



SAMUEL CENTRE  
FOR SOCIAL  
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**“Two Blocks Away”**  
The Unique Strengths and Weaknesses of Refugee  
Integration in Second Tier Canadian Cities

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Canada, the majority of refugees resettle in three main cities: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Nonetheless, smaller, secondary cities play an integral role in the overall landscape of refugee resettlement. As there is a high concentration of refugees resettling in these three large cities, little research has been done on the integration of refugees into secondary cities. This report strives to help fill that gap in research by providing insight into the strengths and weaknesses of refugee integration in second tier cities in Canada. To analyze integration, two cities were focused on: London, Ontario and Winnipeg, Manitoba. By pulling from existing literature and firsthand data, this report has identified strengths and weaknesses of refugee integration in multiple categories and compiled recommendations to inform positive change in the identified areas of weakness. The key strengths that were identified include ease in accessing services, ease in covering basic needs, and ease in creating a broad social network. The key weaknesses of refugee integration in second tier cities that were identified include a lack of translation services, a lack services designed for refugees, and discrimination. To address the weaknesses, this report offers the following recommendations to inform positive change in second tier cities across Canada:

- Increase access to interpretation services
- Increase social inclusion and community acceptance of refugees
- Identify/provide specific services for refugees

To put this research into action, a cross-Canada storytelling initiative, called The Postcard Project, was created. Overall, the research and the outreach project aim to create a more positive integration experience and a more welcoming environment for refugees resettling in Canada.

## TERMINOLOGY

- The term **'refugee'** is used to describe anyone that has held refugee status in Canada. This includes those who arrived in Canada as resettled refugees as well as those who claim asylum upon arriving in Canada and are granted refugee status. Those who have since received a new status (e.g. Canadian Citizen, Permanent Resident) are still included in the study and are referred to as refugees.
- **'Second tier cities'** is used to describe cities with a population of over 100,000 and less than 1,000,000.<sup>1</sup>
- In this report, the term **'newcomer'** is used to describe all immigrants, including economic immigrants, refugees, refugee claimants or those that come as immigrants for humanitarian reasons.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey Krahn, Tracey M. Derwing, and Baha Abu-Laban, "The Retention of Newcomers in Second- and Third-Tier Canadian Cities," *International Migration Review* 39, no. 4 (2005): 8. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2005.tb00292.x>.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, "Classification of Admission Category of Immigrant," Classification of Admission Category of Immigrant (Statistics Canada, July 3, 2019), <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=323293>.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1976, Canada recognized refugees as a distinct class of immigrants with the Immigration Act.<sup>3</sup> This came after some 190 years of refugees arriving in Canada.<sup>4</sup> Since then, Canada has welcomed thousands of refugees to cities across the country. Refugees have settled coast to coast, but the distribution of refugees across Canada has not been uniform. In the past five years, we have seen around 25,000 - 30,000 refugees coming to Canada annually with about 40% of them settling in either Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver.<sup>5</sup> As these three cities receive the most refugees, researchers and policy makers have often paid more attention to them. Thus, there has been a dearth in research about refugee experiences in smaller cities across the country. Smaller, or 'second tier', cities in Canada play a key role in the integration of refugees into Canadian society as they receive thousands of refugees every year.<sup>6</sup> These cities carry their own unique benefits and detriments for the refugees that settle in them. The objective of this report is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of refugee integration in second tier cities in Canada. This study was also designed to provide recommendations to inform actions that would create change in the identified areas of weakness. The research questions that guide the findings are:

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<sup>3</sup> Lindsay Van Dyk, "Canadian Immigration Acts and Legislation" *Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21*, accessed July 6, 2020, <https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-immigration-acts-and-legislation>.

<sup>4</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Canada: A History of Refuge", last modified January 16, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/canada-role/timeline.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Harry H Hiller, "Gateway Cities and Arriviste Cities: Alberta's Recent Urban Growth in Canadian Context," *Prairie Forum* 31, no. 1 (2007): 49. <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~hiller/pdfs/Prairie%20Forum.pdf>.; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Admissions of Resettled Refugees by Province/Territory and Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of Intended Destination and Immigration Category," accessed July 10, 2020, <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/4a1b260a-7ac4-4985-80a0-603bfe4aec11>.

<sup>6</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Admissions of Resettled Refugees."

1. What are the unique benefits that refugees receive when integrating into second tier cities?
2. What are the unique challenges that refugees face when integrating into second tier cities?
3. What would enable positive change for the areas in which there are challenges?

This report focuses on data retrieved from two cities, Winnipeg, Manitoba and London, Ontario to identify the overall strengths and weaknesses of the integration of refugees in second tier cities. These cities were thoughtfully chosen, taking into account multiple factors, including their status as second tier cities, the lack of existing research and literature on refugees' integration experience in these cities, and their respective populations. Winnipeg presents on the larger side of second tier cities with a population of 705,244 and 10,070 refugees resettled in the last five years.<sup>7</sup> The city of London represents a smaller second tier city with an overall population of 494,069 and 4,750 refugees resettled in the past five years.<sup>8</sup> Both these cities present population data that is similar to other cities across Canada. This allows for the findings of this report to be potentially applicable to other second tier cities with similar populations and sizable refugee populations such as Halifax, Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo, Edmonton and more. The report will attempt to explain any differences in governmental programming in each city and then proceed to analyze the benefits and challenges of integration in

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<sup>7</sup> City of Winnipeg, "Census Information," last modified December 6, 2019, <https://winnipeg.ca/census/2016/>; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Admissions of Resettled Refugees"

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada, "Census Metropolitan Area of London," Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census, last modified July 18, 2019, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CMA&GC=555&TOPIC=7>; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Admissions of Resettled Refugees."

second tier cities using an integration framework. It will conclude with recommendations to inform positive change within refugee integration in second tier cities.

## METHODOLOGY

When refugees resettle in Canada, they begin the unofficial process of integration. Integration is a broad concept with multiple definitions, but one definition that aligns well with this research is that integration happens when a refugee has the ability to participate in all major components of society without losing their individual identity.<sup>9</sup> In this report, the integration of refugees is analyzed using an iteration of an established framework by Ager and Strang to identify thematic areas within the data, which is then used to inform the strengths, weaknesses and recommendations.<sup>10</sup>

The areas that are used to evaluate the findings in this study can be referred to as: Basic Needs, Social Connections and Facilitators. Basic Needs refers to four foundational integration categories of employment, housing, education, and health.<sup>11</sup> Social Connections refers to both refugees' social connections and the connectivity of the community and its organizations.<sup>12</sup> The third criteria of the framework addresses Facilitators, which refers to factors that may be barriers to integration, including language and culture.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Integration: A Two Way Process" (Dublin, Ireland: Department of Justice, Equity and Law Reform, 2001): 9. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/?action=media.download&uuid=2A7D3EAF-9701-AB1A-B2070276212EABA5>.

