

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS STANDING
COMMITTEE ON CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION ENTITLED:
*Road to Recovery: Resettlement Issues of Yazidi Women and Children in Canada***

Introduction

The Government of Canada thanks the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMI) for its 18th report, entitled “Road to Recovery: Resettlement Issues of Yazidi Women and Children in Canada”, which was tabled in the House of Commons on March 29, 2018. The Government strongly supports the report and a majority of its recommendations. Helping vulnerable and marginalized populations across the globe remains at the core of Canada’s Refugee Resettlement Program. The CIMI Study and the resulting Report provide the Government with an opportunity to think critically about the ways in which Canada’s settlement services could further help vulnerable populations resettled under Canada’s Refugee Resettlement Program.

Canada’s Refugee Resettlement Program

Delivered by the Department of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the broad objectives of Canada’s Refugee Resettlement Program are to save lives, offer protection to the displaced and persecuted, meet Canada’s international legal obligations with respect to refugees, and respond to international crises by providing assistance to those in need of resettlement. Providing protection to vulnerable populations in the form of resettlement to Canada is a critical and often life-saving intervention for refugees who have urgent protection needs and compelling vulnerabilities. Resettlement also demonstrates to the world that Canada takes seriously its shared responsibility to help those who are displaced, persecuted and most in need of protection.

Canadian officials rely on UNHCR, private sponsors and other referral organizations to identify and refer refugees for resettlement. This ensures that a significant portion of Canada’s resettlement efforts focus on resettling the most vulnerable refugees, including priority populations and at-risk individuals, determined by UNHCR to be in need of resettlement based on their legal and or physical protection needs.

Refugees can be resettled to Canada through one of three streams: (1) government-assisted refugees; (2) privately sponsored refugees and; (3) blended visa office-referred.

Government-assisted refugees are referred by UNHCR or another designated referral agency and receive support from the Government (up to 12 months of income support and immediate and essential services).

Privately sponsored refugees are referred by a Canadian sponsor, who must provide up to 12 months of income support as well as community support for one year. The blended visa office-referred program is designed to resettle refugees identified by the UNHCR. It is referred to as a “blended” program because it is a cost-sharing arrangement whereby refugees receive

six months of income support from the Government, as well as six months of income support from their sponsors. In addition, sponsors are also responsible for providing emotional and community support for up to 12 months.

From time to time, as a life-saving measure the Government will undertake special initiatives that may exceed the planned refugee resettlement targets for a given year and require other exceptional measures to implement.

Resettlement of Survivors of Daesh

In response to a unanimous motion in the House of Commons on October 25, 2016, to provide assistance to Yazidi women and girls escaping genocide, the Government of Canada made a commitment to resettle approximately 1,200 survivors of Daesh (located inside and outside of Iraq), including Yazidi women and girls, by the end of 2017.

It was not Canada's intention to resettle a large numbers of the Yazidi people under this initiative. The Yazidi are an integral part of Iraq's society and it is important to recognize that many people wish to remain in their community, which is why the program focused on a small number of people for whom resettlement was the best option. The size of Canada's initiative is comparable to that of the recent German operation, which brought just over 1,000 vulnerable women and girls from Northern Iraq to Germany over the course of one year.

Canada does not offer protection on the basis of religion or ethnicity, but rather vulnerability. Thus, the Government's response to the motion has focused on all survivors of Daesh for whom resettlement is an appropriate solution. Internally displaced Yazidi made up a large proportion of these individuals since they, in particular, suffered a high level of violence at the hands of Daesh in Northern Iraq.

An internally displaced person is someone who is forced to flee his or her home but who remains within his or her country's borders. They are often referred to as refugees, although they do not fall within the current legal definition of a refugee in either international or domestic law. Therefore, to undertake resettlement of this vulnerable group, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship (IRC) exercised his authority under the public policy provision of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* to temporarily exempt from certain legislative and regulatory requirements internally displaced survivors of Daesh in Iraq who met the eligibility requirements for this initiative, most notably the requirement to be outside of one's country of nationality to be considered a refugee.

In addition to the government-assisted refugees that were part of the Government commitment to resettle survivors of Daesh, IRCC also facilitated the private sponsorship of individuals who fall within this vulnerable group. Canada has now welcomed more than 1,300 survivors of Daesh, including 1,216 government-supported and 88 privately-sponsored survivors. Of these, close to 85% are Yazidi.

While the resettlement and settlement of this vulnerable population has not been without challenges, many of which have been highlighted in the 18th CIMM Report, settlement service

provider organizations report that Yazidi families in Canada are generally integrating well and showing increased independence in their daily living. In addition to the pre-planned services that were implemented in anticipation of the needs of this population, further adjustments are being made as lessons learned are being shared between IRCC, service provider organizations, and the core cities where this population was resettled.

For example, service provider organizations in Toronto set up art therapy sessions for those experiencing post-traumatic stress resulting from the violence and displacement at the hands of Daesh. Facilitated by an art therapist and supervised by a support group facilitator, the program creates a safe and comfortable space for children to explore their emotions about what they may have witnessed or experienced prior to coming to Canada.

