



BUILDING SUPPORTS

PHASE III: POLICY COMPONENT

Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement; Housing; and Health

Acknowledgements

Building Supports Project Team

Jill Atkey

Director, Research and Education, BC Non-Profit Housing Association

Joanne Baker

Executive Director, BC Society of Transition Houses

Louise Godard

Building Supports Project Coordinator

Margaret Jackson

*Director, The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children
Professor Emerita, School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University*

Hannah Lee

Manager of Member Services, BC Society of Transition Houses

Sarah Yercich

*Research Associate, The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children
PhD Candidate, School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University*

Report Prepared by Margaret Jackson, Sarah Yercich, Louise Godard, and Hannah Lee (2018)

We wish to thank members of the Inter-ministerial Committee on Domestic Violence and other key stakeholders for their valuable assistance with this report. As well, many thanks are due to Jordan Ardanaz (law student, University of British Columbia) and Priya Lehal (law student, Kings College, London).



Building Supports Advisory Committees

We gratefully acknowledge the members of the two Advisory Committees for their commitment to this project and thoughtful insight and feedback.

Niki Antonopoulou - *Atira Women's Resource Society*
Shashi Assanand - *Vancouver Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Services Society*
Natasha Beg - *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Ottawa*
Amy Fitzgerald – *BC Society of Transition Houses*
Perminder Flora – *MOSAIC*
Abeer Hattab – *Vancouver & Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services*
Kathi Helm - *Prince George Elizabeth Fry Society*
Mary Kam – *SUCCESS*
Kamaljit Lehal – *General Practice Attorney, specializing in Immigration*
Laura McLeod - *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Ottawa*
Ann Pederson - *BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre*
Kate Rossiter - *Ending Violence Association of British Columbia*
Lisa Rupert - *YWCA Vancouver*
Sairoz Sekhon - *BC Housing*
Swinder Singh – *Abbotsford Community Services*
Tiana Solares - *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Vancouver*
Lana Sullivan – *BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre*
Yasmine Youssef – *Nisa Homes*

Building Supports Lived Experience Advisory Committee

Raj Chahal, Solange Gham, Hufsa Iqbal, and Petra Rusher. Other members' names have been withheld to protect their privacy.

Special thanks to our funders, the Vancouver Foundation, the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth, the Law Foundation of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University, who made this project possible.

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Executive Summary

This executive summary provides an overview of the *Building Supports Project: Housing Access for Immigrant and Refugee Women (IRW) Leaving Violence* (hereafter referred to as the Building Supports Project), and, specifically, the third phase of this research (i.e., the policy component). It outlines the key issues, themes, and recommendations that are detailed in the body of the Building Supports Project Phase III report.

The policy research focuses on provincial (i.e., British Columbia) and select federal policy barriers, practices, and recommendations/solutions to reduce or eliminate the obstacles that exist for IRW leaving violence and abuse to obtain safe and secure short- and long-term housing. In this document, an intersectional analysis considers how policies relevant to that goal, such as housing, immigration, refugee, and settlement,¹ and health have common themes in their individual perspectives.

Through the policy analysis, many themes and barriers emerged, some of which were specific to a single sector, such as housing, immigration, refugee, and settlement, or health. Many of the critical themes that resulted from this research, however, were overlapping and interconnected. The key themes highlighted throughout the analyses include gendered violence and gender-specific considerations (e.g., the gendered nature of the immigrant and refugee experience), well-being of children, financial (in)security, safety and well-being, and language and cultural safety.² Further, central to these critical themes are examinations of intersectionalities³ and the interconnected nature of these issues, including, but not limited to,

¹ In this report the term “settlement” includes social and economic integration.

² The concept of cultural safety originated and was developed for providing safe, empowering, and dignifying services to and within Indigenous communities in Australia; however, this translates to a Canadian context, as Indigenous peoples in Canada “have experienced a history of colonization, and cultural and social assimilation through the residential schools program and other policies leading to historical trauma and the loss of cultural cohesion” (Brascoupé & Waters, 2009, p. 7). The Building Supports research team acknowledges this heritage, and, for the purposes of this project, has chosen to apply the concept of cultural safety to work with immigrant, refugee, and non-status populations to emphasize the importance of culturally safe and empowering service provision. Cultural safety is the preferred term selected by the research team and is reflected in many places throughout the Phase III policy analysis. Terms such as cultural competency and culturally appropriate service provision do, however, appear throughout this report, as these terms were used within much of the literature and reflect the original author’s voice.

³ An intersectional analysis can be informed by developments in gender equality analysis, critical race analysis, disability rights analysis and equality rights jurisprudence. These strategies have developed to address the stereotypes, as well as the unique and intersecting experiences of individuals, because of race or gender or disability and form a necessary part of the contextual and analytical framework. In some measure, an

commonalities and gaps.

Building Supports Project: Introduction, Background, and Foundations of the Research

The Building Supports Project is a collaborative multi-phase community-based project co-led by British Columbia Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA), British Columbia Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH), and The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children (School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University). The overall purpose of this project is to identify and understand the barriers IRW face in accessing short- and long-term housing when leaving violent and abusive relationships.

Each phase of the Building Supports Project aims to address the varying and intersecting socio-legal dynamics faced by IRW leaving violence and abuse. The three phases of the project are:

1. Phase I, the research component, which is now completed (Building Supports Project Phase 1 Final Report: Housing access for immigrant and refugee women leaving violence, 2015; Building Supports Project Phase 1 Infographic, 2015);
2. Phase II, Promising Practices and an ongoing provincial awareness campaign, “You are not alone” (Building Supports Project, 2016; Building Supports Promising Practices Guide, 2015); and
3. Phase III, the policy component, which is the focus of this report.

The policy component is grounded in the Building Supports Project Phase I Report findings, which identified several policy barriers⁴ that affect IRW’s ability to leave violence and abuse and secure short-and long-term housing. In addition to identifying many more such policy barriers, however, the policy component focuses on identifying, analyzing, and making recommendations related to practices and policies that can facilitate the removal of the barriers to safe, secure, and affordable housing for IRW and their children. Further, as explained in the body of this report, barriers related to policy and practice were not just experienced in the housing sector, but also in other related sectors (e.g., immigration, refugee, and settlement and

intersectional analysis can address social conditions relating to poverty, low income and homelessness. More information on intersectional analysis is available at: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/intersectional-approach-discrimination-addressing-multiple-grounds-human-rights-claims/applying-intersectional-approach>

⁴ The key policy barriers identified through Phase I of the Building Supports Project were: 1) discrimination; 2) income assistance policies; 3) legal / immigration status; 4) legal aid; 5) BC Housing policies; and 6) access to health care.

health). Thus, the overall focus for Phase III of the Building Supports Project is on the policies and practices in these sectors, with an emphasis on potential intersections and/or how these sectors may operate in silos, as well as suggested solutions/recommendations to address perceived gaps, disjunctures, and needed policy reform.

The Phase III Policy Analysis: Overview and Research Approach

The general approach to, and methodological framework for, the policy analysis of IRW's experiences in the contexts of (1) immigration, refugee, and settlement, (2) housing, and (3) health were informed by the primary focus on safe housing for IRW leaving violence and abuse, with an emphasis on how to best secure short- and long-term housing for these women and their children. The overall goal of the three-phase project that is to *identify the experiences of immigrant/refugee women in securing safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing after leaving violence and abuse*. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the barriers to housing access for immigrant/refugee women leaving violence.
2. Identify and develop promising practices for transition house workers so that they are enabled to support IRW in accessing longer-term, affordable and culturally-appropriate housing.
3. Identify provincial and select federal policy solutions to reduce or eliminate barriers that exist for IRW in accessing long-term housing; and,
4. Articulate action plans for effecting policy change for two of the project partners, BCSTH and BCNPHA.

The third and fourth objectives were the focus of the Phase III Policy Analysis. The intended long-term outcome of the project is to reduce policy barriers faced by IRW through the identification of practical and collaborative solutions for practice and policy to ensure they can safely leave violent relationships without increasing risks to their safety and well-being⁵ through their securing of short and long-term safe and affordable housing. To achieve these objectives, the research team determined the initial necessary step of developing a policy lens from which to identify and critically examine policy barriers.

⁵ "Well-being" here primarily references physical and mental health.

Phase III began with a broad overview of the resources and materials which consider the challenges and barriers for IRW leaving violence and abuse, grounded in these women's experiences with securing short- and long-term housing for their own, and their children's, safety and well-being. Further, as initially detailed, the research and policy analysis were developed using an intersectional feminist approach when examining the key areas of policy, primarily in the housing, immigration, refugee, and settlement, and health sectors, and guided by questions such as:

1. What are the intersections between IRW's experiences in settlement, housing, and health sectors?;
2. How do policies and practices within these three sectors interlink, and what are the impacts of these linkages on IRW's experiences, especially while leaving violent and abusive homes and/or relationships?; and,
3. How do other intersecting factors (e.g., legal status, poverty, gender) affect each of these three sectors and/or the linkages between these sectors, as well as their policies and practices?

As well as informing the development of the overall action plans, the policy documents generated in Phase III of the Building Supports Projects will be shared with policy makers and government officials at both the provincial and federal levels. In addition, the research team will also share these policy documents and the knowledge from the project with their broader networks of researchers, policy makers, and service providers, including British Columbia's (BC) Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV), BC Housing, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and health sector partners.

Overarching Recommendations

The overall policy analysis resulted in intersecting recommendations that impact all three sectors (i.e., immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, and health).⁶ The primary outcome intended from this policy research is the identification of those recommendations which would assist in securing the safety and well-being of IRW. The key intersecting recommendations are

⁶ The recommendations, both generally and those specific to each sector, are situated within social justice and human rights frameworks, as these values are central to the policy recommendations.

to:⁷

- Create **awareness** of available supports and resources, which is key to provide sufficient support for the safety of IRW leaving violence and abuse. Within this context, awareness includes: 1) linking IRW with resources; 2) raising awareness of, and providing accessible information about, existing available supports and resources; and 3) advocacy related to navigating systems (e.g., immigration, refugee, and settlement, legal, housing, health, child protection).
- Support and improve **rights-based protections** for IRW related to knowledge of/access to systems, lack of legal support, precarious legal status, gender discrimination, and related inequalities. These improvements can be achieved through: 1) increasing IRW's access to legal aid, accessible legal information, and resources (e.g., language, awareness); and 2) providing accessible legal supports and additional support and funding for existing programs that aid IRW in navigating Canadian systems (e.g., legal, immigration, housing, health).
- **Reduce poverty and underemployment among IRW** through initiatives such as: 1) reviewing and improving access to income assistance; 2) acknowledging foreign credentials; and 3) supporting settlement agencies to work in collaboration with employers.
- Minimize the barriers and access issues IRW face related to **language**. Examples of potential solutions and supports are: 1) supporting the development of language classes for newcomers; 2) providing opportunities for language training and education to IRW; and 3) addressing language barriers in the provision of services (e.g., by providing access to interpreters).
- Foster and support **collaboration, coordination, and communication** between and among systems (e.g., immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, health, legal), which can be achieved through initiatives such as: 1) enhancing cross-sector collaboration; 2) improving coordination and collaboration between justice systems (e.g., criminal, family); and 3) community consultations and engagement.

Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement: Key themes and recommendations

Within this report, the focus on immigration, refugee, and settlement policies provides the backdrop for both the housing and health policy analyses. IRW's experiences obtaining secure, safe short- and long-term housing are the primary lenses through which the policy analysis occurs. However, due to the unique experiences, circumstances, and barriers of IRW

⁷ Further detail of the highlighted overall and sector-specific recommendations detailed in this Executive Summary are located in section 6 of the report.