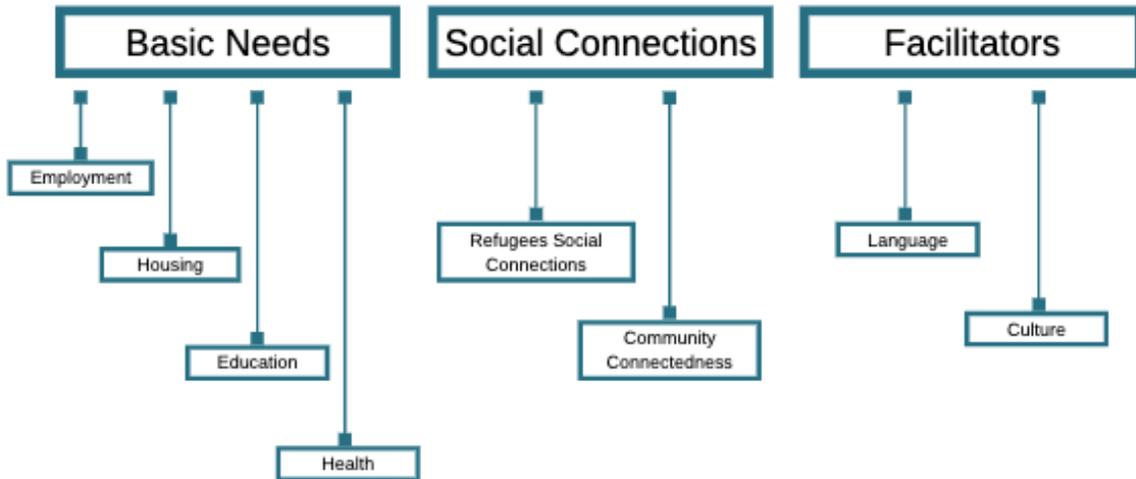
<sup>10</sup> A. Ager and A. Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 166-191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Figure 1: Analysis of integration framework diagram.



Findings are based on both a scoping literature review on refugee integration in Canadian cities and first-hand testimony. 14 people participated in the surveys and interviews that were conducted including researchers, settlement services providers, refugee sponsors and refugees with lived experience in both Winnipeg and London. Although participation may have been hindered due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic during the time of the research, valuable insight was still able to be drawn from the given testimonies.

## BACKGROUND

The first documented arrival of refugees in Canada occurred in the late 1700's and early 1800's, when Quakers and Mennonites fled to Canada in fear of persecution. Followed not long after were American slaves, many of whom fled America through the Underground Railroad.<sup>14</sup> Since then, Canada has received hundreds of thousands of

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<sup>14</sup> History.com Editors, "Underground Railroad," *History.com*, last modified October 29, 2009, <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/underground-railroad>.

refugees every year and now has the ambitious target of resettling 154,600 refugees between 2020 and 2022.<sup>15</sup> Although a global leader in refugee resettlement, the supply of resettlement spots in Canada does not match the number of refugees that desperately need to be resettled, which the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) now estimates is at 1.4 million people globally.<sup>16</sup>

Those fearing persecution have two main ways of receiving protection in Canada: through the Refugee & Humanitarian Resettlement Program (RHRP) or the In-Canada Asylum Program (ICAP).<sup>17</sup> The RHRP is designed for refugees with a status that is recognized by the UNHCR; those that come through this program arrive in Canada with permanent residence status. The ICAP is aimed at those who begin the process of asylum from the border or from within Canada.<sup>18</sup> When arrival occurs through the ICAP program, the Refugee Protection Division and the IRCC review the case to make a decision on the application for asylum. If they deem that the migrant fits the description of a refugee as deemed in the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, they will issue the migrant refugee status.<sup>19</sup>

Those who have arrived in Canada, regardless of status, are eligible to receive certain government funded services to help them become established within the country. The responsibility of resettlement and integration falls on provincial and municipal governments, who work closely with the Canadian government and

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<sup>15</sup> Hugh O'Doherty, "Canada Immigration Levels Plan: 2020-2022," *Moving2Canada*, last modified March 13, 2020, <https://moving2canada.com/canada-immigration-levels-plan-2020-2022/>.

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR, "Global Trends in Forced Displacement 2019" (Denmark, Germany: UNHCR, 2020), 51. <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2019/>.

<sup>17</sup> Spanish Commission for Refugees, "An Overview of the Canadian Asylum System" (Madrid, Spain: CEAR, 2018): 11. [https://www.cear.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CANADA-REPORT\\_-CEAR.pdf](https://www.cear.es/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CANADA-REPORT_-CEAR.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Spanish Commission for Refugees, "An Overview of the Canadian Asylum System", 21.

settlement organizations to provide basic needs and other settlement services.<sup>20</sup>

Although the government provides some services, much of the direct support received by refugees in their cities comes from settlement service organizations that assist refugees in finding adequate housing, learning a new language, making social connections, and more. These services are often funded by the IRCC and differ in their offerings from city to city.<sup>21</sup>

Taking into consideration the route of arrival and access to services, it is important to recognize that the experiences of refugees settling in Canada is not homogenous. Experiences differ by the city refugees settle in, their route of arrival, their educational status, their access to community services and more. While acknowledging that the experiences of refugees differs vastly, this report attempts to provide an overarching analysis of the integration of refugees within second tier cities regardless of these differences.

### ***City of London***

London is a city located in southwestern Ontario that has a population of around 494,069.<sup>22</sup> The city welcomed 4,750 refugees in the past five years, including the approximately 2,400 Syrian refugees that were resettled due to the Syrian refugee crisis.<sup>23</sup> London prides itself on providing smaller community living for newcomers,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>21</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "How Canada's Refugee System Works," last modified November 27, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/canada-role.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Statistics Canada, "Census Metropolitan Area of London."

<sup>23</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Admissions of Resettled Refugees"; Jennifer Beiman, "Region's Syrians - 2,400 and Counting - Settling into New Lives," The London Free Press, last modified March 19, 2018, <https://lfpres.com/news/local-news/regions-syrians-2400-and-counting-settling-into-new-lives>.

although the city does not have a long history of receiving refugees. The city of London and the city of Winnipeg were chosen based on two quantitative characteristics: population and refugees resettled in the past five years. Considering these two characteristics, there are two cities with statistically comparable data to London for which this research would also be relevant -- Halifax and Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo. That being said, this report is qualitative in nature and the identified problem areas and recommendations are broad in their scope, meaning that certain research outcomes could be of value to other cities with a wider population variance as well. In particular, cities with slightly smaller populations but similar numbers of refugees like Windsor, Regina, Saskatoon and Sherbrooke are of interest.