The Government has promoted connections between service providers and Yazidi leaders and associations to facilitate newly arrived families to connect with the broader community. Similarly, Yazidi families have also requested to volunteer with service provider organizations for an opportunity to help others who will be arriving. Some are starting to leverage faith-based community organizations in an effort to build a community foundation in Canada. Yazidi families continuously provide each other with needed moral and emotional support. Among other instances of community building, this is a strong indication that families are feeling empowered and have a clear willingness to positively engage in their communities.

The Committee's Report has put forward several important recommendations, to which the Government responds below.

1) Increasing Refugee Resettlement Targets

That the Government of Canada increase its refugee resettlement targets.

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation.

In 2018, Canada will remain among the largest resettlement countries globally and has committed to resettling 27,000 refugees. Canada's commitment doubles the average number of refugees admitted to Canada annually prior to 2015. In addition, the 2018 Immigration Levels Plan marks the first time that a multi-year plan, providing three years of targets and planning ranges, has been approved. The multi-year Immigration Levels Plan has outlined the Government's intentions to grow overall refugee resettlement levels by 17% over three years, from 27,000 in 2018 to 29,150 in 2019 and 31,700 in 2020.

In addition, in Budget 2018, the Government committed to resettling an additional 1,000 vulnerable women and girls from various conflict zones around the world, further strengthening the growth in annual refugee resettlement.

Through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), Canada is also working with various partners to help other countries set up their own community sponsored refugee programs, in an effort to boost resettlement capacity worldwide. GRSI offers training and public education

on the Canadian private sponsorship system, assistance in building capacity for new community-based sponsorship programs, and encourages a broader discussion that is supportive of refugee protection. Canada has received numerous delegations who have asked to learn about the Canadian resettlement system, and the benefits of developing a private sponsorship of refugees program. Having welcomed nearly 300,000 refugees through its PSR program over the past four decades, Canada is uniquely placed to lead this global effort.

2) Facilitating Private Sponsorship

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with stakeholders to facilitate the private sponsorship of Yazidi women and children; and deem these applications over and above the Sponsorship Agreement Holders' allocations until 2020.

The Government of Canada partially supports this recommendation.

IRCC has and will continue to work with sponsors to facilitate the private sponsorship of survivors of Daesh who are outside of their country of nationality, including Yazidi women and children, by expediting these cases. This means cases will continue to be moved to the front of the queue for review by migration officers, instead of being processed in the order they were received by IRCC (as per the usual process).

As part of multi-year levels planning, Canada will welcome 57,000 privately-sponsored refugees over the next three years. In 2018, Canada will welcome 18,000 privately sponsored refugees. This is four times the average number welcomed in the ten years prior to 2015. The continued high level of interest from private sponsors is a reflection of the success of the program. At the same time, IRCC must ensure that it is able to manage the number of applications it receives each year to be able to process them in a timely way.

Demand from sponsors to submit new applications for privately-sponsored refugees has long outpaced available spaces in the immigration levels plan, resulting in long wait times and backlogs. Long wait times mean that it is difficult for Canada to offer timely protection. Additionally, the longer that a case remains in the backlog the more complex it can be to process given applicants' changing circumstances. Therefore, the allocations for Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) were introduced as an intake management measure in 2012. These allocations limit the total number of applications that may be submitted, but do not place any restrictions related to country of origin or nationality of the refugees. The current allocations have been selected to support the Government's commitments to eliminate the backlog in the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program and implement 12 month processing time for the majority of cases by 2020. In addition, since late 2017, there has been unprecedented growth in application volumes from Groups of Five (G5) and Community Sponsors, for which there are no caps on applications, making intake management of even greater importance.

3) Facilitating a Favourable Environment for Return

That the Government of Canada work with multilateral partners to help internally displaced Yazidi persons return to their region by working towards creating a favourable environment for return in Northern Iraq.

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation.

Canada has and will continue to advocate for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons. In 2016, the Government of Canada announced a three-year (2016-2019) comprehensive and integrated "Strategy for Support to the Coalition Against Daesh and Broader Engagement in Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon", which provides humanitarian, development, stabilization and security assistance in Iraq. As part of this Strategy, Canada is providing \$179.5 million in humanitarian assistance in Iraq to meet the needs of the most vulnerable through multi-year programming.

Our humanitarian assistance is provided on the basis of need, and our partners (the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and international non-governmental organizations) are actively involved in responding to the humanitarian needs of the Yazidis within the overall humanitarian response. In northern Iraq, Global Affairs Canada's humanitarian partners are providing food, water, access to education, medical care and shelter in internally displaced persons camps and in communities where many Yazidis are located. Canada is also supporting initiatives to provide specialized reproductive health and assistance for survivors of gender-based violence, including for Yazidi women and girls. For example, the United Nations Population Fund established a women's centre at Dohuk hospital to provide specialized care to women and girls previously held by Daesh.

Through development funding, a \$1.6 million project implemented by World Vision, has worked to install a water pumping station, water treatment plant and distribution network in Dohuk province, northern Iraq. The system provides drinking water to more than 40,000 Yazidis in camp and non-camp settings. In addition, through a project to build resilience in conflict-affected communities in Iraq with Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, small-scale community-level projects are working to strengthen water and sanitation infrastructure in communities with Yazidi populations.

