based on its convenience for the newcomer, such as a local library. Ms. Crane maintained that this approach is flexible, needs-based and very efficient. She believes that LIPs have an important role to play in setting up itinerant settlement services, as they can put settlement service officials in touch with community organizations.<sup>152</sup>

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Witnesses explained to the Committee that social isolation is a widespread issue in rural communities that can have negative impacts on mental health and make retaining newcomers in these communities difficult. They suggested implementing programs that help newcomers forge connections with other members of the community as a way of preventing isolation.<sup>153</sup>

The witnesses recommended that the Community Connections program be among the settlement services that are funded in every rural region.<sup>154</sup> According to Kristin Crane, "This program encourages the social, cultural and professional interactions and connections between newcomers and the community. It assists immigrants and refugees to feel connected and engaged in the community, to feel as though it's home."<sup>155</sup>

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152 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1535 (Kristin Crane).

153 Ibid., 1545; and *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1540 (Gemma Mendez-Smith).

154 Ibid.

155 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1545 (Kristin Crane).

Furthermore, Ms. Crane stated that, since immigrants in rural areas do not have access to the support of an immigrant community or fellow members of their ethnocultural group, the LIP works to fill this gap by encouraging employers to create a support network for their newcomer employees. She suggested that they could invite family members to go on outings or join in activities, taking into account potential barriers.

Employers should be encouraged to adapt their practices to include more involvement in settling their newcomer employees. The growth and the survival of their businesses depend upon the newcomer workforce in many of our rural regions, so the employer should be doing what it can to support that.<sup>156</sup>

## USE OF TECHNOLOGY

As noted above, personal interactions are critical to successful integration of newcomers. However, witnesses also reported that technology could supplement the delivery of in-person settlement services and help overcome some distance-related challenges.<sup>157</sup>

For example, it would be possible to take distance learning ESL classes. As for settlement workers in schools, once they have an initial meeting with youth, they could subsequently communicate using technology.<sup>158</sup>

One witness told the Committee about a tablet and smart phone application that his organization has developed to help newcomers fill out immigration applications and forms. The software was developed with the help of lawyers and uses concise questions and answers to help individuals fill out applications in their native language.<sup>159</sup>

However, some witnesses sounded a note of caution: while many rural communities have the necessary technological infrastructure – in their libraries, schools and employment centres, for example – some do not. Moreover, some people do not have the skills to use the technology.<sup>160</sup>

Finally, Mr. Mymko told the Committee about the need for service provider organizations, especially those in remote regions, to communicate with IRCC to clarify issues with complicated cases. He said that a help line exists, but that the staff

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156 Ibid., 1540.

157 Ibid.; *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1540 (Gemma Mendez-Smith); and *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1615 (Katie Rosenberger).

158 Ibid.

159 CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1740, (Abdulla Daoud).

160 CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1615 (Joy Escalera) and 1615 (Sabrina Dumitra).



answering calls simply read what appears on the department’s website and cannot offer further explanations. He emphasized that service providers need help interpreting and applying departmental policies, because they help people fill out forms and, if the wrong form is used, it can create months of delay. Mr. Mymko suggested the following:

Establishing a service-provider-only hotline, where settlement service providers could be advised on how to interpret a certain government form or immigration process, would raise the level of service nationwide.<sup>161</sup>

## OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee believes the mobile settlement services model is an innovative way of meeting the needs of newcomers in rural areas. As multiple witnesses pointed out, in addition to providing services directly, itinerant service providers could help train community volunteers who offer support to newcomers. This appears to be a winning approach that could be implemented in other rural communities. It should always be open to employers to acquire settlement services including language training for the temporary foreign workers they employ if they so choose. The Committee therefore recommends:

### Attraction and Retention of Newcomers in Smaller Communities

#### Recommendation 10

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada expand the availability of mobile settlement services in rural and remote communities, and the availability of digital tools, in order to provide services directly to newcomers where they settle, so as to encourage the attraction and retention of newcomers in smaller communities.**

### Supporting Innovation and the Sharing of Best Practices Across Canada

#### Recommendation 11

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada support the settlement service provider ecosystem, by continuing to facilitate opportunities for innovation and the sharing of best practices between frontline organizations across Canada.**

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161 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1550 (Dustin Mymko).

## SETTLEMENT IN FRANCOPHONE MINORITY COMMUNITIES

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A number of witnesses discussed the unique characteristics of newcomer settlement in francophone minority communities.