(e.g., legal status, language) these analyses must be based in a clear, critical understanding and analysis of the overall, and oftentimes intersecting, immigration, refugee, and settlement policies in Canada. These analyses include, but are not limited to, the primary Canadian immigration and refugee policy landscapes (e.g., settlement patterns, sponsorship considerations, the Canadian *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, the role of settlement services), and policy barriers (e.g., limited legal aid/assistance, employment, risk of deportation, discrimination).

The main themes resulting from the overall analysis demonstrate key considerations for approaching policy and practice related to supporting immigrant and refugee populations in Canada, such as key indicators for successful immigration, settlement, and integration. For example:

1. **welcoming communities**, accessible/affordable/sustainable, adequate short- and long-term housing;
2. **sufficient employment and income**; and
3. **refugee-specific considerations** (e.g., short timelines and supports provided for Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds (H&C) applications, cultural safety issues).

In addition, challenges were identified, such as detention of irregular arrivals, the shift toward Temporary Foreign Worker permits in recent years, housing policies and markets in Canada, and concerns regarding “one size fits all” approaches to policy and practice, which often do not meet the needs of diverse groups such as immigrants and refugees.

Interlinking considerations within the immigration, refugee, and settlement policy analysis demonstrate the intersectional and complex nature of IRW’s experiences in Canada, especially within the contexts of leaving violence and abuse and seeking safe, secure short- and long-term housing. These intersectional issues are highlighted through analyses of potential gender bias in federal and provincial immigration policy, child protection concerns, and forced marriage. Further, the interlinking nature of service provision is emphasized through a discussion of how IRCC operates in conjunction with other services, as well as the need for more collaboration and communication when assisting IRW in Canada (e.g., an integrated

service model approach). This discussion is further grounded in a detailed overview of existing provincial and local supports and initiatives that provide support for immigrant and refugee populations and, more specifically, IRW leaving violence and abuse, such as the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR)⁸, British Columbia's *Family Composition* policy and exemptions for persons leaving violence and abuse, the British Columbia Employment and Assistance Program and additional employment supports (e.g., MOSAIC's programming).⁹

Key Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement Policy Recommendations

Through the above noted immigration, refugee, and settlement landscape and policy analysis, primary policy barriers and core issues were identified. Resulting from this analysis, the research team made many recommendations. The key immigration, refugee, and settlement recommendations are to:

- Focus on **community integration** for IRW by placing an emphasis on welcoming communities and building community capacity.
- Improve the **supports available through IRCC** by reviewing IRCC policies (e.g., income assistance for vulnerable newcomers and standardization of intake and accounting/recording practices across Canada).
- **Minimize potential vulnerabilities and harms** IRW face in the process of immigration and settlement, such as: 1) addressing delays to immigration applications and processing; 2) improving the expedition of temporary work permits; and 3) conducting additional and on-going review of sponsorship laws and processes in cases of IRW who are abused by their sponsors.
- Address **gender bias and discrimination** by completing a gendered analysis of the *Balanced Refugee Reform Act* and the *Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act*, and conducting a gender and safety audit of all existing programs.
- Shift the **burden of proof** from IRW applying for exemptions to IRCC or Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) instead.

⁸ At the time this research was conducted, the Ministry was titled Social Development and Social Innovation (SDSI).

⁹ MOSAIC provides settlement services, employment services, language and counselling, intercultural competency training, and interpretation and counselling, to address the needs of refugee claimants and other refugee status and stateless individuals.

Housing: Key themes and recommendations

Building on the immigration, refugee, and settlement policy analysis framework, the housing policy analysis lays the groundwork for access to housing as a fundamental human right in Canada, as well as the challenges related to accessing the right to housing for vulnerable populations such as IRW leaving violence and abuse. This analysis also highlights the many barriers to crisis, short- and long-term housing, as well as housing supports, faced by IRW leaving violence and abuse, such as language, legal status, social supports, limited access to culturally safe services, and lack of knowledge of, or even access to, Canadian systems (e.g., healthcare); these access issues and barriers compromise IRW's ability to leave violence and abuse and locate safe, appropriate short- and long-term housing.

Emerging from the systematic literature review and key informant interviews undertaken specifically for the Phase III component, the housing analysis establishes the housing trajectories of newcomers to Canada, which demonstrates many intersections between immigration, refugee, and settlement and housing (e.g., welcoming communities, markers of successful settlement, economic and social capital, incoming migration class). This analysis also contextualizes housing as a key component of settlement, as well as one of the core indicators of successful settlement and integration for newcomers to Canada.

The housing policy analysis emphasized the three primary challenges related to locating housing in BC, which are:

- 1) **supply** of housing and securing affordable housing;
- 2) **affordability** and the lack of affordable housing; and
- 3) **integration and collaboration** between government and community agencies.

In line with concerns regarding supply and affordability of appropriate, safe, and secure short- and long-term housing, the housing policy analysis provides considerations related to relative and absolute homelessness among immigrants and refugees in Canada, as well as a discussion of acceptable (i.e., adequate condition, suitable size, and affordable) versus core needs (i.e., poor condition, inadequate size, and/or unaffordable) housing. This analysis

demonstrates how these challenges are further impacted by experiences of violence and IRW's search for housing after leaving a violent and abusive relationship.

The barriers to accessing and obtaining secure, appropriate, acceptable housing for newcomers in Canada generally, as well as IRW leaving violence and abuse more specifically, were highlighted within the Phase III literature review. These barriers were broken down into three categories:

- 1) **primary barriers** (i.e., experiences of violence based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion);
- 2) **secondary barriers** (i.e., adverse or non-existent credit history, family size, lack of awareness about available systems and services, language, legal status, poverty/low-income/insufficient employment, no references/guarantor, and social isolation); and
- 3) **macro-level barriers** (i.e., affordability, systemic bias and discrimination, lack of cultural competence and safety in systems and services, informal “no child” policies at rental properties, overcrowding).

Key Housing Recommendations

Through the above noted housing policy analysis, key policy barriers and issues were identified. The key housing recommendations are to:

- **Improve IRW's access to available housing** by creating and disseminating clear messages about housing availability, points of access, and existing supports, and providing assistance (e.g. interpreters, information in multiple languages, outreach) for IRW navigating Canadian housing systems to aid them in finding affordable, secure short- and long-term housing.
- **Evaluate and improve provincial and federal housing policies** to support the safety of IRW leaving violence and abuse. This can be achieved through the creation, implementation, and on-going review of the National Housing Strategy to improve affordability and availability of housing nation-wide,¹⁰ as well as making housing more accessible to vulnerable populations such as IRW. Provincially, a review of BC Housing policies and processes is necessary to ensure they account for the needs of IRW leaving violence and abuse, as well as other vulnerable populations.

¹⁰ Following the release of the National Housing Strategy in November 2017, concerns were raised that the strategy may not have a meaningful impact on affordability and accessibility of housing in BC. This is due to the strategy's focus on home ownership and limited emphasis on support for non-profit and rental market housing. Accordingly, the issues of housing affordability and accessibility must remain at the forefront of advocacy and changes to policy and practice moving forward. The City of Vancouver's *Vision for a National Housing Strategy* report acknowledged that issues of unaffordable and inaccessible housing underlie long-term economic and social inequality in Vancouver, and efforts to structure and implement a provincial housing strategy need to be affordability-focused across housing spheres (e.g., non-profit housing, rental market housing, and home ownership).

- **Support access to appropriate and secure short- and long-term housing** for IRW, which can be achieved through initiatives such as placing emphasis on accessible, *appropriate* housing in the development of policy and funding structures and building more affordable housing with improved access for IRW and their children.
- **Reduce barriers related to discrimination** against IRW in the housing sector and rental market by increasing awareness of the intersections between discrimination (e.g., race, ethnicity, class, gender, ability) and access to housing to improve equitable access for IRW. Important developments include, but are not limited to: 1) improving tenants' rights and protections; 2) providing cultural safety training and education to housing managers, landlords, and service providers regarding the unique needs of vulnerable populations; and 3) reviewing and reforming existing laws and policies governing the rental market to ensure that the needs of vulnerable populations, including IRW, are considered and included.
- **Focus on and address the three key priorities** to improve IRW's safety through access to housing, which includes: 1) improving **supply** of housing through the development of more affordable rentals for low- and middle-income individuals and those with distinct needs, such as IRW; 2) **developing and supporting integration and collaboration** among housing partnerships, as well as between housing agencies and other community services; and 3) addressing the issue of **affordability of housing** through improving provincial housing funding frameworks to be flexible enough to incorporate IRW's needs.

Health: Key themes and recommendations

The health policy analysis provides a detailed discussion of the intersections between health, housing, and immigration, refugee, and settlement sectors. This analysis highlights considerations for both policy and practice within the health sector related to IRW's experiences as well as intersecting contexts of violence against women, migration, settlement, housing, poverty and financial insecurity, and income and employment. These considerations draw attention to how physical and mental health and well-being, as well as access to health services underlie IRW's experiences while leaving violence and abuse, locating appropriate short- and long-term housing, and successfully integrating into Canadian society. Of note, the health analysis demonstrates the complex and intersecting nature of:

- 1) settlement and health outcomes; and,
- 2) the linkages between health and housing.

The health analysis further focuses on issues of access to healthcare in light of current policies (e.g., the Interim Federal Health Program, Universal Healthcare) and practices (e.g., limitations related to access to interpretation and translation, lack of culturally safe health services and policies), which is contextualized within a broader human rights framework.

Key Health Recommendations

Through the above noted health policy analysis, primary policy barriers and issues were identified. Resulting from this analysis, the research team made several recommendations. The key health recommendations are to:

- **Increase health budgets** to reflect the health needs of immigrants and refugees in Canada generally, as well as IRW leaving violence and abuse more specifically.
- **Address language barriers** through prioritizing the translation of relevant information and privileging multilingual access, improving health literacy, and creating and promoting awareness of multilingual information and resources related to status and immigration-related concerns, including health care.
- **Increase access to health services** through the provision of emergency and essential health care services in BC to IRW without medical coverage (regardless of legal status), as well as expediting H&C applications for non-status women experiencing abuse to ensure these women have access to essential and emergency care.
- **Improve culturally safe and violence- and trauma-informed services, supports, and practices** through initiatives such as developing culturally safe health services across health authorities, increasing and supporting cultural safety training within the health sector, and prioritizing the development of violence- and trauma-informed health services and policies.
- **Shift the framework for health to that of a human rights approach** that emphasizes health as a fundamental right of immigrants and refugees, which would involve shifting policies and practices to reflect IRW's health concerns as rights-based and providing more funding and support for health advocates.

Potential Barriers and Recommendations

Many barriers and recommendations emerged through the overall and sector-specific (i.e., immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, and health) policy analyses outlined in the sections above. A summary of these potential¹¹ barriers and recommendations is provided below, and the full discussion and detailed explanations are provided in the complete report, followed at the end of that report by Section 6 which sets out the barriers and recommendations in more contextual detail than in this summary below.

Overall and Intersecting Potential Barriers and Recommendations

Areas of Focus	Potential Barriers and Recommendations
<p>Awareness of, and Access to, Services and Resources</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information; • Lack of multilingual information; • Lack of support for navigating systems and resources; and • Lack of accessible knowledge mobilization. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link IRW with resources and create awareness of existing services and supports. • Raise awareness of available resources, supports, and services. • Provide information regarding and advocacy to support navigation of systems (e.g., legal, child protection, immigration, housing, health). • Provide information about violence against women and supports in multiple languages and in various mediums prior to and upon a woman’s arrival in Canada.
<p>Knowledge of Canadian Laws and Systems</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information regarding, and support for, navigating Canadian systems; and • Lack of legal aid and legal support.