As London does not have a long history of welcoming refugees, they have a limited number of service organizations that serve the refugee community. The city of London works together with different partner organizations, stakeholders and others to settle newcomers. The city co-chairs a partnership organization called The London and Middlesex Immigration Partnership (LMLIP), funded by the IRCC.<sup>24</sup> The LMLIP brings together local organizations that serve newcomers and collaboratively creates strategies for integration. These agencies include Centre Communautaire Régional de London, Cross Cultural Learner Centre, Collège Boréal, LUSO Community Services, South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, and YMCA of Western Ontario.<sup>25</sup> Many of these organizations have contributed their insights to this report. The LMLIP released a 2018-2022 newcomer strategy which includes immigrants, refugees, and

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<sup>24</sup> City of London, "City of London Newcomer Strategy" (London, Ontario: 2018), 28.  
[https://www.london.ca/About-London/Documents/NewcomerStrategy\\_Final\\_LowRes.pdf](https://www.london.ca/About-London/Documents/NewcomerStrategy_Final_LowRes.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

refugee claimants. There is limited research exclusively about refugee integration in London.<sup>26</sup> Areas of concern highlighted by the LMLIP in their strategy include lack of data on newcomers, difficulty finding meaningful work, inadequate program adaptation for specific needs, and more.<sup>27</sup>

### ***City of Winnipeg***

The city of Winnipeg is the largest city in Manitoba, located in the southern region of the province at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. It is larger than the city of London with a population of 705,244 and has resettled 10,070 refugees in the past five years including over 1,800 Syrian refugees.<sup>28</sup> Its population and volume of refugees make it comparable to other larger second tier Canadian cities. Statistically, it is comparable to Edmonton, but the broader lessons learned about refugee integration in Winnipeg are applicable to Ottawa.

As a city that has a long history of welcoming refugees and a large number of resettled refugees, Winnipeg has a much more extensive network of organizations that serves the refugee community than London. These organizations are united through an umbrella organization called the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO), funded by the IRCC, which collaboratively works to integrate newcomers into Winnipeg and broader Manitoba.<sup>29</sup> MANSO has over 30 member

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> City of Winnipeg, "Census Information,"; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Admissions of Resettled Refugees.,"; Ian Froese, "Finding Refuge in Canadian Friends," CBCnews (CBC/Radio Canada, February 24, 2019), <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/finding-refuge-in-canadian-friends-syrian-refugees>.

<sup>29</sup> MANSO, "Manitoba Association of Newcomer Servicing Organizations Annual Report" (Winnipeg, Manitoba: City of Manitoba, 2020), 2. [https://mansomanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MANSO-AnnualReport\\_19-20-English-FINAL-screen.pdf](https://mansomanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MANSO-AnnualReport_19-20-English-FINAL-screen.pdf).

organizations, 10 of whom have contributed their input to this report. MANSO releases an annual report every year which outlines some updates from areas of integration across Manitoba.<sup>30</sup>

## ISSUE, EVIDENCE AND KEY FINDINGS: INTEGRATION IN SECOND TIER CITIES

### **Strengths**

#### *Ease in Accessing Services*

The primary benefit for refugees that resettle in second tier cities in Canada is having access to and knowledge of the services that settlement organizations offer. Respondents from both Winnipeg and London found that it was easy for refugees to ‘know where to go’ to get the services that they needed. Caitlin, a master’s student and employee within Winnipeg’s settlement sector stated that,

I think a big benefit is [...] the connectedness of the settlement sector. So, everybody pretty much knows everybody or knows where to go to find something. I think in a place like Toronto or the GTA, I can't even imagine how to navigate that system and I'm sure they have a way of doing it, but within Winnipeg, it is more isolated and self-contained, so they have all of the resources that you need, you know who to go to if you need help with housing or medical stuff.<sup>31</sup>

It can be seen here that the smaller size of the city has a positive impact on refugees’ ability to navigate the network of services offered by service organizations within their communities. This opposes larger cities, in which there are more difficulties for refugees when trying to access settlement services for their needs.<sup>32</sup> This ease in

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Caitlin Thomas. (Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba Program), in interview with author. July 3rd, 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Céline de Richoufftz, “Community-Based Approaches to the Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Montreal” (Montreal, Quebec: Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness, 2018), 34.

accessing the right services can partially be attributed to the connectedness of the settlement sector. Many service workers who participated in this study noticed that knowledge sharing and a strong referral system help create connection between settlement organizations. Caitlin voiced this when she said, “Winnipeg has a great settlement sector, they collaborate quite a bit and if you don't know where to find resources for something, or if you have a question, there are so many people that you can go to and they'll share their knowledge with you.”<sup>33</sup>

Although the connectedness of the settlement sector is a key reason why services are easy to access, many second-tier cities in Canada also have strong Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP). These LIPs operate as a connector between organizations, stakeholders, and government and are designed to support the needs of newcomers. By having strong LIPs, settlement service organizations find it easier to connect with other organizations within second tier cities, allowing for greater knowledge sharing.<sup>34</sup> In addition to having established LIPs, respondents indicated that geographic closeness is a factor that fosters connection within the sector and creates ease for refugees in accessing services as well.

Services are concentrated downtown in the inner city area. The refugees who come here, first of all, everything is accessible to them. The CMWI building is also like a couple of blocks away from all the other agencies providing services to them, as well as all their transitional housing is like, two blocks away from us.

-Humaira Jaleel (CMWI)<sup>35</sup>

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<https://www.socialconnectedness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Community-based-approaches-to-the-integration-of-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-Montreal-1.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> Caitlin Thomas, in interview with author. July 3, 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Neil Bradford and Caroline Andrew, “Local Immigration Partnership Councils: A Promising Canadian Innovation” (Ottawa, Ontario: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010), 3-4.<http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/09/Local-Immigration-Partnership-Councils-A-Promising-Canadian-Innovation1.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Humaira Jaleel. (Canadian Muslim Women’s Institute), in interview with author. June 11, 2020.

## Social Connection

It is well known that social connections within and outside of the refugee community are central to positive refugee integration experiences and are important in refugee's access to information, well-being, safety, confidence and language skills.<sup>36</sup>

I think that like in any other small communities, community connections are very easy, especially in Winnipeg. We find that refugees and immigrants who come to Winnipeg connect easily with the rest of the community.