According to a witness from the RDÉE Canada, because francophone immigrants are increasingly bilingual and multilingual, Canada must tailor the services it offers them and adopt an approach that meets their specific needs so that they continue to define themselves as francophones.<sup>162</sup>

A representative of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA) stated that the integration pathway in francophone minority communities is currently fragmented:

A francophone immigrant who arrives in Alberta can benefit from a first orientation service in the French language. However, afterwards he may not have access to the entire continuum of French-language services..., either because they don't exist, or because he has not been directed to the proper places to continue his integration journey in French.<sup>163</sup>

IRCC reported that it is working to improve the services it provides to French-speaking newcomers who settle in francophone communities outside of Quebec or Acadian communities.<sup>164</sup> In its 2019 call for proposals for settlement services, IRCC lays out its duties as regards to the official languages and the Francophone Integration Pathway. In addition, one of the customized services for which the department solicited proposals included activities to consolidate the Francophone Integration Pathway.<sup>165</sup>

According to Jean Johnson, President of the FCFA, delivering settlement services in a francophone minority setting requires a different approach than it does in an anglophone majority setting. Newcomers must be directed toward francophone resources in the community, and the goal must be to retain them by focusing on creating links with the francophone community. Services must be adapted to the way the

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162 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1735 (Roukya Abdi-Aden).

163 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1610 (Alain Dupuis, Director General, FCFA).

164 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1600 (David Manicom).

165 IRCC, "*Customized services*," *Call for proposals 2019: Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Programs funding guidelines*.



francophone community is organized, from schools to the francophone health centre to the French-language employment services. Mr. Johnson said that English-language organizations, or even bilingual organizations, cannot accomplish this work: “Very often, they do not even direct francophone immigrants toward francophone resources.”<sup>166</sup>

Accordingly, Mr. Johnson argued that IRCC needs to issue separate calls for proposals for francophone settlement services so that these service providers do not have to compete with those who provide services to the majority, “who often have more resources, but often know almost nothing about the minority realities.”<sup>167</sup>

## **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee understands the benefits of ensuring that French-language settlement services are delivered by francophone organizations with roots in the minority community and that a high standard is maintained for these services. The Committee therefore recommends:

### **Ensure Quality and Effectiveness of French-language Settlement Services**

#### **Recommendation 12**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada ensure the quality and effectiveness of French-language settlement services delivered to newcomers in francophone minority communities.**

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166 CIMM, *Evidence*, 10 April 2019, 1530 (Jean Johnson).

167 *Ibid.*, 1535.

## ENCOURAGING CANADIAN SOCIETY TO HELP INTEGRATE NEWCOMERS

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Several witnesses remarked that, in Canada, integration is viewed as a two-way process, meaning that both newcomers and Canadian citizens have a role to play.

Professor John Shields gave the following explanation:

Integration is approached as a two-way process for immigrants to adapt to life in Canada and for Canada to welcome and adapt to newcomers. This approach is critical for providing the warmth of welcome to newcomers that is absolutely essential for successful immigration. It is a model that has proven successful and that needs to be preserved and strengthened.<sup>168</sup>

Thus, a number of witnesses recommended that investments are needed to fight systemic racism.<sup>169</sup> Racism is a major barrier to integrating newcomers. For example, one witness discussed an anti-racism initiative in Alberta as follows:

In Alberta just two weeks ago we launched a campaign in response to the New Zealand massacre, “Alberta Kind”, as we felt we could no longer stand on the sidelines to bear witness to the crescendo of racism, hate crimes and violence directed towards Muslims and the anti-immigration sentiment in general that is being increasingly expressed. This is directly related to settlement issues, as racism is a barrier to employment, housing and feeling safe in your community. ...

[W]e need a strong national campaign against racism, anti-immigration and Islamophobia, with tools that can be shared across agencies and programs. All Canadians should have the ability to feel safe and respected in their communities.<sup>170</sup>

### OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recognizes that the host society’s contribution to foster newcomer’s settlement and integration is crucial. Therefore, it appears that combatting racism and promoting cultural diversity are critical to ensuring that settlement services can achieve their objectives. The Committee therefore recommends:

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168 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1630 (John Shields).

169 See, for example, CIMM, *Evidence*, 6 February 2019, 1540 (Carl Cadogan); 1555 (Sabrina Dumitra); 1640 (William Sinclair); and *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1655 and 1705 (Jan Reimer).

170 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1655, 1705 (Jan Reimer).



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

## **Initiatives to Promote Cultural Diversity and Combat Racism**

### **Recommendation 13**

**That the Government of Canada continue to develop initiatives to promote cultural diversity and combat racism in order to support newcomer integration.**



## THE IMPORTANCE OF STABLE AND PREDICTABLE FUNDING

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A number of organizations that provide settlement services described to the Committee some of the challenges posed by their funding model. They spoke about the challenge of operating on three years' worth of funding and the need for fixed core funding for peace of mind and long-term planning.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, some organizations stated that, since their funding has remained the same over many years – even as operating costs (rent, wages, etc.) have increased – they are constantly having to do more with less and cut services.<sup>172</sup>

