

Working together to support sponsored refugees

A literature review on best practices in settlement-sponsor collaboration

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About the Project

The *Allies for Refugee Integration* project seeks to increase and strengthen collaboration between settlement workers and refugee sponsors in Ontario and ultimately improve settlement outcomes of privately sponsored refugees. Led by OCASI in close partnership with Refugee 613, ARI is a three year IRCC-funded project that engages settlement workers, refugee sponsors, formerly sponsored refugees and other stakeholders in Ontario to find ways to improve communication and collaboration.

The Allies for Refugee Integration Project is funded by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

For more information on the project, visit: <http://ocasi.org/allies-refugee-integration>

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SECTION 1

Introduction

Allies for Refugee Integration (ARI) is a 3 year IRCC-funded project that aims to strengthen collaboration between settlement workers and refugee sponsors in Ontario. Led by OCASI in partnership with Refugee 613, the focus of ARI is to drive innovation in order to ultimately improve settlement outcomes of privately sponsored refugees.

The purpose of this literature review is to answer the question:

“What does collaboration between refugee sponsors and settlement workers in Ontario currently look like?”

Secondary areas of inquiry include:

- What is currently happening in terms of interactions, relationships, collaboration, or teamwork between sponsors and settlement workers across Ontario?
- What are the benefits of collaboration for sponsored refugees?
- What are the main challenges to promoting collaboration?
- What are the types of collaborations currently in practice in Ontario?
- What best practices in collaboration have been proposed in the literature?

Key terms

This literature review, and indeed the ARI project in general, includes many concepts which are not universally agreed upon that merit some consideration.

The term “integration” is frequently used in the ARI project and in the literature, however most sources recognize that the term “integration” (and similarly the word “settlement”) is a fraught concept in the context of refugee settlement. Most current definitions suggest that integration is a “mutual process between new home society and newcomers” however some models are more or less assimilationist in practice (Hyndman, 2011). Due in part to the difficulty of measuring or quantifying integration, it is generally understood that there is “no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration” (Hyndman, 2011, p. 7). While the term integration is used in an attempt to avoid assimilation, it remains contentious in the literature. The definition of the word “settlement”, while often seen as more neutral and less assimilationist than integration, still differs significantly depending on the actor and the situation. This project also has some implicit assumptions that increased and more effective collaboration will lead to better integration or settlement outcomes for PSR. This could benefit from increased exploration in the literature, however this review is not able to address these questions in its entirety.

Another term which requires some consideration is “collaboration.” A “Collaboration Toolkit” created and published in 2010 by the North Etobicoke Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) notes that there are different kinds of collaborative relationships. It demonstrates that there is a continuum of working together, from cooperation (a short term, informal relationship), to coordination (a long term relationship with a common effort or program), and ultimately to collaboration (a more durable and pervasive relationship with full commitment to a common mission) (Nayar, 2010, p. 5-7). Collaboration can be defined as, “a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards” (Nayar, 2010, p. 7).

Due to the lack of academic study on the topic of strictly “sponsor-settlement” collaboration, we have broadened the scope of collaboration for the purposes of this literature review. Therefore, collaborations explored below include any formalized teamwork between sponsors and sponsorship organizations and settlement organizations, as well as other actors such as provincial/municipal government, secondary education, and health sectors with the goal of working together to support privately sponsored refugees. This could include information sharing, creation of networks, creation of tools, pooling of resources, common events or training, etc. That said, an emphasis is on more formalized collaborations between Service Provider Organizations (SPO) and sponsors as much as possible, a key focus of our research.

Abbreviations

BVOR Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugee*

GAR Government Assisted Refugee

IRCC Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

PSR Privately Sponsored Refugee*

SPO Service-provider organization

* For the purposes of this report, the BVOR category is considered a privately sponsored refugee as sponsors are involved in settlement

Methods

For this literature review, both academic and grey literature sources were consulted. Academic sources included peer-reviewed journal articles found in journal databases such as Sage Journals, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. A focus of the literature search was on identifying best practices of collaborations between sponsors and settlement workers, collaboration in assisting sponsored refugees specifically, and data on the current state of sponsored refugees’

integration in Ontario. This included BVOR sponsorships as well as privately sponsored refugees sponsored under a SAH, a Group of Five, or Community Sponsorship. Search terms included: refugee, private sponsorship, sponsors, Ontario, settlement, integration, collaboration, partnership, service providers, and best practices.

Due to the informal and innovative nature of collaborations between sponsors and settlement workers, there were significant gaps in academic literature on this topic. As a result, we relied upon websites, consultation presentations, annual reports, and other grey literature. Some grey literature were provided upon request via correspondence with contacts at the SAH Council, Refugee 613, Toronto Newcomer Office, and the Etobicoke Network of Refugee Sponsors.

Much of what we know about the current sponsor-settlement relationship and sponsored refugees' integration in general was not found in academic literature. Even data on the challenges and milestones that sponsored refugees face in their resettlement is lacking. One settlement worker pointed out that "I can give you a gender breakdown of employment outcomes for GARs in our city or across the province that includes everyone, but we know almost nothing about the PSR" (Hyndman, 2016, p. 8). Some of the findings in this review may not reflect what practitioners are experiencing on the ground, especially since the experiences of sponsors and settlement workers and sponsored refugees may vary considerably. This literature review is not able to fully capture the experience "on the ground" but does attempt to capture the little research that has been done on this complex topic.

This literature review seeks to provide a starting point for discussions around the role of sponsors and settlement workers in working together to support sponsored refugee integration and begin to identify best practices in collaboration.

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees context

Since the creation of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program in 1978, it has been estimated that between 200,000 to 300,000 refugees have been resettled to Canada under the program. Architects of the program considered it to be a mechanism through which ordinary citizens could be involved in humanitarian issues (Ritchie, 2018, p. 5). The private sponsorship of refugees program came into national prominence when, between 1979 and 1981, 60,000 refugees from Vietnamese, Laos, and Cambodia were resettled to Canada, half of which were privately sponsored by Canadians (Alboim 2016).

