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MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

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Post-2014 migrants' access to housing, employment and other crucial resources in small- and medium-sized towns and rural areas

in Canada

Country Reports on integration

REPORT

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Abstract

This report looks at migrants' access to housing, employment, and other relevant resources in six different small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Canada between 2016 and 2021. Primarily based on interviews conducted in each of the six selected municipalities, secondary data analysis and a policy literature review, it provides an overview of the concrete barriers that migrants face in relation to housing and employment; the local actors who are involved in, and/or seen as responsible for, facilitating their access; any concrete local measures or practices that help or hinder this access; and the specific target groups of these measures, initiatives or practices. The report finds that the concrete barriers facing migrant access to housing are **affordability, availability, and size**. These factors were particularly acute in Ontario and B.C. where a housing crisis has driven up the average cost of a home and decreased availability. During the study period, Canada possessed low unemployment rates, however, one of the concrete barriers regarding economic integration was **foreign credential recognition** and **language acquisition** (English or French). The local actors who were involved included **immigrant settlement service organizations, provincial employment ministries, faith organizations or groups of individuals (involved in private sponsorship), provincial/regional chambers of commerce and community service organizations**. The measures and practices included **employment matching and preparation services, language training programs, job banks, mentoring programs, paid internships, targeted migrant hiring initiatives by municipal and community-service organizations, skills upgrading programs** and **municipal integration policies.** The specific target groups of these measures included **immigrants** (both economic and resettled refugees) as well as **residents**.

Contents

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1. Introduction

1.1. Methodology, report structure and key terms

1. 1. 1. Methodology

Amongst the countries evaluated in this project, Canada is an outlier. It is the only North American case study and possesses different migratory trends and reception infrastructure from the other countries in the Whole-Comm project. While the majority of individuals who arrived in Europe post-2014 were asylum seekers who made "irregular" journeys to seek protection in European destinations, Canada received resettled refugees through regular immigration channels and a targeted policy intervention called the *Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative* (Almustafa, 2021). This initiative occurred in very late 2015 and early 2016 and resettled approximately 40,000 people over a two-year period. Although small in size relative to post-2014 immigrants received in Europe, the Syrian Initiative was the second largest resettlement initiative ever undertaken by Canada after the Indochinese movement of the late 1970s and 80s which welcomed approximately 60,000 people and launched the Canadian private sponsorship program (Molloy and Simeon, 2016). Alongside population size, political orientation and economic indicators, one of the major criteria used to select the case study sites was receipt of Syrian refugees through the Syrian Initiative. All the Canadian case study sites received refugees through this program, however, due to the controlled and 'regular' nature of the Canadian migration process, the relatively small number of Syrian people who arrived in the case study sites, the diversity of national groups included in the European post-2014 migrant cohort, and the study's desire to understand integration policy and services at the local level generally, the interview guide was intentionally left broad to include all immigrant groups.

Table 1: Variables used to select studied localities

Population size	Medium town: 100,000 – 250,000
	Small town: 50,000 – 100,000
	Rural area: 5,000 - 50,000 and low population density
Number of currently residing immigrants	Time period: arrived during and after 2016
Share of Foreign Residents	Time period: in 2006 (SF2006)
Variation of Unemployment level	Time period: 2006-2016 (VARUN)
AND/OR Unemployment Levels	Time period: 2006 and 2016
Variation of number of inhabitants	Time period: 2006-2016 (VARNI) and 2016 -2021
Regional variation	Provinces
Local politics	Most local politicians run as independents in Canada

Following the project methodology, all the selected towns had populations ranging from 50,000 to 250,000 inhabitants and were not linked to a larger city. *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* (IRCC) data indicated that they had all received resettled refugees (Syrian and other) during the study period. Finally, politically liberal and conservative towns were selected using federal and provincial elections information.

Several selection criteria were modified to reflect the Canadian context. The regional variation variable was changed to provinces (not North/South or East/West) because they are the most relevant regional political variation. Case sites from the three most populous provinces in Canada – Ontario, Quebec, and B.C. – were selected. This means that six (and not four) towns were examined. A different study period, 2016 to 2021, was also used. This was done because the majority of refugees resettled through the Syrian Initiative arrived in the country during this period (alongside other resettled refugees and immigrants from other countries). Census data from the 2006 and 2016 censuses were used to calculate VARNI and VARUN scores because the Canadian census cycle happens every five years and these iterations were closest to the 2005-2014 period used by the Whole-COMM literature.

Table 2: Types of localities

Type A	Characterized by a recovering local economy and an improving demographic profile and migrants' settlement before 2016
Type B	Characterized by an improving economic and demographic situation and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2016
Type C	Characterized by demographic and economic decline and migrants' settlement before 2016
Type D	Characterized by economic and demographic decline and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2016

VARUN and VARNI were taken into consideration when selecting the Canadian towns alongside Statistics Canada census profile information and IRCC immigration data. The three small-sized towns selected for this study have VARUN and VARNI values that are lower than the national average. Kelowna, B.C. (a medium-sized town) possesses a VARUN score that is higher than the national average, but it also has a very high VARNI score and had also been recognized as the fastest growing CMA in Canada. The two other medium-sized towns have VARNI scores that exceed the national average and VARUN scores that are lower than the national average.

The case study towns do not fit the Whole-COMM typology very well because the variations in demographics, economy, and immigration that were used to define the four different types do not reflect the Canadian context. All of the Canadian towns had increasing populations. This made Types C and D inapplicable. Additionally, the VARUN scores for Ontario and Quebec were lower than the national average and were negative, in the case of Quebec. Finally, Canada is a country that has relied heavily on immigration for population growth for quite some time. Although asylum seekers do arrive in Canada, most immigration, including resettled refugees, occurs through "regular" channels that are heavily controlled by the state and managed through immigration targets. The distinction between arrival/no arrival of immigrants is difficult to qualify for these reasons.

Table 3: VARNI and VARUN variables for Canadian localities (2006 – 2016)

	VARNI	VARUN
Canada	11.19	1.10
Ontario medium-sized locality (Guelph)	19.66	0.80
Ontario small locality (Stratford)	3.29	0.30
Quebec medium-sized locality (Sherbrooke)	13.45	-0.20
Quebec small locality (Victoriaville)	0.52	-0.40
B.C. medium-sized locality (Kelowna)	20.09	2.00
B.C. small locality (Vernon)	10.67	1.60

The empirical material for this report is based on *secondary data analysis*, a *policy literature review*, and *qualitative interviews* with regional, federal, and municipal policymakers as well as regional and municipal service providers that were conducted using a modified version of the WP4 questionnaire template. Canada did not participate in the ethnographic observation or focus groups. This study was approved by the York University Research Ethics Board and consent to publish the names of the localities was received from the Research Ethics Board.

The analysis is supplemented with information from the 2016 and 2021 Canadian censuses as well as relevant academic literature. Whenever possible, data from the 2021 census was used. However, most of the census profiles, particularly the immigration and diversity profiles, for the 2021 Canadian census have not been released by Statistics Canada. When 2021 data was not available, 2016 data was used. IRCC data was collected through the *OpenCanada* data portal. Information about Quebec was collected through the *Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration* and the *Statistical Institute of Quebec* websites. Information about Ontario and BC was collected through various provincial ministry websites and municipal websites. Information about housing was collected through the Canada Housing Survey conducted by the *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation* (CMHC) and the *Canadian Real Estate Association* (CREA).

Canadian census and IRCC definitions:

This report relies on census material that uses terms that are unique to the Canadian context and require definition. Below, these key terms are defined.

Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVOR): Defined by IRCC as "refugees referred to Canadian visa offices abroad directly by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The Government of Canada will generally provide up to six months of income support through the Resettlement Assistance Program, while private sponsors will provide another six months of financial support and up to a year of social and emotional support. Refugees are also covered under the Interim Federal Health Program for the duration of the sponsorship (one year), in addition to provincial health coverage".

Census metropolitan area (CMA): Defined by Statistics Canada as "a census metropolitan area (CMA) or a census agglomeration (CA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live in the core based on adjusted data from the previous Census of Population Program. A CA must have a core population of at least 10,000 also based on data from the previous Census of Population Program".

Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR): Defined by IRCC as "a person who is outside Canada and has been determined to be a Convention refugee and who receives financial and other support from the Government of Canada or Province of Quebec for up to one year after their arrival in Canada. GARs are selected from applicants referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other referral organizations".

Local Immigration Partnership (LIP): Defined by IRCC as "community-based partnerships designed to foster a systematic approach to engage Service Provider Organisations SPOs and other institutions to integrate newcomers, support community-based knowledge-sharing and local strategic planning and improve coordination of effective services that facilitate immigrant settlement and integration. LIPs do not provide direct services to newcomers. Rather, they seek to increase the absorptive capacity of host communities by engaging a range of stakeholders including employers, school boards, health centres, levels of government, Service Provider Organizations, professional associations, ethno-cultural and faith-based organizations, and the community and social services sectors to enhance collaboration and strategic planning at the community-level".

National Occupation Classification (NOC): A list of all the occupations in the Canadian labour market. It describes each job according to skill type and skill level. The NOC is used to collect and organize job statistics and to provide labor market information. It is also used as a basis for certain immigration requirements.

Privately-Sponsored Refugee (PSR): Defined by IRCC as "a person outside Canada who has been determined to be a Convention refugee or member of the Country of Asylum class and

who receives financial and other support from a private sponsor for one year after their arrival in Canada. Private sponsors are Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), Groups of Five or Community Sponsors".

Refugee Assistance Program (RAP): Defined by IRCC as "a federal program through which the Government of Canada helps government-assisted refugees (GARs) and other eligible clients when they first arrive in Canada by providing direct financial support, and funding the provision of immediate and essential services. Financial support includes a one-time start up allowance and monthly income support typically provided for up to one year or until clients can support themselves, whichever comes first. RAP Service Provider Organizations, located in communities across the country except Quebec, deliver RAP immediate and essential services to clients generally within four to six weeks of arrival in Canada".

Visible minority: Defined by the *Employment Equity Act* as: "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese.

Main aim of WP4 and report structure

The main aim of WP4 is to examine the **local policies, initiatives, and practices** addressing immigrants' **access to housing and employment**. The rationale for this focus is two-fold. First, they are key resources for granting fundamental rights and sustainable integration. Second, they are services that encompass a broad range of actors from the private and public spheres allowing the interplay and potentially different interests, strategies, resources and power positions between actors to be assessed. Housing is (partly or, in some cases, almost completely) in the hands of private actors, from big owners (including banks and international investment funds) to small ones. Work depends on employers, which again are very diverse ranging from big to small (including family) employers, from private to public employers and across different economic sectors. In both cases, between migrants and these private actors, we find a broad range of intermediaries (CSOs, trade unions, real estate agencies, civil society organisations, social networks, etc) and a diverse (and sometimes even contradictory) set of policies and programmes (at the national, regional and local levels).

This report examines the **concrete local policies and initiative** (from the local, regional, and national level) intended to facilitate access to housing and economic integration for immigrants, the **actors** involved in implementing these policies, their **target groups** and **major obstacles/challenges** reported to exist. It is structured according to the WP4 template. **Section 1** provides an overview of relevant population and immigration, housing, economy characteristics as well as local practices/policies helping/hinder migration for each level of governance from the national to the municipal. Additional tables have been included to succinctly summarize these characteristics. It is based on statistical information, grey

literature on housing and the economy, and a literature review of relevant federal, provincial, and municipal policy. **Section 2** summarizes issues around immigrant access to housing, and **Section 3** summarizes issues around economic integration. Both of these sections are based on information collected from the interviews. **Section 4** is the conclusion.

1.2 General information about the Canadian national context

1.2.a Population and immigration

In 2021, the Canadian population reached 38.2 million people, increasing from 35.1 million in 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2022a; Statistics Canada, 2016b). The majority of the population are of working age (15-64) and the average age is 41 (Statistics Canada, 2016b). Canada has historically relied on immigration for population growth and continues to do so. Consistently, between 2016 and 2021, Canadian population growth was driven by international immigration as opposed to births in Canada (CIC, 2022). In 2016, Statistics Canada reported that roughly 23.0% (8,219,555) of the Canadian population were first generation (defined in the census as "persons who were born outside Canada. For the most part, these are people who are now, or once were, immigrants to Canada") and 17.0% (6,100,725) were second generation (defined in the census as "persons who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside Canada. For the most part, these are the children of immigrants") (Statistics Canada, 2016b). The top ten countries of origin for immigrants to Canada were India (668,565), China (649,260), Philippines (588,305), the United Kingdom (499,115), the United States (253,715), Italy (236,640), Hong Kong (208,940), Pakistan (202,260), Viet Nam (169,250) and Iran (154,425) (Statistics Canada, 2016b). Visible minorities (excluding Aboriginal people) make up approximately 22.0% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2016b). The largest Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) in Canada are Toronto (6.2 million), Montreal (4.3 million) and Vancouver (2.6 million) (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

1.2.b Economy

Canada is classified as a high-income country by the World Bank (2022). Between 2016 and 2021, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita for Canada varied between a low of $46,472 (USD) and a high of $52,021 and GDP growth fluctuated between a minimum of -5.2% in 2020 to a maximum of 4.6 in 2021 (OECD, 2022). Over the same period, the unemployment rate varied between 5.8% to 9.5% (during COVID). The Gini coefficient of income inequality was reported to be 33.3 in 2017 and 32.7 in 2016[1] which is relatively low (World Bank, 2022).

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[1] These were the only two years for which data was available.

Table 4: Canadian economic indicator data

Economic indicator for Canada	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
GDP (OECD, US $/per capita)	46,472	48,317	49,892	49,286	46,572	52,021
GDP growth (OECD)	1.0	3.0	2.8	1.9	-5.2	4.6
Unemployment (WB, % of total labour force, modeled on ILO estimate)	7.0	6.3	5.8	5.7	9.5	7.5

Source: *World Bank and OECD indicator data*

The National Occupational Areas (NOCs[2]) that employed the highest numbers of Canadians at the national level include: Sales and service occupations (4,265,895); Business, finance and administration occupations (2,874,305); Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations (2,668,875); Occupations in education, law and social, community and government services (2,138,445) (Statistics Canada, 2016b).

1.2.c Housing

Canada, like many countries is impacted by a 'housing crisis'. In 2014, 40% of the Canadian population was estimated to live in a city where housing prices were "seriously or very unaffordable" (Cheung, 2014, 11). The crisis has been particularly acute in Toronto (Ontario) and Vancouver (B.C.), but it has also impacted housing costs in many medium-sized and rural towns, particularly in Ontario and B.C. As an illustration of the relative increases and absolute prices over the 2016-2021 period, the Canadian Real Estate Association[3] (CREA) reports that between December 2016 and December 2021, the average cost of a house in Canada nearly doubled, rising from $495,200 to $814,200 – the highest average price ever recorded in the country's history (CREA, 2021). Broken down by province, in December 2016, the average cost of a single-family home[4] for all participating geographic areas in Ontario[5] was $368,148. In

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[2] 'National Occupational Areas' or NOCs are the official Statistics Canada job classification system used for the census.

[3] CREA is a good publicly available indicator of housing prices in Canada that is used as the basis for the MLS Home Price Index system used by Canadian realtors, but the quality of its publicly available data varies significantly by province. It is most detailed for Canada's two largest markets, Ontario and B.C., and less detailed for other Canadian provinces.

[4] Calculated according to CREA's single family benchmark indicator. These prices are seasonally adjusted.

[5] The Ontario regions included in this measure are: Bancroft and area, Barrie and district, Brantford region, Cambridge, Grey Bruce Owen Sound, Guelph and district, Hamilton/Burlington, Huron Perth, Kawartha Lakes, Kingston and area, Kitchener Waterloo, Lakelands, London St. Thomas, Mississauga, Niagara region, North Bay, Northumberland, Oakville Milton, Ottawa, Peterborough and Kawarthas, Quinte and district, Rideau St.

December 2021, this price more than doubled to $762,725. In Quebec[6] over the same time period, the price increased from $293,200 to $471,250. Finally, in B.C.[7], the average cost increased from $804,657 to $1,282,800. The average cost of a home during the same period was $462,521 in Ontario, $336,871 in Quebec and $904,202 in B.C. (CREA, 2022). The Statistics Canada New Housing Price Index[8] indicates a similar overall increase of 20.8% in the price of a newly constructed home for all of Canada. Broken down by the provinces of interest over the same period, Ontario increased 24.4%, Quebec increased 35.5% and B.C. increased 24.1% (Statistics Canada, 2022e).

The rental housing market demonstrates similar increases. The average vacancy rate for Canada[9] over the 2016-2021 period was 3.1%. However, Canada's rental housing market is quite variable. The average rental prices of a one-bedroom unit and vacancy rates for rental housing in the major cities of the three most populous provinces examined in this study (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver) are noted below to illustrate this variability as well as the cost increase over time. This information is also included in the discussion of municipal rental prices and vacancy rates as a useful point of comparison for contextualizing the findings.

Laurence, Sault St. Marie, Simcoe and district, Sudbury, Tilsonburg District, Greater Toronto Area, Windsor Essex and Woodstock Ingersoll.