The way funds are provided to organizations also presents a problem. One witness explained that some of the funds allocated are “received as supplemental funding that is released in small amounts, with little lead time and with rigid guidelines that impact a district’s ability to plan for staffing and program delivery.”<sup>173</sup> Another witness illustrated the problem by describing how one of these supplemental funding amounts might arrive in late January and need to be spent by the end of March, or the unused resources would be withdrawn, which makes hiring difficult. This witness hopes the government will soon allow organizations to keep and carry over some unused resources from one period to another.<sup>174</sup>

Another difficulty, specific to education institutions, is that federal funding expires on 31 March, but schools are in session until 30 June. This discrepancy causes a great deal of anxiety in some school districts, which may be forced to lay off settlement program staff and close their welcome centres three months before the end of the school year owing to a lack of funding.<sup>175</sup>

One witness explained that IRCC recently made changes to its funding model. He said that the three-year plan for immigration levels enables settlement organizations to better plan their services. He also noted that federal funding for settlement services was increased to match the higher immigration levels. Moreover, the department decided

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171 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 April 2019, 1715 (Zdravko Cimbaljevic) and 1735 (Adeena Niazi).

172 CIMM, *Evidence*, 3 April 2019, 1615 (Val Windsor) and 1630 to 1640 (Garry Green).

173 *Ibid.*, 1615.

174 *Ibid.*, 1630 and 1640 (Heather Hart).

175 *Ibid.*, 1620 (Val Windsor).



this year to issue funding proposals with five-year time frames, which will reduce job and organizational precarity for settlement service provider organizations.<sup>176</sup>

## **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee understands how the funding model for settlement service organizations creates difficulties and how important it is for them to have stable and predictable funding. Although IRCC seems to have made some positive changes in that regard, such as the possibility to receive funding over five years, service providers remain concerned about issues such as managing the supplemental funding and being unable to carry over the unused funds. The Committee therefore recommends:

### **Predictable and Stable Long-Term Funding for Service Provider Organizations**

#### **Recommendation 14**

**That the Government of Canada provide stable and predictable multi-year funding to organizations with a demonstrated track record of providing effective settlement services, to better support long-term planning and continuity of services.**

### **Settlement Program Funding Commensurate with Immigration Levels**

#### **Recommendation 15**

**That the Government of Canada maintain settlement services program funding commensurate with immigration levels.**

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176 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1630 (John Shields).

## EVALUATING SETTLEMENT SERVICES

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To assess the effectiveness of the various settlement services provided, IRCC conducted a formal evaluation of the Settlement Program, completed in May 2017. This incorporated a wide range of perspectives, including program clients, stakeholders and program officials, and comprised the largest-scale survey of newcomers ever conducted to that point, with almost 15,000 respondents. Overall, the evaluation found that the program has been effective at meeting a growing demand for settlement services. A clear majority of clients—96%—reported positive outcomes, such as improving their language ability, finding employment, and participating in their communities.<sup>177</sup>

During its study, the Committee asked several witnesses how they measured success in their programming. Mr. Calla told the Committee that certain programs were easier to measure than others. For example, in employment programming, the intended outcome is permanent employment. By this standard, the enhanced language training program is effective, since 90% of last year's graduates are now employed in their field. As for the newcomers in the mentoring programs, 75% have found employment. Other settlement services may not have such an obvious outcome, but they are nevertheless very much needed for successful integration.<sup>178</sup>

Mr. Calla told the Committee that to measure integration, a longer-term plan is needed. He pointed to IRCC's database iCARE (the Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment) into which all the settlement services providers input the use of services by newcomers;<sup>179</sup> should a newcomer start life in Canada in Toronto using services there and then move and use services elsewhere, iCARE would capture this information. Matching this with data from the Canada Revenue Agency would allow integration outcomes to be measured.<sup>180</sup>

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177 CIMM, *Evidence*, 30 January 2019, 1555 (David Manicom).

178 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1545 (Mario Calla).

179 The Committee heard that when settlement service providers meet with sponsors to establish roles prior to the arrival of refugees, they are not funded for these meeting and this activity is not captured in iCARE. CIMM, *Evidence*, 4 February 2019, 1715 (Brian Dyck).

180 CIMM, *Evidence*, 1 May 2019, 1545 (Mario Calla).



William Sinclair, Executive Director, St. Stephen's Community House, suggested IRCC use the 77 Local Immigration Partnerships network to evaluate outcomes locally and across Canada.<sup>181</sup>

Noureddine Belhocine, General Manager, Maison Internationale de la Rive-Sud, did not speak to specific measures but referred generally to those contained in the funding agreements.<sup>182</sup> Angela Mowbray, Acting Manager, Language Program, Westman Immigrant Services, stated that the funding agreement her organization had signed with IRCC for language training contained targets that were very high for enrolment and attendance. With students that have jobs and children, the current regular attendance criterion is difficult to meet, and this creates pressure for the settlement service provider.<sup>183</sup>