There are various groups that can engage in private sponsorship, and various streams by which refugees can be sponsored to Canada. Those who are able to sponsor include Groups of 5 (comprising of at least five citizens or Permanent Residents), as well as community sponsor groups such as not for profits, or incorporated groups (Sponsorship Agreement Holders) who have signed an agreement with IRCC to allow them to sponsor (Ritchie, 2018, p. 5-6).

Sponsorship groups may name those they wish to sponsor, or they may be matched through the UNHCR for BVOR sponsorships (Ritchie, 2018, p. 5-6).

With the Syrian refugee initiative of 2015-2016, and the arrival of tens of thousands of Syrians in a short period of time, the need for innovation in service delivery became even more pressing. There were a number of new sponsors and new actors who became involved in private refugee sponsorship over this period, leading to an increased need to understand the experience of sponsored refugees in accessing settlement services and to propose innovative tools to enhance their integration.

The PSR program has been framed by sponsors as “additionality,” making resettlement available to additional refugees beyond those resettled by the Canadian government, known as Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) (Labman, 2016). However, the complementary role of the PSR program is constantly under challenge, with some believing that the government can too easily devolve into a relationship of dependence on sponsors. The private sponsorship of refugees has always been depicted as a grassroots response by civic-minded citizens (Ritchie 2018 p. 6). However, the nature of the program has also been seen to be a type of public-private partnership, with criticism from many academics such as Hyndman that it is an attempt by government to download costs and responsibilities for refugees to citizens.

It is worth interrogating the successes and challenges of this program at this time in part because Canada is actively engaged in promoting the program to other countries. The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) was launched in December 2016 with the aim to promote the creation of community-based sponsorship programs in countries around the world (<http://refugeesponsorship.org/>). With the promotion of community-based sponsorship programs as part of the “Global Compact on Refugees,” a new International Framework on refugees, completed in December 2018, it is essential that the PSR program be fully understood and its gaps addressed in a timely way.

Lastly, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada have released their 3-year immigration and levels plan for 2019-2021, which shows a planned increase in PSR arrivals to 20,000 in 2020 (this is an increase from the 2018 levels of 18,000 and 2019 levels of 19,000). With anticipated high arrivals of sponsored refugees in the coming years, the need for collaboration in settlement remains high.

SECTION 2- Findings

Roles of sponsors and settlement workers in sponsored refugee integration

In OCASI’s 2017 “Refugee Settlement Pilot Project,” confusion over roles of sponsors and settlement organizations as the basis for lack of trust and a barrier towards working together

was identified (OCASI 2017, p. 6). In particular, the settlement workers who participated in the project expressed confusion over the supports they were allowed to provide, their boundaries when working with sponsored refugees and their sponsors, what to do if a sponsored refugee client discloses challenges in their sponsorship.

The general consensus in the grey literature is that while there are various guides from different sources that attempt to define the role distinction of sponsors and settlement workers when supporting sponsored refugees, in practice there is considerable variance and confusion on roles, expectations, and the expected level of cooperation.

The sponsor perspective

The role of sponsors in sponsored refugee settlement involves providing financial and settlement support for the sponsored refugee(s) for up to 12 months (Munson & Atallahjan, 2016, p.18). Sponsors are also responsible for facilitating integration into Canada including assistance on arrival, assisting with enrollment in school and language classes, aiding in the search for employment, and more. Many of these responsibilities are outlined in the Settlement Plan, Sponsorship Agreements, and RSTP materials, however as outlined below, even in these materials there are inconsistencies in approach. Sponsor responsibilities for BVOR-sponsored refugees are similar, with the main difference being that the financial costs are shared between the government and the sponsors.

While we have an understanding of the defined role of sponsors, there is very little information in the literature on who sponsors, including their motivation and experience of sponsorship. One of the few studies on this topic is currently in progress by Macklin and as of present has only published their initial findings, but it bears considering in the question of role definition and capacity of sponsors. They report that, based on 530 responses from active refugee sponsors, they can profile sponsors to be disproportionately white, well educated, middle to upper class women over 50, many of whom are retired and have access to social capital. In addition, they found high numbers of first-time sponsors (80%) which suggests this is a new generation of refugee sponsors (Macklin 2018, p.53). It is important to note that this survey does not appear to capture the many sponsorships undertaken by family members of sponsored refugees here in Canada, perhaps in part due to the challenge of accessing sponsors who are family members or Group of 5 sponsorships. Further study on sponsor composition and motivation that reflect these realities would be helpful.

It is worth noting that from the sponsor perspective, collaborations also take place in the pre-arrival phase of sponsorship, when support for sponsors is needed in completing the sponsorship application and in preparing for the arrival of the sponsored refugee. For example, the Refugee Hub's "Refugee Sponsorship Support" Program, which was launched in 2015, connects sponsors with pro-bono lawyers to assist with private refugee sponsorship applications (refugeehub.ca). Some larger SPOs such as The Multicultural Council of Windsor

and Essex County fill an important void by providing support with sponsorship applications and orientation to settlement services that are available to sponsors, particularly for their existing newcomer clients who wish to sponsor relatives. While this pre-arrival stage is extremely important in sponsor preparation, it is not the focus of this literature review, but could benefit from further exploration.

The Settlement and SPO perspective

Settlement support is offered to newcomers by many kinds of community-based organizations which offer many different services and have different funders. Settlement Providing Organizations (SPOs) are one kind of settlement providing organization that is funded by IRCC to provide settlement services to newcomers, including sponsored refugees. Some of the key areas of support offered by SPOs includes language training, employment support, and referrals to services such as mental health support.

The responsibilities of IRCC-funded SPOs in supporting sponsored refugees is described as a “partnership of support” with sponsors (IRCC, 2017). IRCC says that sponsors are the “primary providers” and that SPOs can provide “language assessment and training, employment-related supports, and other specialized settlement services.” While IRCC recommends that sponsoring groups contact their nearest SPO, this is not monitored and SPOs rely on sponsors and sponsored refugees reaching out to them to access services. The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) outlines that it is a best practice for settlement workers to meet with sponsors before and after the arrival of the sponsored refugee in order to discuss what services are available and how the two groups will partner together (Catholic Crosscultural Services, 2016, p. 4).

According to OCASI’s findings, some of the challenges facing settlement workers in providing services to sponsored refugees includes confusion over refugee streams and program eligibility and insufficient information sharing across organizations and sectors (OCASI, 2017, p. 7).