¹¹ “Potential” in the sense of having or showing the capacity to develop into barriers.

<p>Legal Support</p>	<p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to legal aid, legal information, and legal resources. • Provide additional support and funding for existing programs that aid IRW in navigating legal and immigration systems.
<p>Discrimination</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination; • Poverty; • Un/underemployment; and • Language. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and implement poverty reduction and prevention strategies for IRW and their families who are struggling to meet essential needs. • Shift approach to understanding poverty to include IRW’s lived experiences and related contexts, such as the interconnections between economic well-being and housing, health, and successful settlement. • Review income assistance rates and policies to ensure an increase to a livable income for IRW and their families. • Acknowledge foreign credentials of IRW to support them in securing financially and professionally rewarding and secure employment. • Require each regulated occupation to develop a single pan-Canadian standard. • Support settlement agencies to work in collaboration with employers. • Emphasize and account for the importance of language classes. • Provide opportunities for training and education for IRW. • Address language barriers in the provision of services through hiring multilingual staff, access to translators and providing information in multiple languages.

<p>Relationships that Affect Help-Seeking</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited supports; and • Lack of relationships that support help-seeking. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and utilize culturally informed means of reaching out to IRW. • Highlight and utilize primary points of access to reach IRW, such as settlement and health services. • Develop community relationships and utilize informal support networks for IRW, which will require communication, connection, collaboration, and coordination between formal agencies/programs (e.g., settlement, housing, health) and informal supports.
<p>Collaboration, Connection, Coordination, and Communication</p>	<p><i>Potential Barrier:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cross-sectoral collaboration, connection, coordination, and communication. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance cross-sectoral support and collaboration across housing, health, and immigration, refugee, and settlement sectors. • Improve coordination and collaboration between justice systems. • Consult with communities and foster relationships with agencies such as community-based immigrant and refugee services and informal community networks. • Address the siloed nature of the family and criminal legal systems.
<p>Policy Review</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current challenging policies in federal and provincial housing, immigration, refugee, and settlement, and health; and • Examining policy intent with policy outcomes.

	<p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that flexible and responsive policies and regular policy reviews become an important part of organizational culture. • Create clearly defined and accessible policies, including transparency about eligibility and processes for IRW who are trying to navigate local and government systems.
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Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement Potential Barriers and Recommendations

Areas of Focus	Potential Barriers and Recommendations
Community and Community Integration	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited community integration; and • Limited and variations in community capacity. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize welcoming communities and community integration for IRW and children. • Focus on and support the building of community capacity in both rural and urban settings.
Federal and Provincial Regulations and Procedures	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal jurisdiction procedures for supports; • Provincial jurisdiction procedures for supports; • Challenging immigration applications for status (i.e., federal jurisdiction - IRCC); • Impacts of sponsorship laws and processes (i.e., federal jurisdiction). <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review IRCC policy intents and outcomes related to support for IRW and determine if the supports and assistance offered are sufficient. • Enable temporary resident permit holders access to the <i>Child Care Subsidy Act</i>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardize intake and accounting/reporting practices across Canada. • Streamline labour market integration for immigrants and refugees. • Address challenges related to immigration applications and processing, such as “fast tracking” IRW with experiences of abuse. • Improve the expedition of temporary work permits for IRW. • Review of sponsorship laws and process in cases when a woman is being abused by her sponsor.
<p style="text-align: center;">Discrimination</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination and gender bias in policies and processes; • Provision of training and hiring; and • Labour and employment. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address and minimize gender bias in immigration processes at the federal level. • Complete a gendered analysis of the <i>Balanced Refugee Reform Act (Bill C-11)</i> and the <i>Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act (Bill C-31)</i>. • Conduct a gender and safety audit of all existing programs. • Streamline labour market integration for immigrants and refugees. • Expedite the application process for immigrants and refugees who are seeking employment.
<p style="text-align: center;">Collaboration, Connection, Coordination, and Communication</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination of responses for services and benefits. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination between the IRCC and other federal and provincial agencies/ministries is key to ensure that IRW and their children who are leaving violence and abuse

	<p>have access to services while awaiting the results of an Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds (H&C) application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow temporary resident stakeholders to access child subsidies under the <i>Child Care Subsidy Act</i>.
Legal and Procedural	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onus of burden of proof for IRW. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address issues related to burden of proof by shifting responsibility from IRW to IRCC and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) for establishing abuse in order to qualify for an exemption in cases of sponsorship.

Housing Sector Potential Barriers and Recommendations

Areas of Focus	Potential Barriers and Recommendations
Access to and Knowledge of Existing and Available Housing	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information and knowledge about available housing; and • Lack of supports for navigating housing systems. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support IRW’s access to short- and long-term housing. • Improve access to affordable housing through increased housing stock. • Create and disseminate clear messages about housing availability and access through knowledge mobilization and multilingual awareness campaigns.
Supports for Obtaining Housing	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited supports for IRW to obtain housing; and • Limited cross-sectoral collaboration, connection, coordination, and communication.

	<p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assistance (e.g. knowledge mobilization, multilingual information, access to translators, outreach) to IRW to help them navigate Canadian systems, as well as find and secure affordable housing. • Forge relationships and foster collaboration cross-sectorally to support IRW/mothers and their children in obtaining short- and long-term housing.
<p>Federal and Provincial Jurisdiction and Procedure</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal and provincial housing policies which disadvantage IRW; and • Limited housing budgets which affect IRW’s ability to secure needed housing. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and on-going review of the Canadian National Housing Strategy (NHS) to improve affordability and availability of housing nation-wide, as well as making housing more accessible to vulnerable groups such as immigrant, refugee, and non-status women leaving violence and abuse. • Systematic review and subsequent reforms to the NHS to address recent critiques and concerns raised regarding the limited support for rental market and non-profit housing offered in the strategy. • Affordability-focused policy reform during the development and implementation of BC’s provincial housing strategy. • Development and implementation of the City of Vancouver’s own housing plan to address the challenges that are more pronounced in the Greater Vancouver Area, such as high cost of rentals and insufficient rental availability. • Review BC Housing policies and amend current housing regulations to allow for flexibility in policies that better reflect the realities and lived experiences of IRW leaving violence and abuse. This IRW-focused review should include, but not be limited to: (1) assessing BC Housing’s

	<p>implementation of the National Occupancy Standards; (2) increasing flexibility around the number of children allowed per unit or bedroom within non-profit housing, co-ops, and public units; (3) improving the accessibility of BC Housing’s website and online application process (e.g., language, ease of access); (4) examining and improving the housing registry application process to ensure it meets the unique needs of IRW and their children; and (5) ensuring housing access and eligibility for non- and precarious status women (e.g., during/after the breakdown of a sponsorship arrangement).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve housing budgets for immigrants and refugees at the policy-level. This can be accomplished through increased funding overall and more specific funding allocation within existing housing budgets for vulnerable populations, including immigrants and refugees.¹² • The needs of vulnerable populations must be a focus in the review and reform of all provincial tenancy laws. For example, during the upcoming review of provincial tenancy laws led by the Rental Housing Task Force under BC’s NDP government, the unique needs and realities of IRW and their children must be considered and addressed through the stakeholder consultations and subsequent affordability-based recommendations and reforms.
<p style="text-align: center;">Discrimination</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination in access to housing for IRW; • Limited access to appropriate and secure housing; • Racism as it affects access to both market and non-profit housing for IRW; • Discriminatory treatment of tenants; and • Bias in the rental market.

¹² Of note, the BC NDP’s 2018 budget includes funding for housing for populations who are at an increased risk of homelessness, including women and children leaving violence and abuse. As Robinson (2018) explained, “included in the budget was about \$565 million for new units of housing and homes for those facing homelessness and for women and children feeling domestic abuse. The spending on housing for women and children was touted by the government as the first significant investment of its kind in the last two decades” (para. 5). For more information see: <http://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/b-c-budget-2018-1-6-billion-allocated-for-housing-but-no-rebate-for-renters>.

	<p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize both accessible and appropriate housing in the development of policy and funding structures. • Build more affordable housing and improve access to safe, adequate, and stable housing for IRW and children. • Improve and increase accessibility in the community housing sector to reduce health risks related to poor quality housing. • Increase awareness of racism and discrimination and its impacts on access to housing for IRW and children.¹³ • Improve tenants’ rights and protections, as well as accessibility of such knowledge for immigrant and refugee populations. This can be accomplished through initiatives such as increasing awareness of existing rights and protections within provincial tenancy agreements, improving enforcement powers within the Residential Tenancy Board, and determining what needs to be changed within the Residential Tenancy Agreement to appropriately address discrimination against vulnerable populations such as IRW and their children (e.g., removing the fixed term tenancy loophole¹⁴).¹⁵ • Provide cultural safety training and education about the dynamics and impacts of abuse to housing managers, landlords, and other service providers supporting IRW. • Prioritize education of landlords and housing managers regarding the unique needs and circumstances of vulnerable populations, as well as rights-based education and awareness raising within immigrant and refugee communities. • Ensure that advocates provide support for IRW in navigating housing systems, dealing with issues that arise within the housing systems, and locating and securing both short- and long-term housing.
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¹³ The recently authorized reestablishment of the BC Human Rights Commission should assist in this regard.

¹⁴ British Columbia’s *Residential Tenancy Act* (RTA) was revised in late 2017 to address the fixed term tenancy loophole and vacate clauses. Effective December 11, 2017, the RTA now reads “... a tenancy agreement may only include a requirement that the tenant vacate the rental unit at the end of a fixed term if: the tenancy agreement is a sublease agreement; or the tenancy is a fixed term tenancy in circumstances prescribed in section 13.1 of the Residential Tenancy Regulation.” While the fixed term tenancy loophole has not been fully removed from the RTA, the revisions limit the ambiguity within this legislative framework. For more information see: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/ending-a-tenancy/tenant-notice>

¹⁵ More enforcement powers were granted to the Residential Tenancy Board in the last provincial budget, which will allow for the continued review and enforcement of the *Residential Tenancy Act* provincially.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift the approach for supporting IRW in the rental market through supporting housing memberships (e.g., co-op models), developing strategies that are appropriate for each location (e.g., urban versus rural), and increasing and improving affordable home ownership programs (e.g., availability, eligibility, cost, shared equity models of home ownership). • Review and reform existing laws and policies governing discrimination in the rental market to ensure that the needs of vulnerable populations, such as IRW, are considered.
<p>Housing-Specific Challenges</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited priority of housing for IRW. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine existing research to understand how Housing First models could be adapted and implemented in a culturally safe manner that addresses the housing needs of IRW, as well as conduct any necessary further future research on the appropriate design and implementation of culturally safe Housing First models. • Once understood, make the appropriate adjustments to Federal Housing Partnering Strategy (HPS) program to ensure that the needs of IRW leaving violence are being met. • Create affordable housing supply across the housing continuum to ensure an adequate supply for meeting the needs of IRW leaving violence.
<p>Institutional-level Considerations</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional and systemic. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that housing supports, services, and programs are culturally safe, informed, and appropriate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cultural safety training to housing managers and landlords at the operational level, as well as to government administrators at the institutional level. • Raise awareness about the supports and services available to IRW leaving violence and abuse. • Implement and enforce policies to eliminate institutional racism that create barriers to housing access for IRW and children. • Provide training on the dynamics and impacts of violence, especially within immigrant and refugee communities, to housing managers and landlords.
Development	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of current short- and long-term housing models. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support short-term, crisis, and transitional housing. • Place emphasis on IRW's ability to connect with, secure, and retain long-term safe and affordable housing.