Mrs. Foster told the Committee that success is “not just about learning the language. For us, it’s about their integrating. We want them to reach their dreams, whether it’s to get their AZ driver’s licence or to get their PSW [Personal Support Worker] certification at the local college.”<sup>184</sup>

In response to a request for information from the Committee made on 30 January 2019, IRCC provided a document that outlines the comprehensive set of settlement and integration indicators that the department uses for its Settlement Program. The Performance Measurement Strategy Framework uses five sources of data to track ongoing performance, monitoring and reporting of the Settlement Program: (1) the Grants and Contribution System, (2) iCARE, (3) the Global Case Management System, (4) annual project reports from service providers and community partnerships and (5) settlement surveys.<sup>185</sup> In October 2017, IRCC recognized that there was some unavailable data. For example, iCARE did not have the functionality for service provider organizations to manage waitlists within the database. Also, IRCC’s Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB) would need to be linked to iCARE for performance reporting.<sup>186</sup> A detailed table shows 49 performance indicators throughout settlement and integration: trust in public institutions, a sense of belonging, acquisition of Canadian citizenship and feeling accepted in Canada, to name a few.<sup>187</sup>

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181 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1640 (William Sinclair).

182 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1710 (Noureddine Belhocine).

183 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 6 February 2019, 1610 (Angela Mowbray).

184 CIMM, [Evidence](#), 3 April 2019, 1650 (Andy Foster).

185 IRCC, *Settlement Program Performance Information Profile*, October 2017, p. 9.

186 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

187 *Ibid.*, pp. 21-26.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee heard that it was quite difficult to measure the outcomes of most settlement services. Newcomers have different needs that are met by local solutions, and successful integration can only be determined on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **Developing More Effective Metrics for Settlement Outcomes**

#### **Recommendation 16**

**That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to collaborate with all levels of government and other stakeholders, including Local Immigration Partnerships, in developing more effective metrics for settlement outcomes that take into account clients' specific needs.**



## APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the Committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the Committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<b>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</b> Laura Di Paolo, Director General Settlement Network Melissa Fama, Director Refugee Affairs Ümit Kiziltan, Director General Research and Evaluation David Manicom, Assistant Deputy Minister Settlement and Integration Corinne Prince, Director General Settlement and Integration Policy Branch	2019/01/30	141
<b>International Organization for Migration</b> Matthew Cecchetto, Liaison Officer Canadian Orientation Abroad	2019/01/30	141
<b>Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE) Canada</b> Roukya Abdi-Aden, Administrator National Cooperation Jean-Guy Bigeau, Chief Executive Officer	2019/01/30	141
<b>S.U.C.C.E.S.S.</b> Queenie Choo, Chief Executive Officer	2019/01/30	141
<b>Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia</b> Jocelyne Hamel, Executive Director Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House	2019/02/04	142

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Mennonite Central Committee Canada</b> Brian Dyck, National Migration and Resettlement Program Coordinator	2019/02/04	142
<b>MOSAIC</b> Olga Stachova, Chief Executive Officer	2019/02/04	142
<b>Saskatchewan Intercultural Association</b> Jess Hamm, Executive Director	2019/02/04	142
<b>The Neighbourhood Organization</b> Ahmed Hussein, Executive Director	2019/02/04	142
<b>The Refugee Centre</b> Abdulla Daoud, Executive Director Amr Mourad, Developer DevBloc Social Innovation Catalyst	2019/02/04	142
<b>Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC</b> Sabrina Dumitra, Settlement and Integration Manager Katie Rosenberger, Executive Director	2019/02/06	143
<b>Journey Home Community Association</b> James Grunau, Executive Director	2019/02/06	143
<b>Kinbrace Community Society</b> Loren Balisky, Executive Director	2019/02/06	143
<b>Reception House Waterloo Region</b> Carl Cadogan, Chief Executive Officer	2019/02/06	143
<b>St. Stephen's Community House</b> William Sinclair, Executive Director	2019/02/06	143
<b>Westman Immigrant Services</b> Joy Escalera, Manager Settlement Program Angela Mowbray, Acting Manager Language Program	2019/02/06	143
<b>Afghan Women's Organization</b> Adeena Niazi, Executive Director	2019/04/01	150



<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Alberta Council of Women's Shelters</b> Jan Reimer, Executive Director	2019/04/01	150
<b>As an individual</b> Zdravko Cimbalevic, Human Rights Advocate	2019/04/01	150
<b>Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada</b> Hena Izzeddin, Student Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa Colleen Mooney, Executive Director Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa	2019/04/01	150
<b>Fredric Roberts Photography Workshops</b> Fredric Roberts, Director	2019/04/01	150
<b>New Circles Community Services</b> Diana Gibbs, Development Manager Rosie Smythe, Executive Director	2019/04/01	150
<b>Arden Language Centre</b> Andy Foster, Project Coordinator	2019/04/03	151
<b>Burnaby School District</b> Heather Hart, Assistant Superintendent School District 41	2019/04/03	151
<b>English Language Learners Consortium</b> Val Windsor, Chair	2019/04/03	151
<b>International English Language Testing System</b> Kim Dienhoff, Commercial Director IDP Education Ltd. Victoria Sellar, Assistant Director, Partnerships and Policy Cambridge Language Assessment	2019/04/03	151
<b>Maison Internationale de la Rive-Sud</b> Noureddine Belhocine, General Manager	2019/04/03	151
<b>Toronto District School Board</b> Toula Germanakos, Program Coordinator Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Garry Green, Senior Manager Business Development and Community Services	2019/04/03	151