-Refugee from Winnipeg<sup>37</sup>

Participants in this study found that a unique benefit for refugees who settle in second tier cities is an ease in creating a broad network of social connections. As described by Hanley et al., social networks generally include family, peers, acquaintances, and professional contacts both within and outside of the refugee community.<sup>38</sup> Humaira, a settlement service worker, speaks to creating a broad social network: "The community is small, so people get to network very quickly. So, for a refugee family that arrives, it doesn't take them a very long time to find their own community to integrate in. So, they find others very quickly...That's an added benefit for a smaller city."<sup>39</sup>

Second tier cities offer a unique advantage in creating social connections due to their size. In a study on refugee integration in rural Canadian cities, Haugan accounts that "due to smaller populations and distance from urban areas, small communities

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<sup>36</sup> Stacey Haugen, "We Feel Like We're Home': The Resettlement and Integration of Syrian Refugees in Smaller and Rural Canadian Communities," *Refugee Private Sponsorship in Canada* 35, no. 2 (July 2019): 56. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1064819ar>; A. Strang and A. Ager, "Refugee Integration: Emerging Trends and Remaining Agendas," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 4 (2010): 596-9. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq046>.

<sup>37</sup> Anonymous. (refugee from Winnipeg), in interview with author. June 17, 2020.

<sup>38</sup> Jill Hanley et al., "The Social Networks, Social Support and Social Capital of Syrian Refugees Privately Sponsored to Settle in Montreal: Indications for Employment and Housing During Their Early Experiences of Integration," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 50, no. 2 (2018): 125. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2018.0018>.

<sup>39</sup> Humaira Jaleel, in interview with author. June 11, 2020.

generally have enhanced social capital.”<sup>40</sup> Laura Comiskey, a settlement worker from the Northwest London Resource Centre speaks to the size of second tier cities and social networks:

Just being a smaller place, there's a smaller community of people, there's a great opportunity to have a more extended network... I personally used to live in Toronto for about 10 years. So, I can tell you that even just in the context of getting connected here and navigating things in a smaller space, I think it's just a lot easier. So, as a refugee coming, I do feel that the community, you know, the close-knit community really, really helps.<sup>41</sup>

Another study from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, notes that second tier cities have a unique position as they have enough ethnocultural diversity that refugees can find communities that they relate to, but conversely, their limited ethnocultural diversity in comparison to larger cities allows for the opportunity for refugees to connect with those that they don't necessarily share common ground with.<sup>42</sup> Respondents from London also expressed this when they noted that the refugee community in the city was well connected and that refugees continue to come to London because of the foundation of people from similar backgrounds that reside there.<sup>43</sup> That being said, it was also seen that refugees in London found relative ease in creating relationships with people they might not share as much in common with. One respondent from London noted that refugees were able to build relationships with those

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<sup>40</sup> Haugen, “‘We Feel Like We’re Home’, 55.; Terry L. Besser and Nancy J. Miller, “Latino/A Immigration, Social Capital, and Business Civic Engagement in Rural Prairie Towns,” *Social Capital at the Community Level*, 2015, 174. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315774978-10>.

<sup>41</sup> Laura Comiskey. (North West London Resource Centre), in interview with author. June 26th, 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Rowan El-Bialy and Shree Mulay, “Two Sides of the Same Coin: Factors That Support and Challenge the Well Being of Refugees Resettled in a Small Urban Center,” *Health & Place* 35 (June 9, 2015): 57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2015.06.009>.

<sup>43</sup> Violette Khammad. (researcher in London), in interview with author. July 22, 2020.; Laura Comiskey, in interview with author. June 26, 2020.

from the community in informal settings like walking children to school or at a place of work.<sup>44</sup>

Along with their unique size, second tier cities offer easy access to facilitators that create social connections for refugees. These facilitators include locations like settlement organizations, schools, religious organizations and more. As there is ease in accessing settlement organizations, respondents from this study and as well as respondents from a study by El-Bilal & Mulay found that organizations can offer a ground that facilitates social connections not only through their physical space but also through programming and referrals.<sup>45</sup> In addition, refugees in second tier cities generally have access to facilitators of social connections like religious services and ethnocultural organizations. This opposes more rural cities, in which refugees may have a harder time creating a strong social network due to a lack of faith and cultural services.<sup>46</sup> This is seen in a paper by Haugen, who noted that some refugees living in rural locations have to drive a distance to visit a mosque or obtain ethnic food or clothing.<sup>47</sup> It is important to note here that although having a broad network of social connections is a benefit for refugees who settle in second tier cities, experiences of refugees are not homogeneous and barriers still exist in forming social connections. This study saw that old age, lower ability to speak English, low economic status and discrimination towards refugees were all barriers in creating these robust social networks in second tier cities.

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<sup>44</sup> Violette Khammad, in interview with author. July 22, 2020.

<sup>45</sup> El-Bialy, "Two Sides of the Same Coin", 52-59.

<sup>46</sup> Stacey Haugen, "'We Feel Like We're Home', 58.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

## *Meeting Basic Needs*

Along with ease in accessing services and building social connections, refugees also benefit from an ease in meeting their basic needs, particularly within the areas of housing and employment. Respondents from this study and existing literature found that there was more ease in finding secure housing in second tier cities as opposed to larger metropolitan areas. This can partially be explained by the lower cost of housing within smaller cities. Generally, in Canada, the smaller the city, the less expensive the cost of housing.<sup>48</sup>

The cost of living is also a huge advantage. I feel that a city like Winnipeg can be much more manageable for you to have more access to things in life compared to the cost of living in Toronto, or Vancouver and how challenging that can be.

-Thandiwe (N.E.E.D.S)<sup>49</sup>

Lower costs make housing more accessible to refugees, who often struggle with low levels of income.<sup>50</sup> We can even see, in a study by Rose, that there are instances of refugees moving from Toronto to mid-size or smaller cities in Ontario as a coping strategy to reduce the cost of housing in the first few months after arrival.<sup>51</sup> The low cost of living in second tier cities opposes the high cost of living in most first tier cities as we can see in figure two.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Canadian Real Estate Association, "Home Price Index", accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.crea.ca/housing-market-stats/mls-home-price-index/hpi-tool/>.

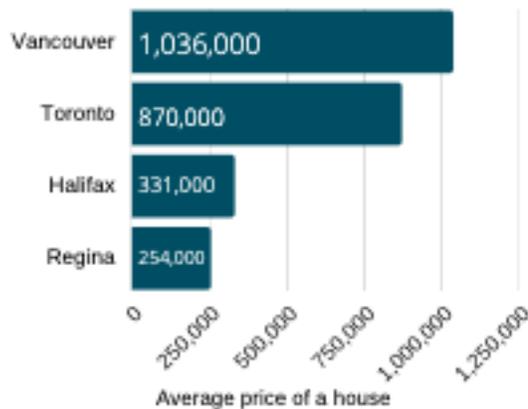
<sup>49</sup> Thandiwe Ncube. (Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services), in interview with author. July 24, 2020.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas S. Carter, John Osborne, and Chesya Polevychok, "The Role of Housing and Neighbourhood in the Re-Settlement Process: A Case Study of Refugee Households in Winnipeg," *The Canadian Geographer* 53, no. 3 (August 2009): 313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562940903150097>.