Health Sector Potential Barriers and Recommendations

Areas of Focus	Potential Barriers and Recommendations
Federal and Provincial Government	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current challenging policies, programs, and budgets. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase health budgets to reflect the health needs of immigrants and refugees in Canada.
Discrimination	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional racism; • Language barriers; and • Lack of medical coverage and/or access to emergency care.

	<p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the development and implementation of policies to reduce racism and promote cultural safety. • Implement and enforce policies to eliminate institutional racism. • Prioritize the multilingual translation of relevant information and improve health literacy and accessibility of information about health services. • Create and promote awareness of multilingual information and resources related to status and immigration-related concerns, including health care. • Support collaboration between BC health ministries, health authorities, hospitals, clinics, health care professionals, universities, and the Provincial Language Service. • Ensure that the Provincial Health Authority continue to dedicate resources to interpretation services and multilingual supports. • Increase access to health services for non-status women and their children. • Ensure that ministries overseeing health programs enact policies of transparency with regard to discretionary approvals for services • Expedite H&C applications for non-status women with experiences of abuse to ensure they have access to essential and emergency health and dental care.
<p>Practice and Procedure</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of culturally safe supports and services; and • Lack of violence- and trauma-informed practices. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement culturally safe health services and policies across health authorities. • Increase public and health provider awareness of racism and discrimination and its impacts on access to health services. • Increase and support cultural safety training within the health sector.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the development of violence- and trauma-informed health services and policies.
<p>Collaboration, Connection, Coordination, and Communication</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination between IRW servicing agencies, government, and other sectors. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and support coordination, connection, communication, and collaboration to provide essential health care to non-status women. • Foster collaboration among health ministries, the police, provincial justice ministries, IRCC, housing ministries, and income and employment ministries to improve health outcomes for IRW.
<p>Development</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current framework for understanding “health;” and • The need for a rights-based health framework for IRW. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that physical health, while important, not be the sole focus when addressing IRW’s health needs and make mental health services and supports accessible for IRW. • Shift policies and practices to reflect IRW’s health concerns as rights-based. • In-line with a rights-based framework, provide more funding and support for health advocates for IRW.

Glossary

Overarching Concepts and Terms

Cultural Safety: Recognizing, understanding, and respecting cultural diversity in a way that supports and provides safety, dignity, and empowerment. Cultural safety recognizes that everyone is a carrier of culture. Therefore, cultural safety requires each individual to examine and reflect upon the biases, judgments, and assumptions and how these influence their work, particularly in regards to power relations. A culturally safe environment is one that is culturally, socially, emotionally, spiritually and physically safe and fosters empowerment, dignity, trust, respect and collaboration in its policies and practices.

Economic Capital: Access to economic resources such as money, assets, and property, which determines an individual's social position and provides them with access to educational and employment opportunities, housing and social support networks, and health and social services.

Integration: In the context of immigrants and refugees, integration is the process whereby newcomers, the host country, and the receiving society work together to affect the outcome of the social and economic integration processes. The most impactful of these is the receiving society, which has established institutions and policies that significantly more influence on the integration outcomes than the newcomer themselves. Further, on an individual level integration can be measured in terms of access to housing, employment, education, health as well as how one adapts to the social and cultural norms of the receiving society.

Intersectionality: Recognizing that individuals have a number of different roles and identities which interweave to shape, restrict, and influence their lives, experiences, power and privilege, and the individual impacts of systemic oppression.

Social Determinants of Settlement and Integration, Housing, and Health: A holistic approach to understanding settlement and integration, housing, and health, and differences in related individual and group statuses across populations. The economic and social conditions that constitute the social determinants of settlement and integration, housing, and health include: income and social status; education; unemployment and job security; employment and working conditions; early childhood development; food insecurity; physical environment (e.g. housing); social exclusion; social safety network; health and social services; Indigenous status; gender; biology and genetics; culture; and disability.

Social Capital: Social resources, relationships, and networks, both actual and potential, among individuals and groups with shared norms, values, and understanding that have benefits and enable cooperation and exchange between people. For example, interpersonal connections can have significant impact on one's ability to locate and obtain employment. In instances such as this, social capital is interlinked with economic capital.

Socially Disenfranchised is a process where certain individuals and groups are systematically disadvantaged through discrimination based on their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, ability, migrant/legal status, social class, educational status, and/or location. This marginalization affects access to power, rights, privilege and access to opportunities.

Structural Violence refers to the systematic ways through which social structures and institutions (e.g., police, military, government, health services) harm and disadvantage individuals. Because structural violence is enacted through discriminatory institutional policies and practices, these harms can be subtle and difficult to attribute direct responsibility.

Underemployment is the underutilization of an individual's abilities and/or education, such as when an individual is over-qualified or over-educated but underemployed based on these credentials. For example, a trained medical doctor with foreign credentials who works as a taxi driver because his/her credentials are not recognized in Canada. The term underemployment can also refer to instances in which an individual can only find part-time work but has the ability to work and is unsuccessfully seeking full-time. Underemployment is a significant cause of poverty.

Violence- and Trauma-Informed Frameworks draw attention to the complex and intersecting experiences of individual and systemic violence that a woman may experience. Violence- and trauma-informed frameworks counter the dominant tendency to entrench the problem, impacts, and solutions to violence on the individual woman and not society as a whole.

Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement Sector Related Terms and Legal Status¹⁶

Convention Refugee: a person who meets the refugee definition in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. This definition is used in Canadian law

¹⁶ To remain consistent with legal and governmental definitions, the legal statuses listed below were taken directly from the Canadian Council for Refugees' (CCR) Glossary. For the original source of these definitions, please refer to the CCR Glossary located here: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/glossary>

and is widely accepted internationally. To meet the definition, a person must be outside their country of origin and have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Economic Migrant: a person who moves countries for a job or a better economic future. The term is correctly used for people whose motivations are entirely economic. Migrants' motivations are often complex and may not be immediately clear, so it is dangerous to apply the "economic" label too quickly to an individual or group of migrants.

Illegal Migrant/Illegal Immigrant/Illegal: these terms are problematic because they criminalize the person, rather than the act of entering or remaining irregularly in a country. International law recognizes refugees may need to enter a country without official documents or authorization. It would be misleading to describe them as "illegal migrants". Similarly, a person without status may have been coerced by traffickers: such a person should be recognized as a victim of crime, not treated as a wrong-doer.

Immigrant: a person who has settled permanently in another country. The three broad categories of Canadian immigrants in the Permanent Residence (PR) Class reflect each of those goals (i.e., economic, family, and refugee classes).

Migrant: a person who is outside their country of origin. Sometimes this term is used to talk about everyone outside their country of birth, including people who have been Canadian citizens for decades. It is used for people currently on the move or people with temporary status or no status at all in the country where they live, often moving for the purpose of trying to secure work.

Permanent Resident:¹⁷ a person granted the right to live permanently in Canada. The person may have come to Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee. Permanent residents who become Canadian citizens are no longer permanent residents.

Person Without Status: a person who has not been granted permission to stay in the country, or who has stayed after their visa has expired. The term can cover a person who falls between the cracks of the system, such as a refugee claimant who is refused refugee status but not removed from Canada because of a situation of generalized risk in the country of origin.

¹⁷ The Statistics Canada Report *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report* (2015) highlights three of the main goals of Canadian immigration policy: (1) to promote economic development; (2) to reunite families; and (3) to protect refugees. The three broad categories of Canadian immigrants in the **Permanent Residence (PR) Class** reflect each of those goals (i.e., economic, family, and refugee classes). Per *Facts and Figures 2014 – Immigration Overview* (2014) report.

Political Refugee, Economic Refugee, Environmental Refugee: these terms have no meaning in law. They can be confusing because they incorrectly suggest that there are different categories of refugees.

Protected person: according to Canada's *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, a person who has been determined to be either (a) a Convention Refugee or (b) a person in need of protection (including, for example, a person who is in danger of being tortured if deported from Canada).

Refugee: a person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is located outside of their home country.

Refugee Claimant or Asylum Seeker: a person who has fled their country and is asking for protection in another country. We don't know whether a claimant is a refugee or not until their case has been decided.

Resettled Refugee: a person who has fled their country, is temporarily in a second country and then is offered a permanent home in a third country. Refugees resettled to Canada are selected abroad and become permanent residents as soon as they arrive in Canada. Resettled refugees are determined to be refugees by the Canadian government before they arrive in Canada. Refugee claimants receive a decision on whether they are refugees after they arrive in Canada.

Stateless Person: a person that no state recognizes as a citizen. Some refugees may be stateless but not all are. Similarly, not all stateless people are refugees.

Temporary Resident: a person who has permission to remain in Canada only for a limited period of time. Visitors and students are temporary residents, and so are temporary foreign workers such as agricultural workers and live-in caregivers.

Housing Sector Related Terms

Absolute Homelessness is a category within the broader definition of homelessness. Absolute homeless refers to individuals who are living and sleeping in places not intended for human habitation (e.g., on the street, in a makeshift outdoor shelter) or using emergency shelters.

Core Housing Need defines the parameters by which an individual or family's housing is defined to be adequate (e.g., does not require any major repairs), affordable (i.e., costs less than

30% of before tax household income), and suitable (e.g., has enough bedrooms for the size and makeup of the household according to the National Occupancy Standard requirements). Acceptable housing defined as housing that is adequate in condition, suitable in size, and affordable.

Emergency Shelter: Immediate, short-term emergency housing for individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Hidden Homeless is a category within the broader definition of homelessness. Hidden homeless falls under the sub-category of *provisionally accommodated*, referring to individuals who live temporarily with others because they have no other options. This is often known as “couch surfing.” Despite living in conditions that have no guarantee of continued residency or prospects for more permanent housing, instances of hidden homelessness are often not captured in statistics on provincial and national homelessness because individuals in these circumstances may not access housing supports and services.

Housing Co-operatives are a form of non-profit housing that provides rental housing. Housing co-operatives are member-owned and controlled organizations and provide housing ranging from townhouses to large apartment buildings.

Housing First Models is a rights-based and recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness, which is focused on moving individuals and families into permanent housing and providing them with wraparound supports and services. This model is based on the idea that all people deserve safe, affordable, and permanent housing, and without such housing individuals are unable to attain economic self-sufficiency and/or address mental health, substance use, or employment challenges.

Housing Trajectories refers to the housing path of an individual, family, or group. Following housing trajectories of individuals and families can reveal typologies of what housing resources are used, and what kind of housing is accessed, by different groups.

Canada’s National Housing Strategy is a consultative process to identify ways to improve and increase affordable housing options for vulnerable Canadians over the next 10 years.¹⁸

Progressive Housing Career: A progressive housing career refers to an individual’s ability to advance their housing situation in a positive direction.

¹⁸ Canada’s National Housing Strategy resources can be found here: <https://www.placetocallhome.ca/nhs-resources.cfm>

Rent-to-income Ratio refers to criteria that defines how much an individual or family should pay for rent, which is commonly 30%. This meaning that individual's or families' rent should not exceed more than 30% of their gross monthly salary.