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Vancouver School Board</b> Jennifer Reddy, School Trustee British Columbia School Trustees Association	2019/04/03	151
<b>As an individual</b> Chantal Desloges, Senior Partner Desloges Law Group	2019/04/10	153
<b>Calgary Chinese Community Service Association</b> Nazifia Hakemy, Program Coordinator Lily Kwok, Executive Director	2019/04/10	153
<b>Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada</b> Alain Dupuis, Director General	2019/04/10	153
<b>Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada</b> Jean Johnson, President	2019/04/10	153
<b>Huron County Immigration Partnership</b> Kristin Crane, Immigration Liaison	2019/04/10	153
<b>Roblin-Cartwright Community Development Corporation</b> Dustin Mymko, Community Development Officer/Settlement Cartwright Killarney Boissevain Settlement Services	2019/04/10	153
<b>As an individual</b> John Shields, Professor, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Ryerson University and Interim Director, Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement	2019/05/01	155
<b>Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning</b> Christine Buuck, Associate Vice-President Academic Administration and International Education	2019/05/01	155
<b>COSTI Immigrant Services</b> Mario Calla, Executive Director	2019/05/01	155
<b>Four County Labour Market Planning Board</b> Gemma Mendez-Smith, Executive Director	2019/05/01	155

## **APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS**

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The following is an alphabetical list of organizations and individuals who submitted briefs to the Committee related to this report. For more information, please consult the Committee's [webpage for this study](#).

**Alberta Council of Women's Shelters**

**Canadian Chamber of Commerce**

**Journey Home Community Association**

**MOSAIC**

**YMCA Canada**



## REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 141, 142, 143, 150, 151, 153, 155, 159 and 166](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Nick Whalen  
Chair



## Supplementary Report of Her Majesty's Official Opposition The Conservative Party of Canada

*Hon. Michelle Rempel, Member of Parliament for Calgary Nose Hill*  
*David Tilson, Member of Parliament for Dufferin – Caledon*  
*Larry Maguire, Member of Parliament for Brandon – Souris*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Canada is and has always been a welcoming land for immigrants. This comes with the responsibility to ensure newcomers integrate into Canada's social and economic fabric, as defined by acquiring proficiency in one of Canada's official languages, becoming self-sufficient, and respecting and upholding the rule of Canadian law.

In some cases, this worthy endeavor, or what is broadly referred to as "settlement services" activities in this report, requires a significant amount of taxpayer funded resources and planning. This requires adequate budgeting, and also requires legislators do to so in the lens of ensuring that the needs of Canadians are met, within the context of a balanced federal budget.

This supplementary report provides clarity on several key points that were not addressed by the report which was produced by the government members of the committee, and additional recommendations to improve the quality and the availability of settlement services in Canada.

#### **1.) Restore the Integrity of Newcomer Selection and Approval Processes**

The number of people accessing settlement services in Canada is large and growing. According to data provided by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (IRCC), "[i]n 2018-2019, [IRCC] has funded over 500 organizations and provided services to approximately 460,000 clients."<sup>[1]</sup> There are significant budgetary implications to this.

That is why it is vital for the government to ensure that immigration selection processes a) prioritize the world's most vulnerable persons to come to Canada as refugees, b) ensure that our asylum system is not being abused, and c) that our economic immigration streams focus on matching intake directly to the needs of the Canadian economy.

On all these points, the government is failing. That has significant opportunity costs related to settlement services.

For example, the Liberal government failed to bring Yazidi genocide survivors to Canada as part of the Syrian refugee initiative. It took several opposition motions and

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<sup>[1]</sup> Mr. David Manicom (Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Integration, Department of Citizenship and Immigration), Meeting 141, 30 January 2019 [1555]

political pressure for the Liberal government to acknowledge that the United Nations had failed to refer these people to Canada. This must change.

In recent years, we have seen the Liberal government allow over 45,000 persons to illegally cross the border from the United States into Canada, and then subsequently claim asylum. These persons exploit a loophole in the Canada-United States Safe Third Country Agreement to do so. Many of these persons do not have valid asylum claims, but are eligible to access language training and other settlement services. This is not fair to those who play by the rules.