<sup>51</sup> Damaris Rose, "Creating a Home in Canada: Refugee Housing Challenges and Potential Policy Solutions Report by the Migration Policy Institute" (Washington, DC: Transatlantic Council on Migration, 2019), 16.

<sup>52</sup> Canadian Real Estate Association, "Home Price Index."

Figure 2: Average Home Prices in Canadian Cities March 2020<sup>53</sup>



Along with increased difficulty of finding secure and affordable housing, the high cost of living in larger cities places refugees with low incomes at a risk of homelessness. One study in Vancouver confirms this: “Alarming, almost one in five respondents in Vancouver allocates over 75% of monthly household income on housing, leaving them at significant risk of absolute homelessness.”<sup>54</sup>

In second tier cities, refugees may find ease in securing housing because of the ease in accessing support from settlement organizations. Sherrell notes that newly arrived refugees and refugee claimants in Winnipeg have increased access to temporary accommodations, financial assistance and orientation services immediately upon arrival in comparison to larger cities.<sup>55</sup> She says that, “Provision of these initial services provides a stable base from which to look for housing and connect with existing co-ethnic communities. In contrast, [refugees] in Vancouver experience a gap between arrival and ability to access services such that recently arrived [refugees] are left with no

<sup>53</sup> “Canadian House Prices,” Living in Canada, 2020, <https://www.livingin-canada.com/house-prices-canada.html>.; Canadian Real Estate Association, “Home Price Index.”

<sup>54</sup> Kathy Sherrell, “Legal Status, Place, or Something Else? The Housing Experiences of Refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver” (Vancouver, BC: Simon Fraser University, 2011), 53.

<sup>55</sup> Sherrell, “Legal Status, Place or Something Else?”, 54.

immediate financial and/or housing assistance.”<sup>56</sup> A respondent from this study also noticed the benefit of the support of settlement services in finding housing, stating, “Within Winnipeg, it really always comes back to who you know, and who you can connect with. With housing, there's a number of different housing organizations or places that will help support those looking for that and so it does help to have somebody advocating on your behalf whether that's like a sponsor or a settlement counselor.”<sup>57</sup> Although refugees in second tier cities may find ease in securing housing, this study also recognizes that there are still certain difficulties with respect to housing in second tier cities, including waitlists for subsidized housing, discrimination and housing access for larger families.

Along with ease in securing housing, respondents found that ease in finding initial employment was another benefit for refugees who settle in second tier cities. One longitudinal study in Winnipeg saw that refugees' statuses of employment positively increased over the three-year span of the study.<sup>58</sup> A possible reason for ease in finding initial employment is a lack of competition within the labour market. We can see that lower unemployment and less competition for jobs is a trend among Canada's second tier cities.<sup>59</sup> Oftentimes, cities may even express a need for newcomers to participate in the labour market due to a shortage of workers. Hodan, a resident of Winnipeg with lived experience as a refugee, speaks about competition when she says:

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Caitlin Thomas, in interview with author. July 3, 2020.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas S. Carter and John Osborne, “Housing and Neighbourhood Challenges of Refugee Resettlement in Declining Inner City Neighbourhoods: A Winnipeg Case Study,” *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 7, no. 3 (August 2009): 312-313. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562940903150097>.

<sup>59</sup> Statistics Canada, “Labour Force Characteristics by Census Metropolitan Area, Three-Month Moving Average, Seasonally Adjusted and Unadjusted, Last 5 Months,” last modified September 18, 2019, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410029401>.

I feel it's a right place that you can start your life without domination and high competition...You can understand where you need to start your career and other services to start yourself again. When newcomers come here, they are new people. Basically, their past experiences and education do not serve like before and it's not easy to fix by themselves. Therefore, here in Winnipeg there are many community organisations who help newcomers with settlement and new career development training.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to low competition for jobs and low unemployment, assistance received from the settlement sector along with the ability to create broad social networks contributes to refugees' ease in finding initial employment. Although we see an ease in securing initial employment, it should also be noted that respondents from this research and literature mention difficulties with finding long-term meaningful employment and that unskilled positions with low pay are the norm.<sup>61</sup> Overall, this study and existing literature shows that refugees who resettle in second tier cities can potentially benefit from an ease in securing housing and initial employment.

## **Weaknesses**

### *Interpretation Services*

In second tier cities in Canada, a lack of interpretation services is a common barrier for refugees. Due to the smaller nature of the cities and a limited number of trained professionals, many refugees find it hard to access valuable interpretation services in their language or dialect. Thandiwe speaks to this when she says:

I can think of a lot of specific clients that come from linguistic minority groups where, you know, access to an interpreter in Winnipeg is very, very difficult. And so, because it's a smaller place, if there are refugees who are coming that have a specific dialect -- and we have encountered that challenge -- we don't have the ability, if we don't have a staff in house, to provide that service. We really have to sometimes look in the community to find someone who could provide that support.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Hodan Ali. (Canadian Muslim Women's Institute), in interview with author. June 18, 2020.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas S. Carter, John Osborne, and Chesya Polevychok, "The Role of Housing and Neighbourhood in the Re-Settlement Process: A Case Study of Refugee Households in Winnipeg," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 7, no. 3 (August 2009): 311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562940903150097>.

<sup>62</sup> Thandiwe Ncube, in interview with author. July 24, 2020.

As Thandiwe notes, sometimes service providers have to look to the community for someone that could provide interpretation services when there is not someone trained to interpret a specific language or dialect, which may result in refugees experiencing substandard interpretation. Inadequate or lack of professional interpretation can have many repercussions, including inability to access the services that they need, risk of being misunderstood, facing discrimination, and having limits on their autonomy.<sup>63</sup> Laura Comiskey, a settlement worker and former trainer for interpreters, demonstrates this when she expresses:

But anybody on principle, can put on a tag and say, I am an interpreter and do the work without really having been trained for it. And the problem with that is that there's a lot of filtering of information potentially, or the person will come and change things a bit because maybe they're not familiar with the terminology. And so, they want to go around that term to avoid it, that type of thing. And so, there's a lot of issues in that respect. And that, of course, can be a barrier for immigrants because then that means their process or their path to integration or to receiving services is not as straightforward as you would want it to be. There's a struggle in communication throughout the way. If there was more of a push to have a standardized way of training interpreters and in communication for those immigrants, it would be easier for them.<sup>64</sup>

A secondary effect of a lack of interpretation services is that youth or children often end up acting as interpreters for their families, particularly when communicating in the public sphere.<sup>65</sup> Children acting as interpreters has a wide range of negative effects on both the child and the family as a whole. These are similar to the repercussions faced with inadequate interpretation, but also include family imbalances and stress for

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<sup>63</sup> Liliana Araujo, "A Voice: The Role of Child Interpreters in Their Parents Immigration and Settlement Experiences in Canada" (Toronto, Ontario: Ryerson University, 2007), 29-31. [https://digital.library.ryerson.ca/islandora/object/RULA%3A463/datastream/OBJ/download/A\\_Voice\\_The\\_Role\\_of\\_Child\\_Interpreters\\_in\\_their\\_Parents\\_Immigration\\_and\\_Settlement\\_Experience\\_in\\_Canada.pdf](https://digital.library.ryerson.ca/islandora/object/RULA%3A463/datastream/OBJ/download/A_Voice_The_Role_of_Child_Interpreters_in_their_Parents_Immigration_and_Settlement_Experience_in_Canada.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Laura Comiskey, in interview with author. June 26, 2020.