[6] The Quebec regions included in this measure are: Montreal (CMA) and Quebec city (CMA).

[7] The B.C. regions included in this measure are: Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Victoria, Lower Mainland, Greater Vancouver Area, Chilliwack and district and Interior B.C.

[8] A Statistics Canada index based on a monthly representative sample that tracks *relative* increases in the price of a *newly constructed* home.

[9] The vacancy rate data publicly available through Statistics Canada only includes data for large and medium-sized CMAs (not small). Nevertheless, this average has been included as an illustrative metric. The CMAs included in vacancy rate data are: Abbotsford-Mission (B.C.), Barrie (ON), Brantford (ON), Calgary (AB), Edmonton (AB), Greater Sudbury (ON), Guelph (ON), Halifax (NS), Hamilton (ON), Kelowna (B.C.), Kingston (ON), Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo (ON), London (ON), Moncton (N.B.), Montreal (QC), Oshawa (ON), Ottawa-Gatineau (ON/QC), Ottawa-Gatineau (ON), Ottawa Gatineau (QC), Peterborough (ON), Quebec (QC), Regina (SK), St. Catharines-Niagara (ON), St. John's (NFL), Saguenay (QC), Saint John (N.B.), Saskatoon (SK), Sherbrooke (QC), Thunder Bay (ON), Toronto (ON), Trois-Rivières (QC), Vancouver (B.C.), Windsor (ON), Winnipeg (MB).

Table 5: Average rent for a one-bedroom apartment[10] and vacancy rates for apartment structures six units and over in Canada's top 3 CMAs (2016-2021)

Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
Toronto, ON: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6+ units, $CDN)	1,134	1,197	1,263	1,363	1,424	1,441	1,304
Toronto, ON: Vacancy rate (%)	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.5	3.4	4.6	2.2
Montreal, QC: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6+ units, $CDN)	719	736	764	794	860	880	792
Montreal, QC: Vacancy rate (%)	4.6	2.9	2.0	1.6	3.3	3.5	3.0
Vancouver, B.C.: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6+ units, $CDN)	1,161	1,226	1,309	1,385	1,418	1,437	1,323
Vancouver, B.C.: Vacancy rate (%)	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.1	2.6	1.2	1.3

Source: *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022*

Over the 2016-2021 period, Vancouver consistently reported the highest average rents (average $1,323) and the lowest vacancy rates (1.3%). Montreal reported the lowest average rental cost ($792), slightly less than two thirds the average rental cost in Vancouver, and highest average vacancy rate (3.0%).

Finally, while the vast majority of rental housing in Canada is privately owned, some social housing does exist. The Canadian Housing Survey defines 'social and affordable housing' as "'non-market rental housing', where housing allocation and rent-setting mechanisms are not entirely dictated by the law of supply and demand. Specifically, SAH aims at providing housing assistance to low- and moderate-income households at large" (Fonberg and Schellenberg, 2019, 21). The 2018 Canadian Housing Survey[11] noted that 13.5% of all Canadian households residing in rented dwellings lived in social and affordable housing and 1.9% were on a waiting list to access social housing.

The Canadian housing crisis has been connected to a number of factors. One of the most commonly mentioned is *speculative foreign buying* of residential properties, however, there

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[10] An apartment building is defined as a building with six or more units for the purposes of this measure.
[11] This survey is conducted every two years, however, 2018 is the most recent iteration for which summaries and data are publicly available at no cost.

is some debate about the relative influence of this practice on housing prices. *High population growth without reciprocal growth in the housing sector* –more people than houses, effectively - has also been identified as a central factor, although this varies significantly by Canadian city. Finally, Canada's *household debt-to-income ratio* has risen steeply over the past decade, indicating that household incomes have not increased in tandem with housing prices forcing new home buyers to rely more heavily on credit (Cheung, 2014).

Housing is a major political issue at the federal level in Canada. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Chrystia Freedland, recently described the housing crisis as a form of "intergenerational injustice" and identified it as her top domestic policy concern. In April 2022, the federal Liberal government implemented a total ban on all foreign residential home purchases for a two-year period and pledged an additional $10.14 billion dollars towards the construction of new homes (Cecco, 2022).

1.2.d National policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

The **federal** government is responsible for generating policy and legislation related to foreign affairs including immigration (Parliament of Canada, 2022c). *Federal policy* (and some legislation) is made by the Prime Minister's Cabinet. The Cabinet is made up of the prime minister and their cabinet ministers who are MPs selected by the prime minister and generally belong to the same political party. Each cabinet minister heads a federal ministry and makes policy decisions related to the operation of that ministry. The federal immigration ministry, *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* (IRCC), is led by a cabinet minister (Parliament of Canada, 2022a).

Federally, the legislation governing immigration and integration in Canada includes: the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) (2001), the *Citizenship Act* (1985), the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1985) and the *Canadian Human Rights Code* (1985). Internationally, the *Safe Third Country Agreement* (2004) is also relevant to discussions of immigration. The main federal legislation structuring **immigration** in Canada is IRPA (2001) which came into force in 2002, replacing the *1976 Immigration Act*. It is administered by Canada's federal immigration ministry, the IRCC (formerly the *Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration*), Canada's independent tribunal on immigration, the *Immigration and Refugee Board* (IRB), and the federal policing agency responsible for immigration, the *Canadian Border Security Agency* (CBSA). Broadly, IRPA establishes: the authority, enforcement and organizational structures related to immigration in Canada; federal immigration policy including admission, selection and appeal processes; the division of responsibility for immigration between Canadian provinces as well as between Canada and various international partners. IRPA incorporates both the *Refugee Convention* (1951) and the *Convention against Torture (1984)* into its text. It also details the distribution of settlement services funding.

IRPA establishes the IRCC as the main federal organization responsible for the administration of settlement services. The IRCC's *settlement services* division "aim[s] to provide newcomers with the information required to make informed decisions, language skills adequate to their settlement and integration goals, and the support they need to build networks within their new communities" (Government of Canada, 2022f). It provides *direct* settlement services to clients and *indirectly* funds settlement activities for new immigrants (including resettled refugees) both within and outside of Canada for all provinces except Quebec (whose settlement services are run by the provincial immigration ministry). The IRCC is the largest funder of settlement services in Canada (Government of Canada, 2022f; IRCC, 2021a; Conference Board of Canada, 2022).

Direct settlement services consume the bulk of IRCC settlement services funding. They include: a) support services that enable client access to services (ex: childcare, translation, interpretation, transportation assistance, disability provisions); b) needs and assets assessments and referrals (ex: personalized settlement plans and referrals to settlement services); c) information and orientation services (ex: web or print-based materials, information sessions, promotion and outreach); d) **language training** (ex: placement tests, language classes); e) **employment-related initiatives** (ex: employment bridging programs, mentoring and networking, skills development and training); f) community initiatives (ex: community activities, cross-cultural activities, mentoring and networking) (Government of Canada, 2022d; IRCC, 2019; Conference Board of Canada, 2022).

Indirect settlement services are also funded by the IRCC through grants and contributions (called 'service agreements') to individuals and organizations including provincial/territorial or municipal governments, not-for-profit organizations, businesses (who provide indirect services) and educational institutions. In 2021, examples of the types of organizations who had active service agreements with the IRCC included: the *YMCA-YWCA de la region de la capitale nationale*, the British Columbia Construction Association, the Syrian Canadian Foundation, Accessible Community Counselling and Employment Services (ACCESS), Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House and the *Société de la francophonie manitobaine* (IRCC, 2021a). The grants are flexible and can be used for a range of institutional purposes (ex: salaries, conduct training, research, travel, capital expenditures, etc.). They are also quite sizable, valuing up to 20 million dollars, and can last for up to five years. These program-based grants and contributions are dispersed according to specific IRCC programs including pre-settlement services, service delivery improvement, or the action plan for official languages francophone integration pathway (a program intended to promote francophone immigration to regions other than Quebec) (Government of Canada, 2022d; IRCC, 2019; Conference Board of Canada, 2022).

In addition to IRPA, the *Safe Third Country Agreement* is an international treaty between the governments of Canada and the United States that came into effect in 2004. It is relevant to discussions of irregular immigration because it mandates refugee claimants (with some exceptions) to make their claim in the *first* safe country in which they arrive. This means that

refugee claimants who pass through the United States on their way to Canada can be returned to the United States and instructed to make their refugee claim there. This is not considered *refoulement* because the United States is deemed a safe country. The Safe Third Country Agreement has been heavily criticized by the Canadian immigration studies community (see, for example, Macklin, 2004; Gonzalez Settlage, 2012; Hyndman & Mountz, 2020).

Federal legislation that can be used to address issues related to **integration** in Canada include the *Citizenship Act* (1985), the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1985) and the *Human Rights Code* (1985). With the exception of the *Citizenship Act* (1985), it is important to note that these acts apply to *all* Canadian citizens and permanent residents, not only to people who have immigrated. There is no specific federal 'integration' legislation intended only for people who have immigrated to Canada. Briefly, the *Citizenship Act* (1985) sets out the various parameters for the acquisition, loss and resumption of Canadian citizenship. The *Multiculturalism Act* (1985) is a piece of federal legislation intended to "recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society". This act "acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage" and mandates all federal Canadian institutions to "promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society", collect statistical data reflective of this multicultural reality and "generally, carry on their activities in a manner that is sensitive and responsive to the multicultural reality of Canada" (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1985).

Finally, the *Human Rights* Act (1985) is the federal legislative framework that identifies grounds for discrimination (including discrimination on the basis of race, nationality or ethnic origin). Its stated purpose is to:

> extend the laws in Canada to give effect, within the purview of matters coming within the legislative authority of Parliament, to the principle that all individuals should have an opportunity equal with other individuals to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered.

1.3 Regional Contexts

1.3.a Regional context: Ontario

Table 6: Ontario summary table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Provincial Political Orientation (2016-2021)	Ministry responsible for immigration/ integration
2021: 14,223,942 2016: 13,242,160	2016: 29.1% (3,852,145) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 48.3% (1,364,380); Family sponsored immigrants 33.3% (940,405); Refugees 17.1% (482,665)	5.8%	Unemployment: 7.4% Top 3 NOC: Sales and service 22.9%; Business, finance, and administration 15.7%; Trade, Transportation and equipment operators 13.0%	2021: Conservative Party (elected in 2018) 2016: Liberal Party (elected in 2014)	2021: Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism; Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services; Ministry of Colleges and Universities; Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development 2016: Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI)

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population.

Population and Immigration

Ontario is Canada's most populous province and its western region is the fastest growing in the nation. Toronto is the capital of the province and according to the 2016 census, the population of Toronto CMA, which is the biggest CMA in Canada, was 5.9 million, of which 46.1% are immigrants. The second biggest CMA in Ontario is Ottawa, the national capital, with a population of around 1.3 million, of which 19.7% are immigrants. The third biggest CMA is Hamilton, that had a population of 747,545, of which 24.1% are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2021a). In 2016, visible minority groups in Ontario made up 29.3% of the provincial population, which exceeded the national rate (22.3%). The largest visible minority groups were South Asian 7.6%, Chinese 5.0%, and Black 4.3% (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Ontario attracts the highest number of immigrants in Canada. The high level of immigration to Ontario was considered the driving factor behind the province's high growth rate over the 2016 to 2021 period (5.8%), which exceeded the national rate (5.2%) (Statistics Canada,

2022a). In 2021, the total new immigrants in Ontario reached 198,530, a sharp increase from 82,963 in 2020 (Government of Ontario, 2022a). The largest source countries of origin for immigrants to Ontario were India 9.4% (360,545), China 8.2% (317,225), the United Kingdom 6.9% (264,120), Philippines 6.0% (31,760), Italy 4.1% (157,815), Jamaica 3.1% (119,840), and the United States 2.8% (109,005 (Statistics Canada, 2016).

Economy

Ontario has the largest economy in Canada. In 2020, it produced 39.3% of Canada's GDP with a 65.0% participation rate in the labour market. The unemployment rate increased from 7.4% in 2016 to 8.0% in 2020 (Government of Ontario, 2022b). The 2016 census reports that the median total income (after tax) for recipients aged 15 years and older in Ontario was $30,641 and the median household[12] income (after tax) was $65,285 – the highest household income (after taxes) of the three provinces surveyed for this study. Ontario's economy is primarily driven by the service industry. In 2016, services made up 77.4% of Ontario's GDP and goods made up 22.5% (of which 11.0% were manufacturing goods). In 2016, the three top employing sectors in the province were sales and service occupation, attracting 22.9% of the labour force, business, finance, and administration, attracting 15.7%, and trade, transportation, and equipment operators, attracting 13.0% of the labour force (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

Housing

Ontario is the second-most expensive province in Canada to buy or rent a home after B.C. In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Ontario were single-detached houses (54.3%), followed by other attached dwelling[13] (28.2%), apartment with five or more storeys (17.2%) and moveable dwelling (0.3%). During the same census cycle, 69.7% of Ontario residents were estimated[14] to be homeowners, 30.2% were renters and 0.1% lived in band housing[15]. Between December 2016 and December 2021, the Statistics Canada New Housing Price Index[16] indicated an increase of 24.4%, in the average cost of a newly-constructed, single family Ontario home. In September 2021, the average price of a home in Ontario was $887,290 (CREA, 2022). Over the 2016-2021 period, the vacancy rate for medium and large CMAs[17] in Ontario was 2.3%.

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[12] A household typically can include more than one income.

[13] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.

[14] This estimate is based on a 25% sample of census respondents.

[15] A housing type found on native reserves.

[16] A Statistics Canada index based on a monthly representative that tracks *relative* increases in the price of a *newly constructed* home.

[17] The Ontario CMAs included in this measure are: Barrie (ON), Brantford (ON), Greater Sudbury (ON), Guelph (ON), Hamilton (ON), Kingston (ON), London (ON), Oshawa (ON), Ottawa-Gatineau (ON), Peterborough (ON), St. Catharine's-Niagara (ON), Thunder Bay (ON), Toronto (ON), Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo (ON), Toronto (ON) and Windsor (ON).

Regional policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

In Ontario, like in other Canadian provinces (except Quebec), immigration and resettlement services are mainly funded by the federal government; however, the province also plays a role. Between 2016 and 2018, during the Ontario Liberals' time in government, the *Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration* (MCI) was the main provincial ministry responsible for working with the federal government on immigration, resettlement and integration. The ministry funded provincial programs intended to facilitate newcomer integration. They included: the *Adult Non-Credit Language Training Program* which was used to deliver English and French language training to adult immigrants in the public and Catholic school boards[18]; the *Newcomer Settlement Program* which provided orientation services and resources to access education, housing, and employment services; the *Bridge Training Program* that assists internationally trained immigrants to obtain employment certification in highly skilled profession; and the *Municipal Immigration Information Program* which provides funding for municipalities to develop website material to attract and integrate immigrants (Government of Ontario, 2017).

In response to the federal *Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative*, the former MCI issued a *Refugee Resettlement Plan* in September 2015 and established the *Syrian Refugee Resettlement Secretariate* in 2016 to assist with the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Ontario. This body enhanced private sponsorship by coordinating resettlement activities between actors including the provincial ministries of health, education, and children and youth service. By August 2016, the MCI's allocated budget for refugee resettlement reached $10 million, supporting 33 organizations and 43 initiatives to enhance service delivery to refugees in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2016a).

The arrival of the Conservative government in 2018 brought radical change to the provincial governance of immigration and resettlement in Ontario. Most importantly, the MCI was dissolved as a provincial ministry on June 29, 2018 and its services transferred to three other provincial ministries, including the *Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services*, the *Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development* and the *Ministry of College and Universities* (Government of Ontario, 2020; Praznik and Shields, 2018). The *Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services* created a new division for citizenship and immigration that was responsible for setting policies related to immigration and resettlement in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2021b; Praznik and Shields, 2018). The *Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development* took over the management of the *Ontario Immigration Nominee Program* (OINP), the joint federal and provincial immigration program, as well as the Bridge training program in 2019. Immigration training programs became the responsibility of the *Ministry of Colleges and Universities*.

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[18] Ontario has two schoolboards funded by the state: the Catholic board and the public board.

In 2021, resettlement services continued to be provided through different provincial ministries under the Conservatives. In June 2021, as a part of a provincial cabinet shuffle, a *Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism* was established to lead Ontario's anti-racism and inclusion initiatives under the *Antiracism Act* 2017 (Bill 114). Its formal mandate is not publicly available due to a Conservative initiative to keep all mandate letters confidential (Government of Ontario, 2021b; CBC, 2022). In 2021, the *Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services'* strategic plans for 2021-2022 did not mention citizenship and immigration and the ministry's organizational chart no longer included a citizenship and immigration division (Government of Ontario, 2021c). Further, in its 2021 annual progress report on anti-racism, the Ontario government announced the allocation of $7.7 million to the *Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development* to support 2,700 newcomers qualify for in-demand jobs and assist employers to find skilled workers. This initiative was a further contribution from the Ontario government to enhance the inclusion of newcomers (Government of Ontario, 2021a). Despite these initiatives, the Conservative government also imposed budget cuts targeting some resettlement and integration programs and services in Ontario. These include a 30.0% cut to the general legal aid budget of *Legal Aid Ontario* (LAO) as well as the termination of legal aid for refugee and immigration cases (a cost that was deferred to the federal government).

