



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# **REPORT 3, SETTLEMENT SERVICES FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES—IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA, OF THE 2017 FALL REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA**

**Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

**The Honourable Kevin Sorenson, Chair**

**MARCH 2018  
42<sup>nd</sup> PARLIAMENT, 1<sup>st</sup> SESSION**

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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 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

has the honour to present its

## **FORTY-THIRD REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(g), the Committee has studied Report 3, Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, of the Fall 2017 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada and has agreed to report the following:







## REPORT 3, SETTLEMENT SERVICES FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES—IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA, OF THE 2017 FALL REPORTS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

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### INTRODUCTION

According to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG), as of 30 April 2017, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC or the Department) “reported that 44,919 Syrian refugees had arrived in Canada”<sup>1</sup> through the following three streams since November 2015:

- 1) **Government-assisted refugees** – Under the Resettlement Assistance Program, “the federal government provided these refugees with essential services—such as help with finding permanent accommodations—for four to six weeks after arrival in Canada, along with one year of income support.” These refugees were referred by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>2</sup>
- 2) **Privately sponsored refugees** – These refugees were selected by private sponsors in Canada, who agreed to provide them with “financial, social, and emotional support for one year.”<sup>3</sup>
- 3) **Blended visa office-referred refugees** – These refugees were referred by the UNHCR, and the Department helped match them with private sponsors. “The federal government provided them with up to six months of income support, and private sponsors provided another six months of income support and up to a year of social and emotional support. In setting its commitments for admitting Syrian refugees, the government included these refugees within the stream of government-assisted refugees.”<sup>4</sup>

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1 Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG), [Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#), Report 3 of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 3.4.

2 Ibid., para. 3.3.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.



According to the OAG, this number is “unprecedented in recent history. Each year since 1995, the Government of Canada has admitted about 11,000 refugees—excluding the recent Syrian refugees.”<sup>5</sup>

The [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act](#) gives the Department “the express responsibility for promoting the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada.”<sup>6</sup> The federal government’s responsibility for refugees who settle in Quebec “differs from its responsibility for those who settle elsewhere in Canada. Under the Canada–Québec Accord relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens, the Province of Quebec is solely responsible for providing services to those who settle in that province.” “Of the almost 45,000 Syrian refugees who came to Canada, about 10,000 settled in Quebec.”<sup>7</sup>

The OAG conducted an audit, published in fall 2017, to determine “whether Syrian refugees received selected settlement services funded by [IRCC] that were needed to help them integrate into Canada. It also examined whether the Department measured the outcomes of its efforts to settle Syrian refugees.”<sup>8</sup> The settlement services selected for the audit were “needs assessments, language assessments, and language training.”<sup>9</sup> The audit covered services for “Syrian refugees who arrived in Canada between 4 November 2015 and 31 December 2016 under the Government of Canada’s Syrian refugee initiative.”<sup>10</sup>

On 13 February 2018, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts (the Committee) held a hearing on this audit. From the OAG were Nancy Cheng, Assistant Auditor General, and Nicholas Swales, Principal. From IRCC were Marta Morgan, Deputy Minister, David Manicom, Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Integration, and Ümit Kiziltan, Director General, Research and Evaluation.<sup>11</sup>

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5 Ibid., para. 3.4.

6 Ibid., para. 3.5.

7 Ibid., para. 3.6.

8 Ibid., para. 3.11.

9 Ibid., para. 3.12.

10 Ibid., para. 3.13.

11 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2018, [Meeting No. 87](#).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Delivering settlement services

The OAG conducted its own survey to compare its results to the data in the Department's Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE<sup>12</sup>) system; the results of its survey matched the Department's data. The OAG was therefore able to rely on the Department's data to "evaluate whether Syrian refugees received the settlement services we selected."<sup>13</sup>

The OAG found that, "between November 2015 and March 2017, more than 80 percent of Syrian refugees received needs assessments and language assessments. In addition, more than 75 percent of those who received language assessments also received language training. Syrian refugees accessed the three settlement services we examined at a higher rate than non-Syrian refugees who arrived during the same period."<sup>14</sup>

The Department noted that "Syrian refugees who were in the privately sponsored or blended visa office—referred category used fewer settlement services than did Syrian refugees in the government-assisted category. The Department determined that Syrian refugees in the privately sponsored category had more knowledge of English or French than did Syrian refugees in the government-assisted category (82 percent of the privately sponsored refugees knew some English or French on arrival, compared with 16 percent of the government-assisted refugees). This difference could help explain why privately sponsored refugees attended fewer language classes than did the government-assisted refugees."<sup>15</sup>

Note that among the Syrian refugees arrived in Canada from 4 November 2015 to 31 December 2016, 55% were government-assisted refugees, 35% were privately sponsored-refugees and 10% were blended visa office – referred refugees.<sup>16</sup>

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12 According to the Government of Canada, the [Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment \(iCARE\) system](#) is an online tool which allows for the collection of service information on the Settlement Program and Resettlement Assistance Program delivered by funding recipients to eligible newcomers.