Canada is also assisting in creating a favourable environment for returns through its stabilization programming in liberated areas. Canada's stabilization efforts are linked to its membership in the Global Coalition to Counter Daesh as well as Global Affairs Canada's stabilization country strategy, and are based on three lines of effort: (i) essential services and civil security; (ii) reconciliation and conflict prevention; and, (iii) transitional justice and accountability.

To ensure a safe return to liberated areas, Canada has committed \$6 million to Improvised Explosive Device (IED) clearance operations in both Nineveh and Anbar to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis to their homes. This includes support to the Mine Advisory Group's work in Sinjar where several Yazidi communities reside. Canada also seeks to address drivers of conflict

in the liberated areas in Anbar and Ninewah, which were heavily affected by Daesh occupation. Canada is supporting formal and informal mechanisms for dispute resolution in order to address current grievances and enable peaceful co-existence. An initiative being implemented by a Canadian-funded NGO, Development Transformations, will support a grassroots anti-retribution campaign to prevent revenge attacks and protect the most vulnerable groups in liberated areas. Another example includes Canada's support to Mercy Corps' efforts to establish community action groups that facilitate conflict resolution and promote reconciliation in Sinjar and Sinuni. Canada will also be working with international and local partners to promote peace and reconciliation across Iraq, including Ninewah.

Canada is also helping to restore essential services and more effectively resolve housing, land and property disputes and access essential civil documentation in liberated areas. A project with the Norwegian Refugee Council will ensure more effective resolution of housing, land and property disputes by ethno-religious and tribal leaders, in conformity with Iraqi and international law and through participation in formal legal processes. This project will improve sustainable access to civil documentation, housing, land, and property by returnees, including members of minority groups. It will also focus on the unique needs of displaced women. Canada also supports the United Nations Development Program's Funding Facility for Stabilization, which is rehabilitating critical infrastructure and essential services across liberated areas, and has identified Sinjar and Sinuni as priority areas. Ultimately, our stabilization programming seeks to build the community's confidence in local authorities and address grievances or vulnerabilities that could be exploited by violent extremist organizations in order to re-ignite conflict and political violence.

The deployment of Canadian police under the International Police Peacekeeping and Peace Operations Program is another way through which Canada is establishing a more secure environment for civilians in Iraq, including vulnerable populations. Before deploying, Canadian police officers receive extensive training on the political and social context in Iraq and working in fragile and conflict affected states, including instruction on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The aims of these deployments are to strengthen the Iraqi security institutions that underpin local policing and to support transitions in policing methods for areas liberated from Daesh. One key element of this work, which is being carried out in collaboration with several partners led by Italy, is advancing the adoption of community policing principles to help local police protect, serve and rebuild trust with the diverse members of their communities.

The Government of Canada believes that long-term stability in Iraq requires an inclusive reconciliation process. Justice is the first step towards reconciliation. The Government of Canada has been at the forefront of international efforts to bring Daesh to account for crimes against the Yazidi and other minority and vulnerable groups in Iraq and Syria. In May and June 2016, former Minister Dion formally asked the UN Security Council to establish an investigative and accountability mechanism for Daesh crimes. On June 16, 2016, in Parliament, former Minister Dion acknowledged the independent report by the UN Commission and its conclusion that genocide was committed by Daesh against the Yazidi of Sinjar. With that evidence, the Canadian government concluded that genocide against the Yazidi was currently

ongoing. In September 2017, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution to establish a UN Investigative Team to collect evidence of international crimes committed by Daesh in Iraq. This is a positive step towards the eventual prosecution of Daesh for the heinous crimes committed against the Yazidi and all Iraqis.

4) Building a Cohesive Community

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada offer newly arrived Yazidi women and children information about existing Yazidi communities in Canada to help build a supportive Canadian network of Yazidi people; and facilitate the resettlement of Yazidi women and children in areas with existing Yazidi communities to assist with their integration.

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation.

The Government is committed to ensuring that all government-assisted refugees, including Yazidi refugees, are resettled to areas where they will be most likely to successfully integrate into the community and have the support they need. In addition to the efforts described below to facilitate the resettlement of Yazidi women and children in areas with existing Yazidi communities, the Government will explore the best means of providing appropriate information directly to newly arriving Yazidi refugees, both pre-arrival and post-arrival, regarding the existing Yazidi communities in Canada.

For the resettlement of survivors of Daesh, including Yazidi women and girls, the Government implemented a tailored approach to the resettlement process. Recognizing the importance of establishing connections to the existing religious community in Canada, four core cities where there was an existing Yazidi diaspora were selected from within the existing network of destinations across Canada having adequate supports in place for this population. This allowed for the development of growing community networks amongst the newly resettled families.

The core cities selected for the resettlement of survivors of Daesh were Toronto, London, Winnipeg, and Calgary. Core cities were chosen following comprehensive consultations with stakeholders and pertinent agencies. The criteria for selection encompassed various aspects of the resettlement process including: adequate medical and psycho-social supports, availability of interpreters and adequate community capacity to support high needs clients.