Immigration, resettlement, and integration of newcomers is governed through a set of provincial legislation and policies. Before June 2018, immigration, resettlement and integration services in Ontario were governed through bilateral agreements between the federal government of Canada and the province of Ontario. The first *Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement* (COIA) was signed in 2005. The five-year 2017 COIA agreement articulated federal and provincial roles with regards to the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), foreign workers, French-speaking immigrants and international students. The agreement also included Annex (D) on the partnership with municipalities which articulates federal and provincial authorities' commitment to working with municipalities to attract and retain immigrants and support resettlement and integration. This is notable because municipal governments have no constitutional responsibility for immigrant selection, resettlement and integration. Other legislation includes the *Ontario Immigration Act (2015)* outlines the Government of Ontario's immigration and resettlement commitments and relationships with the federal government and municipalities. The *Ministry of Citizenship and Culture Act (1990)* defines the roles and responsibilities of the minister and deputy minister and the operational aspects of the *Ministry of Citizenship and Culture* that was first established in 1982 as the main provincial ministry responsible for immigration and resettlement.

Newcomers are also addressed in some employment-related legislation such as the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act (2006)* which establishes guidelines for professionals trained in Ontario or internationally to comply with the Ontario regulations related to their professions. The *Newcomers Employment Opportunities Act, Bill 89 (2010)* focuses on improving employment opportunities for newcomers in Ontario. Finally, the *Ontario Anti-Racism Act, Bill 114 (2017)* sets anti-racism measures mainly targeting

Indigenous, Black and Jewish communities and communities that are impacted by Islamophobia.

1.3.b Regional context: Quebec

Table 7: Quebec summary table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Provincial Political Orientation (2016-2021)	Ministry responsible for immigration/ integration
2021: 8,501,833 2016: 8,164,361	13.4% (1,091,310) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 54.1% (469,015); Family sponsored immigrants 27.8% (241,225); Refugees 16.9% (146,265)	4.1%	Unemployment: 7.2% Top 3 NOC: Sales and service 23.2%; Business, finance and administration 15.9%; Trades, transportation and equipment operator 13.5%	2021: *Coalition Avenir Québec* (CAQ) (elected 2018) 2016: *Quebec Liberal*	2018: Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration (MIFI)

Sources: *2021 and 2016 Canadian Census Data*

Population and Immigration

Quebec is the second most populous province in Canada, containing 23.0% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2021a). In 2021, the population was roughly 8.5 million people, growing 4.1% from 2016, an increase still below the national growth average of 5.2%. In 2016, approximately 11.0% of Quebec's population belonged to a visible minority group and the largest visible minority groups were Black (3.9%), Arab (2.6%) or Latin American (1.6%) (Statistics Canada, 2021a; Statistics Canada, 2016a).

Quebec is the third largest host of immigrants to Canada including resettled refugees (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Along with Ontario, it also receives high numbers of asylum claims. Amongst Canadian provinces, Quebec is unique because of the *Accord Gagnon-Tremblay-McDougall* (1991) which established a different relationship between the federal government and Quebec on immigration matters. Normally, the federal government sets annual immigration quotas and makes the ultimate decision about who should be admitted through each stream (including PNPs). Quebec is the only province that selects certain streams of immigrants (economic and humanitarian) – an arrangement with the federal government that is different from every other Canadian province. The federal government maintains the ability to set numerical quotas for *all* immigration categories in Quebec and it also controls the numbers of people who arrive through the family sponsorship stream. Knowledge of the French language is central to Quebec's immigration and integration policy and, as a result, most immigrants to Quebec tend to come from French-speaking places (MIFI, 2021). In 2016, the major countries of origin for immigrants to Quebec included France (7.4%), Haiti (7.4%), Morocco (5.6%), Algeria (5.4%), Italy (4.7%), China (4.5%) and Lebanon (3.6%) (Statistics Canada, 2016a).

As a result, Quebec possesses its own provincial immigration ministry called the *Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration* (MIFI) that is responsible for administering economic and humanitarian immigration as well as integration activities. Similar to the IRCC, the MIFI develops annual immigration plans and has an independent agreement with the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2017). The MIFI is responsible for administering Quebec's refugee resettlement program which includes a *government* and *private* stream. There are two different categories of private sponsors: *groups of two to five private individuals* or *non-profit organizations* (Blain et al., 2019; Government of Quebec, 2022).

During the 2015-2017 period, Quebec received 11,251 Syrian refugees through its refugee sponsorship program. The vast majority of these refugees (81.0%) were privately sponsored (9,064) and the remainder were sponsored by the Quebec state (Blain, Rodriguez del Barrio, Caron, Rufagari, Richard, Boucher and Lester, 2019). The MIFI suspended the program twice during the 2016 and 2021 period, once during 2017-2018 and again in 2020-2021. The program was just reopening when the interviews for this study were conducted in February 2022. These suspensions were due to concerns about the integrity of the sponsoring organizations or individuals. Specifically, there were reports that some private sponsors were

exploiting people sponsored through the program, financially or otherwise. Based on its inquiries, the MIFI developed a 'blacklist' of sponsoring organizations and individuals who are banned from private sponsorship (Valiente, 2020; Bergeron and Gervais, 2022; Bélair-Cirino, 2022).

Economy

In 2016, Quebec possessed an unemployment rate of 7.2%, slightly lower than the national average of 7.7%. Quebec's economy is driven by the service and manufacturing sectors. In 2016, the three largest economic employment areas were: Sales and service occupations (23.2%); Business, finance and administration occupations (15.9%) and Trades, transport and equipment operators (13.5%) (Statistics Canada, 2021b). Since the early 2010s, Quebec has experienced a labour shortage that has garnered significant media and political attention (Government of Quebec, 2021; Commission nationale, 2011). Part of the provincial government's solution to this issue has been a 'targeted' immigration policy approach that seeks to fill labour gaps with both temporary workers and permanent residents (Government of Quebec, 2021). The 2016 census reports that the median total income (after tax) for recipients aged 15 years and older in Quebec was $33,110 – the highest individual income of the three provinces surveyed for this study - and the median household[19] income (after tax) was $52,207 – the lowest of the three provinces surveyed for this study.

Housing

Quebec is the least expensive province to purchase or rent a home surveyed in this study. In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Quebec were other attached dwellings[20] (48.2%), followed by single-detached houses (45.4%), apartments with five or more storeys (5.3%) and moveable dwelling (0.7%). The observation that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Quebec are some type of low-rise apartment (and not single-detached homes measured by the New Housing Index) suggests that this measure may not be the best housing indicator for the majority of people in Quebec. During the same census cycle, 61.3% of Quebec residents were estimated[21] to be homeowners, 38.6% were renters and 0.2% lived in band housing[22].

Between December 2016 and December 2021, the Statistics Canada New Housing Price Index indicated an increase of 35.5% for a newly-constructed single family home in Quebec – the highest relative increase of the provinces surveyed in this study - however, the absolute average price of a Quebec home in September 2021, $459,955, was effectively half the

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[19] A household typically can include more than one income.
[20] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.
[21] This estimate is based on a 25% sample of census respondents.
[22] A housing type found on native reserves.

average price of an Ontario ($887,290) or B.C. ($913,471) home during the same period. Over the 2016-2021 period, the vacancy rate for medium and large CMAs[23] in Quebec was 3.4%.

Regional policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

The *Accord Gagnon-Tremblay-McDougall* (1991) allows the province of Quebec to select all *economic migrants* and *humanitarian/refugees* who come to the province. People sponsored through the *family sponsorship* program are not included in this agreement. This arrangement is different from other Canadian provinces. While other Canadian provinces can set up different immigration streams under the PNP, their selected candidates must all be approved by the federal IRCC (MIFI, 2021).

1.3.c Regional context: B.C.

Table 8: B.C. summary table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Provincial Political Orientation (2016-2021)	Ministry responsible for immigration/ integration
2021: 5,000,879 2016: 4,648,055	2016: 28.3% (1,292,675) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 56.0% (537,875); Family sponsored immigrants 33.8% (323,440); Refugees 8.6% (82,360)	7.6%	Unemployment: 6.7% Top 3 NOC: Sales and service 24.1%; Business, finance, and administration 14.9%; Trade, transportation, and equipment operation 14.6%	2021: BC New Democratic Party NDP (elected in 2020) (2017: BC NDP with BC Green's support; 2013: BC Liberal	2021: Ministry of Municipal Affairs; Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation; Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training 2016: Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology

Sources: *2021 and 2016 Canadian Census Data*

Population and Immigration

B.C. is the third-most populous province in Canada, containing 11.4% of the national population. In 2021, the population was approximately five million people, with a growth rate of 7.6% in 2016 that exceeded the national rate (5.8%). It has a high rate of linguistic diversity: approximately 29.6% of the population speaks a third language other than English or French, exceeding the Canadian rate of 22.9%. The major ethnic minority groups in B.C. are Chinese

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[23] The CMAs included in this measure are: Montreal (QC), Ottawa-Gatineau (QC), Saguenay (QC), Sherbrooke (QC), Trois-Rivières (QC) and Québec (QC).

(11.2%), Filipino (3.2%), and Korean (1.3%) (Statistics Canada, 2021a). The province attracts the highest rate of interprovincial immigration amongst the provinces evaluated.

Vancouver is the biggest city in the province. It is one of the world's most expensive cities, with the highest cost of living in North America. In 2021, the Vancouver CMA's population was estimated at 2,606,000, an increase of 5.5% from 2016. Immigrants made up 40.8% of the city's population in 2016. Victoria is the second biggest CMA in B.C. and the capital of the province. Its CMA population was estimated at 389,910 in 2021, an increase of 6.0% from 2016. Immigrants represented 18.3% of the population in Victoria in 2016. Kelowna is the third largest CMA in B.C. With its CMA population increasing at the very high rate of 14.0% (from 194,882 in 2016 to 222,162 in 2021) Kelowna is the fastest growing CMA in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016; 2022a).

B.C. is the second largest receiver, after Ontario, of international immigrants to Canada, with 15.0% of the national total during the 2020-2021 period. In 2016, immigrants accounted for 28.3% of the B.C. population, exceeding the national rate of 21.9% (Statistics Canada, 2021b). The largest source countries of origin for immigrants to B.C. are China 15.5% (199,990), India 12.6% (162,650), United Kingdom 9.6% (123,810), Philippines 8.7% (112,100), Hong Kong 5.7% (74,210), United States 4.5% (57,780), and Germany 2.7% (35,045).

B.C. received the third highest number of resettled refugees in Canada during the period from 2015 and 2020 (8.4%). In 2019, B.C. received more than 7.6% of the total protected persons and resettled refugees admitted to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022b). Between 2015 and 2020, B.C. received 12,924 refugees, of which 6,170 were GARs, 5,505 PSRs and 1,240 BVORs. In 2017, the number of GARs declined by 64.0% compared with the previous year (2016), a phenomenon that was coupled with a 76.0% increase in refugee claimants' arrivals to the province in 2017 (B.C. Refugee Hub, 2020). In 2021, 3,420 asylum claimant applications were processed in B.C., 13.6% of the total asylum applications processed in Canada that year (Government of Canada, 2022a).

Economy

During the 2010–2018 period, B.C.'s accounted for 13.5% of the total Canadian GDP. During the same period, B.C.'s GDP growth rate (9.3%) was almost double the average growth rate of other Canadian provinces (5.2%). Between 2015 and 2018, B.C. was the second fastest growing province in Canada. Due to this growth rate, the unemployment rate was below-average (5.3%), compared with the national average unemployment rate (7.6%) during the 2015 to 2019 period (Globerman, 2020). The service sector drives the provincial economy, employing 24.1% of the province's labour force. An additional 14.9% are employed in business, finance, and administration and 14.6% in trade and transportation (Statistics Canada, 2021a). According to the Conference Board of Canada, immigration accounted for 90.0% of British Columbia's labour force growth during the 2011-2016 period (Conference Board of Canada, 2018). The 2016 census reports that the median total income (after tax) for

recipients aged 15 years and older in B.C. was $29,783 – the lowest of all provinces surveyed- and the median total household[24] income (after tax) was $61,280.

Housing

B.C. is the most expensive province in Canada to buy or rent a home. In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in B.C. were single-detached houses (44.1%), followed closely by other attached dwelling[25] (43.8%), apartments with five or more storeys (9.4%) and moveable dwelling (2.6%). During the same census cycle, 68.0% of B.C. residents were estimated[26] to be homeowners, 31.8% were renters and 0.2% lived in band housing[27]. The Statistics Canada New Housing Index indicates that the average cost of a newly constructed home increased 24.1% between December 2016 and December 2021. The absolute average price of a home in B.C. was $913,471 in September 2021 (CREA, 2021). Over the 2016-2021 period, the vacancy rate for medium and large CMAs[28] in B.C. was 1.1%.

Regional policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

B.C. has no dedicated ministry for immigration, resettlement, or integration. The *Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation* and the *Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training* are involved in immigration and resettlement activities in B.C. which are mainly conducted through the Welcome B.C. initiative, the three PNPs, the Immigration Policy and Integration Branch, and International Students programs. In 2021, the provincial *Ministry of Municipal Affairs* (MMA) represented B.C. in its bilateral immigration agreement with the federal government of Canada and was mandated with supporting resettlement and integration services for newcomers and facilitating economic immigration to the province (B.C. Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2021). To achieve this mandate, the ministry relies on B.C.'s *Immigration Programs Act* of 2015 (Bill 39) and the *Ministry of International Business and Immigration Act* of 1990.

The MMA is also responsible for administering B.C.'s PNP, which is the main economic immigration program used to attract international highly skilled workers and entrepreneurs. Like other Canadian PNPs, the federal government sets the annual quotas of the maximum nominees the province can select. B.C.'s allocations doubled between 2013 and 2017, with 6,000 nominees in 2017, of which 69 were entrepreneurs who invested $56 million and created 147 jobs. During the same year, the majority of the PNP nominees were from India, China, South Korea, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Statistics Canada, 2022a).

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[24] A household typically can include more than one income.
[25] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.
[26] This estimate is based on a 25% sample of census respondents.
[27] A housing type found on native reserves.
[28] The CMAS included in this measure are: Abbotsford-Mission (B.C.), Kelowna (B.C.), Vancouver (B.C.) and Victoria (B.C.).

The MMA developed various PNP streams and the *Entrepreneur Immigration Regional Pilot* (B.C. PNP*)* to attract international talent and entrepreneurs to B.C. and contribute to its economic development. In 2017, the province launched the B.C. *PNP Tech Pilot* to fill the skills gap in the tech industry and assist local tech companies to recruit and retain international talent. In 2017, 923 tech workers were nominated through this program (Government of B.C., 2022). Another PNP pilot program was established in 2019 to invite international entrepreneurs to establish businesses in B.C.'s regions. The pilot fell under the mandate of the *Ministry of Jobs, Trade, and Technology* (MJTT) and aimed to address the economic development needs of regional communities in the province, outside the urban centres. Communities who enrolled in the program had to have less than 75,000 people and demonstrate their capacity to provide settlement and business support services to newcomers (Government of B.C., 2019). The MJTT also supports the integration of newcomers through employment matching programs such as *Career Path for Skilled Immigrants*, which are intended to match newcomers and refugees with employment opportunities that correspond to their pre-arrival skills and education (Ministry of Municipal Affairs, 2021).

In September 2021, *Refugee Readiness Program* was established. This $2 million one-time investment, funded by the federal government, was allocated to the immigration division of the provincial MMA, to enhance refugee resettlement services provided by the province through the IRCC RAP. In addition to federal resettlement support, provincial services also included trauma counselling and a career path for skilled immigrants program. A similar model was established in 2015/2016 to welcome Syrian refugees in the province, when British Columbia received 4,595 refugees (Government of British Columbia, 2022). In 2015, the province allocated one million dollars of the provincial budget towards the establishment of five *Refugee Readiness Teams* intended to assist with the resettlement of Syrian refugees. The teams coordinated needs assessments and training in the receiving communities (AMSSA, 2018). In January 2022, B.C. was one of the provinces selected by the federal government to receive a share of the $21 million allocated towards the establishment of new resettlement assistance service providers. This came as a part of a new initiative by the federal government to expand settlement services for newcomers in small towns and rural communities (Government of Canada, 2022h).