Rental Market Housing: Private-market rental housing that varies across regions in Canada. Prices for rental housing are determined local market conditions. The housing market in many regions fails to meet the housing needs of many individuals and families (e.g., affordability, availability).

Safe Housing: Community-based networks of private homes in small rural communities where transition housing does not exist. Safe housing provide shelter to women and their children who have experienced, or are at risk of, violence. Stays at safe houses are often short but can be longer if required.

Second Stage Housing provides safe and affordable temporary housing and supports, generally 3-12 months, for women, children, and youth who have experienced violence.

Subsidized Housing: Affordable long-term housing for which the provincial government provides financial support or rent assistance. Rent in subsidized housing is geared to income, meaning that the housing provider matches an individual or families' rent based on household income and generally reflects a 30% rent-to-income ratio.

Third Stage Housing provides independent supportive housing for 2-4 years to women and their children who have experienced violence and no longer need and/or qualify for crisis service support.

Transition Housing provides short- to long-term shelter and support services to women, children, and youth who have experienced, or are at risk of, violence.

Typologies of Homelessness: Generally, homelessness is divided into 4 categories, 1) absolute homeless or unsheltered; 2) emergency sheltered; 3) provisionally housed or hidden homeless; and, 4) at immediate risk of homelessness.

Health Sector Related Terms

Healthy Immigrant Effect refers to the fact that immigrants tend to be healthier than those born in Canada. Over time and successive generations their health, however, and the health of their children and grandchildren often declines because of many factors such as discrimination, poverty that lead to poor standard of living, stresses related to challenges finding an adequate source of income, language difficulties, social exclusion, barriers to health care, limited social supports, and challenging settlement experiences.



Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) provides limited and temporary health coverage to individuals who are not eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance. Eligible individuals include protected persons, resettled refugees, refugee claimants, and certain other groups.

Universal Health Care refers to a health care system that provides free health care (i.e., necessary hospital and physician services) and financial protection to all citizens through a publicly funded health care. Instead of having a national socialized health plan, Canada has 13 provincial and territorial health care insurance plans.

Section 1) Background

The *Building Supports Project: Housing Access for Immigrant and Refugee Women (IRW) Leaving Violence* (hereafter referred to as the Building Supports Project) is a collaborative multi-phase community-based project co-led by British Columbia Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA), British Columbia Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH), and The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children (School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University). The overall purpose of this project is to understand the barriers IRW face in accessing short-and long-term housing when leaving violent and abusive relationships, and to identify practices and policies that can facilitate the removal of barriers to safe, secure, and affordable housing. There are three phases to this project:

1. Phase I, the research component, which is now completed (Building Supports Project Phase 1 Final Report: Housing access for immigrant and refugee women leaving violence, 2015; Building Supports Project Phase 1 Infographic, 2015);
2. Phase II, Promising Practices and a provincial awareness campaign “You are not alone,” which is ongoing (Building Supports Project, 2016; Building Supports Promising Practices Guide, 2015); and
3. Phase III, the policy component, which is the focus for this report.

In the initial phase of the Project, the Project Team recruited two Advisory Committees (ACs) for the Building Supports Project; the first AC is comprised of local and provincial anti-violence agencies, multicultural services, housing providers, and provincial and federal ministries. The second AC is comprised of IRW with lived experiences of violence.¹⁹ In the first phase of this project, the ACs participated in the identification of research communities, advised the team on the research methodology and instruments, provided critical feedback on emerging research findings, and assisted with the direction of Phase II and subsequently Phase III (i.e., the policy component) of this research.

From the Phase I Report findings, there were several policy barriers that affect IRW’s ability to leave the violence and abuse and secure short-and long-term housing, which were

¹⁹ The women with lived experience who participate in the Advisory Committee unanimously chose to have a separate advisory committee at the project’s outset.

identified by focus group participants, housing managers, and survey respondents. As explained below, policy and practice barriers were not just experienced in the housing sector, but also in other related sectors (e.g., immigration, refugee, and settlement²⁰, health). Thus, the focus for Phase III is on the policies and practices in these sectors, with an emphasis on how immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, and health sectors interlink or may operate in silos.

Phase III is the policy component of the Building Supports Project which focuses on provincial and select federal policy barriers, practices, and solutions in order to reduce or eliminate the obstacles to obtain safe and secure short- and long-term housing that exist for IRW leaving violence and abuse. In this document, an intersectional analysis considers how policies relevant to that goal, such as housing, immigration, refugee, and settlement, and health, have common themes in their perspectives. The two primary Phase III component goals are:

- 1) To identify provincial, and select federal, policy solutions to reduce or eliminate barriers that exist for IRW in accessing long-term housing.
- 2) To articulate an action plan for effecting policy change.

1.1) Creating a Policy Frame

As stated in the original Building Supports Project research proposal, the overall goal of the project that is consistent across all three phases of the research is *(to) identify the experiences of immigrant/refugee women in securing safe, affordable, and culturally safe and appropriate housing after leaving violence and abuse*. The first two objectives were:

- 1) To determine the barriers to housing access for immigrant/refugee women leaving violence and abuse.
- 2) To identify and develop promising practices for transition house workers so that they are enabled to support IRW in accessing longer-term, affordable and culturally-appropriate housing.

Those two objectives were achieved and resulted in *the Phase 1 Report, an Infographic* (Building Supports Project Phase 1 Infographic, 2015) and a *Promising Practices Guide* (Building

²⁰ In this report the term “settlement” includes social and economic integration.

Supports Promising Practices for Supporting Immigrant & Refugee Women Leaving Violence, 2016). As mentioned above, the last two objectives, which are the focus of Phase III, are:

- 3) To identify provincial and federal policy solutions to reduce or eliminate barriers that exist for IRW in accessing long-term housing; and,
- 4) To articulate an action plan for effecting policy change.

The intended long-term outcome for the last two objectives is to reduce policy barriers faced by IRW through the identification of practical and collaborative solutions for practice and policy; these solutions aim to ensure that IRW can safely leave violent and abusive relationships without increasing risks to their safety and well-being²¹ through their securing of short and long-term affordable housing. To achieve these objectives, the research team determined the initial necessary step of developing a policy lens from which to identify and critically examine policy barriers. For Phase III of this research, given the primary focus on access to housing for IRW, the examination and analysis uses a housing-centric policy lens to link to other policies in other areas, such as immigration, refugee, and settlement and health; these are sectors and areas previously identified in the Building Supports Project Phase I component as being relevant by the women with lived experiences, as well as service providers in transition houses, non-profit housing, and multi-service agencies.

Key Research Findings and Themes from the Phase I Report

Barriers to Safety	Barriers to Housing	Policy Barriers	Impacts	Solutions
Language and cultural barriers	The limits of Transition Houses	<i>Discrimination</i>	Health and well-being	Information, support, outreach, and accompaniment
Shame and fear of disclosure	Misconceptions about Transition Houses	<i>Income assistance policies</i>	Risk of homelessness	Staff diversity and training
Lack of familial support, financial security, and knowledge	Communal living	<i>Legal / immigration status</i>	Return to abuser	Organizational culture shift
			Deportation with or without children	

²¹ "Well-being" here primarily references physical and mental health.

about available services	Waitlists and size	<i>Legal aid</i>		More funding and housing
Limited housing options and information	Tenant selection	<i>BC Housing policies</i>		<i>Review of policies and practices</i>
	Inadequate income assistance	<i>Access to health care</i>		<i>Collaboration</i>
	Lack of support and affordable housing			
	Landlords			

1.2) Steps for Examining Relevant Policies for IRW Who Have Experienced Violence

Since Phase III is the policy component of the Building Supports Project, it is important to begin by considering what actually constitutes a policy. First, policies are value-based and often those values may be in conflict, or tension may exist between the different policy values. The policy itself establishes the balance between, for example, individual and societal values. In that regard, *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is an example of a key policy document for the country as a whole. Second, each policy’s intent refers to an action set out to secure the stated value balance. One example here is mandatory charging policies in domestic/intimate partner violence which intend to provide protection of the woman’s safety as a priority over the accused’s rights. Third, problems can arise when a stated policy intent does not result in the desired balance, outcome, or impact. In the present examination of relevant policies, the overarching policy intents considered were *to secure women’s safety and well-being*. This particular approach to the analysis through the housing-centric policy lens sees accessing safe short- and long-term housing as key to that intent, as it may be relevant to the safety and security of IRW leaving violence and abuse. It was necessary to determine what policy intents and values served as foundational.

What constitutes a policy analysis with a housing policy lens?

Phase III, the policy component, began with a broad overview of the resources and materials which consider the challenges and barriers for IRW leaving violence and abuse; this overview was grounded in IRW's experiences with securing short- and long-term housing for their own, and their children's, safety and well-being. The primary document guiding this analysis was the Phase I Report from this project. The results of the Building Supports Project Phase I Final Report, entitled *Housing for Immigrant and Refugee Women Leaving Abuse (2015)*, assisted in identifying the barriers, gaps, and challenges at the micro/operational level of the transition houses and multi-service agencies. In addition, the Ending Violence Association of British Columbia's (EVA BC) foundational report, entitled *Immigrant Women's Project: Safety of Immigrant, Refugee, and non-Status Women (2012)* (hereafter *Immigrant Women's Project*) (described below), provided a template for broader and related systemic issues.

EVA BC's Report: Immigrant Women's Project: Safety of Immigrant, Refugee and Non-Status Women (2012)

A report from the *Immigrant Women's Project (2012)* is of interest and relevance for the current report, because of its focus on four broadly defined key issue areas identified as policy priorities for their own focus group discussions: 1) IRW survivors; 2) immigration; 3) cultural competency; and 4) the legal system. This analysis highlighted the need for hearing the voices of those most affected by policy in any analysis, which is an approach consistent with the one utilized for the Building Supports Project Phase III Policy Component. Thus, even though the *Immigrant Women's Project* did have different specific foci than the present Building Supports Project, and is now outdated, there are nonetheless some commonalities between the two projects which will be noted in the challenges and solutions/recommendations section (see Section 6 of this report). The current project, however, uses a housing-centric policy lens and provides a broader systemic scope and policy analysis than *The Immigrant Women's Project* report. For example, this research focuses on health, well-being, and immigration/settlement specifically to examine the challenges, barriers, and solutions to securing short- and long-term housing for IRW leaving violence and abuse. Further, the *Immigrant Women's Project* report

Insight from a Lower Mainland Immigration Lawyer

In response to a question about what policy issues set out in the *Immigrant Women's Project* (2012) Report recommendations remain as priorities to be dealt with today, the immigration lawyer interviewed indicated there were two identified policy issues that remain problematic (i.e., the sponsorship debt and Out-of-Status women who are experiencing abuse).

(1) Sponsorship debt: the situation described involved a woman who had sponsored a male, but the male became abusive toward her, he left and went onto welfare, thus incurring a debt to be recovered by the victim. There is a debt recovery program associated with such situations and the interviewed lawyer is currently involved with EVA BC in efforts to convince the government (i.e., the Minister of Finance) to change its regulations to include women with experiences of abuse under an exception, in order that the debt not be sought from her.