<sup>65</sup> Araujo, "The Role of Child Interpreters", 1.

the child who may be navigating a complex network of services in a new city on behalf of their family.<sup>66</sup> Until professional interpretation services are more widely available in second tier cities, refugees will continue to face the negative consequences of not being adequately understood.

### *Refugee Specific Services*

In second tier cities, it is common for refugees to be offered services lumped together with other immigrants. We can see this in London, where only one out of the estimated 27 settlement agencies offer services specific to refugees. This one-size fits all approach may not be the most effective way to deliver services because it ignores the unique needs of refugees.<sup>67</sup> When services attempt to uniformly meet the needs of refugees and other immigrants, they are ignoring the major differences in migration processes and the subsequent effect that this has on the migrant.<sup>68</sup> Refugees are those who face involuntary movement when they are forced to leave their home due to war, persecution or other forms of violence. In contrast, other immigrants are those who voluntarily leave their home country. Consequently, studies have found that refugees often face mental health challenges from experiencing high levels of stress and potentially traumatic experiences before, during and after migration has occurred.<sup>69</sup> It is

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 7,8.

<sup>67</sup> Lydia Awuah-Mensah, "Examining the Experiences of Government Assisted Refugee Women with Settlement Services in Kitchener-Waterloo" (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2016), 26. [https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=brantford\\_sice](https://scholars.wlu.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=brantford_sice).

<sup>68</sup> Peter Waxman, "Service Provision and the Needs of Newly Arrived Refugees in Sydney, Australia: A Descriptive Analysis," *International Migration Review* 32, no. 3 (1998): 762. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2547771>.

<sup>69</sup> Awuah-Mensah, "Examining the Experiences of Government Assisted Refugee Women", 54.; Priya Nair, "The Post-Migration Mental Health of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Quebec" (Montreal, Quebec: The Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness, 2019), 4. <https://www.socialconnectedness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/The-Post-Migration-Mental-Health-of-Asylum-Seekers-and-Refugees-in-Quebec.pdf>.

important to emphasize that although all refugees are forced to leave their home, differences in their backgrounds, race, gender, class, lived experiences and culture are also factors that can affect their integration experience in Canada.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, it is necessary for settlement services to provide services that take into account the unique experiences of refugees and design programming that supports and enhances their integration into Canadian society.<sup>71</sup>

This study found that the lack of refugee specific services can be attributed to three main factors: lack of resources, lack of funding and lack of demographic data. As second tier cities generally have a relatively small population of refugees, there is often limited funding and resources available to the resettlement sector.<sup>72</sup> This is one reason why settlement services are limited in their capacity to create refugee specific programming. In addition to a lack of funding and resources, settlement services in second tier cities are also limited by a lack of demographic data. Laura Comiskey notes that this lack of data makes it difficult to create programming that relies on data rather than observation:

What I've seen is that we don't have as much data to support demographics here. So, it's much harder for us. And that's something that's a challenge I have encountered in my new role here, in trying to find information for me to understand the demographics of our area, there is not as much. Larger cities would have every type of information done already, and they can tell who lives where, for how long they've been there. Then for smaller cities like us, we don't have that information. It's very, very difficult to find. So, because of that, we rely more on our observations. We put together programs in our own way we see with our own clients rather than relying on specific data.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Awuah-Mensah, "Examining the Experiences of Government Assisted Refugee Women", 7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 60

<sup>72</sup> Maria Mukhtar et al., "But Many of These Problems Are About Funds...': The Challenges Immigrant Settlement Agencies (ISAS) Encounter in a Suburban Setting in Ontario, Canada," *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 17, no. 2 (January 11, 2015): 397. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-015-0421-5>.

<sup>73</sup> Laura Comiskey, in interview with author. June 26, 2020.

It is imperative that moving forward, second tier cities place an emphasis on increasing their understanding of refugee needs so that they can design and implement programming designed to meet such needs.<sup>74</sup>

### *Discrimination*

Although Canada is recognized internationally as a country with little discrimination and a successful human rights landscape relative to other countries, respondents from this study found that instances of discrimination, racism and other forms of exclusion still affect refugees, especially within second tier cities. Reem, a settlement worker with lived experience as a newcomer says that there are many welcoming locals in her community, but there are some locals who “live in a bubble [who] don't have the awareness of how to deal or accept different people from different backgrounds and cultures.”<sup>75</sup> Literature by Krahn, Derwig & Abu-Laban<sup>76</sup> and Drolet & Moorthi<sup>77</sup> confirms that discrimination is often a challenge faced by refugees who settle in second tier cities in Canada.

Discrimination poses a threat to refugees' integration experiences and “threatens the sustainability of social, economic and political systems, and endangers the full enjoyment of human rights guaranteed to people living in Canada.”<sup>78</sup> In addition, discrimination can result in lowered mental and physical health as well as a decreased

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<sup>74</sup> Awuah-Mensah, “Examining the Experiences of Government Assisted Refugee Women”, 60.

<sup>75</sup> Reem Alghooti. Survey response. August 17, 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Krahn et al. “The Retention of Newcomers,” 16.

<sup>77</sup> Julie Drolet and Gayatri Moorthi, “The Settlement Experiences of Syrian Newcomers in Alberta: Social Connections and Interactions. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 50, no. 2 (2018): 115. [doi:10.1353/ces.2018.0017](https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2018.0017).