13 OAG, [Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#), Report 3 of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 3.32.

14 Ibid., para. 3.34.

15 Ibid., para. 3.35.

16 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2018, [Meeting No. 87](#), 1720.



As to the use of language services by Syrian refugees, Director General Ümit Kiziltan said that when “we asked privately sponsored refugees and government-assisted refugees about language classes, we saw that about 40% of privately sponsored refugees, when asked why they were not taking language classes, would say that they didn't need to improve their English or French.”<sup>17</sup>

The OAG found that the Department allocated “settlement program funds to its regional offices in proportion to the number of Syrian refugees settling in those regions. In turn, regional officials worked with local service providers to fund services where the Syrian refugees most needed them.”<sup>18</sup>

Additionally, regional “officials analyzed information on where Syrian refugees had settled locally, identified gaps in settlement services, and assessed the capacity of service providers.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in “April 2016, the Department identified 10 areas of the Settlement Program that needed more funds to meet the Syrian refugees’ needs.”<sup>20</sup>

The “Department responded by increasing funds for settlement services for Syrian refugees by \$116 million, from \$141 million over four years to \$257 million over five years.”<sup>21</sup> This increase was necessary “because the refugees who arrived under the Syrian refugee initiative needed more settlement services than expected. The Department had originally based its estimates of the costs of the initiative on past trends in providing services to refugees. However, previous refugees had generally required fewer services than did those arriving under the Syrian refugee initiative.”<sup>22</sup>

However, the OAG found that “some of the funding for maintaining services that were put in place for Syrian refugees in 2016 was delayed, resulting in cuts to some settlement services.”<sup>23</sup> The Department’s “\$116 million increase to the budget for settlement services for Syrian refugees included \$18.5 million to expand services in the last quarter of the 2016–17 fiscal year. These services included language training, child-care assistance, transportation, and mental health services. The Department noted in

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17 Ibid, 1610.

18 OAG, [Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#), Report 3 of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 3.42.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., para 3.43.

21 Ibid., para. 3.44.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., para. 3.45.

August 2016 that to maintain these additional services, it would need to give the service providers who offered them another \$51 million in the 2017–18 fiscal year.”<sup>24</sup>

Even though the Department “received approval in November 2016 to allocate the additional \$51 million in the 2017–18 fiscal year, it did not include these funds in the new contribution agreements that took effect on 1 April 2017. The Department did not start to amend the contribution agreements to include the additional \$51 million in services until June 2017, three months into the fiscal year.”<sup>25</sup> Of the 113 service providers, 16 “were not prepared—or were unable—to risk not receiving additional funding. The Department’s delay therefore resulted in cuts to some settlement services for at least three months.”<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the decision of these 16 service providers, Nicholas Swales, of the OAG, said that the “risk to them was whether they were going to get the supplemental funding later on, when the agreements started to be renegotiated. That was the risk they were all facing by front-loading, and some said they were not prepared to accept that risk.”<sup>27</sup>

As a result, the OAG made the following recommendation:

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada should improve its planning and approval processes to ensure the timely transfer of funding to service providers in order to meet urgent programming needs resulting from such events as the Syrian refugee initiative.<sup>28</sup>

The Department responded that it “intends to review where it can make further improvements to its planning and approval processes, particularly for urgent and unexpected programming needs such as the Syrian refugee initiative ... This review will include business processes established by the Department to effectively manage grants and contributions.”<sup>29</sup> According to its Detailed Action Plan, the Department completed this review in December 2017. It also intends to update Chapter 2 (Planning) in its

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24 Ibid., para. 3.46.

25 Ibid., para. 3.47.

26 Ibid., para. 3.48.

27 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2018, [Meeting No. 87](#), 1605.

28 OAG, [Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#), Report 3 of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 3.49.

29 Ibid.



Grants and Contributions Manual by July 2018 to ensure “timely ... disbursement of funds to service provider organizations.”<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

**RECOMMENDATION 1 – On the timely delivery of funds to service providers**

**That, by 31 July 2018, *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts the updated Chapter 2 (Planning) of its Grants and Contributions Manual.**

**B. Managing information for decision making**

The OAG found that the Department “did not have accurate or timely information to manage wait-lists for language training. As a result, the Department could not closely monitor where demand exceeded supply, and it was less able to make timely decisions on where to spend money most effectively.”<sup>31</sup>

According to the OAG, the Department “had information showing that some Settlement Program clients had to wait for language training.” However, “the Department did not know how long people waited for those services across the country. The addition of many Syrian refugees who also needed language training meant that the Department needed better information to manage wait-lists for language training services.”<sup>32</sup>

The OAG found that, in 2010, “the federal government and the Province of Ontario had co-funded a system that gave the Department, the Province, and service providers real-time information on language training services. This information included how many seats were available in classes and which service providers had wait-lists. When the Syrian refugees started to arrive in 2015, the Department used its information about Ontario language training providers to allocate funds to them according to the demand in their areas. The system also allowed the service provider network in Ontario to easily identify available classes for refugees across the network.”<sup>33</sup>

Yet the Department had “not implemented a similar approach in other provinces before Syrian refugees started to arrive. [The OAG] found that the Department did not ask

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30 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 1.