(2) Out of Status Women's Experiencing Abuse: out of status or non-status women represent a highly problematic issue, as the non-status designation affects their eligibility for certain key benefits. One example of a partnering program that works to counter these problems is one in which the YWCA and BC Housing work together to provide support when children are involved, however this does exclude women with no children.

came out prior to BC's

*Violence Against Women
In Relationships* (VAWIR)

policy in 2010 and the
Family Law Act (FLA) in

2013; however, the
concerns expressed

throughout that report
about the lack of sharing
of relevant information

between the two justice
systems (i.e., family court
and criminal court)

remain relevant to date
(Martinson & Jackson,
2016), as well as

concerns about the
availability of legal aid²²

for IRW leaving violence
and abuse. The lack of
clear understanding

around intersections of
immigration law and

family court remains, and

²² According to a community services key informant, anecdotally it appears with the recent influx of refugees into Canada, the wait times and priority classifications may have shifted to the refugee processing priority.

the same is true of the intersections between immigration law and criminal court.

Development of a Housing-Centric Policy Analysis

This policy analytic research was developed using an intersectional feminist approach when examining the key areas of policy, primarily in the housing, immigration, refugee, and settlement, and health sectors.²³ This intersectional analysis²⁴ was guided by questions such as:

- 1) what are the intersections between IRW's experiences in settlement, housing, and health sectors?;
- 2) how do policies and practices within these sectors (i.e., settlement, housing, and health) interlink, and what are the impacts of these linkages on IRW's experiences, especially while leaving violent and abusive homes and/or relationships?; and,
- 3) how do other intersecting factors (e.g., legal status, poverty, gender) affect each of these three sectors and/or the linkages between these sectors, as well as their policies and practices?

After developing the base for this research, guided by the Building Supports Project Phase I Report and *The Immigrant Women's Project* (2012) Report, the research team next outlined interrelated and often intersecting information on policies dealing with immigration, refugee, settlement, integration, housing, and health, with additional considerations such as labour/financial assistance and child protection, which informed the research team's approach to the two primary Phase III objectives and constitute our guide. The approach, done through the primary housing-centric policy lens, was adapted along the way; however, the basic intents of the policies, as well as their values and objectives, remained in place throughout the course of this research.

The present policy component analysis takes the examination of policies to a higher systems level than was previously undertaken in the Phase I component of the Building

²³ An intersectional analysis can be informed by developments in gender equality analysis, critical race analysis, disability rights analysis and equality rights jurisprudence. These strategies have developed to address the stereotypes, as well as the unique and intersecting experiences of individuals, because of race or gender or disability and form a necessary part of the contextual and analytical framework. In some measure, it can address social conditions relating to poverty, low income and homelessness. More information is available at: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/intersectional-approach-discrimination-addressing-multiple-grounds-human-rights-claims/applying-intersectional-approach>

²⁴ See Figure 1 on page 46 for an infographic demonstrating the complex and intersecting nature of systems that impact IRW's safety and well-being.

Supports Project. For example, the research team expanded their approach and analysis to include the following research questions:

- 1) How well do housing policies, as they are the primary focus and lens, achieve the policy intent outcomes, especially regarding the accessing of safe short- and long-term housing?
- 2) How well do immigration, refugee, and settlement and health, along with other linked sector policies, meet the overarching policy intent and values of women's safety and well-being?

The two policies stated above (i.e., the *VAWIR* policy and *Charter of Rights and Freedoms Section 15 Equality*) served as the overarching policy intents against which to examine policies

One of the disadvantages IRW leaving violence and abuse can face when dealing with family and/or criminal court systems are the impacts and effects of the intersectionality of their own circumstances, such as poverty, ethnicity, and gender which further disadvantage them in those settings. However, those same justice system disadvantages can occur much earlier with their contact (or noncontact) with the police. As a result, mistrust of the justice system, which many IRW hold for that system, can even impact their willingness to disclose to police in the first place. The same intersectionality factors can also occur within their experiences with immigration and child protection hearings.

relevant for inclusion in the development of the policy lens analysis. These overarching policy intents guided the examination of the policies relevant to the safety and security of IRW leaving violence and abuse in the contexts of housing, and subsequently immigration, refugee, and settlement, and health. Thus, while the purpose of the Phase III analysis and report is not to undertake a detailed evaluation of the outcomes of each individual policy, which would easily be a costly multi-year project in and of itself, the assessment of how they interactively

may relate to other policies involved in achieving the safety and well-being policy intents for IRW leaving violence and abuse is important to examine. How the policy intents may not interact, or even possibly counter each other, was also an important element within this analysis. Those considerations come from and have been identified by:

- 1) the women themselves, the service providers, and housing managers (see the Phase I Report);
- 2) from our analyses of the many other reports and studies examined; and
- 3) from our interviews with key stakeholders, which is detailed in the methodology section (see Section 2).

Following the full intersectional policy examination, recommendations are laid out as they emerged from the above sources, but also from the research team's analysis. These recommendations and solutions are integrated throughout this report, as well as in Section 6; Section 6 provides the comprehensive grid of identified barriers/problems, recommendations, and solutions. This analysis will also inform the development of specific action plans with the input from our two ACs and British Columbia's Inter-Ministerial Committee on Domestic Violence (IMCDV) (see subsection 1.3 below). These action plans may be in the form of advocacy plans, as well as plans for policies and programs suggested to be in need of reform.

1.3) Ultimate Goal: The Action Plans

Throughout this research, the research team continuously referred back to, and searched through, the policy analysis for potential and feasible actionable pieces.²⁵ Following the completion of the Phase III policy analysis, these key themes and actionable items will form the basis of action plans for two of the partners, BCSTH and BCNPA (e.g., advocacy, programs, policies). Some of the questions that guided, and will continue to guide, the development of action plans includes:

- 1) How can such recommendations become concretely operationalized at the systems level?;
- 2) Would joint committees with different sector representation work with respect to the sharing of relevant information for decision-making?;
- 3) Are lobbying initiatives at the provincial and federal levels for more funding for needed resources effective?; and,
- 4) How can the many recommendations that have already been made and the others that emerge through the policy analysis support and inform the development of a

²⁵ For example, one common theme in previous reports has been the need for collaboration, connection, coordination, and communication among and between sectors and agencies.

Phase III *Policy Report and Policy Brief Summary* of a different nature than the one developed for the Phase I outcomes?

During the development of action plans, input from key stakeholders and women on the lived experience AC helped identify priority policy areas to pursue. One additional component of Phase III provided an examination of the legislation of relevance for non-status IRW leaving violence and abuse. This additional component was completed with the assistance of a Pro Bono law student from the University of British Columbia (UBC), who provided a legalistic analysis as well making specific recommendations (see Ardanaz, 2017).

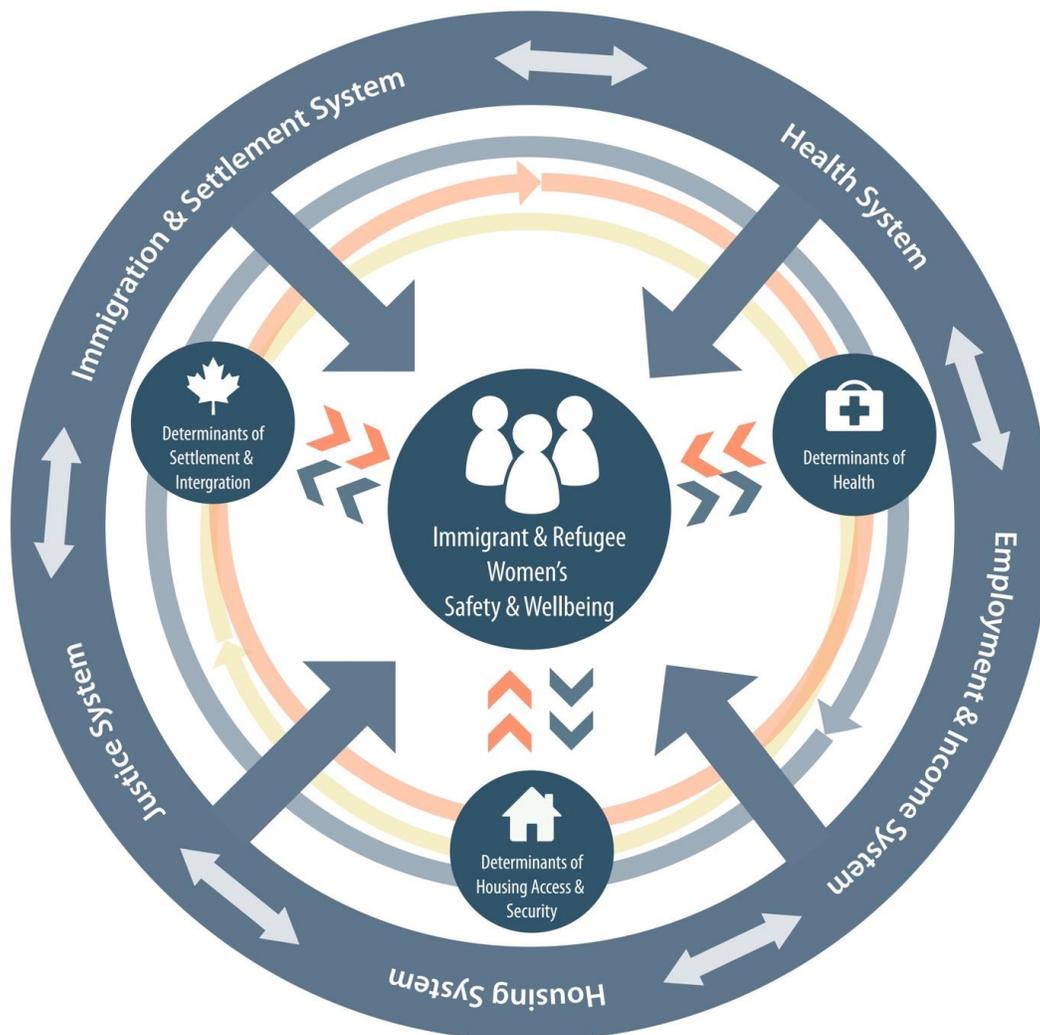


Figure 1: The Intersectional and Interconnected Nature of Systems and IRW's Experiences



Figure 1 above demonstrates the complex and intersecting nature of the systems that impact IRW's safety and well-being. This schematic created by Hannah Lee and Louise Godard highlights the need for collaboration, connection, coordination, and communication among and across sectors, as well as individual agencies and supports, to ensure the safety and well-being of IRW and children.

Section 2) Research Development and Methodology

The general approach to, and methodological framework for, the policy analysis of immigrant and refugee women’s (IRW) experiences in the contexts of immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, and health were informed by the following focuses (see sub-section 2.1 below).²⁶

2.1) Overview of Approach and Methodologies (figure 1)

Primary Topic Focus	Safe, affordable, long- and short-term housing for IRW leaving violence and abuse.
Goal of Policy Analysis	How best to secure short- and long-term safe and affordable housing for IRW leaving violence and abuse.
Overarching Policy Values	<p><i>British Columbia’s Violence Against Women in Relationships</i> policy (2010).</p> <p>Policy Intent: “The goal is to support and protect those individuals at risk” (i.e., women’s safety and security).</p> <p><i>Charter</i> Section 15 equality rights values:</p> <p><i>15(1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.</i></p>
Sectors Examined	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Housing, which is the predominant lens; 2) Immigration, refugee, and settlement; 3) Health.

²⁶ The issues addressed in this methodological overview are reiterated and expanded upon in the narrative below.