Further, unplanned significant intake of refugees without budgeting for the impact on settlement services, as we saw with the Syrian refugee initiative, detrimentally impacts the efficacy and availability for this programs. This prevents newcomers from accessing services that could help them more quickly integrate.

To ensure fairness in Canada's immigration system and to ensure that settlement services are available for those who play by the rules, we recommend:

- 1. That the Government of Canada close the loophole in the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement.**

## 2.) Metrics

We know from the Auditor General's 2017 Fall Report 3—Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada did not establish service expectations in most of its contribution agreements with service providers. As a result, IRCC was less able to ensure the quality and consistency of services provided to Syrian refugees and other clients.

This same report noted concern about the Department's inability to track whether the Syrian refugees had access to basic provincial services, such as health care and education—especially considering that part of the Department's objective was to help Syrian refugees benefit from Canada's social, medical, and economic systems. The Department did not collect any information for the following 5 health care and education indicators:

- the percentage of Syrian refugees with chronic health issues who had health care providers,
- the percentage of Syrian refugees with chronic health issues who had health care providers and were satisfied with the health care they received,
- the percentage of school-aged children who were attending school,
- the percentage of Syrian refugee families who had school-aged children with special needs, and
- the percentage of Syrian refugee families who had school-aged children with special needs that were being addressed.



Throughout the Committee’s study, it became apparent that there is no consistently defined or measured metric for the success of resettlement services, as it relates to measuring successful integration outcomes.

This creates a lack of ability to determine what programs work, or the level of impact the programs have on integration. Therefore, we recommend that:

**2. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada develop clear metrics for integration and ensure that all service providers meet these standards.**

3.) Privately Sponsored Refugees

Privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) typically integrate better than government-assisted refugees (GARs) according to the Executive Director of The Neighbourhood Organization<sup>[2]</sup>. For example, in the Syrian refugees’ cohort, 43% of GARs were employed compared to 60% of PSRs.<sup>[3]</sup> This can partially be explained by the support and the connections they form through their relationship with sponsors.

Unfortunately, GARs do not benefit from this relationship. Moreover, “many GARs are arriving with health, mental health and physical limitations.”<sup>[4]</sup> This demonstrates that stronger services need to be offered to them, especially to vulnerable newcomers who suffered trauma and/or are continuing to experience trauma.<sup>[5]</sup>

Given this evidence, we recommend that:

**3. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada focus refugee intake selection via sponsorship agreement holders, while reforming the GAR program to ensure that spaces are filled by those experiencing emergent situations of the four atrocity crimes.**

4.) Settlement Services for Refugees who Suffered Trauma

Many witnesses testified during this study that there was a lack of services aimed at helping refugees or immigrants that have suffered trauma prior to coming to Canada. Some refugees suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder that needs to be addressed in order for them to be able to integrate to Canada.<sup>[6]</sup> More than that, as stated by Zdravko Cimbalevic, a human rights advocate, “[t]here is a need for increased support for

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<sup>[2]</sup> Ahmed Hussein (Executive Director, The Neighbourhood Organization), Meeting 142, 4 February 2019 [1535].

<sup>[3]</sup> Mr. David Manicom (Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Integration, Department of Citizenship and Immigration), Meeting 141, 30 January 2019 [1610].

<sup>[4]</sup> Carl Cardogan (Executive Director, Reception House Waterloo Region), Meeting 143, 6 February 2019 [1545].

<sup>[5]</sup> Queenie Choo (Chief Executive Officer, S.U.C.C.E.S.S.), Meeting 141, 30 January 2019 [1650].

<sup>[6]</sup> Andy Foster (Project Coordinator, Arden Language Centre), Meeting 151, 3 April 2019 [1725].

mental health for newcomers and refugees. The adjustments are frequently far more difficult than anyone realizes.”<sup>[7]</sup>

Carl Cardogan, the Executive Director at the Reception House in the Waterloo Region, explained how difficult it is for a smaller region to respond to the mental health needs of refugees:

Allocate funding for initial mental health assessments and support for clients who suffer from severe trauma. It might be a first step in dealing with this very serious issue. We have seen an increase in very serious and chronic health issues. We are trying to respond in ways that make sense, but our community is a small one. The health system isn't always ready and willing to be flexible, and we want to see ways in which IRCC can have a broader impact on the provinces to do more for those people who are coming to our region.<sup>[8]</sup>

This difficulty to access mental health services has many ramifications that ultimately impede refugees' and immigrants' success in integrating to the Canadian society. For example, as Ms. Andy Foster stated:

It's hard to focus on studying English when you have no way to get help with [PTSD] first. [...] We've definitely had that experience where it's hard for students to focus, and a lot of other issues come out. English is almost the least of their worries at that point. [...] Having more programs available for people when they come, letting them know they have psychotherapists and the like whom they can go to for the first year—in smaller towns, people often don't even know that's available for them—and translators and interpreters.<sup>[9]</sup>

These services, which should be culturally competent<sup>[10]</sup>, are paramount “to ensure that newcomers can maintain their employment and progress economically” as stated Olga Stachova, the Chief Executive Officer at MOSAIC.<sup>[11]</sup>

This said, it is important to note that many Canadians, and Canadian veterans do not have ready access to these services, and there must be a balance struck. Ensuring that only the worlds most vulnerable are selected as refugees, while ensuring Canadians have access to these services is vital.