31 Ibid., para. 3.52.

32 Ibid., para. 3.57.

33 Ibid., para. 3.58.

language trainers outside Ontario to report on clients waiting for language classes. Therefore, the Department did not know how many people were on wait-lists across the country when Syrian refugees started to register for language training.”<sup>34</sup>

According to the OAG, in 2016 the Department had made changes to its iCARE system to better understand the wait-lists across the country. The OAG found that “the information about wait-lists in iCARE was not reliable. The system contained duplicate entries, errors in the data entered by service providers, and incorrect information about how long clients were on wait-lists. Therefore, the Department did not have accurate information about how long Syrian refugees had to wait for urgently needed language training.”<sup>35</sup>

As a result, the OAG made the following recommendation:

To more efficiently manage and meet the demand for language training, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada should improve its management of wait-lists in consultation with service providers.<sup>36</sup>

In response to this recommendation, the Department noted that it had “recently created the Settlement and Integration Sector to provide a single point of accountability for the strategic vision and oversight of the Department’s settlement and integration policy, programs, and operations. This will also allow for a more focused and integrated approach and will help support our commitment to ensuring that newcomers to Canada receive timely, high-quality Department-funded settlement services.”<sup>37</sup>

Further, “in collaboration with provinces and territories, the Department is currently advancing a Pan-Canadian Language Strategy to improve the coordination of English as a second language (ESL) and French as a second language (FSL) programming for adult immigrants and refugees in Canada (outside of Quebec). The strategy, which was approved by senior federal and provincial officials in May 2017, is now being implemented, with enhancements anticipated by March 2019 in the areas of employment-related language training, ESL and FSL literacy, and e-learning.”<sup>38</sup>

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34 Ibid., para. 3.59.

35 Ibid., para. 3.60.

36 Ibid., para. 3.62.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.



In its action plan, the Department commits to preparing a final paper on the feasibility of enhancing the waitlist module in its iCARE system and, should these enhancements not be feasible, the paper will identify other options.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

**RECOMMENDATION 2 – On the information available on language training waitlists**

**That, by 31 July 2018, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts a report detailing the progress and enhancements to be made to its iCARE system and other possible options to better manage the information available on language training waitlists for refugees, including a timeline for making these enhancements.**

The OAG also found that the Department “did not establish service expectations in most of its contribution agreements with service providers. As a result, the Department was less able to ensure the quality and consistency of services provided to Syrian refugees and other clients.”<sup>40</sup> For example, “in the November 2015 to March 2017 contribution agreements, the Department specified service expectations for only 47 percent of language assessments and 57 percent of language training services.”<sup>41</sup> In contrast, “the Department’s April 2017 to March 2020 contribution agreements were much better— 93 percent of the agreements contained service expectations for both language assessments and language training.”<sup>42</sup>

However, “the Department did not specify service expectations for either needs assessments or employment services in any of the contribution agreements from November 2015 to March 2017, or in those from April 2017 to March 2020.”<sup>43</sup>

As a result, the OAG made the following recommendation:

To ensure that the quality of settlement services across Canada is consistent, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada should include clear service expectations in contribution agreements for services delivered by settlement service providers.<sup>44</sup>

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39 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), p. 2.

40 OAG, [Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#), Report 3 of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 3.63.

41 Ibid., para. 3.69.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., para. 3.70.

44 Ibid., para. 3.71.



In response to this recommendation, IRCC said it had “already set clear service expectations in almost all April 2017 to March 2020 contribution agreements for language training and assessment services.”<sup>45</sup> Further, in its action plan, the Department said it would set out, by 31 May 2018, final requirements for information and orientation and needs assessment and referral services, and, by 30 November 2018, final requirements for support services and employment-related services.<sup>46</sup>

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

### **RECOMMENDATION 3 – On service expectations**

**That *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts two reports on the requirements for (1) information and orientation services providers, as well as needs assessment and referral services providers, by 31 May 2018; and (2) support services and employment-related services providers by 30 November 2018.**

### **C. Measuring outcomes**

According to the OAG, although the Department “had developed a strategy for measuring the integration of Syrian refugees into Canada, it did not collect information from the provinces for some important indicators, such as access to health care providers and school attendance.”<sup>47</sup>

The OAG found that the Department “had created the Outcomes Monitoring Framework to measure and report the results of the Syrian refugee initiative.” The framework had “three methods:

- (1) a performance measurement strategy to track the integration of Syrian refugees;
- (2) an evaluation to be completed in 2016 to assess short-term outcomes of the Syrian refugee population, and
- (3) support for academic research on the Syrian refugee population.”<sup>48</sup>

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45 Ibid.