<p>Critical Themes Throughout</p>	<p>While many themes and barriers arise throughout the analysis, some of which are sector-based (i.e., housing, immigration, refugee, and settlement, or health-specific), many critical themes are overlapping and intersectional. Of these, some of the key themes highlighted throughout the analysis are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) gendered violence 2) well-being of children; 3) gender issues and gendered nature of the immigrant and refugee experience; 4) financial (in)security; 5) safety and well-being; 6) language and cultural competency; 7) examining intersectionalities; and, 8) the interconnected nature of commonalities and gaps.
<p>Sources of Information</p>	<p>The sources of information that comprise the Phase III policy analysis and report are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Phase I Results from interviews, surveys, and focus groups. 2) Advisory Committee Phase II Workshop summary. 3) <i>The Immigrant Women’s Project (2012) Report</i>. 4) A systematic literature review, which included over 150 relevant policy and government reports, sector reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Key themes were derived from this literature and informed many of the solutions and recommendations presented throughout this report. To establish parameters for this literature review, only documents published within the last decade were considered (i.e., 2006 on) and key search terms (e.g. immigrant women, violence, housing, health and well-being, immigration, refugee, and settlement) guided the data collection process. 5) An in-person meeting in Victoria with members of the BC Inter-ministerial Committee on Domestic Violence (IMCDV). The initial results from Phase I and the proposed policy frame and analysis for Phase III were presented. The membership of the IMCDV is composed of Associate Deputy Ministers in relevant sectors, such as housing, immigration, health, victim services, social development, and child protection. Feedback was obtained from individual members. 6) Interviews were conducted with fourteen key stakeholders, who are individuals who have working knowledge as an administrator in the

policies of one of the sectors (i.e., housing, health, immigration, refugee, and settlement). These interviews were conducted by the research team, and were conducted to obtain current information on challenges, “what works,” and promising practices and policies in their areas of experience and expertise.

- 7) A one-day in-person workshop with the two ACs was held on April 11th, 2017 to garner feedback on the policy analysis and report, as well as identify additional recommendations and potential items for the Action Plans. Their input provided some indication of policy priority areas and desired actions. The AC members include women with lived experience, transition house providers, non-profit housing providers, and policy experts.
- 8) An examination of relevant law which impacts non-status refugee women undertaken by a Pro Bono student UBC’s Allard School of Law was also considered and integrated.
- 9)

Finally, subsequent feedback on the draft report and policy brief summary was most recently obtained from relevant key stakeholders and individual members of the IMCDV. The selected person reviewed the policy analysis subsections of relevance to their own areas of expertise and experience (i.e., immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, and health), as well as the overall Policy Brief Summary.

2.2) Research and Development of Policy Documents

First, the Phase I research findings and the Phase III systematic literature review was conducted of documents, reports, and resources related to the primary relevant policy areas and selected current legislation where barriers and/or opportunities for change and development exist.²⁷ These materials were annotated; subsequently, key themes were extracted for analysis. This systematic literature review process provides the foundation for the policy analysis document and focuses primarily on the provincial context, but will note where the adoption of more robust policies and practices at the federal level would aid in the

²⁷ This systematic literature review included a comprehensive review of over 150 documents, including academic articles, government and community organizations’ reports, as well as actual relevant policies.

facilitation of accessing and securing short- and long-term housing for IRW leaving violent and abusive relationships.

Occurring in tandem with the systematic literature review, individual interviews were conducted with fourteen key stakeholders as a means of garnering information and context for the policy lens and providing some indication of policy priority areas and desired actions. The individual interviewees included housing and immigration law experts, federal and provincial Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) staff, and family law personnel. Eight questions were developed from the Phase I findings, as well as from the research team's initial findings from the literature review analysis.²⁸

Policy Analysis, Action Plans, and Recommendations and Solutions

Initial notification of the Phase III Policy Component was provided to the Advisory Committees (ACs) via conference call, with information on the major themes found to date from the literature review, and a two-page document explaining the framework sent to them beforehand. On April 11, 2017, the ACs gathered during a one-day in-person meeting in Vancouver to consider the findings and the policy implications of the research, receive feedback, further commit to priority areas, and begin the development of ideas for action items and action plans for implementation. Subsequently, the Phase III policy analysis document will be provided to both ACs, for further comments, if they have any. A second round of feedback from individual members of the Provincial Inter-Ministerial Committee on Domestic Violence (IMCDV) and key stakeholders more recently occurred on the draft report on sections of their own expertise and on the overall Policy Brief Summary (PBS).

The PBS was created and derived from the report. It will serve to inform first, government policy-makers and second, community advocacy staff and service providers. From those policy documents, action plans will be developed by the Project partner agencies, the British Columbia Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) and the British Columbia Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH). The PBS will provide the policy recommendations for how to reduce barriers to short-

²⁸ See Appendix 1 for the full list of questions.

and long-term housing for IRW leaving violence and abuse and suggestions for how they might

**British Columbia's Violence against Women
in Relationships (VAWIR) Policy and the
Charter of Rights and Freedoms.**

Given the non-homogenous nature of immigrant and refugee groups, sensitivity to issues of diversity is critical. It is acknowledged that within these groups there are difference experiences based on intersecting identity markers, such as culture, status, age, and socio-economic levels. Thus, the employment of the *Charter* in the analysis allows for a consideration of substantive equality matters.

At a baseline level, immigrant and refugee groups share some common stressors, barriers, and vulnerabilities (e.g., immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, and health) within the broader contexts of status, experiences of abuse, and legal and policy contexts. The application of the VAWIR policy considers the impact of such risk factors on securing the safety of the women.

The Immigrant Women's Project (2012) Report provides a foundational template and analysis which focuses upon the same demographic and using a similar methodology, but has a different focus than the Building Supports Project.

pursue other opportunities (a detailed rationale for the recommendations, with supporting evidence, is given at the end of the full report). The PBS can be used by the partners and other community agencies to raise awareness of policy barriers among their member organizations; this document can be used to formulate the specific commitments (i.e., action plans) for two of the project partners (BCSTH and BCNPHA) to carry the work forward through their advocacy mandates. These plans will detail how and with whom the organizations will undertake advocacy efforts to reduce the barriers faced by IRW leaving violence and abuse.

Similarly, for the government administrators and policy-makers, the PBS can be used to assist in the consideration of needed policy reform in the area of domestic violence in the sectors which impact the responses and processing of these situations, that is,

primarily in housing, but also in immigration, refugee, and settlement sectors as well as health.

The involved policy makers and government officials at both the provincial and select federal

levels will be made aware of the results and recommendations.²⁹

The research team will also engage in knowledge mobilization and share information from the project with their broader networks of researchers, policy makers, and service providers, including the BC's Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV), BC Housing, IRCC, and health sector partners, plus present the results at a variety of conferences and in other venues. The three partner organizations will post research reports and other resources (e.g., promising practices toolkit, policy documents) on their respective websites. Finally, the research team will engage in dissemination efforts to share the knowledge generated from the project with the public more generally.

²⁹ In addition to the Policy Brief Summary, the hyper-linked full report will be made available to both government and community.

Section 3) Canadian Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement Policy Analysis

To provide the context for the Phase III Policy Component, the backdrop for the experiences of immigrant and refugee women (IRW) leaving violence and abuse needs to begin with a clarification of the immigration, refugee, and settlement policy environment in British Columbia (BC) and Canada. Before examining these issues through a housing-centric lens, it is necessary to provide an understanding of how the women's immigration and refugee status affects their ability to secure safe housing, both short- and long-term. Therefore, prior to examining relevant housing policies, this report begins with a discussion of Canadian immigration policy and practice. This is most appropriate because as Hiebert (2017) noted, **"first and foremost, immigration policy is, essentially, also a form of housing policy"** (p. 1, as cited in Todd, 2017).³⁰

The Statistics Canada Report *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report* (2015) highlights three of the main goals of Canadian immigration policy:

- 1) to promote economic development;
- 2) to reunite families; and
- 3) to protect refugees (p. 4).³¹

Immigration Categories

The three broad categories of Canadian immigrants in the ***Permanent Residence (PR) Class*** reflect each of those goals (i.e., economic, family, and refugee classes). Per *Facts and Figures 2014 – Immigration Overview* (2014) report,³² 61 percent of female PRs were admitted under the economic class, whereas 28 percent were admitted under family class and 10 percent as refugee/humanitarian class.³³

³⁰ "Federal Immigration targets 'form of housing policy'", Douglas Todd, *Vancouver Sun*, December 23, 2017, p. A1, citing Daniel Hiebert study on the relationship between immigration and housing policy, in the winter issue of the *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, Immigrants and Refugees in the Housing Markets of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, 2011, v.26, pp. 32-78 .

³¹ IRCC'S Mission Statement also includes developing and implementing policies, programs and services to facilitate the arrival of people and their integration into Canada... and advancing global migration policies to support Canada's immigration/humanitarian objectives. For more information, see: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/mission>.

³² For more information see *Canada – Female permanent residents by category* (p. 14): <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/2014-Facts-Permanent.pdf>

³³ Also see p. 91 in the housing section of this report for the impact these differing categories may have for IRW securing appropriate housing

Other categories are ***Protected Persons (PPs)*** and ***Refugee Claimants (RCs)***. PPs have been assessed as needing protection or as being a Convention Refugee. Once a positive decision has been made on an asylum claim, they become PPs and are eligible for federally-funded Settlement Program integration support services; these services include labour market integration support,³⁴ language training in English or French, needs assessment and referral services, information and orientation, and Community Connections. RCs, on the other hand, are individuals who have fled their country and made an asylum claim in Canada but have not yet received a decision on their claim. As a claimant, however, RCs cannot apply for PR status until they receive a positive determination on their asylum claim. RCs are, though, generally eligible for some settlement services provided by provinces and territories while a decision is pending in their claim, such as social assistance, education, temporary health services, emergency housing, and legal aid. RCs may also apply for a work permit.

RCs and PPs, including resettled refugees, who are not eligible for provincial or territorial health insurance may have access to temporary coverage of health-care benefits under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP).³⁵ They have only limited benefits available to them, but it should be noted that RCs are granted a work permit, thereby enabling them to legally work in Canada (derived in part from, Building Supports Promising Practices for Supporting Immigrant & Refugee Women Leaving Violence, 2015, pp. 34-35).

Non-Status Persons (or Out-of-Status Persons) is the last status category to be discussed for this component and has proven to be most problematic for IRW leaving violence and abuse. Non-status individuals arrive in Canada after fleeing their country and remain in Canada without legal status; this may occur for several possible reasons, such as the fact that their sponsor may not have gone through the necessary process to secure their legal status³⁶ or

³⁴ The Canadian government offers financial assistance for government-assisted refugees and loans for all resettled refugees. These services are not available to other permanent residents or newcomers.

³⁵ See page 129 of the health section for more information on the IFHP.

³⁶ If the individual is out-of-status but has a sponsor, this suggests they are applying for PR as a member of the spouse or common-law-partner in Canada class. In cases where there is a breakdown in the relationship, women in such a situation may instead request Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds (H&C) consideration in order to remain in Canada as a PR. See page 60 for additional information on the H&C option.

they may not meet other criteria for eligibility. The non-status persons category also includes persons who arrive in Canada with temporary status (e.g., temporary worker, visitor, student), but their status has lapsed. These individuals are, therefore, particularly vulnerable if their partner is abusive, because as non-status persons they have limited access to key benefits and services through provincial and federal governments and may also be subject to deportation and removal (Building Supports Promising Practices for Supporting Immigrant & Refugee Women Leaving Violence, 2016, p. 35).

In fact, the situation of the out-of-status or non-status woman leaving violence and abuse has been identified as the most vulnerable situation of all the statuses for IRW women (Key Informant/KI, 2017; see also Ardanaz, 2017). They cannot apply for citizenship. They are, however, able to apply for Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds (H&C) status, which takes on average between 2-3 years to complete. They are not able to work during that time unless they have received approval in principle and given the green light to apply for or otherwise managed to obtain a work permit. There are very limited benefits available to them during this time, but women with children can access housing and some benefits; these benefits are limited.³⁷ If their H&C application is accepted, they will be given PR status.