The literature also notes that it is both a strength and a weakness of the sponsor-settlement relationship that each role is fundamentally different. With sponsors, the relationship is personal and immediate. Settlement professionals in contrast are expected to adopt a posture of impartiality and equal commitment (Macklin, 2017, p. 5). When there is a fundamental difference in where sponsors and settlement workers are positioned, some level of role conflict may be endemic.

Do sponsored refugees need more collaboration?

While the goal of the ARI project is to increase collaboration between sponsors and settlement providers, it is worth exploring whether sponsored refugees are accessing settlement services, and are there gaps that could be filled by more collaboration?

Some sponsored refugees are accessing settlement services

Some preliminary research has been conducted on the way in which sponsored refugees access settlement services in Ontario, but there is little publically available. In addition, much of the data available comes from those sponsored through a SAH and so may not reflect the reality of all sponsored refugees.

Recently published IRCC Open Data indicates that there are a number of sponsored refugees who are accessing settlement services at SPOs. From January 2015-September 2018 in the province of Ontario, 36,295 Privately Sponsored Refugees accessed services including Information and Referrals, Orientation sessions, community connections, and language assessment and training. In comparison, in the same time period, there were a similar number of GARs who accessed SPO services (37,530). Even with this data, it is difficult to know whether those sponsored refugees who are not accessing services would indeed benefit from increased collaboration, as it is possible that their settlement needs are being met in other ways. It appears that IRCC also sees the importance of gaining a better understanding of sponsored refugees' experiences accessing settlement services, as they have launched their own survey in January 2019. The data they collect will be used to make improvements to the PSR program (<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/client-service-survey-2019.html>).

The SAH Council conducted a survey among constituent groups working with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder on the topic of settlement service access. In the raw data shared for this literature review, a majority of sponsors did not report experiencing challenges in matching sponsored refugees with settlement services, and the most important types of services identified by sponsors were language classes. See "Survey of Constituent Groups" (2017) for more information.

Another survey among faith-based sponsorship groups found that 81% of settlement organizations reported that they have worked with faith groups on private sponsorship, and 78% of sponsorship groups reported that they had worked with settlement organizations (Brnjac 2018, 7). This study is one of the few found in the literature, however its defined scope of faith-based sponsors means that conclusions to be drawn will be limited.

Privately Sponsored Refugees versus Government Assisted Refugees

Another way in which the literature explores the success of sponsored refugees in accessing settlement services is through comparing integration outcomes of sponsored refugees to Government Assisted Refugees (GARs). The logic is that GARs have, by the nature of their path of resettlement, direct access to settlement support in the form of a caseworker, while sponsored refugees access settlement services. As we will explore below, due to the selection process of sponsored refugees versus GARs and other factors, it is unfortunately not always a helpful comparison.

Many studies on this topic conclude that sponsored refugees are indeed accessing settlement services, although at a lesser rate than GARs. One research study found that 69% of sponsored refugees reported accessing settlement services, in comparison to 87% of GARs (Hyndman, 2011). In IRCC's Rapid Impact Assessment of the Syrian Refugee Initiative, they found that fewer sponsored refugees were registered in language training than GARs, with sponsored refugees reporting that they did not access the programs due to work conflicts or not needing the services (IRCC 2016, p. 16-17).

Most long-term research shows that sponsored refugees have slightly improved settlement outcomes in the short-term, but similar long-term outcomes to GARs. Many reports, including a 2017 AMSSA publication, indicate that sponsored refugees enter the labour market more quickly than GARs. It was reported that between 2002-2012, 50% of sponsored refugees found employment during their first year in Canada compared to 12% of GARs, and sponsored refugees also reported higher earnings than their GAR counterparts (AMSSA, 2017, p. 1). Among Syrian resettled refugees one year after they had arrived, half reported having found employment while only 10% of GARs had reported finding employment (IRCC 2016, p. 19). Sponsored refugees tend to become self-supporting more quickly than GARs, however median incomes for PSR are lower than for GARs. This may be because in-kind economic supports are not usually accounted for, but it is also possible that sponsored refugees are being pushed into the labour force out of necessity, leading to lower incomes (Hyndman 2011).

While this kind of comparison is common in the literature, comparing sponsored refugees to GARs is most often a flawed comparison. Most studies of this nature do not control for factors such as location, country of origin, conditions and length of displacement, levels of education, social capital, and official language abilities that may differentiate sponsored refugees and GARs (Hyndman 2016, p. 14). Most studies including the IRCC study above do not take into consideration that sponsored refugees are much more likely to have higher levels of education, and have better language skills in an official language than GARs (Hyndman 2016, p. 15). In addition, nearly all data on integration of the different streams of refugees quoted in the literature originates from one 2016 IRCC study; "Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs (PSR, GAR, and BVOR)." Therefore, it is clear that this merits further study.

Gaps in sponsored refugees accessing settlement services

Despite the successes of the private sponsorship program, there is recognition that there is a need to increase awareness of settlement services among sponsored refugees and sponsors.

This comes through very clearly in IRCC's Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs, conducted in 2016. Recommendation 3 of the report is that "IRCC should develop a strategy to improve privately sponsored refugees' awareness of the supports available to them during their first year in Canada." In particular, IRCC argues that sponsored refugees are not fully aware of their

settlement plans and what their sponsors are support to be providing them. They recommend that at minimum, sponsored refugees should be informed about their settlement plan and be engaged in its implementation (IRCC, 2017). It is not just sponsored refugees who are unaware of available service, but also some sponsors and SAHs hold misconceptions as to eligibility of sponsored refugees for settlement services. This IRCC study identified, for example, that some sponsors believe sponsored refugees were only eligible for basic health services, which suggests there is confusion by some sponsors regarding Interim Federal Health program eligibility as well.

While sponsored refugees are in general settling well into life in Canada, there is still room for improvement in promoting available services so that sponsored refugees can fully benefit from programs that they are eligible to access.