1.4 Overview of the municipal cases studied

1.4.a Local case: Guelph, Ontario (Medium-sized town)

Table 9: Guelph summary table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Political Orientation (2016-2021)	VARNI & VARUN
2021: 165,588 2016: 151,984	20.6% (30,880) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 46.7% (9,775); Family sponsored immigrants 32.5% (6,805); Refugees 20.1% (4,200)	9.0%	Unemployment: 5.9% Top 3 NOC: Sales and service 20.9%; Business finance and administration 13.5%; Occupations in education, law and social, community, and government services 13.3%	Federal PM (2021): Liberal; Federal MP (2019): Liberal; Federal MP (2015): Liberal; Provincial MPP (2018): Green; Provincial MPP (2014): Liberal	VARNI: 19.66 VARUN 1.10

Sources: 2021 and 2016 Canadian Census Data

Population and Immigration

Guelph is located in southwestern Ontario. It had a population of 165,588 people in 2021, growing at a rate of 9.0% from 2016, the third highest rate in Ontario and one of the highest rates in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022a). The variation of number of inhabitants (VARNI) between 2006 and 2016 was 19.66. In 2016, immigrants made up 20.6% of the total population with 46.7% arriving as economic immigrants and 20.1% as refugees. In 2016, visible minorities constituted 17.0% of the population. The largest groups were South Asian (4.6%), Chinese (2.9%), Black (2.0%) and Filipino (2.0%). Between 2015 and 2019, Guelph received 470 PSRs, 1,345 BVORs, and no GARs (Statistics Canada, 2021). The town is not a centre for the federal RAP and does not host a reception centre for GARs.

Politically, Guelph is known to be left leaning at both the federal and provincial levels. The Liberal Party has won federal elections in Guelph since 2015. Provincially, the Ontario Liberals won the elections in 2014, but in 2018, Guelph elected the Green Party, offering them their first provincial seat at the Ontario Legislative Assembly. Municipally, the mayor and the 12 city councillors ran as independents.

Economy

The median income was estimated at $38,262 in 2016, with an unemployment rate of 5.9%, one of the lowest rates in Ontario and in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2021). The variation of unemployment level between 2006 and 2016 was 0.80. In 2016, the participation rate was 70.4% with 20.9% of the labour force was involved in sales and services, 13.5% in business, finance, and administration, and 13.3% in education, law, and social, community, and government services. Guelph is known for its agri-food and biotechnology market sector, which is rated number one in Ontario. Guelph University is a major employer and host to the Ontario Agricultural College and Ontario Veterinary College. The 2016 census reports that the median total income (after tax) for recipients aged 15 years and older in Guelph was $34,308 and the median household[29] income (after tax) was $70,503.

Housing

In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Guelph were single-detached houses (55.7%), followed by other attached dwelling[30] (34.8%), apartments with five or more storeys (9.4%) and moveable dwelling (0.2%). During the same census cycle, 70.2% of Guelph residents were estimated[31] to be homeowners and 29.8% were renters. CREA (2022) reports that the average cost of a single-family home in Guelph region between 2016-2021 was $585,849, increasing from $470,500 in December 2016 to just slightly under one million ($925,400) in December 2021. The average rental price of a one-bedroom apartment between 2016 and 2021 was $1,105, slightly lower than the average rental price in Toronto ($1,304). As mentioned previously, Guelph possesses the third highest demographic growth rate in Ontario. This high growth rate is reflected in the average vacancy rate for Guelph between 2016-2021, which was *lower* than the average vacancy rate for Toronto (the major Ontario urban centre) suggesting relatively lower housing availability.

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[29] A household typically can include more than one income.
[30] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.
[31] This estimate is based on a 25% sample of census respondents.

Table 10: Guelph average rents (one-bedroom apartment) and vacancy rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
Guelph, ON: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	962	985	1,036	1,150	1,217	1,281	1,105
Toronto, ON: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	*1,134*	*1,197*	*1,263*	*1,363*	*1,424*	*1,441*	*1,304*
Guelph, ON: Vacancy rate of an apartment structure (6 units+) in %	0.9	1.2	1.4	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.6
Toronto, ON: Vacancy rate (%)	*1.3*	*1.0*	*1.1*	*1.5*	*3.4*	*4.6*	*2.2*

Source: *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022*

Local policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

Guelph municipality has no mandate to offer resettlement or integration services to newcomers. However, the municipality provides resources to a charitable immigration services organization whose major funders include the federal IRCC and the provincial *Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services* (MCCS). This organization offers resettlement services to immigrants in Guelph and county. Its services include translation and interpretation, language assessment, settlement workers at schools, settlement orientation, employment services, and community connections. In 2020/2021, the organization served 3,243 clients of whom 52.0% were refugees, 20.0% family sponsored immigrants, and 3.0% from the federal skilled worker program (ISGW, 2021). Refugee claimants in Guelph also receive assistance from a faith-based organisation located in a neighbouring town (25.5 km from Guelph). This organization started in 1987 as a coalition of four Mennonite Churches and a Mennonite organization from the broader region. It assists and advocates for refugee claimants and offers them settlement services including orientation, housing, employment readiness session.

Guelph also hosts a LIP office (a federally funded community-based coalition) that was established in 2009. In addition to supporting the immigration services organization, the LIP aims to strategically enhance the co-ordination of immigrant integration services in both the town and county (GWLIP, 2022). Finally, the municipality of Guelph invests in a *Neighbourhood Support Coalition*, a community-based organization intended to foster an inclusive, engaging, and diverse neighbourhood communities. A city councillor confirmed that funding for this organization is an indirect way for the municipality to support integration and diversity, "*There haven't been any specific policies for us. It does not mean the city has no*

investment in integration. The city significantly funds the Neighborhoods Support Coalition to do this work, so that work has been delegated".

Guelph is also geographically located in Wellington County which provides social services to the residents of the town (including newcomers) in addition to the county's seven other towns. These services include childcare, subsidized housing, income support programs, and resettlement services for permanent residents and individuals with Convention Refugee status in the county and town.

1.4.b Local case: Stratford, Ontario (Small-sized town)

Table 11: Stratford Summary Table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Political Orientation (2016-2021)	VARNI & VARUN
2021: 33,232 2016: 31,465	11.3% (3,470) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 37.5% (555); Family sponsored immigrants 44.9% (665); Refugees 16.2% (245)	5.6%	Unemployment: 5.3% Top 3 NOC: Sales and service 23.0%; trade, transportation, and equipment operator14.7%: Occupation in manufacturing 12.7%	Federal PM (2021): Conservative; Federal MP (2019): Conservative; Federal MP (2015): Conservative; Provincial MPP (2018): Conservative Provincial MPP (2014): Conservative	VARNI: 3.29 VARUN: 0.30

Sources: 2021 and 2016 Canadian Census Data

Population and immigration

Stratford is located in southwestern Ontario. In 2021, its population was estimated at 33,232 people, growing 5.6% from 2016. The variation of number of inhabitants between 2006 and 2016 was 3.29. In 2016, people with immigrant backgrounds made up 11.3% of the population, well below the Canadian national average (21.9%). Economic migrants made up 37.5% of total immigrants and refugees accounted for 16.2%, slightly higher than the national rate (15.1%) (Statistics Canada, 2016). Between 2016 and 2021, Stratford received 35 BVORs and no PSRs or GARs. Stratford is not a federal RAP centre and does not host a reception centre for GARs.

Politically, Stratford is a conservative town at both the federal and provincial levels. The Conservative Party has held power federally since the 2015 and provincially since 2014. With its limited diversity, the city council reflected the political orientation of the community, as put by the faith group leader, "*we don't have any diversity on our council*".

Economy

The 2016 census reports that the median total income (after tax) for recipients aged 15 years and older in Stratford was $31,931 and the median household[32] income (after tax) was $57,216. The unemployment rate during the same period was 5.3%, one of the lowest rates in Ontario. Between 2006 and 2016, unemployment levels varied by 0.30. In 2016, sales and services employed 23.0% of the labour force, 14.7% work in trade and transportation, and 12.7% work in manufacturing occupations (Statistics Canada, 2016). Tourism is a major economic driver due to the annual Stratford theatre festival that routinely attracts around 1.7 million visitors (Ontario Art Council, 2022). The diverse economy and low rate of unemployment are in fact significant factors for attracting newcomers to the community.

Housing

In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Stratford were single-detached houses (54.5%), followed by other attached dwelling[33] (41.2%) and apartments with five or more storeys (4.3%). During the same census cycle, 66.7% of Stratford residents were estimated[34] to be homeowners and 33.3% were renters. Over the 2016-2021 period, the average price of a one-bedroom unit in Stratford, ON was $829, significantly lower than the average price of a similar unit in Toronto. Unfortunately, vacancy rates for small CMAs in Canada are not included in vacancy rate measures.

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[32] A household typically can include more than one income.
[33] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.
[34] This estimate is based on a 25% sample of census respondents.

Table 12: Stratford average rents (one-bedroom apartment) and vacancy rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
Stratford, ON: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	735	757	797	823	909	954	829
Toronto, ON: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	*1,134*	*1,197*	*1,263*	*1,363*	*1,424*	*1,441*	*1,304*
Stratford, ON: Vacancy rate of an one-bedroom apartment (6 units+) in %	n/a[35]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Toronto, ON: Vacancy rate (%)	*1.3*	*1.0*	*1.1*	*1.5*	*3.4*	*4.6*	*2.2*

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022

Local policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

Stratford is located within Perth County, but the municipality is separate from the county and has its own municipal government. The municipality has a social services department that is provincially mandated to provide income, housing, childcare and homelessness supports. It does not have a mandate to offer resettlement or integration services to newcomers or refugees. This was clearly noted by a city councillor, *"Our social services department have welcomed and offered services to our newcomers. But once again, those are services that they would make readily available to all individuals and certainly to our newcomers as well"*.

However, some resettlement services are available through local community organizations. In 2011, a community-based charitable organization was founded by an immigrant from Ethiopia, with the aim of providing immigration, resettlement services to newcomers including orientation sessions, community networks, translation and interpretation and assistance with citizenship applications. In 2018, the YMCA also started to offer community settlement services to newcomers financed by the federal government. Programs include community settlement, language assessment, orientation sessions, settlement workers at schools, and mentorship programs. This development came as a result of a local advocacy campaign.

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[35] Vacancy rate information for this CMA was not collected by Statistics Canada.

1.4.c Local case: Sherbrooke, Quebec (Medium-sized town)

Table 13: Sherbrooke summary table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Federal, Provincial & Municipal Political Orientations (2016-2021)	VARNI & VARUN
2021: 227,398 2016: 212,105	7.1% (14,550) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 40.2% (5,035); Family sponsored immigrants 20.1% (2,515); Refugees 38.5% (4,820)	7.2%	Unemployment: 6.7% Top 3 NOC: Sales and service 23.5%; Occupations in education, law and society, community and government services 13.9%; Business, finance and administration 13.7%	Federal MP (2021): Liberal Federal MP (2016-2021): NDP Provincial MNA (2018): *Québec Solidaire* Provincial MNA (2016): Liberal	VARNI: 13.45; VARUN: -0.20

Source: *2021 and 2016 Canadian Census Data*

Population and immigration

In 2021, the population of Sherbrooke included 227,398 inhabitants, increasing 7.2% from 212,105 in 2016 (StatsCan, 2021). The VARNI rate between 2006 and 2016 was 13.45. The VARUN rate was -0.20. Sherbrooke is overwhelmingly francophone with a sizeable bilingual (English/French) population and was characterized as an urban centre ('*ville*') by interviewees.

In 2016, Sherbrooke contained 14,550 people with an immigrant background and a visible minority population of 11,990. It is one of the largest hosts of immigrants and refugees in the province after Montreal and Quebec. In 2016, the largest immigration streams used by people who had immigrated to the town were the economic category (5,035) followed by the refugee (4,820) and family sponsorship (2,515) (StatsCan, 2016). Although the economic category makes up the largest category of all people who have immigrated to the town, both the policy literature and interviews suggested that since the early 2000s, people arriving through the resettled refugee category have made up more than half of the total number of immigrants arriving in the town annually (Ville, 2019). The most common countries of origin for immigrants are Afghanistan (445), France (325), Colombia (250), Syria (235) and Congo (215) (StatsCan, 2016). During the 2016-2021 period, the largest countries of origin for refugees included Colombia, Syria and Afghanistan.

The community possessed two additional features worthy of note. First, it contained many faith organizations (churches, synagogues, a mosque), some of which were very active organizational private sponsors of resettled refugees. Second, the town includes a small, historic Syrian community who first arrived in the late 19th century. They founded a Syrian Orthodox church that interviewees reported had been an active private sponsor of Syrian refugees over the course of the Syrian conflict. These features are worthy of note because they furnish insight into WP4's central question around the influence of the local on housing and employment access. Specifically, private refugee sponsorships depend *entirely* on the initiative and coordination of private citizens or organizations. Often, organizations who privately sponsor individuals are faith organizations like churches, mosques and synagogues who mobilize support from their local congregants.

Sherbrooke has been recognized both within Quebec and internationally for its well-developed and innovative municipal integration policies. It is a part of the European Council's *Network of Intercultural Cities*, an international association of cities (with populations of 30,000 or more) who collaborate to produce inclusive municipal policy. Members can also access Council of Europe experts to develop policy and attend study workshops. The network includes cities such as Barcelona (Spain), Lublin (Poland) or Modena (Italy) (European Council, 2019). Another notable characteristic of the town is that it is quite close to the American border. Interviewees mentioned that an informal border crossing between the US and Canada was close and had been used quite frequently by irregular immigrants between 2016 and 2021.

Politics at the federal and provincial level tend to be either centrist or left leaning. Between 2016 and 2021, the MPs elected at the federal level belonged to either the NDP or Liberal parties. At the provincial level, the MNAs belonged to the sovereigntist, social democrat *Québec Solidaire* and the Quebec Liberal parties. At the municipal level, all councillors and mayors ran as independents or as the head of small, local political parties following the Canadian norm. Interviewees noted that the recent 2021 municipal elections had brought about a significant shift towards greater representation and inclusion on city council. The mayor elected in 2021 was a younger woman, the majority of the councillors were women and three of the councillors elected were from racialized groups, a notable departure from the makeup of previous city councils.

Economy

Sherbrooke is located in the *Estrie* region which is primarily a manufacturing region (PERQ, 2021). The economy of the town itself is primarily driven by the service industry and the two universities (English and French) that are located there. The 2016 census reports that the

median total income (after tax) for recipients aged 15 years and older in Sherbrooke was $28,534 and the median total household[36] income (after tax) was $47,558.

Housing

In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Sherbrooke were other attached dwelling[37] (52.7%), followed by single-detached houses (44.6%), apartments with five or more storeys (2.1%) and moveable dwellings (0.6%). Sherbrooke possesses a higher number of renters than Ontario or B.C. A notable 43.7% of Sherbrooke residents were estimated to rent, while 56.3% were homeowners. Unfortunately, CREA (2022) only possesses housing price information for Quebec's two largest CMAs: Quebec and Montreal. However, as a rough indicator, the average housing price for these two CMAs over the 2016-2021 period was $336,871, almost doubling from $293,200 in December 2016 to $471,125 in December 2021. Between the 2016-2021 period, the average rent of a one-bedroom apartment was $551 in Sherbrooke, lower than the average rent of a similar unit in the major population centre of Montreal ($792). The average vacancy rate for Sherbrooke (3.4%) during the same period was similar to Montreal's rate (3.0%).

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[36] A household typically can include more than one income.

[37] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.

Table 14: Sherbrooke average rents (one-bedroom apartment) and vacancy rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
Sherbrooke, QC: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	517	523	531	544	571	620	551
Montreal, QC: Average rent of a 1-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	*719*	*736*	*764*	*794*	*860*	*880*	*792*
Sherbrooke, QC: Vacancy rate of an apartment structure (6 units+) in %	6.9	5.7	3.0	2.0	1.6	0.9	3.4
Montreal, QC: Vacancy rate (%)	*4.6*	*2.9*	*2.0*	*1.6*	*3.3*	*3.5*	*3.0*

Source: *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022*

Local policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

Sherbrooke was one of the first Quebec towns to implement a formal municipal policy on integration in 2009 and was in the process of renewing it when the interviews for this report were conducted in February 2022 (European Council, 2022). The policy defines the municipality's contribution to integration services in the following way:

> the city intends to ensure accessibility to its services, employment opportunities and different spheres of municipal life to all citizens from all origins and to promote a feeling of belonging to the community in collaboration with different relevant actors (Ville, 2009, 10).

The policy defines three specific roles for the municipality as part of its mandate. These include:

> a facilitative role intended to welcome and retain the immigrant community; an accompanying role intended to assist the immigrant community with their projects and to support initiatives emanating from this population; a referral role intended to direct the immigrant community to other non-municipal resources (specialized or not) because the municipality cannot nor should not respond to all the demands made of it (Ville, 2009, 10).

In addition to its formal policy on integration, in 2015, the municipality also established a formal committee, the *Committee on Intercultural Relations and Diversity*[38] (CRID), intended to address issues related to integration and diversity. The committee is led by an elected city

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[38] *Comité des relations interculturelles et de la diversité* (CRID)

councillor and is made up of citizens from the community. Their goal is to develop municipal interventions that promote intercultural relations and inclusive practices. One of the major pieces of municipal policy to come out of this committee was the 2018/19 *Action Plan on Immigration*, adopted by the municipal council in 2017 and enacted by both the municipality and its community partners. The stated objectives of the plan were to, "*respond to frontline workers who are confronted daily with the shortcomings of the reception and integration system as well as the 'néo-Sherbrookois(e.s)' who hope to permanently and harmoniously establish themselves in our community as citizens*" (Ville, 2019, 8).