<sup>78</sup> Paul Holley and Jack Jedwab, “Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees to Canada: The Role of Municipalities” (Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 2019), 13. <https://en.ccunesco.ca/-/media/Files/Unesco/Resources/2019/08/CIMToolkitNewComers.pdf>.

sense of belonging to communities.<sup>79</sup> Respondents found that the lower concentration of refugees and ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities in second tier cities contributed to refugees experiencing discrimination. Violette, a researcher on refugees in London, speaks to how the lack of diversity within second tier cities can be a barrier for refugees:

When you have a city that's a little bigger, you have more ethnic representation. [...]So, you're not afraid to express your ethnicity, your culture. So, I feel like there's still that stigma that is associated. Although there are Arabic restaurants, there's still that challenge of fully being able to be yourself or be a refugee, because maybe you don't see as many people like yourself working in various positions, whether in the grocery stores or in the mall. It helps when you do see that and I think in a bigger city, that would be a tad easier. So, representation, I think is one [unique challenge].<sup>80</sup>

The lack of diversity may be particular to second tier cities, but unfortunately the issue of discrimination pervades small and large cities alike in Canada, threatening refugees' ability to fully thrive in Canada.

## RECCOMENDATIONS

By analyzing integration through the framework by Ager & Strang, this report identified three strengths and three weaknesses of integrating refugees into second tier cities in Canada. Taking a look at both London and Winnipeg, we can see both cities have made recommendations to better newcomer integration experiences in their most recent newcomer strategies. The city of London proposes fostering awareness of the importance of newcomers, facilitating access to programs and opportunities for newcomers and creating greater engagement with all integration stakeholders to

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<sup>79</sup> Nyla Wofford, Andrew M. Defever, and William J. Chopik, "The Vicarious Effects of Discrimination: How Partner Experiences of Discrimination Affect Individual Health," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 10, no. 1 (December 10, 2017): 9. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/mr54z>; Sara Edge and Bruce Newbold, "Discrimination and the Health of Immigrants and Refugees: Exploring Canada's Evidence Base and Directions for Future Research in Newcomer Receiving Countries," *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 15, no. 1 (May 22, 2012): 144. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-012-9640-4>.

<sup>80</sup> Violette Khammad, in interview with author. July 22, 2020.

achieve a more coordinated approach.<sup>81</sup> The city of Winnipeg, suggests four thematic areas for improvement which include: fostering supportive and welcoming communities, addressing discrimination, providing accessible and equitable services, and creating a representative workforce.<sup>82</sup>

By drawing on existing literature and the first-hand accounts from both London and Winnipeg, the report offers recommendations to address the weaknesses identified in second tier cities in Canada. The recommendations made in this report include:

- Increase access to interpretation services
- Increase social inclusion and community acceptance of refugees
- Identify/provide specific services for refugees

***Access to Interpretation Services***

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Recommendation | Increase access to quality interpretation services for refugees in second tier cities.   |
| Stakeholders   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Settlement Services Organizations</li> <li>● IRCC</li> <li>● Municipalities</li> <li>● Other funders</li> </ul>   |
| Rationale      | As noted above, due to the smaller nature of secondary cities and lack of trained professionals, many refugees in second tier cities struggle to access adequate interpretation services. By providing refugees with access to adequate interpretation services, cities can increase the possibility of refugees receiving the services that they need. Furthermore, this could potentially increase refugees’ autonomy and decrease the need for family members to act as interpreters. Crucial to this recommendation is the distinction that translators are trained to provide equitable interpretation when working with forced migrants. When interpreters are properly trained, not only can they better understand the technicalities of interpreting for forced migrants, but they can also increase information accuracy. This aids in ensuring that there is effective communication between the refugee and the speaker. |

<sup>81</sup> City of London, “City of London Newcomer Strategy”, 43.

<sup>82</sup> City of Winnipeg, “Newcomer Welcome and Inclusion Policy” (Winnipeg, Manitoba: City of Winnipeg, 2019), 2-4. [https://www.winnipeg.ca/cms/projects/newcomer\\_policy/documents/summary\\_report.pdf](https://www.winnipeg.ca/cms/projects/newcomer_policy/documents/summary_report.pdf).

|         |  |
|---------|--|
|         | Lastly, having a trained interpreter that understands a refugee’s language and dialect may increase a refugee’s feeling of empowerment and belonging to the community and ultimately, could positively impact their integration experience. <sup>83</sup>  |
| Methods | The IRCC, funders and municipalities can provide settlement service organizations the finances and resources to facilitate access to professional interpretation services. In terms of increasing the number of interpreters in second tier cities, this report encourages training and hiring local populations and/or resettled refugees from the community for increased contextual understanding when interpreting. While increasing access to equitable interpretation services is a good first step, it is recognized that there may not be an interpreter for every language and dialect within a city. Thus, increasing the distribution of funding to settlement organizations for investments in digital translation services is another way to provide effective communication when traditional translation methods might not be available. By increasing the availability of quality interpretations services, second tier cities can assist refugees in paving the way for a more positive and linguistically inclusive integration experience. |

**Social Inclusion and Community Acceptance**

And while Winnipeg is definitely looking a lot different than how it was many, many years ago, I think that, there's still a lot of challenges, with racism, discrimination, and smaller places, I think sometimes there can be more of a homogeneous type of community. And sometimes there isn't always necessarily an awareness. I think inclusion can look a lot different in a smaller place, compared to a larger, more cosmopolitan city that has so many different people from so many different places...

-Thandiwe Ncube (N.E.E.D.S)<sup>84</sup>

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Recommendation | Collaborative action to decrease discrimination and increase social inclusion and community acceptance of refugees within second tier cities.  |
| Stakeholders   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Settlement service organizations</li> <li>● IRCC</li> <li>● Municipalities</li> <li>● Other Funders</li> <li>● Residents of second tier cities</li> </ul> |

<sup>83</sup> Walid El Ansari et al., “The Role of Advocacy and Interpretation Services in the Delivery of Quality Healthcare to Diverse Minority Communities in London, United Kingdom,” *Health & Social Care in the Community* 17, no. 6 (2009): 640-642. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2009.00867>.

<sup>84</sup> Thandiwe Ncube, in interview with author. July 24, 2020.

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| Rationale | <p>In the quote above, Thandiwe reflects on how refugees continue to experience racism and discrimination within second tier cities in Canada. As discussed earlier, a lack of diversity and representation within second tier cities may be an explanation for the discrimination felt by refugees. There are many consequences for refugees that experience discrimination, like making integration a more difficult experience and potentially poor mental and physical health.</p>  |
| Methods   | <p>Although there is no one-stop solution for addressing discrimination and racism, a good place to start is through awareness, education and programming. Awareness and education are crucial to educate the broader community about refugee experiences, racism, discrimination, inclusion, and diversity. These are key ways to amplify the voices of refugees and promote their inclusion into the community while concurrently engaging residents of the city. Awareness and educational campaigns can offer a way to create a more positive narrative around refugees and can allow refugees to feel more welcomed within their city. We saw this during Canada’s reception of Syrian refugees in 2015. Due to the increased publicity and messages of welcome, citizens were more mobilized to support refugees and integrate them into society.<sup>85</sup> Awareness and education can take many forms. The city of St. Albert took on a digital format with their ‘It Starts With Me’ campaign to dispel myths around refugees and create welcoming messages in 2015.<sup>86</sup> ‘The Postcard Project’, an outreach initiative created in tandem with this report is another example of an awareness and education campaign. This project uses postcards as a way to share stories about forced migration, with the goal of creating a positive narrative around forced migration in Canada.</p> <p>Another way to potentially decrease the discrimination felt by refugees in second tier cities is through programming. Programming can offer the public an opportunity to connect with refugees, learn about other cultures and can promote positive dialogue around refugees and greater awareness of the challenges faced by refugees in second tier cities. The city of Ottawa exemplifies one type of programming with ‘Welcoming Ottawa Week’, a series of events to welcome newcomers to Ottawa whilst also providing the residents of Ottawa an opportunity to connect with newcomers.<sup>87</sup></p> |

<sup>85</sup> Céline de Richoufftz, “Community-Based Approaches to the Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers”, 19.