Numerous support services are provided by service provider organizations in the core cities, along with assistance accessing other community supports. These organizations facilitate social integration, and aid in community building and healing. In our core cities, partner organizations coordinate efforts to ensure the local community resources are aware of the population's needs.

To assist service provider organizations to prepare for the arrival of Yazidi refugees, the Government developed a population profile with information on the culture, religion and language of the Yazidi people. The profile illustrated the societal environment that the population came from. This information was shared with all relevant parties, particularly the

Settlement Network and concerned Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) service provider organizations to ensure resettlement and settlement programming was better tailored for this population. The organization Yazda generously shared a population profile/backgrounder with the Government, and allowed Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to share it with stakeholders and service providers.

The Government has promoted connections between service providers and Yazidi leaders and associations to facilitate newly arrived families to connect with the broader community. Similarly, Yazidi families have also requested to volunteer with service provider organizations for an opportunity to help others who will be arriving. Further, some are starting to leverage faith-based community organizations in an effort to build a community foundation in Canada. Yazidi families continuously provide each other with needed moral and emotional support. Among other instances of community building, this is a strong indication that families are feeling empowered and have a clear willingness to positively engage in their communities.

For example, service provider organizations in Calgary facilitate an informal social community group for Yazidi families. Adults meet regularly to discuss their challenges, help each other with decision-making processes related to resettlement such as, budgeting, properly disciplining their children, sharing their stories and learning from each other's experiences. A women-only group was also formed, replicating the program explained prior.

In another example, service provider organizations in Toronto set up art therapy sessions for those experiencing post-traumatic stress resulting from the violence and displacement at the hands of Daesh. Facilitated by an art therapist and supervised by a support group facilitator, the program creates a safe and comfortable space for children to explore their emotions about what they may have witnessed or experienced prior to coming to Canada.

Moving forward, the Government will continue to ensure that Yazidi arriving to Canada are resettled to communities where their needs will be met, most often to cities with an existing Yazidi diaspora, and that have specialized language, medical and psycho-social services, and general community support available. For Yazidi refugees with family or friends who have already resettled in Canada, the Government will destine these individuals to the same communities to continue to support family reunification efforts.

5) Strengthening Services

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continue to support settlement service providers assisting Yazidi women and children in developing shared capacity and best practices particularly within the five relocation areas, namely London, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Lethbridge.

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation and will build on existing work to continue to develop shared capacity and best practices.

IRCC has worked to support settlement service provider organizations from the outset of the

initiative to resettle survivors of Daesh. Yazidi refugees have settled in four communities, namely London, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Calgary. Yazidi refugees that had originally been resettled to Lethbridge chose to move to Calgary to join an existing Yazidi community.

IRCC facilitates, and will continue to lead monthly *Yazidi Resettlement Information Sessions* via teleconference with internal and external stakeholders including funding recipient organizations that provide temporary accommodation to Yazidi clients upon their arrival in Canada. These sessions provide opportunities for all key partners to share their experiences and provide updates on their progress to date in resettling the vulnerable Yazidi refugee population.

On March 26-27, 2018, a face-to-face workshop on the Yazidi refugee population was held in London, Ontario. Funded by IRCC and hosted by London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, workshop sessions provided opportunities for key local, provincial, and national partners to discuss and exchange ideas for addressing areas of concern that have been identified with the Yazidi population (e.g. Mental Health, Dealing with Youth, Interpretation Services, Employment, Community Capacity Building, etc.).

Other ongoing work to support service provider organizations working with survivors of Daesh, including Yazidi women and girls, include:

- COSTI Immigrant Services, the service provider organization for the RAP in Toronto, took the lead on creating the Yazidi Refugee Network in York Region of Ontario. Partners include Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture, Catholic Community Services of York Region, COSTI Immigrant Services, Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, York Catholic District School Board, and York Region District School Board. The objective is to enhance client service co-ordination to achieve best results and to identify areas and families which require more intensive coordination (i.e. wrap around services). The partners are all funded by IRCC.
- London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, the RAP service provider organization in London, Ontario, has created a Yazidi Committee to coordinate services with other IRCC-funded organizations in the community. The focus is to share programming that is already ongoing by the providers as well as best practices in order to streamline access to services and avoid duplication.
- Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council, *Accueil Francophone* in Winnipeg, and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society are the main RAP service provider organizations for Yazidi refugees in the West. In both Calgary and Winnipeg, two local umbrella agencies—Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations and Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies—host regular meetings to ensure a collaborative approach within the local community. These meetings include other IRCC-funded organizations, IRCC representatives, provincial officials, and other stakeholders in the community. In Calgary, the meetings are being held every 3 weeks. In Winnipeg, the meetings are held bi-weekly.
- The Local Immigration Partnerships in Winnipeg have been engaged in the local community, both with IRCC-funded providers, as well as community leaders to support the resettlement

of the Yazidi clients. They have aided in the creation of a relationship between the Yazidi community and local RAP service provider organizations, ensuring a collaborative approach to the resettlement of Yazidi refugees.