The benefits of greater sponsor-settlement collaboration

In research conducted by the Afghan Women’s Association, they found considerable variance in the experiences of sponsored refugees in their level of settlement support from their sponsors and settlement agencies. Some sponsored refugees had positive experiences whereby their sponsors were able to support them in all their settlement needs, while others had extremely challenging experiences in not getting the support they needed from their sponsors or from settlement organizations. Due to this kind of variance, greater collaboration could benefit sponsored refugees in order to catch those who might otherwise fall through the cracks (Afghan Women’s Organization, 2017, p. 8).

Involving sponsors in the settlement of sponsored refugees provides economies of scale by expanding the resources available for integration beyond what a settlement agency could offer on its own. Sponsorship confers advantages to settlement agencies and to the community through including potential cost savings, access to human resources, the coming together of diverse stakeholders, decreased duplication of services, and enhanced opportunity to influence public policy (Nayar 2010 p. 1). Welcome Home TO, in a report from 2016, emphasizes the benefits of the grassroots nature of sponsorship, including that it has succeeded in mobilizing immense amounts of resources in relatively short amounts of time. They also argue that, “by effectively utilizing and magnifying the goodwill and resources of volunteers, we can ensure that resettlement efforts are agile and adapted to the emerging needs of refugees, which is usually more difficult for larger organizations” (Welcome Home TO, 2016, p. 22).

Research coming out of Montreal on the impact of the assistance of sponsors in the integration of privately sponsored refugees emphasizes the way that sponsors, in particular those connected to ethnic communities and faith communities, allowed sponsored refugees to access personal social capital that aided in settlement. In particular, they demonstrated how

sponsors create a network of solidarity and humanitarian support for newcomers (Hanley et al., 2018, p. 124). As Hyndman has argued, sponsor involvement in newcomer integration can be extremely beneficial; “direct personal contact between ordinary Canadians and refugees can be magical for all involved and leads to cross-cultural learning, respect, friendship and real two-way integration” (Hyndman 2016, p. 12).

Settlement agencies and community based agencies, too, are essential to the settlement of sponsored refugees. Sponsors often do not have access to the knowledge and resources of settlement support of the settlement sector. Welcome Home TO notes that some sponsor groups waste significant time and resources in an attempt to understand the settlement process while settlement workers have years of experience they could share (Welcome Home TO, 2016, p. 28). In order for sponsors to not “burn out”, and for the successful connection of sponsored refugees to services to which they are eligible, the role of settlement agencies is a key component to the overall settlement of newcomers.

With the strengths of each actor coming together to support sponsored refugees, there is a widely agreed benefit of collaboration.

Main challenges in collaboration

In order identify tools to encourage sponsor-settlement collaboration, it is essential to consider the following challenges and how they might be overcome.

Challenges in role messaging

Some resources that outline respective roles of sponsors and settlement workers that come from sources such as IRCC, RSTP, and others can be contradictory, confusing, or insufficient.

One of the main channels used by IRCC to communicate with sponsors is through the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP). One of their foundational documents includes the “Responsibilities of Sponsorship Groups & Availability of IRCC-funded Resettlement and Settlement Services.” This document outlines the roles of sponsors and settlement workers in the following way; settlement workers are responsible for language assessment and training, referrals and information/orientation, employment services, and community connections. Sponsors are responsible for financial support, housing, transportation, interpretation, orientation to the country, school registration, language training connection, employment assistance, childcare, and linkages to settlement services (IRCC, 2017, p. 2).

However, on the IRCC website outlining the role of sponsors, there is no mention at all about settlement services and sponsors appear to be responsible of all aspect of settlement support: (See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/guide-private-sponsorship-refugees-program.html>). Section 2.6 of this guide to the

Private Sponsorship of Refugees program outlines, “What are the responsibilities of the sponsoring group?” The responsibilities listed include many activities that could be done by settlement worker or in collaboration and yet there is no mention at all of the availability of settlement services. These responsibilities given to sponsors include locating interpreters, enrolling in school and language training, introducing PSR to other newcomers, providing orientation, helping in the search for employment. This gives the impression of sponsors that they alone are responsible for all aspects of settlement of the refugee they sponsored. While the IRCC “Settlement Plan” form completed for all sponsorship applications does indicate an expected connection (asking, “Which immigrant settlement assistance agencies will the refugee(s) likely access, and for which services?”) it is not a strong and consistent message from IRCC encouraging sponsors to reach out to settlement services.

From the settlement worker perspective, in one of the primary resources from RSTP for Settlement Workers on how to work with sponsored refugees, they are told that their role may be to mediate between sponsors and the newcomers to help in managing expectations. The advice given to working collaboratively with sponsors is that “the settlement counsellor’s role is supportive rather than primary” (Catholic Crosscultural Services, 2016, p. 4). There is clearly some confusion in official messaging from IRCC as to the exact nature of the sponsor-settlement relationship and role definition.

Another challenge involves how to work together while still respecting the need for confidentiality and autonomy of the sponsored refugee. While the needs of the sponsored refugee for privacy should always be respected, it can be challenging to strike a balance between settlement worker and sponsor understanding of where the boundaries of confidentiality are. This challenge was raised by the SAH Council in a meeting with IRCC in November 2018, where they outlined what their constituents have observed about a contradiction in messaging from IRCC about collaboration between SAHs and SPOs. The responsibility of SPOs towards privacy and security are outlined in their IRCC Contribution Agreements Section 7.0 where it says that personal information of the client, the newcomer, cannot be disclosed to any other person and they are liable for any breach in privacy. Due to these strict confidentiality stipulations, settlement workers are reluctant to discuss matters with sponsors (SAH Council, personal communication, November 7, 2018).

The Council argued that this is in conflict with other guidance from IRCC for sponsors that encourage dialogue and meetings between settlement workers and sponsors. IRCC describes the SPO-sponsor relationship as a “partnership of support”, encouraging SPOs and sponsors to work together to support the refugees’ settlement and integration, even suggesting that settlement workers should act as mediators and educators for sponsors. From the sponsor side, there is little guidance on what it looks like to work with settlement workers while maintain strict confidentiality rules.