#### **4. Work to provide better access to mental health services for Canadians, and refugees, in an immigration system that prioritizes the worlds most**

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<sup>[7]</sup> Zdravko Cimbaljevic (Human Rights Advocate, As an Individual), Meeting 150, 1 April 2019 [1720].

<sup>[8]</sup> Carl Cardogan (Executive Director, Reception House Waterloo Region), Meeting 143, 6 February 2019 [1545].

<sup>[9]</sup> Andy Foster (Project Coordinator, Arden Language Centre), Meeting 151, 3 April 2019 [1725].

<sup>[10]</sup> Adeena Niazi (Executive Director, Afghan Women's Organization), Meeting 150, 1 April 2019 [1710].

<sup>[11]</sup> Olga Stachova (Chief Executive, Officer, MOSAIC), Meeting 142, 4 February 2019 [1720].

## **vulnerable persons and prevents the abuse of Canada's humanitarian immigration system.**

### 5.) Family reunification

No settlement services could ever replace the benefits of having the support of a family member, and unfortunately, there are many difficulties faced by refugees, particularly victims of genocide, to bring their family members to Canada.

Considering the importance of family reunification for a successful integration, it is not acceptable that refugees who are genocide survivors face so many difficulties in trying to bring their family members to Canada. Witnesses highlighted the different treatment faced by refugees:

Refugees who are genocide survivors wait much longer for family reunification than newcomers in the Family Class. In December 2016, the government announced faster processing for spousal sponsorships, but no measures have been announced to expedite family reunification for refugees. Family reunification processing time for children under family class averaged 15 months in 2015. In comparison, processing time for family members of refugees averaged 38 months in the same year.<sup>[13]</sup>

It is important to remember that refugees who are genocide survivors coming to Canada have often faced the loss of many family members, and that their conception of family is extended. Consequently, it is important that family reunification be possible and processed in a timely manner.

Therefore, we recommend that:

- 5. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada improve the wait times and the efficiency of the family reunification's process for refugees who are genocide survivors, as well as extending the definition of family members for survivors of genocide.**

### 6.) Accessible and Relevant Services

There is no point in making public expenditures on settlement services if they are ineffectual or hard to access.

Matthew Cecchetto, the Liaison Officer, Canadian Orientation Abroad, for the International Organization for Migration, stated:

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<sup>[13]</sup> MOSAIC, written submission, p.4.

Refugees are resilient and positively contribute to Canadian society. Their outcomes improve when they are provided services that are tailored to their needs. All newcomers require support, but for refugees some needs cannot be met by services designed for other categories of immigrants.<sup>[14]</sup>

Unfortunately, these needs have not been met by the current government, mainly due to a lack of planning. Again, governments need to show compassion and be prepared for the arrival persons who likely suffered trauma before coming to Canada. This was particularly highlighted by Carl Cardogan, the Executive Director of the Reception House in the Waterloo Region, who explained that:

Many GARs are arriving with health, mental health and physical limitations. IRCC must review the needs of these people and look to how we can better respond as they arrive. For example, our site is not accessible and this severely inhibits our ability to serve newcomers with mobility issues.<sup>[15]</sup>

Another example stems from the lack of organization for the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative that ultimately impacted the successful integration for these refugees who had experienced a civil war in their home country. An example was brought forward by the representative from the International Organization for Migration:

In IRCC's rapid impact evaluation of the Syrian refugee initiative in 2016, the department cited that the lack of COA due to logistical issues meant that the basic information Syrian refugees were expected to have upon arrival had to be provided in Canada, making their initial resettlement stages even more difficult.<sup>[16]</sup>

Planning is therefore essential, especially when deciding to welcome refugees or to increase immigration levels plans and we recommend that:

**6. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada plan the orderly migration of refugees to Canada, taking into consideration the resources available to ensure Canada is able to welcome newcomers with compassion and care.**

## 7.) Modernizing Settlement Services

Canada is a large country, and it is difficult to provide adequate settlement services in every region in Canada in a cost-efficient model. That is why the government should better exploit technologies to provide settlement services to newcomers.

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<sup>[14]</sup> Matthew Cecchetto (Liaison Officer, Canadian Orientation Abroad, International Organization for Migration), Meeting 141, 30 January 2019 [1640].

<sup>[15]</sup> Carl Cardogan (Executive Director, Reception House Waterloo Region), Meeting 143, 6 February 2019 [1545].