The action plan defined integration as a shared community endeavour and developed specific goals intended to improve integration (Ville, 2019). Specifically, it identifies five intervention axes including: Establishing connections between different actors and the immigrant population; Economic integration; Social integration; Cultural inclusion and the fight against discrimination, racism, prejudice and extremism; Transversality and complementarity (Ville, 2019, 12). It also includes detailed actions, specific actors and anticipated results. Practical actions include conducting intercultural seminars, an employment matching program and changes to municipal hiring practices to promote better inclusion of racialized and immigrant people. Sherbrooke continued to develop and pursue these objectives in the *2020/21 Action Plan on Immigration* (Ville, 2020).

In 2020/21, Sherbrooke was also the site of a study on racism that was initiated largely in response to the global social movements against racism that occurred after the murder of George Floyd in 2020. While it goes without saying that not all people who immigrate to Canada are racialized and not all racialized people have immigrated, this policy does impact racialized immigrants. The study provides specific recommendations for the municipality to address racism and discrimination including:

> Establishing a policy and action plan against racism and discrimination in place in consultation with citizens, organizations and institutions; Establishing a recruitment plan that prioritizes representation of racialized people and the immigrant community at the heart of city employees and para-public societies that are associated with it; Compiling population statistics that allow the city to measure the differences between the racialized population and/or cultural and immigrant communities and the rest of the population in the areas mandated to the municipality (housing, public security, employment, democratic life, social and economic development); Establishing training seminars on racism and discrimination for all personnel of the municipality and para-municipal organizations (Blaise et al., 2021, 113-115).

There are three primary newcomer-serving organizations located in Sherbrooke. Generally, their major sources of funding come equally from the MIFI (province) and the municipality. These organizations offer essential services for people who have very recently immigrated, including activities such as French language courses (English language courses are not funded by the MIFI), assistance finding employment, accompanying services (for health care) and

translation services amongst other things. Community organizations that could be accessed by newcomers but are intended for the broader community include social and cultural organizations or tenant's associations. English language classes for newcomers are not funded by the MIFI but are provided by community organizations in the town. Finally, the municipality also contributed to the "week of intercultural exchange", a social event which was identified by multiple interviewees as a site for building awareness and cultural exchange.

1.4.d Local case: Victoriaville, Quebec (Small-sized town)

Table 15: Victoriaville summary table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Federal, Provincial & Municipal Political Orientations (2016-2021)	VARNI & VARUN
2021: 52,936 2016: 51,336	2.9% (1,355) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 24.6% (290); Family sponsored immigrants 34.3% (405); Refugees 39.8% (470)	3.1%	Unemployment: 5.5% Top 3 NOC: Sales and service 25.6%; Trades, transport and equipment operators 14.6%; Business, finance and administration 13.7%	MP (2016-2021): Conservative MNA (2016-2021): Coalition avenir Québec	VARNI: 0.52 VARUN: -0.40

Source: 2021 and 2016 Canadian Census Data

Population and immigration

Victoriaville is the second, smaller Quebec case study and was considered to be a more rural area ('*région*') by interviewees. The town is overwhelmingly francophone (StatsCan, 2021). In 2021, its population included 52,936 inhabitants, increasing 3.1% from 51,336 in 2016. Its VARNI score was 0.52. It is located in the *Centre-du-Québec* region and is part of the Regional Municipal of the County of Arthabaska (*Municipalité régionale de comté* or 'MRC').

In 2016, 1,355 people living in Victoriaville reported an immigrant background and 1,145 belonged to a visible minority group. Most immigrants came through the refugee (470) category followed by family sponsorship (405) and the economic category (290). It is worth noting that this distribution is very different from both Sherbrooke and Quebec at the provincial level. In 2016, the most common countries or regions of origin for immigrants were

Colombia (225), France (150) and various African countries[39](195) (StatsCan, 2016). Victoriaville is notable because it is one of the destinations for government-sponsored (Quebec) resettled refugees who made up 80.0% of all resettled refugees in the county in 2012 (MRC-Arthabaska, 2012).

Politically at the federal level, the MPs elected belonged to the Conservative party, which is notable for Quebec because the Conservative party is not a major party and typically does not receive a high number of seats. At the provincial level, the MNAs elected between 2016 and 2021 were all part of the centre-right, autonomist CAQ party. At the municipal level, mayors and councillors ran as independents following the Canadian norm.

Economy

Victoriaville is economically driven by manufacturing followed by agriculture and forestry (Government of Canada, 2022). The 2016 census suggests that most workers are sales and service occupations followed by business and finance. Its VARUN score was -0.40. The 2016 census reports that the median total income (after tax) for recipients aged 15 years and older in Victoriaville was $27,769 and the median household[40] income (after tax) was $46,290.

Housing

In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Victoriaville were single-detached houses (50.7%), followed closely by other attached dwelling[41] (49.0%) and moveable dwellings (0.3%). During the same period, homeowners were estimated to made up 63.4% of Victoriaville residents and renters made up 36.6%. Over the 2016-2021 period, the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Victoriaville was $475, almost half the average cost of similar unit in Montreal ($792). Unfortunately, vacancy rates for small CMAs in Canada are not included in vacancy rate measures.

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[39] The census entry lists these entries as "Other place of birth in Africa". This category *excludes* Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Somalia and South Africa. Togo is listed in other government documents as a source country.

[40] A household typically can include more than one income.

[41] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.

Table 16: Victoriaville average rents (one-bedroom apartment) and vacancy rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
Victoriaville, QC: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	420	452	462	493	504	524	475
Montreal, QC: Average rent of a 1-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	*719*	*736*	*764*	*794*	*860*	*880*	*792*
Victoriaville, QC: Vacancy rate of an apartment structure (6 units+) in %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Montreal, QC: Vacancy rate (%)	*4.6*	*2.9*	*2.0*	*1.6*	*3.3*	*3.5*	*3.0*

Source: *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022*

Local policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

In 2012, the municipal region (including Victoriaville) adopted a regional-level policy on reception, integration and retention of immigrant people. It was developed in consultation with representatives from the province, the municipalities in the region as well as the regional integration centre. The rationale for the policy is explicitly anchored in the labour shortage, a feature of Quebec's economy for some time. The policy characterizes immigration very positively, suggesting that it "contributes to new knowledges, the creation of enterprises, the creation of new consumers and the growth of international economic networks" (MRC-Arthabaska, 2012, 6-7). The portrayal of all immigration (regardless of immigration stream) as an economic issue and the primary solution to the labour shortage was notable in Victoriaville interviews.

A city councillor interviewed for this study noted that Victoriaville was actively trying to recruit families from the Maghreb region (particularly Morocco) to come live and work in the town. The councillor noted that they were attempting to improve municipal services to make the town and region more attractive to people from this group. They noted that major issues being addressed by the municipality included housing, transportation and family services.

There is one major organization for newcomers in the community. It serves the region but is located in Victoriaville. This organization is responsible for supporting all immigrants (government-sponsored refugees, economic immigrants, family sponsored immigrants). Its major services include: job market integration, social and cultural integration, language training and referral services amongst others (MRC-Arthabaska, 2012).

1.4.e Local case: Kelowna, B.C. (Medium-sized town)

Table 17: Kelowna summary table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Political Orientation (2016-2021)	VARNI & VARUN
2021: 222,162 2016: 194,882	13.9% (26,455) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 52.6% (7,605); Family sponsored immigrants 37.2% (5,375); Refugees 9.5% (1,380)	14.0%	Unemployment: 7.1% Top 3 NOC: Sales and service 25.8%; Trade, transportation, and equipment operators 16.0%; Business, finance, and administration 14.3%	Federal MP: (2021): Conservative; Federal MP (2019): Conservative; Federal MP (2015): Liberal Provincial MLA (2020): BC Liberal; Provincial MLA (2017): BC Liberal; Provincial MLA (2013): BC Liberal	VARNI: 20.0 VARUN: 2.00

Sources: 2021 and 2016 Canadian Census Data

Population and Immigration

Kelowna is located in the Regional District of the Central Okanagan, in the southern interior part of B.C. The municipality grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, becoming B.C.'s third major population centre after Greater Vancouver and Greater Victoria. It is the major town of the Okanagan valley. With a population growth rate estimated at 14.0% between 2016 and 2021, Kelowna (CMA) was ranked as the fastest growing in Canada. In 2021, its population was estimated at 222,162 people (Canada Statistics, 2022d). The variation of number of inhabitants between 2006 and 2016 was 120.1. The vast bulk of the population increase is driven by Canadians moving from other parts of B.C. or Canada. The community is especially popular with retirees from elsewhere in Canada, but the establishment of a university campus in 2005 has also brought more students from outside the region (almost 11,000 students as of 2020) (Global News, 2020). With a median age of 43.8 (compared to the Canadian average median age of 41.2), Kelowna is slightly older than the Canadian median (Statistics Canada, 2021).

In 2016, immigrants made up 13.9% of the total population, with 52.6% arriving through the economic immigration stream, 37.2% family sponsored immigrants and 9.5% arriving as refugees. Visible minorities made up 7.8% of the population and the largest visible minority groups were South Asian (2.1%), Chinese (1.2%), and Filipino (1.0%). The VARNI between 2006 and 2016 was 20.09.

Politically, Kelowna has a history of electing conservative representatives. Provincially, Kelowna was the home of Social Credit leaders Bill Bennett and his father W.A.C. Bennett, and still Kelowna reliably elects conservative representatives (currently from the B.C. Liberal party, which is a conservative party). Federally, a Member of Parliament from the Liberal party headed by Justin Trudeau was elected in 2015, the first time in many decades that Kelowna was represented by a non-conservative politician, but he was defeated in 2019 and the current MP (who won 45% of the votes)[42] is a member of the federal Conservative party.

Economy

According to 2016 Census, the median income was $34,509, and the unemployment rate was 7.1%. The participation rate in the work force was 63.7% and the major employment areas were sales and services (25.8%), trade and transport (16.0%), and business and financial services (14.3%) (Statistics Canada, 2016). Marketing and distribution centres of fruit industry products, the UBC Okanagan university campus, and Okanagan College were also major employers. The main employment sectors are forestry, manufacturing, high tech, and tourism. The variation of unemployment level between 2006 and 2016 was 2.00. The 2016 census reports that the median total income (after tax) for recipients aged 15 years and older in Kelowna was $30,954 and the median total household43 income (after tax) was $62,366.

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[42] Given its size, Kelowna is split into two ridings federally. The 2012 federal electoral boundaries redistribution placed Kelowna's downtown in the riding of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola riding (represented by a Conservative MP since its formation, meaning the 2015, 2019, and 2021 elections); the federal riding of Kelowna-Lake Country included the other parts of Kelowna. As of this writing, the 2022 federal electoral boundaries redistribution is recommending that Kelowna be split differently, with Kelowna's downtown (including Kelowna city hall) being placed in a new Vernon-Lake Country riding, while half of Lake Country would be in the reconfigured Kelowna riding. Different boundaries would likely lead to different results: an urban riding covering only central Kelowna and the university would likely elect a more progressive candidate, while splitting Kelowna into two otherwise largely rural ridings makes it more likely conservative candidates will continue to come first.
[43] A household typically can include more than one income.

Housing

In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Kelowna were single-detached houses (52.1%), followed closely by other attached dwelling44 (41.3%), apartments with five or more storeys (2.1%) and moveable dwelling (4.5%). Homeowners were estimated to make up almost three quarters (73.3%) of Kelowna residents, while renters made up the other quarter (26.7%). Although data is not available for Kelowna specifically, CREA (2022) reports that the average cost of a home for the entire Interior B.C. region between 2016-2021 was $568,232, increasing from 494,200 in December 2016 to $850,100 in December 2021. Over the 2016-2021 period, the average cost of one-bedroom unit in Kelowna, B.C. was $1,039, slightly lower than average cost of a similar unit in B.C.'s major urban centre, Vancouver ($1,323).

Table 18: Kelowna average rents (one-bedroom apartment) and vacancy rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
Kelowna, B.C.: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	864	937	1,003	1,095	1,145	1,191	1,039
Vancouver, B.C.: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	*1,161*	*1,226*	*1,309*	*1,385*	*1,418*	*1,437*	*1,323*
Kelowna, B.C.: Vacancy rate of an apartment structure (6 units+) in %	0.6	0.2	1.9	2.7	2.1	0.6	1.4
Vancouver, B.C.: Vacancy rate (%)	*0.7*	*0.9*	*1.0*	*1.1*	*2.6*	*1.2*	*1.3*

Source: *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022*

The average vacancy rate for the same period was 1.4%, almost the same as Vancouver, suggesting limited housing availability which is consistent with Kelowna's status as the fastest growing CMA in Canada.

Local policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

A local multi-service agency provides immigration and resettlement services to newcomers in Kelowna as well as community, employment, and family services. In 2019/2020, the agency assisted 1,780 newcomers (KCR, 2019). The agency is also a centre for the *Building Capacity to Support Migrant Workers* project launched by a provincial multicultural association and

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[44] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.

funded by the federal *Migrant Worker Support Network B.C. Pilot*. The project started in 2019 to enhance the knowledge and capacity of settlement and migrant worker support organizations, unions, professional associations, volunteers, employers and all individuals supporting migrant workers by providing them with tools, resources and training opportunities. The centre provides employment skills training, orientation/information sessions, translation and interpretation, community connection, soft advocacy, crisis intervention, emergency transportation support, emergency access to food, workplace rights, and responsibilities information, open work permit application support, permanent residence application support, housing or supplies and referral services to other service providers including legal advocates. Kelowna also hosts another local organization that supports migrant workers and provides similar services (AMSSA, 2020).

Finally, the municipality is a member of a regional LIP, the federally funded organisation that supports and coordinates the work of local service providers involved in the resettlement and integration of newcomers. The LIP conducts research to identify needs of newcomers and gaps in service provision to enhance the strategic planning of member municipalities. LIP members include: municipal governments, cultural groups, immigrants, the school district, post-secondary education, employers, foundations, local media, umbrella organizations, and non-profit organizations from the four Central Okanagan communities (KCR, 2019).

1.4.f Local case: Vernon, B.C. (Small-sized town)

Table 19: Vernon summary table

Population	Immigrants (2016)	Demographic Growth (2016-2021)	Economic Development (2016)	Provincial and Municipal Political Orientation (2016-2021)	VARNI & VARUN
2021: 67,086 2016: 61,334	11.4% (6,785) Relevant categories: Economic immigrants 53.3% (1,735); Family sponsored immigrants 39,6% (1,290); Refugees 6.0% (195)	9.4%	Unemployment: 7.6% Top 3 NOC: Sales and Service 24.7%; Trade, transport and equipment operators 16.5%; Business, finance and administration 13.5%	Federal MP: (2021): Conservative; Federal MP (2019): Conservative; Federal MP (2015): Conservative Provincial MLA (2020): BC NDP; Provincial MLA (2017): BC Liberal; Provincial MLA (2013): BC Liberal	VARNI: 10.67 VARUN: 1.60

Source: 2021 and 2016 Canadian Census Data

Population and Immigration

Vernon is also located in the Okanagan valley in the southern interior part of B.C. In 2021, its population was 67,086, increasing at a rate of 9.4% from 2016 (61,334). It is one of the oldest communities in Canada, with a median age of 48.4. The variation of number of inhabitants between 2006 and 2016 was 10.7. In 2016, immigrants made up 11.4% of the total population. The largest categories of immigrants were the economic stream (53.3%), family sponsored immigrants (39.6%) and refugees (6.0%). The largest source regions for immigrants to Vernon were Europe followed by Asia. The main countries of origin for immigrants to the area were the UK (1,535), Germany (780), the Netherlands (395), and India (360) (Statistics Canada, 2021). Politically, Vernon is interesting in that it has generally had conservative representatives at the provincial (British Columbia Liberal party) and federal (Conservative Party of Canada) levels but in the 2020 provincial elections, the riding was won by a nurse who had immigrated to Canada from Punjab, India, in 2001 and had earlier run unsuccessfully for the NDP in the federal elections.[45]

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[45] Harwinder Sandhu (NDP) won 36.6% of the votes, compared to 35.1% for the BC Liberal incumbent.

Economy

Vernon's economy is primarily driven by the sales and services sector followed by trades, transportation, and businesses (Statistics Canada, 2021). The 2016 census reports that the median total income (after tax) for recipients aged 15 years and older in Vernon was $29,495 and the median total household[46] income (after tax) was $57,565. In 2016, the unemployment rate was 7.6% and the main economic engines were agriculture, forestry, construction, tourism, and manufacturing industry. The variation of unemployment level between 2006 and 2016 was 1.6.

Housing

In 2016, the census reported that the majority of occupied private dwellings in Vernon were single-detached houses (59.0%), followed by other attached dwelling[47] (36.5%), apartments with five or more storeys (1.2%) and moveable dwelling (3.4%). Vernon possessed a similar estimated distribution of homeowners to renters as Kelowna, with approximately three quarters (74.7%) of Vernon residents estimated to be home-owners and the other quarter (25.2%) were renters.