Challenges in the environment

There have been many changes to the refugee settlement sector that have increased the need for collaboration and yet inherently make collaboration more challenging. In comparing the context of arrivals of the Indochinese more than 30 years ago to the more recent Syrian arrivals, major changes have taken place in settlement services and sponsorship. These include the closing of immigration and employment centers in the community, and devolving responsibility for resettlement and integration to the provinces and a network of NGOs. Through these changes and more, important elements such as sponsor support and monitoring fell through the cracks, and coordination was particularly difficult especially since the immigration department was no longer visibly present in most communities (Alboim, 2016). Given the landscape in which many newcomer-serving agencies find themselves, including reduced and fragmented funding, increasingly complex government forms and processes, and clients with increasingly complex needs, the challenges facing collaborations are higher than ever (Nayar 2010 p. 1-2).

Another challenge is the lack of support for private sponsorship post-arrival to ensure sponsored refugees are getting the support they need. The 2016 Senate report recommended that the government “develop formal monitoring systems to provide appropriate assistance to privately sponsored and blended visa-office referred refugees in cases of sponsorship challenges or breakdown” (Munson & Ataullahjan, 2016, p. 44). While monitoring of sponsorship has become recently at the SAH level by IRCC, it is often sporadic and does not focus on the needs of the sponsored refugees and instead focuses on the sponsors. IRCC themselves have acknowledged that there is no formal mechanism for monitoring of settlement activities of sponsored refugees across the board, and that IRCC staff were unclear on procedures to follow in the event of sponsorship breakdown (IRCC, 2016). Further study into the purpose and methods of IRCC’s monitoring of private sponsorship would be welcomed in order to understand its impact on the successful collaboration of sponsors and settlement workers.

Challenges inherent in the private sponsorship of refugees program

While the private sponsorship of refugees program has many strengths, recent pressure on the program has demonstrated some of the inherent challenges that make it difficult for sponsors to reach out to settlement organizations, or even successfully support sponsored refugees themselves. The very nature of the program is that it relies upon the goodwill and efforts of volunteers. As a result, if sponsorships break down, there is a risk that sponsored refugee may be left entirely without support (Munson & Ataullahjan, 2016, p 26).

Sponsors may be taxed in terms of time and resources due to the voluntary nature of sponsorship. They may be frustrated by excruciatingly slow overseas processing times, the

lack of backup plans if the sponsorship fails, and the high administrative burden of application and settlement processes (Hyndman 2016, p. 15-16). Some of the most challenging areas that sponsors identified in supporting sponsored refugees was in helping newcomers find employment commensurate with their skills (76%), language barriers (60%) and managing expectations (48%) (ENRS, 2018, p. 12). The administrative burden of sponsorship on sponsors and SAHs is high, and the ability to reach out to settlement agencies for help varies from one sponsorship group to another.

Another challenge inherent in the program is the confusion around which settlement services are available for sponsored refugees. Many newcomers learn about settlement through family and friends, and misinformation may occur which can lead to challenges in expectations of sponsored refugees. In a study among recently resettled refugees in Alberta, sponsored refugees felt that GARs had more resources at their disposal, and were dissatisfied with the quality of language instruction they received (Agrawal & Zeitouny, 2017). The private sponsorship program has long been an avenue for family reunification with family members here in Canada (Macklin, 2018). This family-linked nature of a large number of sponsorship means that there is an additional layer of confusion involved in communicating with sponsors about settlement services and sponsor responsibilities.

As sponsors are not extensively trained in providing support to newcomers, they may bring assimilationist orientation to working with newcomers, including excessive intrusiveness in the lives of refugees (Hyndman 2016, p. 16). This is often a barrier to settlement organizations willing to engage with sponsors, as it runs contrary to their professional responsibility of impartiality and cultural competency.

Challenges inherent in settlement agencies

Settlement agencies have the expertise and mandate to support sponsored refugees in their integration in Canada. However, there are a number of reasons why settlement agencies may not be able to collaborate with sponsors, or why sponsored refugees may feel unable to access settlement services.

Settlement agencies are sometimes not able to collaborate as they have a lot of work to do with limited capacity. As some of the most visible organizations in the refugee-serving sector, settlement agencies are under pressure to provide information to the public about the immigration system. However, most SPOs in particular are not funded to “screen, train, and support the community interest” (Munson & Atallahjan, 2016, p. 24). The challenge of “underfunding” has been identified as a barrier to the settlement sector meeting the needs of sponsored refugees. IRCC has acknowledged they weren’t able to provide resources and information to settlement workers that would have allowed them to respond to sponsors, particularly during the Syrian resettlement in 2015-2016 (Munson & Atallahjan, 2016, p. 25).

The literature also identified a number of challenges that sponsors face when they reach out to get information or support for the newcomers they are sponsoring. Some sponsors who did visit settlement agencies with the newcomers felt frustrated by what they saw as ineffective referrals, inconsistent information, and delivery that is driven by quantitative metrics and outdated models instead of responding to the realities on the ground (Welcome Home TO, 2016, p. 12). Sponsored refugee themselves also shared that they desire more “individualized and accessible” support from settlement workers, beyond public workshops (ENRS, 2018, p. 46).

It is interesting to note that there was a lot of literature on the challenges that sponsors, but very little on the internal barriers that settlement agencies face when serving sponsored refugees. It would be useful to see more research on the impact of funding models of settlement agencies on their ability to serve sponsored refugees and work with sponsors, but this information didn’t appear in the research.

Types of collaborations

Collaborations between sponsors and settlement organizations are very briefly and incompletely addressed in the literature. Most of the examples of collaborations are found in grey literature such as conference presentations, annual reports, working papers, and preliminary findings from new studies.

Below are a few types of collaborations that are currently being tested, implemented, or have been successful in promoting greater integration of settlement support from various actors in support of sponsored refugees.

Cross-sector and multi-stakeholder collaborations

One of the most common example of collaboration between sponsors and settlement providers is in multi-stakeholder partnerships, with an emphasis on cross-sector collaborations.

Access Alliance did a research report after the Syria resettlement in which they identified the mobilization of cross-sector partnerships as a best practice. They gave the examples of municipal and regional leaders working together instead of competing, and the involvement of new stakeholders like school boards and police services as successful innovations in enabling better resettlement outcomes (Access Alliance, 2017, p. 4). They also identified innovations in service delivery through these collaborations such as the creation of new roles to coordinate activities such as Syrian mental health workers being shared across settlement agencies in Peel (Access Alliance, 2017, p. 4). Cross-sector collaboration, as outlined in the report, could take on many different forms from regional roundtables to interagency networks, but all with

the same outcome of better mobilizing resources and sharing information to assist in refugee resettlement.

