

OLIP Syrian Refugee Research Institute – Update

August 15, 2017

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) contracted the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) to study Ottawa's experience settling 1579 Syrian refugees in the community in 2015-2016. The purpose of the research is to develop a systems level analysis of Syrian refugee resettlement in Ottawa and to better understand the capacities needed to support the successful integration of refugees in the community in the future.

The study will include:

- 1) An overview of the services provided to Syrian refugees, in several key sectors including:
 - Settlement and settlement support services
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Employment
 - Education

- 2) An analysis of the capacity underlying these services, including strengths and gaps in four aspects:
 - Information and communication,
 - Financial resources and capacity
 - Policies of the various levels of government and the agencies involved,
 - Partnerships and collaboration leveraged to provide and enhance services to the Syrian refugees.

- 3) Recommendations arising from the analysis.

The research team includes

- Principal Researcher, Dr. Erin Tolley, from the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto.
- Vivien Runnels, Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa, who focused on the housing sector,
- Jane Moloney, Canadian Association of Community Health Centres, who focused on the health sector,
- Nathali Rosado, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, who focused on settlement and settlement support services,
- Lynne Tyler, Catalyst Research and Communications, who is coordinating the project and conducted some additional interviews (employment sector, United Way, City of Ottawa, CESOC and others).

The team has completed

- a) an analysis of 91 documents,
- b) 54 interviews with a range of agencies, institutions and service providers in the Ottawa community.

A meeting of the research team to briefly review the interview results indicated that:

- a large number of organizations and service providers were involved in the response to the Syrian refugees, and there was also an outpouring of public support,
- overall, the system of response works quite well,
- there are several service gaps, and also a few key areas where collaboration and communication was challenging and could be enhanced, leading to better quality services and/or more rapid response,
- service providers found the number of refugees arriving in a short time taxed their financial and human resource and in some cases, the stress had significant impact on staff,
- there was good support from the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government and there are also some areas where policies and funding practices hampered the work on the ground, and could be improved.

The Principal Researcher is now reviewing the information collected and preparing a report that will include analysis and recommendations. The draft report will be ready by late August for review by the research team and the Director of OLIP, and the final version will be released to the community in the fall.

A Community Forum is planned for November, at which time the report will be presented for discussion and feedback from the community, and the proposed recommendations in the report will form the basis for discussion about moving forward to strengthen the community's capacity to welcome refugees in the future.