Vernon is also part of the interior of B.C. (the southern region). CREA (2022) reports that the average cost of a home for the entire Interior B.C. region between 2016-2021 was $568,232, increasing from 494,200 in December 2016 to $850,100 in December 2021. Over the 2016-2021 period, the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Vernon was $832, substantially lower than the average cost of a similar unit in Vancouver. Unfortunately, vacancy rates for small CMAs in Canada are not included in vacancy rate measures.

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[46] A household typically can include more than one income.
[47] This category includes semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments in a duplex, apartment in a building with fewer than five storeys and other-single-attached house.

Table 20: Vernon average rents (one-bedroom apartment) and vacancy rates

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Average
Vernon, B.C.: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	706	768	796	866	914	940	832
Vancouver, B.C.: Average rent of a one-bedroom apartment (6 units+, $CDN)	*1,161*	*1,226*	*1,309*	*1,385*	*1,418*	*1,437*	*1,323*
Vernon, B.C.: Vacancy rate of an apartment structure (6 units+) in %	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vancouver, B.C.: Vacancy rate (%)	*0.7*	*0.9*	*1.0*	*1.1*	*2.6*	*1.2*	*1.3*

Sources: Canadian Housing

Local policies, initiatives or practices impacting immigrant access to services

In Vernon, immigrants, refugees, and refugee claimants receive settlement services from a non-profit regional community service society. This society supports temporary migrant workers as part of the federal *Migrant Worker Support Network* (MWSN) and develops partnerships with local service providers to serve migrant workers and their employers from Vernon and other parts of the North Okanagan region. Additionally, newcomers in this town benefit from services and resources made available in the North Okanagan region and coordinated by LIP which is funded federally, provincially, and regionally.

Vernon is actively engaged in economic immigration programs. In its 2019-2022 strategic plan, the municipality adopted the goal of attracting and retaining entrepreneurial and skilled immigrants as a part of its business development plan. In 2019, the municipality participated in the provincial *Entrepreneur Immigration: Regional Pilot Program*, launched by the province of B.C. During the same year, Vernon also was one of the 11 Canadian municipalities selected for the *Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot* (RNIP), a five-year program funded by the federal government to help smaller rural and northern communities attract and retain foreign skilled workers to meet their economic development and labour market needs. It is characterized as an innovative, new community-based approach for attracting labour force because the selected community identifies candidates for the program and are responsible for candidate recruitment and endorsement for permanent residence (IRCC, 2019).

2. Access to housing

Table 21: Housing summary table

CASE	Major obstacle(s)	Measure(s)	Actor(s) involved	Target group(s)
ON: Guelph	Housing affordability; housing availability; securing appropriate housing size for family size; socioeconomic stigma; concentration of newcomers in low-income areas; limited access to transportation	Social housing services including: information session; social housing assistance; referrals to housing services	Social Services department at Wellington County; Immigration Services Guelph Wellington	Residents of Guelph and Wellington County; Newcomers including resettled refugees;
ON: Stratford	Housing affordability; housing availability; securing appropriate housing size for family size; housing discrimination; limited access to transportation; limited social services;	Social housing services including: information session; social housing assistance; referrals to housing services	Housing Division at the City of Stratford;	Residents of Stratford; Newcomers including resettled refugees;
QC: Sherbrooke	Securing appropriate housing size for family size; housing availability; some housing discrimination; concentration of newcomers in low-income areas; Navigating French language resources (ex: hydro) and	Translation services; accompanying services; mediation services; assistance setting up language courses; tax clinics; cultural "twinning"	SANC; Action Interculturelle; SAFRIE; Municipal City Commission for Safety and Social Development; Sherbrooke Ville en Santé; Sherbrooke Renters Association	1-3) Resettled refugees (private and government sponsored) and economic migrants; 4) Residents of Sherbrooke; 5) Sherbrooke renter's community

	municipal resources;			
QC: Victoriaville	Securing appropriate housing size for family size; housing availability; rural housing with limited access to transportation; social isolation and formation of ethnic enclaves; Inability to access services due to remote nature of housing;	Construction of social housing; Financial bursaries for home renovation;	CAIBF; Victoriaville municipality and MRC region	1) Resettled refugees and economic migrants;
BC: Kelowna	Housing affordability; housing availability; securing appropriate housing size for family size; housing discrimination; limited access to transportation;	Social housing services including: information session; social housing assistance; referrals to housing services	B.C. Housing; Region District of Central Okanagan	Residents of Kelowna; Newcomers including economic migrants and resettled refugees;
BC: Vernon	Housing affordability; housing availability; securing appropriate housing size for family size; housing discrimination; limited access to transportation;	Social housing services including: information session; social housing assistance; referrals to housing services	B.C. Housing; Social Services Department at the Region District of North Okanagan	Residents of Vernon; Newcomers including economic migrants and resettled refugees

Ontario and B.C.

All our interviewees discussed the importance of finding a proper shelter to call home at the beginning of a settlement journey. This was powerfully articulated by a Stratford ON city councillor:

> *If a person is coming to Canada for whatever reason, they have made the decision to call Canada home and then where specifically in Canada do they want to plant their flag and say this is my new home. And for me I want them to do that with confidence, with the knowledge that there are all the resources available for them to do that. So, by that I mean, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, you need to have a shelter and shelter means a home. It is not in the basement of somebody's house because that is not your home. That is a basement of somebody else's house. You need to have a home, some place that you can call your home.*

The **major factors and challenges affecting housing** for immigrants to Ontario and B.C. included housing affordability, housing availability, securing appropriate housing size for family size, socioeconomic stigma, discrimination, concentration of newcomers in low-income areas, limited access to transportation, and limited social services in the case of small towns like Stratford ON.

Housing affordability and availability were addressed by most of our interviewees as the major challenges for newcomers to Ontario and B.C., where the housing crisis is most acute. High rents accompanied by limited supply of units created obstacles for newcomers. In the case of resettled refugees, the high housing costs in B.C. were viewed as uninviting or unmanageable and in the particular case of Syrian refugees, whose families are usually bigger than the Canadian average family size, it was a challenge to find larger rental units.

Housing affordability has been identified as one of the major challenges that newcomers face when settling in Perth Country, the home region of Stratford (Social Research and Planning Council, 2017). During 2021, Perth County witnessed an increase of 35% in the average price of a detached home and an 18% increase in the average rental cost of a two-bedroom unit (United Way, 2021). A city councillor from Stratford confirmed, "*Housing is a challenge. Finding housing is a challenge. Competition for housing will continue to be a challenge for us*". A leader of a faith group in Stratford explained the particular issue of housing in Stratford and the pressure it creates for newcomers and locals:

> *The economy is unique here too, right? Because we have three pillars of our economy. We have manufacturing, we have agriculture and we have the festival theatre… So, there's unique pressures actually on housing here, especially from the tourism sector. So, we have increasing numbers of housing that's being transformed into Airbnb… increasing number of housing units in previous iterations that were transformed into bed and*

breakfast. And then we have University of Waterloo campus which no one seemed to plan for on the housing side. There's all their students that just have nowhere to live in Stratford. We've all these demands that are perhaps a little bit unique to Stratford on top of everything else. So, if housing is a crisis, you know in Kitchener, I think it's actually even worse here in Stratford just because of those additional factors, right? A house in my neighborhood just went for one million and it's a standard house. Like, I mean, not talking about anything amazing. And so, if housing prices have gone that far in little old Stratford, I don't understand like it's more than doubled in last two years. It's just crazy right there, and there's no end in sight. I don't see it slowing down for a while, yet. As you know, I mean we in order to fill the labour force weight and maybe our commitments, to other countries to take on refugees in our communities here in Ontario and across Canada. I mean, there's a real push for immigration, right? And so, I mean that's just adding another layer to the conversation about housing again.

This housing challenge hinders employers' ability to attract newcomers to areas like Stratford, where unemployment is very low and the need for work force is high. A Stratford business owner explained,

The cost of housing is very expensive here and it makes it very difficult for almost anyone coming in. We get an awful lot of the Toronto retirees coming in and buying up the housing... Selling a house in Toronto and then coming here so the house prices are just crazy right now. So, I don't know how people would come here and buy a house.

A city councillor addressed this impact and the need to act:

The driving force like I said are employers, employers banging their drums that we need help, the government is saying okay we're going to support new Canadians to go to communities across our province, across the country, moving outside of the GTA or Montreal, Vancouver to smaller communities. But how do we make it happen? And that's where it kind of falls on the province and the municipalities too to kind of own that then.

According to the same city councillor, actions at the municipal level require a holistic approach that involves various community groups including the developers:

We talk about it at the municipal level here in Stratford, how are we going to address this? And it has been tasked to our Economic Development Corporation… but it's something that we need to work with community groups… take a more holistic approach because although the developers love to build million-dollar homes, that's not the answer that we need to look up. We need to look up how do we build more affordable housing for people

> *to come to our community, to be here. Again, it's a full circle. We need to have everything in order for that to be successful.*

Limited resources allocated for housing is affecting newcomers' ability to face the barrier of availability and affordability of housing in those localities. The CEO of a local organization involved in supporting refugee claimants in Guelph and Stratford referred to limited resources allocated for addressing the housing challenge, "*housing remains the most critical issue with the least amount of resources available for it*". An Ontario opposition MPP confirmed that municipalities should play more active role in terms of enhancing affordable housing options for their communities and for newcomers in particular:

> *Municipally, the intersection primarily is around housing and shelter… the biggest intersection at the municipal level would be on housing… municipalities can make decisions about having developers build larger units for larger families… they can encourage more flexible housing like multi-unit levels.*

Housing affordability is no better in Guelph ON, as confirmed by the business leader, "*Rents in Guelph have gone up dramatically and housing is more difficult than it was five years ago*". A city councillor in Guelph confirms the fact that housing is a major challenge for the integration of newcomers to Guelph:

> *I think successful migrant integration means easy access to housing, which is a huge barrier here. And it's getting worse. So, you talk about trends in migrants. I think the housing situation is worse now unfortunately. So, an ideal integration would be that you could arrive, there would be housing that is either affordable or supported.*

Another city councillor in Guelph referred to housing affordability as **a challenge for newcomers and other residents as well**:

> *So, the housing question is huge and getting worse, unfortunately. Even regular, like, even people who have been here for a long time, the costs are going up and it's varied. People are being evicted because people want to sell the house now that's worth two million or whatever. And it's not like it's a lot less expensive in the surrounding communities either.*

Additionally, housing affordability impacts newcomers' ability to live close to their workplaces. The Guelph's city councillor explained, "*If you want to work here and live here, the cost of housing is really problematic".*

The housing crisis in B.C. affects integration of newcomers as well. An immigration consultant in Kelowna explained how housing is number one barrier for integration of newcomers in Kelowna, "*So that* [housing] *remains the most challenging thing for anyone that wants to come here. How do you become an active member of the community, when you*

cannot find somewhere to live?... I think that continues to be a real, real problem." A city councillor in Kelowna confirmed same concerns in terms of housing availability and affordability, "*We did have lack of supply of housing. Our housing costs have almost doubled in that time we're talking abou*t". Similar comments on housing were echoed by another city councillor in Kelowna:

> *The biggest factor that would affect migrant integration in Kelowna is housing availability and affordability… Housing assessments jumped thirty percent in the last year, so an average house in Kelowna is just about one million, which is similar to Toronto, Vancouver. We've kind of well exceeded what housing price should be in a community of our size.*

The arrival of **Syrian refugees** in B.C. created another challenge of housing affordability and availability, since they **had bigger families and needed larger units**, as explained by a city councillor in Kelowna:

> *There was a large rush of refugees from Syria that came and that was a really big conversation to integrate people into our community. That was a large community conversation. People looking for five bedroom, six bedroom homes for these large families with lots of kids. And so we didn't have this. It's not just how we build houses in Canada, we struggled getting three bedroom houses. So I think how it's changed is, one we had that big integration of folks moving here. But then also we did have lack of supply of housing. Our housing costs have almost doubled in that time we're talking about. And so, the unfortunate reality is as folks are moving here they've had to be either more affluent or they've had to have supports in the community in order to be able move here based on the rising cost.*

Interviews in B.C. confirmed that housing affordability is affecting the ability of local employers of attracting the labour force they need. An immigration consultant in Kelowna stated:

> *I guess the other trend is that there is the housing challenges… So, the affordability continues to become a more significant issue. That has certainly an impact for people arriving here. Employers who are trying to meet the needs of their growing businesses and can't find workforce… It was a significant issue before, now It is on the top of the list.*

Similar comments were shared by a community economic advisor in Vernon:

> *Workforce development in our region and every region of BC is significant. We have significant labour shortage. We have limited ability to attract workers. The cost of housing is very high. The average home price in our region is somewhere around $800,000, it gets really high and we have almost 0% vacancy rate.*

Housing discrimination has been addressed as another challenge for newcomers to towns like Kelowna and Vernon in B.C. A local researcher commented:

> *Housing discrimination is again and again and again in my studies, which is sad... These are immigrants... women including single mothers, and, you know, gender plays a role too, race plays a role, ethnicity, your income, being on welfare or not, so that are different ways to discriminate.*

Interviews demonstrated the **limited action adopted by municipalities to face the challenges of housing**. The researcher discussed the needs in Kelowna and addressed the limited municipal actions:

> *Life is very expensive here in Kelowna, an aging population and certainly the lack of affordable housing and the lack of available housing are increasing more and more here. But if you want to attract immigrants, we need jobs, we need services. And then public transportation, etc. And in my opinion, the city has not paid too much attention to that.*

The policies, initiatives and practices that foster or hinder access to housing vary by level of governance. At the municipal level, newcomers can access housing services offered to all limited-income community members. Additionally, resettled refugees in Ontario and B.C. receive housing services through resettlement programs funded federally and provincially. Such services include information session; social housing assistance; referrals to housing services.

Migrant workers benefit from particular municipal programs on housing. For example, Kelowna B.C. is part of the federal ***Migrant Worker Support Network B.C. Pilot.*** The project started in 2019 to enhance the knowledge and capacity of settlement and migrant worker support organizations, unions, professional associations, volunteers, employers and all individuals supporting migrant workers by providing them with tools, resources and training opportunities. The centre provides employment skills training, orientation/information sessions, translation and interpretation, community connection, soft advocacy, crisis intervention, emergency transportation support, emergency access to food, workplace rights, and responsibilities information, open work permit application support, permanent residence application support, housing or supplies and referral services to other service providers including legal advocates. Kelowna also hosts another local organization that supports migrant workers and provides similar services (AMSSA, 2020).

Vernon B.C. is actively engaged in economic immigration programs. In its 2019-2022 strategic plan, the municipality adopted the goal of attracting and retaining entrepreneurial and skilled immigrants as a part of its business development plan. In 2019, the municipality participated in **the provincial *Entrepreneur Immigration: Regional Pilot Program***, launched by the province of B.C. During the same year, Vernon also was one of the 11 Canadian municipalities selected for **the *Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot* (RNIP),** a five-year program funded by

the federal government to help smaller rural and northern communities attract and retain foreign skilled workers to meet their economic development and labour market needs. It is characterized as an innovative, new community-based approach for attracting labour force because the selected community identifies candidates for the program and are responsible for candidate recruitment and endorsement for permanent residence (IRCC, 2019).

The **actors** involved with housing are varied. Housing services are generally part of social services offered by municipalities. Counties and regions are generally, more involved than municipalities in offering such services. In Guelph, the **Social Services department at Wellington County**; is responsible for offering housing assistance as it operates and manages housing services in the County and the City of Guelph. It delivers and operates the provincially mandated social and affordable housing programmes and provincial initiatives to prevent and address homelessness. The County owns and operates rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units and affordable housing units and provides financial support to housing providers and housing co-operatives. Additionally, the County funds affordable housing projects and assists community members with finding homes. Additionally, **Immigration Services Guelph Wellington**, which is a federally funded resettlement agency, provides newcomers with immigration and resettlement services to newcomers as well as community, employment, and family services. In Stratford ON, it is mainly **the Housing Division at the City of Stratford** that is involved in offering housing services to newcomers and local residents.

Newcomers to Kelowna and Vernon in B.C. can receive housing assistance like other locals from ***B.C. Housing***, a provincial organization involved in offering social and affordable housing, rent assistance, assisting with home ownership and addressing homelessness in B.C. Additionally, in Kelowna, ***Kelowna Community Resources***, a local multi-service agency, provides immigration and resettlement services to newcomers as well as community, employment, and family services. In 2019/2020, the agency assisted 1,780 newcomers (KCR, 2019). The agency is also a centre for ***the Building Capacity to Support Migrant Workers*** project launched by a provincial multicultural association and funded by the federal ***Migrant Worker Support Network B.C. Pilot***.

In Vernon, immigrants, refugees, and refugee claimants receive settlement services from a non-profit regional community service society. This society supports temporary migrant workers as part of the ***federal Migrant Worker Support Network (MWSN)*** and develops partnerships with local service providers to serve migrant workers and their employers from Vernon and other parts of the North Okanagan region. Additionally, newcomers in this town benefit from services and resources made available in **the North Okanagan Region** and coordinated **by LIP** which is funded federally, provincially, and regionally.