Naomi Alboim, in her comparison of the Indochinese resettlement versus the Syrian resettlement, stressed the importance of partnerships across various levels, in particular with government, arguing that, “multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration at the international, national, provincial and local levels matter: these partnerships must be based on common goals, trust and respect” (Alboim, 2016).

Case Study: Kitchener-Waterloo

The Kitchener-Waterloo region is rich in examples of cross-sectoral partnerships and initiatives involving settlement organizations, SAHs, sponsors, and community members in support of all newcomers. The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership is one such example of a successful collaboration. Like many LIPs across Canada, The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership is a community collaboration that involves SAHs, business groups, social service agencies, ethnocultural groups, government representatives and settlement organizations who meet often to share information and discuss topics of common interest. Collaborating on sharing information, programming, and advocacy on issues such as health, housing, language learning and more, the partnership is actively engaged with all levels of the community in promoting opportunities for newcomers (Immigration Partnership, 2018).

In regards to specific PSR initiatives, the Immigration Partnership has conducted forums and events for Syrian refugees in the area, raised money on behalf of sponsors and newcomers to fill gaps in service delivery and other supports, educate service providers on how to support refugees, among other activities. As an example, they hosted an event entitled “Three Lanes on the Refugee Highway” as a way to bring together agencies working with PSR, GARs, and refugee claimants as a forum of information-sharing across different sectors. This case study demonstrates how collaboration can benefit all newcomers, not just PSR, and how an all-sector approach means that gaps can be identified and responded to collectively.

Domain-specific Collaborations

Many collaborations emerge as a result of a targeted intervention in particular domains by sponsors, settlement, or other partners to assist sponsored refugees.

Case Study: Helping Newcomers Work

One domain where collaborations have emerged between sponsors and settlement organizations is for employment support. The website “helpingnewcomerswork.ca” was co-founded by Jim Shenkman and Helga Breier and is a digital hub to provide information and support to sponsors to assist sponsored refugees to find employment. This was a sponsor-led

initiative in which the founders collaborated with Agincourt Community Services Association (ACSA), a non-profit, multi-service agency based in Scarborough, Ontario.

Case Study: Toronto Refugee Support Initiative

Another example of a successful domain specific collaboration is the Toronto Refugee Sponsorship Support Initiative. This was funded (temporarily) by the City of Toronto to assist in resolving sponsorship disputes by clarifying rules of refugee sponsorship and providing dispute resolution support for sponsors, PSR, and settlement organizations. This initiative responded to potential breakdowns, ultimately resulting in more successful sponsorships. (Catholic Crosscultural Services, 2017, p. 8)

Formalized connection between sponsored refugees, sponsors, and settlement

Another form in which collaborations may take place is through various methods of formally connecting sponsored refugees and their sponsors to settlement providers.

Research emerging from the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO) identified the need to streamline referral processes to SPOs for sponsored refugees as an important step to improve collaboration between sponsors and service providers. In particular, they recommended that MANSO (the umbrella organization for immigrant and refugee service providers in Manitoba), RSTP, and SAHs collaborate in order to better define roles and responsibilities of sponsors and SPOs, as well as streamlining the process of referring sponsored refugees to an agency. They suggested holding a joint meeting between a sponsorship group and settlement agency to discuss available settlement services, and including referrals to SPOs on the Settlement Plan checklist (MANSO, 2018, p. 11).

Another method of connection suggested in the literature is to involve all three players in the creation and implementation of the Settlement Plan, the IRCC form that outlines the settlement responsibilities of sponsorship group. The Centre for Community Based Research suggested that “settlement organizations can contact sponsorship groups to facilitate connections between refugees and the local web of support” (The Centre for Community Based Research 2017, p. 6). Other related ideas in the literature include a “one stop shop” where sponsored refugees and sponsors can get settlement information, community hubs and co-location agreements.

Case Study: RSTP

The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program responded to this need to have better connections between sponsors and settlement organizations by spreading out their presence across the country, right into the offices of settlement organizations themselves. Catholic Crosscultural

Services developed agreements in 2016-2017 with settlement agencies in six cities across the country which allowed “regional trainers to create deeper connections with settlement agencies and bridge the relationship of settlement agencies and the sponsorship community” (Catholic Crosscultural Services, 2017, p. 7).

Training and capacity building

One common way in which settlement-sponsor collaboration occurs is providing training opportunities and capacity building for both sponsors and settlement workers.

Some training focuses on providing sponsors with information on settlement; as discussed above, some sponsors lack the expertise in settlement, and so ensuring that sponsors are aware of the settlement services in their community is a key intervention. Training for sponsors may also involve countering myths and misinformation among sponsors about the refugee sponsorship program, “ensuring that private sponsors and other citizens have accurate orientation to the refugee selection and resettlement process” in order to avoid sponsor burnout and misunderstandings (The Centre for Community Based Research 2017, p. 7).

On the other side, settlement workers also would benefit from training in order to engage better with sponsors and be able to better support sponsored refugees. OCASI’s 2017 research with settlement workers suggests that frontline staff could benefit from more training on topics such as the different refugee streams, what to do in the event of sponsorship breakdown, new immigration regulations and policies, and more (OCASI 2017, p. 10).

Case Study- The Etobicoke Network of Refugee Sponsors

The Etobicoke Network of Refugee Sponsors (a collaboration between Islington United Church and Ecumenical Links Etobicoke) was formed in 2016 to support refugee sponsors. One major offering of the network is to bring together different actors and provide training and networking opportunities to sponsors, PSR, and settlement.

ENRS research among sponsors has found that there are significant gaps in sponsor support in the formal and informal settlement sector, with few resources available for sponsors to access once the sponsored refugee had arrived (in particular in employment support), as well as in mentorship, and in services that were accessible and welcoming to sponsors (ENRS, 2018, p. 23-24). They found that, “many sponsors, though eligible to receive support from settlement service organizations, do not feel comfortable seeking out support from those organizations due to the fact that settlement service agencies are mandated to provide services directly to newcomers” (ENRS, 2018, p. 24).