6) Developing Best Practices for the Resettlement of Vulnerable Groups

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with relevant stakeholders and experts on the development of a best practices guide for the settlement sector on the resettlement and integration of vulnerable groups.

The Government of Canada supports the recommendation to work with relevant stakeholders and experts on the resettlement and integration of vulnerable groups; noting, however, that a single best practices guide may not be suitable given the complexity and variety of needs experienced by various vulnerable groups. In order to address all issues and keep current with innovations in service design and delivery, IRCC will continue to work with stakeholders to provide spaces for sharing information and best practices, as well as providing more targeted resettlement and integration services for those most in need.

A number of councils and committees have been established between IRCC and key stakeholders that serve the purpose of national engagement with the resettlement and settlement sector. These include the National Settlement Council that focuses on integration policy and programs, the Government-Assisted Refugees Resettlement Assistance Program (GAR-RAP) working group that focuses on resettlement for government-assisted refugees, and the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Settlement Working Group that provides a forum for sharing information on settlement and integration policies and programs for immigrants, including refugees, across Canada. In March 2018, a workshop on the vulnerable Yazidi refugee population was held in London, Ontario providing an opportunity for key local, provincial, and national partners to discuss and share ideas for addressing areas of concern that have been identified with the Yazidi population.

IRCC will continue to ensure that professional development and capacity building of the resettlement and settlement sector is a priority area of focus for future programming development. Notably, IRCC's Settlement Program has provided funding to the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants to develop a bilingual, national online Community of Practice, where settlement and resettlement sector staff, leaders and professionals in related sectors can connect, share, collaborate and learn. The Community of Practice will enable all players involved in the settlement and integration of newcomers to share and access best practice information and resources on a wide variety of settlement and resettlement topics including those regarding vulnerable populations. Groups and individuals from across the country will be able to use the Community of Practice to collaborate on front-line, organization and sector issues; coordinate activities to reduce duplicative efforts; and find partners and subject matter experts to enhance service delivery options. It is anticipated that the Community of Practice will be launched online in 2019.

Through the Settlement Program at IRCC a number of different approaches and supports are provided to address the needs of specific groups of vulnerable newcomers:

- Case Management and wrap-around supports to settlement and integration - refugees, and other newcomers who face multiple barriers to integration, may benefit from settlement programming delivered with a case management approach. These more personalized services, typically delivered individually with progress monitored over a longer period of time, ensure referrals to local supports and follow-up for high-needs newcomers. Case management support services are often delivered through a collaborative network of delivery agencies and aims to ensure that youth, seniors, families and refugees will be able to deal with life challenges more effectively. This also includes implementing a service model of care for high-needs refugees and their families in order to enhance services and build capacity for specialized service provision through training and consultation. This includes assessment, service planning, and implementation of coordinated services, resources and supports for individual members and whole family systems.
- IRCC recognizes the distinct and multiple challenges newcomer women face navigating a new language, including back to work transitions, childcare responsibilities, developing new networks as well as shifts in family dynamics. IRCC's Settlement Program funds a range of targeted settlement services that can be accessed by newcomer and refugee women such as: mentoring; information and orientation on rights and responsibilities; women's only employment and language supports; and family and gender-based violence prevention support. The Settlement Program also provides Support Services such as child-minding and transportation services to ensure that women are able to access the full range of integration services. In addition, Budget 2018 allocated \$31.8 million, starting in 2018-19, for a pilot to explore measures to support the labour market attachment of newcomer women who are also members of visible minorities. The Department recognizes that employment is key to the successful integration of newcomers and that some may face additional barriers to financial independence. Accordingly, IRCC will explore combinations of employment interventions and case management to strengthen outcomes.
- IRCC recognizes the distinct and multiple challenges newcomer women face navigating a new language, including back to work transitions, childcare responsibilities, developing new networks as well as shifts in family dynamics. IRCC's Settlement Program funds a range of targeted settlement services that can be accessed by newcomer and refugee women such as: mentoring; information and orientation on rights and responsibilities; women's only employment and language supports; and family and gender-based violence prevention support. In addition, Support Services such as child-minding and transportation services are offered to ensure that mothers are able to access these integration services.
- Newcomers who are seniors are provided with the information required to make informed decisions; programming to strengthen language skills to achieve settlement and integration goals; assistance in finding and retaining employment; and support to build networks in communities and mitigate social isolation. Some settlement services specific to seniors include conversation circles, computer training sessions to help seniors connect with friends

and families through email and learn to use search engines for their settlement needs, as well as workshops on elder abuse prevention. Further, information on seniors' rights, health and wellness, housing options, budgeting, the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) and other available benefits as well as social activities are provided for seniors specifically.