<sup>86</sup> Holley and Jedwab, “Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees to Canada”, 20.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 21

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|  | Municipalities and community organizations have a strategic position in the community perfect for initiating change through awareness, education, and programming. With collaborative effort, these stakeholders have the ability to elevate the voices of the refugee community and pave the way to true social inclusion for refugees within their communities. |
|--|---|

**Specific Services for Refugees**

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Recommendation | Develop and implement refugee specific programming and services within second tier cities.   |
| Stakeholders   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Refugees</li> <li>● Settlement Service Organizations</li> <li>● IRCC</li> <li>● Other Funders</li> </ul>  |
| Rationale      | As identified earlier, a weakness of second tier cities is that often there is no access to services designed specifically for refugees’ needs. This, in turn, can hinder the successful integration of refugees. It is important that cities recognize that integration is not a one-size fits all approach and therefore should design programming that adapts to suit the specific needs of refugees. <sup>88</sup>   |
| Methods        | Effectively and holistically addressing the needs of a heterogeneous refugee population is not a simple task; however, it can be facilitated by actively engaging with refugees to better understand their needs, ensuring access to centralized data for service providers, and providing adequate funding to the settlement sector. In the creation of new programming for refugee populations, it is critical to include refugees from a wide range of backgrounds when conceptualizing the programming to ensure that the needs identified and suggestions for programming are coming from those within the community, who have greater insight on refugee needs than those without lived experiences. Greater insight on refugee needs can also be provided through the collection and centralization of demographic data on refugee populations in second tier cities in Canada. The substantial lack of data on refugee populations in smaller cities needs to be addressed not only by municipal and provincial stakeholders, but also by the federal government. By having more data available, stakeholders can improve the reliability and quality of programming by relying more on qualified data and less on observation. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that developing |

<sup>88</sup> Kristina Sue Kimura, “Exploring the Gender-Specific Needs of Female Refugees during Resettlement and Integration: A Case Study in Pittsburgh” (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University, 2013), 61. <https://dsc.duq.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1763&context=etd>

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>and administering refugee centred programming takes time, resources and funding. As settlement organizations would most likely be delivering the programming, it is recommended that adequate financial support is distributed by the IRCC and other funders to organizations that are mobilized to implement refugee specific programming. With the participation of stakeholders, the involvement of refugees, the creation and centralization of data, and the distribution of funding, second tier cities can move forward in creating programming that caters to the needs of refugees to enhance their resettlement into society.</p> |
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**IMPACT**

To address the weakness of discrimination towards refugees in second tier cities, The Postcard Project was created in partnership with the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness and the Common Threads program. This is a multimedia storytelling initiative that elevates the voices of those implicated in the process of forced migration and shares their stories across the country. It intends to create a positive narrative around forced migration in Canada by freely distributing postcards to the public that feature stories about forced migration. As mentioned above, the initiative acts as one way to reduce discrimination and develop more positivity around the concept of forced migration to Canada. Till date, the Postcard Project has distributed 500 postcards and reached over 600 people online.

The findings of this report and the outreach initiative were both created with the intention of creating better integration experiences for refugees in Canada. The Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness (SCSC) and Common Threads program should continue with their advocacy, outreach and research within the area of forced migration in order to continue the impact of this work. In particular, SCSC should place greater emphasis on research related to the experiences of forced migrants outside of the three main receiving cities of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, along with placing value on

research focused on forced migrants that are part of another marginalized group. In particular, more attention is needed on the unique experiences of women refugees and refugees that identify as queer, as there is a lack of research overall in these areas. It is also suggested that SCSC continue to broaden the scope of their outreach work by engaging with smaller communities across Canada.

Central to all the recommendations that were made is the inclusion and involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. This report focuses mainly on the local stakeholders within second tier cities, but also acknowledges that there are provincial and federal stakeholders with whom municipal stakeholders must also cooperate. For the implementation of the recommendations, it is strongly suggested to have collaboration between stakeholders in order to maximize the impact of the recommendations and create a path for positive change in the integration of refugees within second tier cities. Lastly, when applying this research to other second tier cities, it is important to apply the aforementioned recommendations with discretion and take into account the local context and refugee experiences of each particular city.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although the three major cities of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver receive the largest number of refugees annually, second tier cities in Canada play a significant role in resettling thousands of refugees every year. Refugees who resettle in second tier cities face unique challenges and experience distinctive benefits during the process of integration. Three key strengths and three weaknesses of refugee integration in second tier cities were identified in this report. Strengths include ease in accessing services, ease in meeting basic needs, and ease in creating a broad social network. Weaknesses

include lack of adequate translation services, lack of services designed for refugees, and discrimination faced by refugees. Strategies to inform positive change within the areas of weakness were also suggested, including increasing access to interpretation services, reducing discrimination through awareness, education and programming, and developing refugee centred programming. Although this project was focused on Winnipeg and London, other second tier cities in Canada could learn from these findings. In particular, this research could be beneficial to Halifax, Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo, Edmonton and more.

As refugee communities in second tier cities are not homogenous, it is expected that refugees who are part of another minority community along with being a refugee (e.g. religious minority, those with a disability) have significantly different challenges and benefits during their resettlement into second tier cities. Due to a lack of representation from these minority communities, it was not possible to address these intersections in this report. It is recommended that there be more attention placed on these communities in future studies on refugees.

Due to temporal limitations of this research project, second tier cities outside of Winnipeg and London could not be addressed. Therefore, further exploration into the intricacies of refugee experiences and how to create positive change in other second tier cities is needed. Moving forward, it is also imperative that there is more widespread research, literature and demographic data on refugees within second tier cities across Canada. By mobilizing municipalities, refugees, settlement organizations, funders, and communities to work together, second tier cities can help better the path of refugee integration and uphold Canada's reputation of being a welcoming place for refugees.

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