Innovation and Technology

There were many reports produced on lessons learned through the arrival of Syrian refugees over the course of 2015-2016. This was a massive undertaking by sponsors and settlement organizations, and many innovations in communication, coordination, and provision of services arose as a necessity.

The use of technology to enable better support for sponsored refugees by the settlement and sponsorship community also emerged as a kind of collaboration. Refugee 613, for example, improved information flow for Arabic-speaking sponsored refugees through collaborating with partners at the YMCA/YWCA Newcomer Information Centre as part of a WhatsApp group to provide information and referrals in Arabic. From 2017-2018, around 16,358 messages were exchanged on this platform to promote PSR settlement.

Case Study- Lifeline Syria

Lifeline Syria is an organization created in 2015 to help sponsor groups welcome and assist private sponsored refugees (<http://lifelinesyria.ca/>). One of the founders of the organization was Dr. Wendy Cukier, who was working at the time as Ryerson University's Vice-President of Research and Innovation. Dr. Cukier compared the way that new sponsorship groups, which brought in massive involvement of students and university community members, to the "sharing economy." She argued that by challenging traditional processes of sponsorship, such as not requiring sponsors to complete onerous paperwork, it opened up innovative approaches to PSR support in the community and offers economies of scale by tapping into a new community's resources and efforts (Cukier & Jackson, 2016).

Best Practices in Collaborations

The following best practices were the main factors identified in the literature as key to the successful promotion of collaboration between sponsors and settlement workers in the support of sponsored refugees.

Harness general goodwill

Many sources cited the importance of building a sense of communal effort and general goodwill to support refugees as essential to the encouragement of collaboration between sponsors and settlement. In their study among faith-based sponsorship groups, the Centre for Community Based Research emphasized that, "building partnerships requires a paradigm shift from 'how can my organization or group help those people' to 'how can we support newcomers in our community'" (Brnjas, 2018, p.9).

In a report on lessons learned from the Syrian crisis, Access Alliance also echoed the need for "general goodwill" in the successful collaboration of various partners in refugee resettlement,

especially in the harnessing of the heightened interest in volunteers and the general public in supporting settlement providers and other agencies in welcoming refugees (Access Alliance, 2017, p. 8). One concrete suggestion was to share positive stories and examples of successful partnerships in order to increase trust and build collaboration between sponsors and settlement workers (Brnjas 2018, p. 9).

Focus on the needs of the sponsored refugee

Another best practice in promoting collaboration is to keep the focus on what inspires both settlement workers and sponsors, supporting the settlement of privately sponsored refugees.

One survey of faith-based sponsorship groups and settlement organizations found that, from the perspective of settlement organizations, partnerships would increase if they felt the partnership would help them to address a service gap that would otherwise not be possible to fill, and if they could see clearly how the partnership would benefit newcomers (Brnjas 2017, 8). In their research among settlement workers, 94% of settlement workers reported that partnerships were motivated by recognizing that faith groups are important to newcomers, and 76% saw it as addressing a service gap.

On the sponsor side, many wished to see stronger evidence of the benefits of partnering with settlement organizations and hear more examples of successful partnerships (Brnjas 2018, 8). However, 93% of sponsors saw partnerships as a way to address a service gap, and 60% recognized they lack some expertise in settlement (Brnjas 2017, p. 14).

This was echoed by the findings of Welcome Home TO who noted that sponsors are primarily driven to volunteer by a perceived lack of capacity in settlement services for sponsored refugees (Welcome Home TO, 2016). In promoting collaboration, it could be helpful to motivate sponsors and settlement workers by putting the needs of the PSR first and focusing on their common goals of promoting integration.

Involve senior-level leaders

Another success factor identified in strong collaborations is the involvement of senior-level leaders and decision makers in the partnerships. Access Alliance identified that the involvement of accessible, willing, and supportive leadership is essential to enabling collaboration. They gave as an example a case study of the Kitchener-Waterloo area and the importance of government decision makers involved in their multi-sector immigration partnership in enabling smooth school registration for sponsored refugees (Access Alliance, 2017, p. 9).

Case Study- City of Toronto's Refugee Resettlement Program

The Refugee Resettlement Program was a senior-level initiative at the municipal level that had wide-reaching impact on promoting collaboration amongst settlement agencies and sponsorship organizations in support of Syrian privately sponsored refugees. The program was approved by City Council on October 2, 2015 and was implemented through the Toronto Newcomer Office. Its goal was to mobilize existing supports for privately sponsored refugees and to enhance and facilitate those supports where possible, focusing on strategies where they could have the most impact (Dodich, 2016). Five community organizations were funded to provide support to sponsored refugees and sponsors, who led activities such as providing training, housing support, mediation and conflict resolution, and an online portal for information (City of Toronto, 2016).

One of the main goals of the initiative was to be a driver and funder of cross-sectoral collaboration, including collaborations that were inter-division and inter-agency at the City of Toronto, as well as with community agencies and LIPs. The project identified best practices including harnessing public and media interest, getting collaborative relationships in place prior to arrival of newcomers, and implementing strategies that addressed broader issues in the City of Toronto (City of Toronto, 2016). The leadership and engagement of City of Toronto through the Toronto Newcomer Office enabled better coordinated actions to welcome newcomers to Toronto.

Promote a user-centred and equitable approach

The importance of building collaborations that are user-centred and equitable came through strongly in the literature.

Access Alliance noted the need to address concerns around equity and fairness, recognizing that the emphasis on Syrian refugees since 2015 as an example of leaving refugees from other streams or from other countries without the same level of services (Access Alliance, 2017, p.12). The Senate Report echoed the challenges of differential treatment of refugees based on nationality or stream, with recommendation 5 being that “the Government of Canada implement equitable treatment among refugees of any background, and that any differential treatment on the basis of private or government sponsorship be minimal and essential” (Munson & Atallahjan, 2016, P. 44).

The needs of each sponsored refugee will be different, and the need to build collaborations that are flexible and take the individual needs into consideration is a best practice.

Build cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships

Many successful collaborations were partnerships that placed a high importance on the involvement of multiple stakeholders, both inside and outside of the usual actors involved in private refugee settlement.