- Targeted services are offered to newcomer youth in recognition of their diverse needs, including challenges navigating a new culture, educational system, school to work transitions, peer relationships as well as shifts in family dynamics. These supports can include peer mentoring, youth leadership camps, employment supports related to job search skills, and information on credential and educational recognition. IRCC also recognizes the importance of engaging directly with newcomer youth, who have diverse skills, knowledge and experience. Work is underway at IRCC to engage with newcomer youth on Canadian integration and immigration issues and ensure that a youth-centered lens is reflected in IRCC's work.
- Given the specific issues that LGBTQ2 newcomers face, such as social isolation, targeted services are also made available for this vulnerable group. For example, information is provided about LGBTQ2 rights and exploring LGBTQ2 identity within a cultural context, and LGBTQ2 youth also have access to support groups. Additionally, IRCC funds training for service providers to help them better serve LGBTQ2 newcomers. Many settlement service provider organizations have established strong partnerships with other integral community resources and supports that are well-placed to serve the needs of this population.
- Care for Newcomer Children is one of six support services offered by IRCC to address barriers for newcomers in accessing IRCC-funded settlement programming. In response to the lessons learned from the Syrian Refugee experience, IRCC funded the Supporting Child Care in the Settlement Community organization (known as CMAS) to develop the following resource, The Resilience Guide - Strategies for Responding to Trauma in Refugee Children. The resource was shared with settlement workers who deliver the Care for Newcomer Children Program and was the focus of a Working with Refugee Children and their Families conference for Care for Newcomer Children childcare workers from across Canada.

7) Ensuring Proximity to Services and Housing which is Affordable

That the Government of Canada recognize that resettled Yazidi women and children do not necessarily have the knowledge, ability or resources to access services on their own and should assist them in relocating to areas that are in close proximity to services, such as public transportation, educational and medical centres as well as settlement services; and work with provincial and municipal governments as well as service provider organizations to ensure resettled Yazidi women and children have improved access to housing which is affordable.

The Government of Canada supports efforts to improve access to services by Yazidi women, but does not concur with the recommendation that it should directly assist Yazidi women in

relocating them to areas that are in close proximity to services, as this recommendation falls outside of the mandate of IRCC. IRCC plays a limited role in offering housing supports as part of the integration of newcomers.

However, as part of their pre-arrival services, refugees destined for Canada, including Yazidi refugees, attend Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) sessions delivered by the International Organization for Migration. COA sessions consist of three to five days of pre-departure group orientation, delivered to Yazidi refugees with the help of Kurmanji interpreters. During these sessions, participants learn about many aspects of life in Canada, including housing, in order to ensure participants have realistic expectations and understand their rights and responsibilities when they arrive in Canada. The Welcome to Canada publication provides introductory information on finding temporary accommodations, rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords, and buying and financing a home in Canada.

Upon arrival in Canada, through the RAP, IRCC offers temporary accommodation to government-assisted refugees (GARs). RAP service provider organizations (SPOs) will also assist newly arrived GARs in finding and securing permanent housing, while also providing other financial and non-financial supports. RAP SPOs work with refugees to find a home which is both in proximity to essential services and to other Yazidi community members, while also trying to ensure that this housing is affordable for the refugees.

More broadly, in November 2017, the Government of Canada announced the National Housing Strategy, and committed to invest \$40 billion to build stronger communities and help Canadians across the country access a safe, affordable home. The Strategy will adopt a “whole-of-government” approach that aligns housing with other important goals like creating jobs, increasing access to healthcare and education, and preventing violence against women.

The first priority will be to help the most vulnerable Canadians access housing and the strategy is expected to remove 530,000 Canadians from housing need. This includes women and children fleeing family violence, seniors, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, those dealing with mental health and addiction issues, veterans and young adults.

Overall, the Strategy will provide \$20.5 billion to help the provinces and territories build more affordable housing, reduce homelessness and create better outcomes for all Canadians. Provinces and territories will be required to cost-match roughly half of this total investment, including contributing \$2 billion towards the creation of a new \$4 billion Canada Housing Benefit to meet local needs and fight the challenge of housing affordability. Launching in 2020, the Canada Housing Benefit will provide affordability support directly to families and individuals in housing need, including those potentially living in social housing, those on a social housing wait-list, and those housed in the private market but struggling to make ends meet. The Benefit will deliver an average of \$2,500 a year to each recipient household and grow to support at least 300,000 households.

8) Improving Mental Health Support and Access

That the Government of Canada work with provincial and territorial governments, the Mental Health Commission of Canada and all relevant partners to invest in improving mental health support for all refugees resettled in Canada; and work to improve access to mental health support for Yazidi women and children in their mother tongue when accessing services through the Interim Federal Health Program.

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation.

To help ensure that the settlement of all immigrants and refugees is managed in a coordinated and effective manner including with respect to whether their specific mental health needs are addressed, IRCC engages and collaborates with provinces and territories via the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration and at the working level through the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Settlement Working Group. In addition, IRCC has ex-officio status at the federal, provincial and territorial Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health, which is supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

IRCC also engages with the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Mental Health Commission of Canada, to collaborate and advance mental health policy, research and programming by and for immigrant, refugee, and ethno-cultural and racialized (IRER) groups. Through participation in the Mental Health Commission of Canada Collaborative on IRER, IRCC is able to further connect with researchers, service providers, as well as representatives from provincial, territorial, and regional health authorities to share information and to seek advice and insights on mental health issues.