Quebec

Quebec is the **least costly province surveyed in this study** to either rent or buy a home – this is important to note because one of the major factors limiting access to housing in Ontario and B.C. is cost. Whereas the average cost of a house in Ontario and B.C. is approximately one million dollars, the average cost of a house in Quebec is just under half a million dollars. Similarly, while rents in Ontario and B.C. tend to average around $1,300, rents in Quebec tend to approximately $1,000 or lower. Further, **vacancy rates in Quebec are also relatively higher than B.C. and Ontario**, suggesting that housing is relatively easier to find. Social housing exists but the market is overwhelmingly private. Finally, both Victoriaville and Sherbrooke had a higher proportion of low-rise apartment and renters relative to Ontario and B.C. Below **the actors** responsible for housing in both municipalities surveyed, the **specific target groups,** the **policies, initiatives and practices that foster/hinder access to housing** and **the major challenges/obstacles related to accessing housing** are discussed.

The **major challenges/obstacles** suggested by the literature review and interviews included: a) Housing availability, size and location relative to necessary social resources and housing discrimination by private owners; b) concentration of immigrants in specific low-income areas; c) difficulty navigating French-language resources related to housing (ex: transportation or hydroelectric power). These issues are briefly discussed below:

A) *Housing availability, size and location relative to necessary social resources and housing discrimination by private owners*

Interviewees from both Sherbrooke and Victoriaville suggested that securing housing that was an appropriate size for an extended family unit (i.e. with more children, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins) was an issue. This was a particular issue in Victoriaville where immigrants from the Maghreb region were being actively sought. The municipality were actively trying to devise ways to modify existing housing so that it would accommodate larger families using initiatives such as renovation bursaries. In Victoriaville, they also noted that cooperative social housing projects and renovation projects were underway to address this issue. Finally, housing discrimination on the part of private landlords was also described as a factor limiting access to housing (ICI, 2021, 27). These factors were confirmed in an interview with the director of a para-municipal organization (a community organization with its own social mandate that is partially funded by the municipality and the province) based in Sherbrooke:

> *Of course, the question of housing is problematic. It's as if Sherbrooke has the desire to attract more [immigrants] than it can accommodate. So, there is a kind of contradiction there because I think in terms of housing, the city would not be capable of accommodating all of the immigrants it hopes to attract. So, that's a challenge, I think, in addition to the fact that certain landlords of immigrant people or refugees have problems accommodating their larger families. There are challenges of cohabitation, of living together.*

Also, it's normally the case, unfortunately, that these people [immigrants and refugees] tend to go live in the poorest neighbourhoods, so we have to add poverty to the issues at hand, which adds another level of complexity. So that's the reality, if not at the level of the municipality – but I think that in these past four years the municipality has engaged issues around intercultural relations and diversity, so I think that is very positive because it wasn't always the case.

B) Concentration of immigrants in specific areas of the city upon initial arrival

Interviewees from both areas noted that newcomers when they first arrived tended to concentrate in specific areas. In Sherbrooke, a particular area of the city, Ascot, was mentioned by multiple interviewees as the first major reception neighbourhood for newcomers. People tended to move to this area when they first arrived and then move to another area when they were more established, a trend that had been ongoing since the 1990s. This area was noted to be popular amongst newcomers because it is cheaper than the rest of the city. Although not explicitly mentioned in interviews, it is also possible that there were strong connections between newcomer-serving organizations and landlords in this area given the length of time it had acted as a neighbourhood of first welcome. The inhabitants of this area varied depending on the migration wave. People from multiple national backgrounds were reported to live in the area at the same time. For example, during the 1990s, it was home to many people from the former Yugoslavia. What is notable about this area is that newcomers tended *not* to stay there over the long term which is why the character of the neighbourhood was reported to shift based on the most recent migration wave. People tended to leave this area once they had become more established, suggesting some degree of social mobility and social integration.

In Victoriaville, a municipal representative stressed the importance of avoiding the formation of 'ethnic enclaves' for both the successful retention of immigrants and their integration into the community. They suggested that when people of the same background concentrated in the same area, they would be less inclined to learn French, making connections with community life more challenging. A former municipal official from Victoriaville noted,

It's often by waves that it [immigration] happens - recently, we've recently seen a lot of Colombians, Iraqis for a while - and this is one of the challenges that we see when we receive a lot of people from the same nationality. It indirectly creates mini-ghettos, even in our small cities, where they stay together. The kids all go to the same high school, because we have public high school, and they're all together, why? To protect themselves. They stay together because they speak the same language and that means that there is work to be done to ensure that there is cohesion between the academic sphere and the municipal sphere, the population, to help them or to allow them to participate in city life.

C) Difficulty navigating French-language resources related to housing (ex: transportation or hydro)

Acquisition of the French-language was universally recognized as a difficulty for many immigrants to Quebec, particularly those who did not come from francophone or Latin language-speaking areas. In cases where French was difficult to acquire, interviewees suggested that it was challenging for some newcomers to navigate housing services in French (or English, depending on the service).

The **policies, initiatives and practices that foster/hinder access to housing** included: a) formal municipal or regional policies and action plans on integration; b) municipal websites inviting immigration to the region; c) accompanying, "matching" and translation services provided by newcomer-serving organizations; d) a voluntary immigrant integration coordination group.

a) Formal municipal or regional policies and action plans on integration

Both Sherbrooke and Victoriaville had a formal policy on integration. Sherbrooke possessed both a formal municipal policy on integration as well as annual action plans on immigration that identified specific goals and actions related to immigrant integration. Their 2009 municipal policy on integration (which they were in the process of revising at the time that interviews were conducted) makes explicit reference to housing, which they include as a core part of 'reception' ('*accueil*'), the first phase of immigration process:

> *the term reception or establishment refers generally to the acclimation and primary steps towards adaptation. It is a short-term process over the course of which newcomers make the initial adjustments to life in a new country, notably finding housing, learning the local language, finding employment and orientating themselves to a society with which they are not familiar (10).*

In this document, **housing is characterized as an "essential municipal service"** alongside provision of electricity, water and public transport – a characterization that is repeated in the annual action plans on immigration.

The regional policy on integration present in Victoriaville also explicitly characterizes access to housing as an integral part of the integration process and identifies the CAIBF as the organization responsible for organizing housing for newcomers, alongside the provision of other essential services such as access to food, clothing and furniture. It also identifies **access to housing spacious enough to accommodate larger family sizes as a key challenge for the region** where average family size and structure (i.e. nuclear family with two children) have historically tended to be smaller than the average size of newcomer families' size and structure (i.e. extended family with more than two children). The importance of housing for immigrant integration was confirmed in an interview with a city councillor who noted,

> *The first issue is housing. The profile of a Quebec family unit is two adults and maximum two children. Our profiles, because we already have a not*

insignificant number of people [who have immigrated] working in the manufacturing sector, so we know that we are attractive to people from the Maghreb, the Philippines and so we know that in those countries, in those cultures, that the family size is often two adults and maybe five, six children, maybe more. That does not correspond to the reality in our country and the size of homes. So now we are saying to ourselves, we have this transversal problem that is finding quality housing that can be adapted to the needs of [incoming] family units. How can we develop renovation projects to modify housing to respond to this need? We are, of course, working on community cooperative housing projects with a 'modified' housing design.

b) Municipal websites inviting immigration to the region

In addition to these more formal policy documents, each city's website includes a section intended to attract international migrants to the city. The Sherbrooke website includes detailed information about how to find a home (including how to identify housing discrimination and resources to deal with it); what it means to be a 'good neighbour'; accessing furniture; establishing hydro, electricity and internet; housing insurance; and garbage/recycling. The Victoriaville website also promotes housing to immigrants by stressing its affordability and by highlighting a municipal bursary of up to $8,000 for home renovation intended for all residents.

c) Accompanying and translation services provided by newcomer-serving organizations

Both Sherbrooke and Victoriaville possessed newcomer-serving organizations intended to aid resettled refugees and economic migrants with the initial settlement process including housing. One of the major services provided by these organizations was translation/accompanying services, meaning that someone who spoke the newcomer's language and French would accompany a newcomer to an appointment and provide them with translation services or assistance navigating social context. This service could be used for newcomers to assist them with the practicalities of obtaining housing such as arranging apartment viewings, signing leases and so on.

The **actors** responsible for addressing housing concerns in both Quebec case study sites included *newcomer service organizations*, the *municipality* and *various non-profit community organizations.* In both case study sites, there was at least one organization that was responsible for addressing the immediate needs of newcomers when they first arrived. In **Sherbrooke**, there were three organizations – *Service d'aide aux néo-canadiens* (SANC), *Actions interculturelles* and *Soutien aux familles réfugiés et immgrantes de l'Estrie* (SAFRIE). SANC was most commonly identified by interviewees as the primary newcomer-serving organization in Sherbrooke alongside *Action Interculturelle* (a non-profit organization with multiple service locations). SAFRIE was occasionally mentioned as an organization serving the broader Estrie region. Sherbrooke municipality also had a subcommittee that dealt with housing for Sherbrooke residents including newcomers alongside other social issues. Finally,

Sherbrooke also possessed a renter's association and a community health organization that was mandated with coordinating community service activities surrounding immigration issues including housing. In **Victoriaville**, the newcomer-serving organization was the *Comité d'accueil international des Bois Francs* (CAIBF) and served the entire region. The **specific target groups** for these policies tended to be newly arrived immigrants (including resettled refugees as well as economic immigrants) or the municipal residential community generally.

3. Access to employment

Table 22: Employment summary table

CASE	Major obstacle(s)	Measure(s)	Actor(s) involved	Target group(s)
ON: Guelph	English language skills; lack of Canadian experience; recognition and matching of foreign professional credentials; housing crisis; limited access to transportation;	Support and assists with job search; resume/cover letter preparation; interviewing skills; local labour market and career transition information; individual assessments/counselling; referrals to existing resources for more intensive employment-related assistance	Employment Ontario EO; Employment Resource Center at Wellington County; Immigration Services Guelph Wellington	Residents of Guelph and Wellington County; Newcomers including resettled refugees
ON: Stratford	English language skills; lack of Canadian experience; recognition and matching of foreign professional credentials; housing crisis limited access to transportation;	Support and assists with job search; resume/cover letter preparation; interviewing skills; local labour market and career transition information; individual assessments/counselling; referrals to existing resources for more intensive employment-related assistance	Employment Ontario EO; YMCA Stratford-Perth; Multicultural Association Perth-Huron	Residents of Stratford; Newcomers including resettled refugees
QC: Sherbrooke	Immigrant retention and the "double immigration"; Professional credential matching; French language acquisition	Municipal policy on integration; Anti-racism study recommendations for municipal action; Integration action plans; Newcomer employment support service agencies; Promotional programs intended to incentivize immigration to the region and employees responsible for the attraction and inclusion of immigrants; Immigration coordination strategies	SANC; Action Interculturelle ; SAFIE; Emploi Quebec; Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec; Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec; MIFI	Economic migrants and resettled refugees; potential immigrants; municipal residential community

		for all relevant actors regarding employment		
QC: Victoriaville	Immigrant retention and the "double immigration"; Professional credential matching; French language acquisition	Regional policy on integration; Employment assessment services; information sessions on the regional job and skills market; employment orientation services (employment 'matching', credentialing, competence assessment, etc.); Employability services (C.V., reference dossiers, interview preparation, strategy, etc.); employment integration (accompanying, integration, mediation)	Emploi Quebec; Accès Travail; Chambre de commerce et d'industrie Bois-Francs-Érable; Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec; Economic Development Corporation of Bois-Francs; Carrefour jeunesse-emploi	Economic migrants and resettled refugees; potential immigrants; municipal residential community
BC: Kelowna	English language skills; lack of Canadian experience; recognition and matching of foreign professional credentials; housing crisis limited access to transportation	Support and assists with job search; résumé/cover letter preparation; interviewing skills; local labour market and career transition information; individual assessments/counselling; referrals to existing resources for more intensive employment-related assistance	Immigration Services Society of BC; Work BC Kelowna; Kelowna Community Resources KCR	Newcomers including economic migrants and resettled refugees
BC: Vernon	English language skills; lack of Canadian experience; recognition and matching of foreign professional credentials; housing crisis; limited access to transportation	Support and assists with job search; resume/cover letter preparation; interviewing skills; local labour market and career transition information; individual assessments/counselling; referrals to existing resources for more intensive employment-related assistance	Immigration Services Society of BC; Work BC Vernon; Vernon & District Immigrants & Community Services Society	Newcomers including economic migrants and resettled refugees

Ontario and B.C.

The major factors and challenges affecting access to employment by immigrants to Ontario and British Columbia are related to low rates of unemployment, language skills, lack of Canadian experience, recognition and matching of foreign professional credentials, housing crisis, and limited access to transportation.

Low unemployment rates and aging populations in the municipalities examined in Ontario and B.C. were key factors that pushed businesses to seek new labourers through immigration or resettlement programs which result in availability of job opportunities. A business leader in Guelph explained:

> *.... although the housing prices have gone up, it is more affordable here. Guelph is also fortunate that we have anyone who is willing to work can work. We have an unlimited number of jobs now. It's not an unlimited number of management jobs. It's not an unlimited number of white-collar jobs. But if you're willing to work in a factory, in construction and agriculture, in putting up drywall, anything, you can get a job. And so we're very, very fortunate and it works the other way around because the employers are actually happy because they need people to work. So, I think they tolerate when they're still learning English and they're not perfect. And I think that's why Guelph can be a welcoming place for refugees. It wouldn't be if someone said, oh, the refugees are taking our jobs. All I have to do is call Tim Horton's or McDonald's and say, do you have a job. The answer is absolutely they have a job, right?*

Yet **finding a job opportunity that matched the professional skills of newcomers was reported to be challenging**. As a city councillor in Guelph explained, "*The barriers to entry, you know, from Canadian experience to Canadian education, it makes it really difficult for a professional from outside of Canada to find employment*". A local bureaucrat from Guelph confirmed this challenge:

> *The reality is again, many newcomers work in these areas [manufacturing] because they can't work in their professional fields. This is a really, really unfortunate reality of the Canadian economy.*

Such a challenge influences immigrants' ability to achieve successful integration. A city councillor in Guelph described this challenge:

> *To me that is successful integration, of bringing them back up to the skill level so that they can participate fully. For example, one of the things that I notice here is that most fast-food delivery or the Uber drivers that skip the dishes most seem to be from minority communities, and I think that that is not quite right because I imagine a lot of people that are doing those odd*

jobs, if we had a more successful integration, that could be contributing to our community in more meaningful ways.

Lack of "Canadian experience" and limited English language skills have been addressed as other barriers to employment. A business owner in Stratford explains: "*Definitely I say language is the big thing. We have more success with ones that either know some English or want to learn English than ones that have no interest in learning English or it's difficult for them unless there's someone around*".

The **challenge of housing affordability and availability in Ontario and B.C. affects immigrants' ability to live where they work**. A Stratford business owner, who was involved in an employment program for GARs in Waterloo Region (45 km from Stratford) that offers the GAR training sessions at work sites, discussed the difficulties they faced with attracting those GARs to work in Stratford:

> *But the problem is they get some skill trainings, which we offer the, like welding or they learn a skill. And then rather than commuting to Stratford, they'll find a local job closer to where they live in Kitchener Waterloo. And then we lose them.*

In addition to impacting immigrants' ability to live and work, ***housing affordability and the ability to secure the not one but two income streams*** necessary to finance a home was noted by one municipal councillor in Kelowna as a determining factor that could impact the likelihood that a person would immigrate despite a high demand for labour. The councillor noted that in the absence of formal municipal or provincial policy on this issue, informal networks had developed between local employers that were intended to secure employment for the spouses of people who wished to migrate. This was identified as a gap in the local immigration reception infrastructure:

> *So I would say, have we developed policies in immigration? We often do it based on economic drivers as a gap in workers and we're often asking people to move here and then networking to find their spouses... We know that if they don't have... If they have employment, exactly what they want, but they can't get their spouse employed... So, I know that the HR folks at the biggest employers do phone around and go, "Is there any chance you have a position for this person's spouse? Because we would love to have them here but they need both incomes". Especially with the house prices that we talked about. So I think it's more of a collaborative discussion right now versus policy but there is lots of opportunity so I would say... Unfortunately, I would almost say, "No, there's not policies. There's just an understanding that we need more.." I don't know if it's policies... Maybe I almost think staff people is where I'd go? But we're just starting to grasp that we need that and, yeah, we haven't got there yet.*

The **policies, initiatives and practices that foster/hinder access to employment** are varied. Newcomers to Ontario can access employment services available for all residents of Ontario through *Ontario Works* program. Newcomers also benefit from **provincial funded programs intended to facilitate their integration**. For example, the *Bridge Training Program* aims to assist internationally trained immigrants to obtain employment certification in highly skilled profession. Additionally, benefit from the employment services offered by **regional immigration and settlement agencies.** In British Columbia, immigrants receive assistance with employment *Work* BC program in addition to *regional immigration organizations.* The services usually include support and assists with job search, resume/cover letter preparation, interviewing skills, local labour market and career transition information, individual assessments and counselling, and referrals to existing resources for more intensive employment-related assistance.