46 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, [Detailed Action Plan](#), pp. 4–5.

47 OAG, [Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#), Report 3 of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 3.72.

48 Ibid., para. 3.79.



The performance management strategy had 36 indicators and was divided into three periods. Each period had specific indicators. The Department measured 2 out of the 3 indicators for Period 1 (November 2015 to March 2016), 7 out of the 16 indicators for Period 2 (July 2016 to July 2017) and 6 out of the 17 indicators for Period 3 (January 2017 onward). For the last period, some data was simply not available.<sup>49</sup>

According to the OAG, for the second method in the Outcomes Monitoring Framework, “the Department published a report of its evaluation on its website in April 2017 ... Some of the report’s findings illustrated that the settlement of the Syrian refugees was challenging. For example, 55 percent of the government-assisted Syrian refugees faced a language barrier. However, the report concluded that Syrian refugees were integrating at approximately the same rate as other refugees.”<sup>50</sup>

The third method was not examined because the academic research was ongoing.<sup>51</sup>

As a result, the OAG made the following recommendation:

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada should update and implement its performance measurement strategy for the Syrian refugee initiative to ensure that the Department can fully and consistently monitor the integration of Syrian refugees into Canada.<sup>52</sup>

In response to this recommendation, IRCC said it “will update its Outcomes Monitoring Framework, including its performance measurement strategy, by January 2018.”<sup>53</sup>

Appearing before the Committee, Deputy Minister Marta Morgan said that the Department had “updated [its] outcomes monitoring framework and [its] performance information profile for the Syrian refugee initiative.” The Department will be working with the framework and will continue “to improve it as [it goes] forward.”<sup>54</sup>

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49 Ibid., paras. 3.82-3.87.

50 Ibid., para. 3.89.

51 Ibid., para. 3.90.

52 Ibid., para. 3.91.

53 Ibid.

54 House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts, *Evidence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, 13 February 2018, [Meeting No. 87](#), 1715.

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

**RECOMMENDATION 4 – On the outcomes monitoring framework and the performance information profile for the Syrian refugee initiative**

**That, by 30 April 2018, *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* present to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts a report detailing its outcomes monitoring framework and its performance information profile for the Syrian refugee initiative.**

## CONCLUSION

The Committee concluded that “most Syrian refugees received needs assessments, language assessments, and language training during their first year in Canada.” Further, Syrian refugees “received settlement services at a higher rate than other refugees who arrived in Canada during the same period.”<sup>55</sup>

However, an improvement in provincial data collection and by fully implementing its performance management strategy, IRCC will be better able to fully and consistently monitor the integration of Syrian refugees into Canada.

The Committee made four recommendations to IRCC so that the settlement services for Syrian refugees are better managed, especially with respect to managing information on language training waiting lists and performance indicators.

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55 OAG, [Settlement Services for Syrian Refugees—Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#), Report 3 of the 2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada, para. 3.17.



## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND ASSOCIATED DEADLINES

Table 1 – Summary of Recommended Actions and Associated Deadlines

Recommendation	Recommended Action	Deadline
Recommendation 1	<i>Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada</i> must present to the Committee the updated Chapter 2 (Planning) of its Grants and Contributions Manual.	31 July 2018
Recommendation 2	IRCC must present to the Committee a report detailing the progress and enhancements to be made to its iCARE system and other possible options to better manage the information available on language training waitlists for refugees, including a timeline for making these enhancements.	31 July 2018
Recommendation 3	IRCC must present to the Committee two reports on the requirements for (1) information and orientation services providers and needs assessment and referral services providers; and (2) support services and employment-related services.	1) 31 May 2018; 2) 30 November 2018
Recommendation 4	IRCC must present to the Committee a report showing its outcomes monitoring framework and its performance information profile for the Syrian refugee initiative.	30 April 2018

## APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

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<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Department of Citizenship and Immigration</b>	2018/02/13	87
Marta Morgan, Deputy Minister		
David Manicom, Assistant Deputy Minister, Settlement and Integration		
Ümit Kiziltan, Chair, Director General, Research and Evaluation		
<b>Office of the Auditor General</b>		
Nancy Cheng, Assistant Auditor General		



## 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. 87 and 89](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Kevin Sorenson  
Chair