Canada's Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) addresses medical needs, including mental health needs of both government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees. The IFHP provides limited, temporary coverage of health-care benefits to resettled refugees, usually for up to one year after arrival in Canada.

Yazidi women and children are eligible beneficiaries under the IFHP. As such, they receive basic coverage for services that include mental health services provided by physicians (such as psychiatrists, general or family practitioners) or services provided by mental health hospitals; supplemental coverage, including mental health services provided by allied health professionals, such as clinical psychologists, psychotherapists, or counselling therapists, and prescription medications for treatment of mental disorders. Interpretation supports for mental health services are also covered under the IFHP.

In addition to the IFHP, all newcomers can access mental health supports through the Settlement Program. Mental health programming includes a variety of services which promote the mental health and well-being, independence, and community integration of newcomers. Programming is in place to enhance capacity-building through the training of settlement workers to identify mental health issues and make the appropriate referrals in the community. For example, approximately 5,700 settlement workers and health professionals across Canada have enrolled in the online interactive courses developed by the Centre for Addictions and

Mental Health as part of their ongoing Refugee Mental Health Project funded by IRCC. In cases where newcomers require mental health interventions such as trauma counselling, IRCC-funded service providers may provide short-term crisis counselling and referrals to health care services offered by the provinces and territories.

In addition, IRCC funds service provider organizations to deliver non-clinical mental health-related supports and to provide community-based health information that promote mental health awareness and access to health care services, particularly among women, youth, seniors and refugees. IRCC-funded service providers also offer supports and referrals to local services to newcomers in need for additional supports.

Recently, for example, in response to the lessons learned from the Syrian Refugee experience, IRCC funded the Supporting Child Care in the Settlement Community organization (known as CMAS) to develop the resource entitled *The Resilience Guide - Strategies for Responding to Trauma in Refugee Children*. The resource was shared with settlement workers who deliver the Care for Newcomer Children Program, one of six support services offered by IRCC to address barriers for newcomers in accessing IRCC-funded settlement programming, and was the focus of the *Working with Refugee Children and their Families* conference (March 2018) for Care for Newcomer Children childcare workers from across Canada.

In another example, Aurora Family Therapy is delivering a Psycho-Social Settlement Needs Assessment pilot project to ensure government-assisted refugees are appropriately screened by trained clinicians for psycho-social settlement needs and referred to physical and mental health services as required. Follow-up assessments will be conducted at 6 months. This pilot project was initially in response to the anticipated needs of the survivors of Daesh, and as of July 1, 2017, has been expanded to include all government-assisted refugees. Effective March 2018, privately sponsored Yazidi refugees are now included as well.

Since the pilot project began March 2017, the assessment has been provided to approximately 344 survivors of Daesh clients. This has resulted in 31 Yazidi clients being identified as in need of needing critical/serious mental health interventions and have been referred to Aurora's Newcomer Therapy Program. This program was previously funded through the United Way of Winnipeg, but funding ended March 31, 2018. IRCC has provided interim funding through the "Enhanced Crisis Counselling" pilot project which will extend the period of counselling for these highly vulnerable and traumatized survivors of Daesh.

Additionally, IRCC partners with organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health to develop resources to help settlement, social service and health care providers identify the mental health needs of refugees and equip them with the training and resources needed to support and respond to the mental health needs of refugees.

IRCC will continue to build partnerships and contribute to a coordinated effort to advance information sharing, and programming to support the mental health and well-being of newcomers, including refugees.

9) Anticipating Interpreting Needs

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada anticipate linguistic capacity needs in its resettlement initiatives and provide professional interpretation to newcomers in their mother tongue.

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation.

Canada's resettlement, settlement and integration programs are led by IRCC and delivered primarily through SPOs in Canada.

IRCC funds SPOs to deliver Support Services which are offered to enable access to direct settlement services, including: child care, transportation assistance, translation, interpretation, crisis counselling and provisions for persons with disabilities.

In order to support service delivery and anticipate the specific needs of the Yazidi population, IRCC shares important information with its local offices, Port of Entry SPOs and RAP SPOs once refugee applications have been approved and again prior to their arrival. This includes information on family composition, medical needs, language capacity, special travel requirements, immediate post-arrival services requirements, family or friends in Canada, etc.

With this information, SPOs supporting Yazidi resettlement efforts ensure they have Kurmanji-speaking staff or are able to access translation/interpretation help from volunteers, as needed. This begins with port-of-entry services at Pearson International Airport, where support services are available in Kurmanji through the service provider Malton Neighbourhood Services.

Access to translation and interpretation support in Kurmanji is a continuing element in the services offered by our SPOs to those requiring it. This is achieved either through paid staff positions or by harnessing the contribution of volunteers. Resettled Yazidi continue to have access to translation and interpretation support and to the services offered in their destination communities on an ongoing basis. Translation services are available to all newcomers, including Yazidi newcomers, who may need it at any point in the settlement process.

10) Developing Community Interpreting

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada work with provincial, territorial and municipal governments, as well as professional associations in the areas of interpretation and translation, to develop the capacity of community interpreting and to ensure that professional interpretation is provided to newcomers to Canada who are in need of this service.