Additionally, some medium and small towns like Kelowna and Vernon benefit from federal and provincial pilot projects that are mainly designed to attract migrant workers and entrepreneurs. Immigrants arrived in B.C. through B.C. Pilot Nominee Programs (PNPs) received assistance through employment matching programs such as *Career Path for Skilled Immigrants*, which are intended to match newcomers and refugees with employment opportunities that correspond to their pre-arrival skills and education. Its services include financial help to pay for professional re-credentialling (training) or licenses, job-related language training, assessment (checking) of credentials and experience, career planning, communication with regulatory authorities, job referrals, and information on Canadian work experience. Additionally, newcomers can access Work B.C. services and the employment services offered by immigration and settlement societies in both towns.

The actors involved in these activities include: ON Work agencies, regional immigration agencies assist newcomers with their access to employment services. Immigration Services Guelph Wellington (ISGW) is a regional immigration and settlement agency that offers employment services to newcomers to Guelph. In Stratford, some of these services are offered by the YMCA-Perth. In British Columbia, major actors include *Immigration Services Society of BC, Work BC,* and community-based agencies like Kelowna Community Resources KCR in Kelowna or Vernon & District Immigrants & Community Services Society in Vernon.

Quebec

As mentioned in the regional summary, Quebec has been experiencing a **labour shortage** that has been ongoing for at least the last ten years. This shortage has been most acutely felt in rural and small cities (often referred to as "la région") because of internal migration to urban Quebec centres and aging populations. Immigration is often characterized as one of the primary solutions to this issue. As a result, a number of **provincial and municipal programs have been set up in an attempt to attract immigrants to small cities and rural areas** in Quebec. As one city councillor from Victoriaville observed,

> *....our politicians, we are obliged to ensure that our communities will evolve [and] will develop and I think that in 2022, immigration is inescapable, particularly in certain regions of the world. In Quebec, where there is a labour shortage, population aging and demographic decrease, it [immigration] is very important. I read a document this week where they said that the population of Quebec will decrease [more] in relation to the rest of Canada. In the next ten to fifteen years, Quebec is predicted to receive less immigrants than the rest of Canada and, what's more, when we look at Canadian provinces, Quebec is the province that is aging the fastest. We have a notable aging in our population. So, it's logical that political decisionmakers now are saying, "What methods can we use to rejuvenate our population or combat aging?". Yes, we could have maternity initiatives to encourage subsequent generations, but I think we need to work on immigration as well.*

The **major challenges/obstacles** described by community representatives regarding economic integration included a) *Low unemployment, immigrant agency and the "double immigration"* and b) *professional credential matching*.

a)   Low unemployment, immigrant agency and the "double immigration"

The ongoing labour crisis in Quebec meant that there was a very strong demand for labour giving newcomer labourers more agency in their choice of employment as well as mobility in their choice of potential destinations to live. Many immigrants to Quebec chose to live in either Montreal or Quebec City despite the presence of work opportunities in smaller towns. Representatives from the municipalities and regional economic organizations indicated that the retention of people in employment positions in smaller towns despite an abundance of work opportunities was a particular challenge that they were actively trying to address. An interviewee from an economic organization that assisted immigrants to migrate to small towns and rural areas suggested that this could be attributed to a "double immigration". This term was intended to encompass the *two* major cultural shifts encountered by immigrants who moved both from large urban centres in their country of origin to rural Quebec. Not only did the person need to understand *Quebec French and cultural norms*, they also needed to understand *rural social norms* as well. The interviewee suggested these cultural shifts could

be quite overwhelming, prompting people to be hesitant about moving to rural areas or promoting their return to urban centres:

> *The profile of immigrant people who arrive here, these are people who are very educated and they are urban. These are people coming from Bogota, from Mexico, from Marrakech, etc. Large centres. These are centres that are sometimes much larger than Montreal. So, Bogota, Mexico, they are not Montreal! [These people] are used to urban environments. So there is a phenomenon that we call "the syndrome of the double immigration". That means that these people, when they arrive from their country of origin, they frequently move to Montreal because that is where the employment offers are and the opportunities for the economic activity and competences are found. That's the first thing. Their cultural community is usually also in Montreal and so it's a double immigration because the social reality of the Quebec countryside is completely different from that. I'll give you a trivial example, but it's the accent. The way that they speak French in the countryside is different. They are less international. The rate of representation of people of immigrant origins is less. So all that to say that if the person goes to the region it's as if they are redoing a second migration. So that explains why it is difficult.*

b)   Professional credential matching

The policy literature review and interviews suggested that there were issues regarding professional credential matching and economic opportunities in both municipalities. While finding *a* job was relatively easy, finding a job that matched a person's credentials held in their country of origin could be a challenge, particularly if that person was in a professional occupation such as medicine or engineering. This is because **recognition of foreign credentials** varies by the country of origin and is controlled by provincially based professional licensing bodies. With some exceptions based on country of origin, it is common for newcomers to be required to undergo significant additional training in order to obtain a professional license.

The **policies, initiatives and practices that foster/hinder economic participation** include: a) Formal policy identifying employment discrimination and promoting representation of racialized and immigrant groups; b) Newcomer employment support services and recruitment initiatives, and; c) Coordination strategy including economic actors.

a)   Formal policy identifying employment discrimination and promoting representation of racialized and immigrant groups

Employment was explicitly mentioned in the formal municipal/regional integration policies and other policy documents of both municipalities surveyed. In both cases, the municipality was generally characterized as having a *facilitative* rather than *primary* role for economic integration of immigrants generally. However, in some policy documents the municipality was

explicitly identified as an employer of people with immigrant backgrounds. Sherbrooke's municipal integration policy, for example, provided an illustration of successful integration using employment:

Further, when we speak of equitable integration on the economic level, for example, when immigrant people find employment corresponding to their past professional profile (generally, the realization or the renewal of skills is necessary before the person can access said work opportunity). Also, it is important to make a distinction between employment integration and economic integration. The first, effectively, corresponds more to the first entrance on the job market without taking into consideration the type of employment filled, while the second is more based on the professional capacities and qualifications of the person (Ville de Sherbrooke, 2009, 10).

Both policy documents from Sherbrooke and Victoriaville discussed specific objectives and activities related to economic integration. Specifically, they discuss remunerated "professional matching" programs intended to integrate newcomers into the job market and the generation of a database of employment offers, employment preparation services. Victoriaville also included a similar emphasis on professional skills matching as an opportunity component of the economic immigration of immigrants.

Finally, a formal academic study on racism against racialized and immigrant groups had also recently been conducted in Sherbrooke that had been funded by the MIFI and coordinated by the paramunicipal organization responsible for coordinating newcomer integration services and the municipal committee against racism and discrimination. A report of the findings was published in May 2021. It identifies formal policy, formalizing hire procedures, regular "testing" of the employment sector for discrimination and training sessions as the four primary routes to promote anti-racist hiring practices. It also makes specific recommendations to the city as an employer (amongst other organizations) intended to improve the representation of immigrant and racialized people amongst city employees:

> Recruitment plans promoting the representation of racialized people and people from immigrant communities in city staff and its associated para-public societies should be promoted. A) Put a recruitment plan into action according to targets (ex: women, visible minorities, people with handicaps) that is informed by an analysis of gender, national origins, ethnic origins, physical conditions, etc.; b) Set representivity targets for each minority group addressed by the inequality in employment program and differentiate it by category of employment (employees, professionals, cadres); c) Produce an annual report, divided by said categories, on the progression of the action plan on diversity in employment and diffuse it to the municipal councillors and citizens (Blaise et al., 2021, 111-122).

b) Newcomer employment support services and recruitment initiatives

The newcomer-serving organizations of both municipalities and, to a lesser extent, the MIFI possessed a broad range of services intended to facilitate newcomer economic integration specifically, alongside local human resource firms, regional/provincial chambers of commerce and the provincial labour ministry, *Emploi-Quebec* that cater to the general population. In Victoriaville, these organizations included two human resources firms called *Accès-Travail* and *Carrefour jeunesse-emploi*, the local employment centre and the regional Economic Development Corporation of Bois-Francs (Victoriaville, 2012, 10). Access-Travail is identified as the organization tasked with facilitating newcomer economic integration for the Bois-Francs region including Victoriaville. In Sherbrooke, newcomer-serving organizations included the SANC, *Action Interculturelle* and SAFIE. Services offered by these organizations included initiatives such as: employment cultural sensitivity training seminars for both newcomers and employers; access to a bank of job advertisements, remunerated professional "matching" programs; skills upgrading programs and assistance generating French CVs and job applications.

In addition to employment services, at the provincial level, the provincial chamber of commerce for Quebec, the FCCO, began a program intended to connect immigrants to employers in rural areas and small cities called, "*Un emploi en sol québécois*". The initiative matches people who have immigrated who have functional French abilities and are willing to move to the country with employers in addition to a series of other support services.

The **actors** responsible for addressing economic concerns include: both Sherbrooke and Victoriaville municipalities, *Emploi Quebec* (the provincial economic ministry), *Accès Travail* (human resources firm in Victoriaville), the *Economic development corporation of Victoriaville and its region*, the *Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Bois-France-Érable* (the chamber of commerce for the region including Victoriaville) and the *Federation of Chambers of Commerce of Québec* (FCCO). The **specific target groups** include refugees (both government and privately sponsored) as well as economic immigrants and the host communities of both areas.

4. Conclusion

The Whole-COMM project identifies four major explanatory factors that can be used to understand access to housing and economic integration: *size of localities*; *political party in government*; *structural factors* and *experience with diversity*. The influence of each of these factors, including a provincial comparison, is now discussed.

First, the *size of the localities* appeared to play a limited role in newcomer access to housing and employment integration. Overall, locality size did not appear to be a good indicator of housing affordability across the Ontario and B.C. study sites where houses in smaller towns were noted by interviewees to be quite expensive. Economic demand was also high across all case study sites evaluated regardless of locality size. Rather, increasing locality size was most useful as a proxy for availability of settlement and social services . These organizations typically offered some kind of employment connection service (job database and job preparation services), housing information and support services and translation services (that could be used to assist with housing and employment). Generally, the medium-sized towns tended to have more settlement and social services available to newcomers than the smaller towns. These organizations included both specialized newcomer services and social services that could be used by newcomers intended for the general public. Yet the small towns were typically not devoid of services and, in some cases, were the sites of provincial immigration pilot programs intended to promote immigration to smaller urban centres like, for example, Vernon (B.C.). In Ontario and B.C., these organizations were mainly funded by the federal and provincial governments whereas in Quebec, it was mainly the provincial and municipal governments.

Second, *political party in government* **appeared to have an influence on access to housing and employment for newcomers**, however, this influence varied by level of government. As a brief reminder, political parties are *only* present at the federal and provincial levels in Canadian politics (with some limited exceptions). There can also be significant divergences between the policies and values of provincial and federal political parties of the same name, in addition to different funding structures. At the municipal level, local politicians including mayors and city councilors tend to run as independents (or the heads of their own small political parties).

Immigration and settlement services is the formal responsibility of the federal government, who set national immigration policy, legislation and annual immigration category quotas, select or approve the selection of Provincial Nominee Programs (PNP) immigrants and fund settlement services for all migrants (including resettled refugees) with the exception of Quebec. With respect to resettled refugees, the federal government either fully or partially funds the GAR and BVOR programs (but not the PSR program which is fully funded by private individuals or organizations). The provinces sign formal agreements with the federal government represented by the IRCC setting the norms of cooperation on immigration including settlement services. The provinces do have their own provincial PNP programs with

the exception of Quebec which develops all of its immigration programs except family reunification.

Throughout the study period (2016-2021), the political party in power at the federal level was the Liberal party who spearheaded the 2016 Syrian Resettlement Initiative. This was one of the largest refugee resettlement initiatives in Canadian history suggesting a relatively high and consistent immigration policy focus on resettled refugees by the Liberal government. **The federal government also provided direct and indirect settlement services as part of their role throughout the study period.** For example, employment-related settlement services are part of the direct settlement service funded by the IRCC and include: employment bridging initiatives, mentoring and networking, credential assessment counselling and skills training. The federal government can and do also indirectly fund employment-related newcomer organizations. There were no major changes to federal settlement service delivery during the study time period.

At the provincial level, the influence of political party transitions on provision of settlement and integration services appeared to be most prominent in Ontario as opposed to Quebec or B.C. Although there were political shifts between governing parties in all provinces surveyed, only the shift between the Ontario Liberal and Ontario Conservative government brought about a significant reorganization of government infrastructure dedicated to settlement services. This is interesting given, for example, the Quebec CAQ's campaign promise to decrease immigration to the province which did not appear to translate to any significant changes to newcomer settlement services and was not mentioned by newcomer-serving organizations in interviews.

Although migration *legislation*, *policy* and *programs* regarding integration tended to be overwhelmingly concentrated at the federal and provincial levels, **much of the *social mobilization* for and *practical work* of refugee sponsorship, particularly for the Syrian project, tended to be overwhelmingly *community-based* in scale**. This is because the bulk of resettled refugees in the case study sites arrived through private sponsorship programs, with the exception of Victoriaville and the two B.C. towns. This means that private individuals or organizations (typically groups of people or faith organizations) voluntarily elected to provide economic and social support services (that the state would otherwise provide) to a sponsored individual or family for one year. In addition to providing full economic support for them, private sponsors were required to find adequate housing for the family that they sponsored. They also provided them with social support and economic integration assistance.

Third, the two most important *structural factors* for understanding access to housing and employment for newcomers were the *low unemployment rates and labour shortage* present in all small and medium-sized towns evaluated by this study and *housing affordability and availability* in Ontario and B.C.

In the area of employment, **all three provinces characterized immigration positively as one of the major ways to address the low unemployment rates.** Most of the newcomer-serving

organizations provided some type of employment integration support. Further, all newcomers could access the employment services funded by the province and available for all residents. In addition, specific provincial employment programs existed such as the *Bridge Training Program* in Ontario that assists internationally trained immigrants to obtain employment certification in highly skilled profession. A similar program existed in B.C. where newcomers who arrived through PNPs received employment matching assistance through programs specifically intended for newcomers that correspond to their pre-arrival skills and education. In Quebec, a strong network of economic integration services specifically intended for newcomers that included municipal, para-municipal, economic and provincial actors was present. This could be connected to a relatively more acute labour shortage in the province, lower comparative proportion of immigrants in the general population and their unique relationship with the federal government regarding immigration and provincial approach to state organization.

Despite the positive characterization of immigration due to the demand for labour, there were a number of challenges regarding newcomer economic integration. **One of the major challenges encountered in all three provinces was *foreign credential recognition*.** Immigrants with professional certifications often were required to redo significant amounts of academic training in order to practice their former trade (depending on country of origin). **Official language acquisition, either English or French, was also reported to be a challenge for newcomers seeking to enter the job market.**

Housing affordability and availability were the second major structural factors. Ontario and B.C. possessed the highest average provincial housing and rental costs relative to all other Canadian provinces. Further, the cost of housing (both home ownership and rentals) had effectively doubled in both provinces during the 2016-2021 period. The average cost of a home in Ontario and B.C. was approximately one million dollars and slightly less than half a million dollars in Quebec. Unsurprisingly, housing affordability was discussed by interviewees as a tremendous challenge for both newcomer and non-newcomer populations in Ontario and Quebec. Although rents were generally lower in the case study sites than in the provincial urban centres, in Guelph ($1,105) and Kelowna ($1,039), average rents over the time period studied were very close to the average rental costs in Toronto ($1,304) and Vancouver ($1,323) respectively, indicating a very high housing cost for a small centre.

To a lesser extent, **housing availability was also mentioned as a challenge**. This was particularly evident in Guelph (1.6%) and Kelowna (1.4%) which both possessed average vacancy rates that were either virtually the same or *lower* than average vacancy rates in the provincial urban centres of Toronto (2.2%) or Vancouver (1.3%) suggesting that housing availability in these medium-sized towns was equivalent to or less than availability in major urban centres. Similarly, the vacancy rate for Sherbrooke had decreased from 6.9% to 0.9% between 2016 and 2021 suggesting that housing availability had substantially decreased over the study period. Across all the provinces, **housing size was also a major challenge facing newcomers with large families**. Namely, it was difficult to accommodate the larger family

sizes of newcomers – that often included extended family members – in single family homes intended based on a nuclear family model.

Finally, ***experience with diversity* also appeared to play a role.** Overall, at the provincial level, a substantially higher proportion of the Ontario and B.C. populations – over one quarter in both cases (29.1% and 28.3% respectively) – possessed an immigrant background relative to Quebec (13.4%). At the municipal level, the medium-sized towns all had higher proportions of people with immigrant background relative to their smaller peers. Although people could find jobs, one of the factors that appeared to deter them from staying, particularly in small towns, was the limited presence of a community from a similar background.

Overall, low unemployment rates were viewed as attracting factors for immigrants but housing affordability and availability were limiting factors in both Ontario and B.C. Conversely, in Quebec, low unemployment rates and comparatively lower housing affordability were seen as attracting factors while housing availability was a challenge for newcomers.

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