<sup>[16]</sup> Matthew Cecchetto (Liaison Officer, Canadian Orientation Abroad, International Organization for Migration), Meeting 141, 30 January 2019 [1640].

An example comes from the Refugee Centre in Montreal. They developed an application called LUNA to help newcomers navigate the Canadian immigration system. This application uses the newcomers' native language and uses short and concise questions to provide counsel on immigration processes and how to fill out forms. As Executive Director Abdulla Daoud explained the application helps save 83% of lawyers' time since they save money on translation and on additional counsels.<sup>[17]</sup> Unfortunately, the application cannot currently be implemented nationally because the organization lacks the funding.

Another example is the pilot project for blended learning for students used in the Burnaby School District, which takes online platforms for language learning to allow students flexibility to maintain employment.<sup>[18]</sup>

These technologies can help reduce costs without compromising the quality of the settlement services. Considering the increase in newcomers coming to Canada, this should be better developed by IRCC. Therefore, we recommend:

**7. That Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada increase the use of innovative technology to provide certain settlement services to newcomers that do not necessarily require face to face interventions.**

**8.) Access in Rural Communities**

There are many communities in rural Canada that need newcomers to help fuel their economy, and there are many communities that want to do more to help refugees. Yet, we heard through testimony that it can be very difficult to bring newcomers to rural Canada because all the settlement services are concentrated in large urban centres.

On this issue, Ms. Andy Foster, Project Coordinator, Arden Language Centre, stated:

Give rural Canadians the tools to help. Right now there's a lot of frustration because when newcomers come to the area, there are not any resettlement services, but having a mobile resettlement centre would really help a lot. This mobile centre could have a representative who would answer questions to sponsors, do ESL training seminars for those who want to volunteer, and do English testing for the students.<sup>[19]</sup>

Therefore, we recommend that:

**8. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship adequately provide settlement services to rural regions to ensure integration and retention.**

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<sup>[17]</sup> Abdulla Daoud (Executive Director, The Refugee Centre), Meeting 142, 4 February 2019 [1740].

<sup>[18]</sup> Heather Hart (Assistant Superintendent, School District 41, Burnaby School District), Meeting 151, 3 April 2019 [1610].

<sup>[19]</sup> Andy Foster (Project Coordinator, Arden Language Centre), Meeting 151, 3 April 2019 [1655].

## **CONCLUSION**

The Liberal government has failed to adequately prioritize the world's most vulnerable in our humanitarian immigration system and has prompted the abuse of our asylum system. This, coupled with poor planning after the Syrian refugee initiative, has placed great strain on Canada's settlement services system. Much improvement is required.

## Settlement Services Across Canada

This study heard from 52 witnesses who shared their expertise and opinion regarding all aspects of Canada's settlement services. Not only did witnesses comment on a wide array of existing settlement services, they also offered their views on the limitations of some these programs, both in scope, duration and availability. In addition to these shortcomings, they also highlighted the gaps that exist. The lens in which they view Canada's settlement services is based on their experience on the ground with clients and as such, they are able to clearly identify the need.

Pertinent to the delivery of resettlement services is the issue of funding. The impact of the lack of funding or underfunding is significant. They highlighted for Committee members the potential results of properly funding these critical services. The issue of eligibility was paramount and the witnesses discussed who is eligible for these services, who is ineligible, and where and how eligibility should be expanded.

The Committee's analysts, as they have throughout this 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, done a great job of compiling and summarizing as much witness testimony as possible. That list contains invaluable information on how to support the important work of organizations on the groups and how to improve access and delivery of resettlement services to newcomers.

To that end, while the NDP supports the main report, the NDP is submitting a supplementary report to ensure that many of these sound recommendations from the witnesses are also recognized. However, to do justice to the evidence presented, the NDP believes that the current Standing Order restriction on Supplementary and Dissenting Opinion piece's length of 10 pages is inadequate.

The NDP is of the opinion that this effectively means the muzzling of the opinion of the opposition through report length constraints.

The testimony and recommendations put forward by witnesses cannot justly be summed up in 10 pages.

As such, the NDP has posted a more robust opinion piece of this study on MP Jenny Kwan, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Immigration's website. It can be found here:

[https://www.jennykwandp.ca/in\\_committee](https://www.jennykwandp.ca/in_committee)

This more fulsome examination of the study presents 30 recommendations that witnesses informed the Committee would improve settlement services and therefore the integration of newcomers in Canada. When newcomers succeed, everyone wins. Settlement services aim to reduce the steep curve the all newcomers face when they arrive in Canada and start their lives here. It's a well-placed investment to ensure that everyone in Canada can thrive and have the opportunity to succeed so that they can contribute to our society to their fullest.

Canada's settlement services providers made it clear that they are capable, ready, and deeply desire to do more. Their efforts just need to be matched by the political will to enable them.