Access Alliance suggests that “sector leaders... need to play an active role in promoting multi-sector collaboration that is inclusive and that mobilizes the expertise and strengths that (each) different sector/organization brings” (Access Alliance, 2017, p.18). This was echoed by IRCC’s “Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative” in December 2016 where they identified that the building of collaborations with various stakeholders including government, schools, SPOs, and the provinces was a success of the initiative, including the best practice of the use of Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) to coordinate (IRCC 2016, p. 31).

Another way this has been framed is in promoting a community-wide response in supporting newcomers. This could involve shifting the responsibility of refugee resettlement away from one agency or government effort to reinforcing community effort over assisting refugees in their communities. In order to promote this effort, activities could be taken such as providing resources for system-wide coordination, involving all levels of government as partners in local refugee response, and more (Centre for Community Based Research, 2017, p. 4).

The Transatlantic Council recommends unlocking ‘multiplier effects’ by considering what successful integration looks like and undertaking innovations that have positive outcomes for the whole of society (Papademetriou, 2017, p. 2). It was identified that in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, a major innovation over the years of Syria Influx was shifting the responsibility of refugee resettlement from one agency to a much broader network of community agencies and actors. They identified the need for equitable treatment of all refugee streams and a community-wide response to the common needs of all as a best practice in building successful partnerships (Centre for Community Based Research, 2017).

Case Study- Refugee 613

One example of a successful multi-stakeholder approach in supporting sponsored refugees is found in the organization Refugee 613. This organization formed in 2015 as a grassroots network in Ottawa, Ontario has three main pillars to its work, “Inform, Connect and Inspire” (www.refugee613.ca).

Refugee 613 works in close collaboration with its Sponsorship Advisory Group which includes SPOs and SAHs among others. Their work involves supporting sponsors by providing information and referrals, one-on-one coaching and training on the process, the experience and the resources available for private sponsors. As a forum for many different stakeholders to

share information and work together, they are an example of how a multi-stakeholder approach can lead to stronger collaborations to assist sponsored refugees holistically.

Leverage and formalize previous relationships

Many new actors have recently arisen to support private refugee sponsorship and settlement, leading to new collaborations and informal relationships that have been strengthened. These have involved the formalization of informal sponsor-settlement relationships, or bringing non-traditional actors into the settlement process in order to strengthen the network of support available for sponsored refugees.

By tapping into existing organizations that are not traditionally actors in sponsorship, it opens up new resources and economies of scale to aid in the resettlement of refugees (Papademetriou, 2017). This best practice was also highlighted by the Centre for Community Based Research, where their recommendations for increasing collaboration included formalizing partnerships that already exist and including faith groups at the table (Brnjac 2018, p. 10).

Another example of leveraging previous relationships and new actors in sponsorship is Lifeline Syria's involvement of the Ryerson University community. Lifeline Syria moved very quickly to welcome sponsored refugees by drawing on support from the University community. They tapped into "Ryerson's rich ecosystem of student-run organizations" to secure support, such as creating a financial literacy course for the program's Syrian arrivals (Cukier & Jackson, 2016).

Another recommendation that emerged in the research was to strengthen and better utilize Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) in the coordination and promotion of collaboration among stakeholders in private refugee sponsorship (Centre for Community Based Research, 2017, p. 4). This was an important pillar in the City of Toronto's response to the high numbers of Syrian arrivals in 2015-2016, with the Newcomer Office engaging in collaboration through the Toronto Quadrant LIPs, to "enhance coordination, identify emerging issues, and share information and tools" (City of Toronto, 2016, p. 15). While LIPs are already intrinsically involved in promoting information sharing and communal efforts on behalf of all newcomers, the extent to which they have played a role in refugee resettlement varies widely across the country. The literature suggests exploring whether their role in promoting collaboration could be formalized as a best practice in promoting sponsor-settlement teamwork.

Some sources did caution that when planning to undertake any innovation in refugee integration, including collaborations where new actors brought on board, the efforts can backfire if not done systematically. It was recommended that when planning to bring new actors to the table or formalizing partnerships, to balance a desire for experimentation with evaluation, use human resources systematically, and ensure that any changes consider what

unintended consequences the change may have on the rest of an interconnected system (Papademetriou, 2017, p. 10-13).

SECTION 3

Conclusion

The literature does support the promotion of collaboration in the refugee-serving sector, and there is some research supporting the need of greater collaboration between sponsors and settlement organizations.

Nevertheless, there are very few examples of collaborations there were formal or intended to be long-term in nature between IRCC-funded SPOs and sponsors, the main focus of this investigation. Instead, there are examples of collaboration, many of which are recently created, and most of which involve different actors beyond strictly SPOs and sponsors such as faith-based communities, cross-sector partnerships, and more.

This literature review seeks to address these gaps in the literature by bringing together academic and grey literature to explore the current state of sponsor-settlement collaboration.

As outlined above, the literature does identify a number of best practices when building collaborative capacity, including:

- Harness general goodwill in between settlement and sponsors and focus on the bigger picture
- Focus on the needs of the sponsored refugee to motivate both settlement workers and sponsors to work together
- Involve senior-level leaders to get the needed buy-in and clout for change
- Promote a user-centred and equitable approach in any collaboration that is undertaken
- Build cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships to maximize resources and knowledge
- Leverage and formalize previously existing relationships

There were a few topics identified by the literature which would merit greater consideration and research in order to understand the current situation of sponsor-settlement relationship, including:

- The differences in service provision for sponsored refugees in rural versus urban areas
- The barriers facing settlement agencies in their motivation and capacity to reach out and work with sponsors
- Longitudinal studies on the impact of sponsor support on the successful integration of sponsored refugees

- Specific examples of best practices in sponsor-settlement collaborations in Ontario over a long period of time and their impact on integration
- Data regarding the degree to which sponsored refugees are accessing settlement services

In sum, “our settlement system must be collaborative and dynamic, combining the resources of engaged Canadians, the experience of sponsorship agencies, and the wisdom of settlement service providers” (Welcome Home TO, 2016, p. 31). While this review is just a first step in understanding sponsor-settlement collaboration, the literature confirms the benefits of promoting collaboration in an effort to better support sponsored refugees in Ontario.

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