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation.

IRCC funds Support Services, including translation and interpretation, to reduce barriers to access and enable participation of newcomers in settlement services. Support Services contribute to the overall expected outcomes related to the delivery of direct settlement

services, and together they create the conditions necessary for newcomers to succeed in Canadian society and the economy.

IRCC has increased engagement with provinces and territories at both multilateral and bilateral levels. At the multilateral level, IRCC supports the work of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Settlement Working Group. Meetings and activities of the working group are focused on the achievement of the stated vision and goals of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration, particularly those contained in FPT Vision Action Plan 2016-2019, and in the FPT Settlement Working Group's work plan.

Multilateral engagements with provinces and territories are complemented at the bilateral level through the negotiation of bilateral settlement arrangements and governance mechanisms which address specific jurisdictional needs which includes settlement programming and may include translation and interpretation. These Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) are key to formalize relationships and ensure efficiency and effectiveness of settlement programming at the bilateral level. Within the context of the MOU, IRCC and the given jurisdiction commit to the joint vision, principles and objectives of a bilateral partnership in settlement, the areas of partnership in settlement, roles and responsibilities, reporting and accountability, and the governance structure (an implementation working group) to oversee the implementation of the MOU.

To date, IRCC has completed and signed MOUs with Ontario, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick and has started negotiations with Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador and Yukon. Within these MOU's there are commitments to collaborating on support services which includes interpretation and translation.

Through its Settlement Program, IRCC funds two local networks related to immigrant settlement and integration: the *Réseaux en immigration francophone* and the Local Immigration Partnerships. One of the goals of both networks is to improve coordination amongst organizations involved in the settlement and integration of newcomers.

11) Encourage Language Acquisition

That Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada continue its support of language training for all refugees.

The Government of Canada supports this recommendation.

In 2018-19, IRCC will invest approximately \$762 million outside of Quebec to support the settlement needs of newcomers, including refugees. IRCC spends approximately 36% of the federal settlement funding envelope on language training, which represents the largest proportion of expenditures.

Language programming is delivered by a wide range of organizations and combines language acquisition with instruction on Canadian culture and civics, rights and responsibilities, job search and cross-cultural communication skills. Programming ranges from literacy to advanced language ability levels, including employment-related language training. Settlement language training was originally designed to facilitate participation by newcomer women, regardless of their labour market intent. Historically, the majority of participants have been women. Language courses are offered in tandem with support services that facilitate newcomers' participation in language training such as care for newcomer children, transportation assistance, and where appropriate, referrals to linguistically appropriate crisis counselling and interpretation services.

The settlement needs of newcomers are assessed through a needs assessment and referral service available after landing in Canada. Language training clients are referred to language programming best suited to meet their settlement language learning needs. Programming takes into consideration that some newcomers, including refugees, may face multiple barriers such as low literacy or official language capacity, low educational attainment, exposure to trauma and disability. IRCC is in close contact with settlement service provider organizations on a regular basis to determine demands on their services. In areas where waitlists for language training exist, funding is directed towards language training for basic language ability levels (i.e. literacy to Canadian Language Benchmark 4/*Niveau de compétence linguistique canadien 4*). IRCC is also reviewing informal approaches to language acquisition such as group conversation circles for newcomers.

Federally funded settlement language programming is complemented by provincial and territorial programs and investments in language training. IRCC continues to work closely with provincial and territorial governments to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of settlement language training.

12) Supporting Family Reunification

That Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada support family reunification for survivors of Daesh by considering extending indefinitely the One-Year Window of Opportunity for them to include immediate family members found to be living; and continue to expedite the applications of immediate family members.

The Government of Canada partially supports this recommendation.

Every effort is being made to ensure that families and in particular spouses, common-law partners and dependent children are not separated, or, if separation is unavoidable, that reunification is facilitated to the greatest extent possible.

Accordingly, IRCC asked the UNHCR to identify extended families for resettlement, as opposed to immediate families only, to ensure that survivors of Daesh would have appropriate family support in Canada. IRCC has a number of pathways to support family reunification, such as the

One-Year Window of opportunity provision and Family Class sponsorship.

The One-Year Window provision is a regulatory provision contained in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* (IRPR), which, under certain conditions, allows non-accompanying family members to come to Canada within one year following the confirmation of permanent residence of the principal applicant. In the case of survivors of Daesh, the CIMM recommendation seeks to extend the one-year timeframe in light of the fact that many Yazidi are being held in captivity at the hands of Daesh.

While the Government will not extend the One-Year Window provision indefinitely, in light of the unique challenges faced by this population, with immediate family members potentially remaining in captivity beyond the timeframe allowed for One-Year Window, the Government will develop eligibility criteria and implement a temporary extension of the One-Year Window provision for immediate family members of survivors of Daesh refugees resettled under this initiative (family members are defined in IRPR as spouses, common law partners, dependent children, and dependent children of dependent children of the principal applicant).

IRCC will also continue to expedite the processing of immigration applications for Yazidi family members released from captivity, including considering humanitarian and compassionate factors when assessing the application.