One interviewed KI is working with a group that advocates for the H&C application to be expedited. This group is also asking that these women be granted a Temporary Resident Permit (TPR) and work permit immediately. Just as there used to be a way to fast track Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) applicants by a green sticker designation placed on the outside of the envelope to indicate urgency, the same kind of process could be applied to H&C applications; that is, a coloured sticker indicating that the application needs to be processed right away. If we can expedite processing of applications for people who may be an economic asset to Canada, we should be able to expedite applications of the most vulnerable individuals as well. Otherwise they may become stuck in a limbo.

³⁷ One example of a partnering program that works to counter these problems is one in which the YWCA and BC Housing work together to assist when children are involved, however this does exclude women with no children.

The application for H&C consideration and the TPR Permit go out at the same time. The hope is that Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) will defer removal while the application is being processed. However, there is no automatic right of stay of removal under the law, as it is at the discretion of CBSA. As far as housing and shelter benefits, non-status IRW with children leaving violence and abuse have better access to both of those benefits than non-status IRW leaving violence and abuse who do not have children. Thus, there is a greater need for an H&C application for the latter group of women.

In addition to the hurdles these vulnerable women face which give them little incentive for leaving a violent and abusive relationship, there are many other obstacles immigrant, refugee, and non-status women face. For example, there may be issues with Canadian children of non-status women (parents) accessing child benefits that would normally be available to Canadian children of PR or Canadian citizen parents. Other problems pertain to issues of access to justice, which arise when these women are not able to retain counsel. This is linked to limited legal aid budgets and difficulty finding lawyers in more remote areas. Even when the access is possible, many times the lawyers are not themselves informed or sufficiently aware of the dynamics of family abuse and how the trauma experienced can impact on the woman's ability to share what she has endured. Training for lawyers to have a violence- and trauma-informed lens is critical. These women need access to counseling while going through the process of sharing their details and completing their H&C and other immigration related applications.

The best interests of these women and children both need to be profiled as the primary policy intent guiding the actions to assist all IRW leaving violence and abuse, but those with non-status are particularly in need of such considerations. Therefore, what should be emphasized here is that the most vulnerable have to navigate the most difficult path to safety. The processes from beginning to end, with all the participants (e.g., police, courts, immigration), need to have a violence- and trauma-informed lens and priority placed on the safety of these women and children. In conclusion, it is evident that the access to justice

challenges described for the non-status IRW women leaving violence and abuse may also constitute human rights challenges when neither the equality of services provided, nor the equality of justice secured is achieved for them.

3.1) The Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement Policy Landscapes

The immigration status of IRW is closely connected to the other two sectors relevant for this policy review: (1) housing; and (2) health. The connection is most clearly seen in how the immigration process differentially impacts the benefits and social supports (e.g., housing and health services) provided to these women, which is dependent upon the designated status class to which they have been streamed. Thus, a PR status woman is better able to secure safe housing than a non-status woman, because being non-status prevents women from receiving the same financial and employment assistance as provided to PRs. This, in turn, significantly impacts and limits IRW's ability to escape abuse and become and remain independent. Ultimately, access to benefits such as, but not limited to, supports for housing and health directly impact the safety and well-being of the IRW, which are the primary policy goals that underwent examination during the Building Supports Phase III policy analysis.

The decisions that make the linkages between vulnerable IRW and the necessary support services (e.g., housing, health) begins pre-arrival of the family into Canada, with or without her partner and children. Settlement Services are often the first point of contact for these women, and the first agency to assist in the IRW's journey.³⁸ Abuse may proceed with that initial entry, or it may begin once in Canada. The sponsorship arrangement, whereby the woman and her children are sponsored by a partner who is already in Canada, can itself trigger the abuse; this abuse can take many forms, and has the potential to manifest not just

One woman put it this way, "So I hear things like 'if you come, he sponsors you, you have to stay in there [with him] or your PR status will be revoked'."

³⁸ Pre-arrival settlement services are only available to immigrants and refugees who have been selected as PRs by IRCC. By this point, most women have had contact with IRCC through that application process.

as physical violence but also as financial and psychological abuse. Further, the woman and her children's health and well-being may be affected by the traumatic stress, psychologically, and/or physically in cases of physical violence. IRW's and children's safety and well-being, therefore, may be compromised prior to any attempts to locate or escape to safe and secure housing. Accordingly, what the Phase III Policy Component examines are the barriers IRW face when attempting to secure safe, appropriate short- and long-term housing. It is evident, however, that in order to explore and assess these processes, it is necessary to first examine

A key recommendation arising from the findings of Depner and Teixeira's (2012) analysis holds similar importance for both rural and urban settings, which is the need to continue to build community capacities and create a collaborative environment to better deal with immigration, refugee, and settlement issues (pp. 88-89).

the contexts and experiences of IRW prior to their search for housing, as well as the related impactful policies.

In the past, Canada's immigration policies and approaches have been considered proactive (Schmidt, 2007). That is, there is a relatively interactive, proactive relationship between immigrant communities

and government officials in Canada, compared to the United States. Schmidt (2007) attributes this in part to Canada's smaller population size in comparison with the immigration population, support, and relationships available in the United States (p. 113). Additionally, Depner and Teixeira (2012) provide an overview of immigrant and settlement patterns in BC, which demonstrated that settlement is largely an urban phenomenon provincially and, as they suggest, in Canada overall. Thus, the differences in rural and urban environments and policy landscapes are extremely important to keep in mind when suggesting changes to policy and practices.

Having established this backdrop, an examination of the major policy barriers for IRW leaving violence and abuse in Canada was one arising from immigration and sponsorship issues specifically (as identified in the Building Supports Project Phase I Report). Throughout the focus groups, the issues and vulnerabilities related to sponsorship came across as confusion and fear

for the women who had been sponsored by their abusive partners; this was related to concerns about revocation of their status if they left their abusive partner.³⁹ There was general agreement on this point among the sponsored women participating who had not been granted their PR status.

Some of that fear will be alleviated with the relatively recent amendment to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* (IRPR), which occurred on April 18, 2017 (“Regulations amending the immigration and refugee protection regulations,” 2016). The

The H&C Option

A spouse or partner who has had their sponsorship withdrawn or is removed from a PR application may apply to remain in Canada in another immigration class, or may submit an H&C application. The possibility that family violence could place a sponsored spouse in a situation of hardship, as in the situation where a woman feels she has to stay in a relationship of risk removal if her spouse withdraws sponsorship, is specifically addressed in the H&C guidelines for immigration officers. The Officers are instructed to consider the evidence of abuse, whether there is a degree of establishment in Canada, hardship that would result if the applicant had to leave Canada, laws, customs, and culture in the applicant’s country of origin and whether the applicant has children in Canada or is pregnant. These cases are generally assigned for processing in priority. If the application is approved in principle under the H&C stream, the applicant will benefit from a deferral of removal until the application is finalized. Filing an H&C application does not stop removals - however, usually the CBSA will defer removal if the application was made in a timely fashion. Once a woman receives first stage approval for her H&C application, she is able to apply for a work permit. It will still, however, take 1 to 2 years for her to get her PR status. Because of the lengthy process and precarious situation women and children are in (i.e., the potential to be removed), many of those women choose to remain in the abusive relationship.

³⁹ It should be noted that sponsored spouses who have had their PR status revoked can apply for H&C. For more information, see the H&C option boxed material below.

IRPA specifically repealed the two-year conditional PR status and removal of a regulatory requirement for sponsored spouses and partners of Canadian citizens and PRs to live with their sponsor for two years as a condition to maintaining their PR status. It should be noted, however, that the Act itself was not amended.

The two-year cohabitation requirement of conditional PR status was originally added to the IRPA in an attempt to deter fraudulent applications in the family reunification program; this Act required the sponsored spouse or partner to cohabit in a conjugal relationship for a continuous period of two years after obtaining PR status, and if at the time of their application they had been in the relationship for two years or less and have no children. If the cohabitation did not occur for the required two-year period, the sponsored person could lose their PR status and be forced to leave the country. Thus, the two-year requirement could make a woman abused by her spouse more vulnerable to further abuse.

Subsequent analysis recognized that the sponsored spouse or partner could be vulnerable and at risk of abuse for many intersectional reasons, including gender, age, official language proficiency, isolation, and financial dependence, and that these factors can create a power imbalance between the sponsor and their spouse or partner. It was further assessed that the conditional PR two-year cohabitation requirement could compound these vulnerabilities in situations of abuse. Since women made up 70 percent of those submitting requests to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for an exception to the condition on the basis of abuse or neglect, it was determined this particular regulatory requirement could potentially result in vulnerable spouses and partners remaining in the abusive relationships out of fear of losing their PR status in Canada.

Apart from the recent change to the immigration and sponsorship, which previously functioned as a policy barrier for IRW, one solution reported from the Phase I Report was to review sponsorship laws and policy processes in cases where a woman is being abused by her sponsor. The intent of this section was to review other related policies of relevance and identify the critical themes inherent in IRW's lives, which are relevant to the women in their attempts to

British Columbia's Provincial Domestic Violence Plan

The Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) coordinates and strengthens services for children and families affected by abuse. While the BC Provincial Domestic Violence Plan (2014) does not specifically focus upon immigrant and refugee populations, the plan does acknowledge “the need to apply a diversity lens in order to address the unique needs of IRW and children. It emphasizes the importance of providing support to populations with specialized needs and complex vulnerabilities, which addresses, but is not limited to, the increased vulnerability among immigrant and refugee women.”

One of six key focus areas (p.11): Approaches to address the unique needs of Aboriginal, IRW and women with disabilities emphasizes the intent to work with federal counterparts and citizenship and immigration Canada to leverage federal investment in settlement initiatives (p.24), as well as the need for women without status to have access to income assistance (p.23).

secure safe, affordable, and culturally safe and appropriate short- and long-term housing. The question is, however, how do these other policies intersect/link to the housing policy lens in order that the goal of securing safe housing is achieved? The areas examined for this component are in the sectors of immigration and refugee processing, which are areas of processing undertaken by transition houses and multi-service agencies. In this context, multi-service agencies include those which provide language training, financial assistance, and other settlement services' supports.

3.2) Settlement Policy Issues

The primary basis for understanding the experiences of IRW needs to be provided within the context of settlement issues, as these often

begin prior to or in tandem to the search for safe housing for immigrants and refugees. For example, generally speaking, Settlement Services work to assist refugees coming into the country (i.e., Convention Refugee/Protected Person category), and they provide immigration and settlement services for newcomers to Canada which are often free and always confidential (Refugee Sponsorship Settlement Handbook, 2016).

The term “settlement” specifically refers to as a process or continuum of activities that a new immigrant or refugee passes through upon arrival in a new country. Settlement can be broken down into three phases (Mwarigha, 2002, pp. 9-10, as quoted by Wayland, 2006):

- 1) *Immediate*: Persons require shelter, food, clothing, information and orientation, basic language instruction, and other essential “reception” or early settlement services.
- 2) *Intermediate*: Persons require advanced or employment-specific language instruction, training and education to acquire or upgrade skills, usually with the goal of securing employment. Other needs at this stage include accessing health services, housing, and the legal assistance system.
- 3) *Long-term*: Persons work to overcome systemic barriers and to participate in Canadian society as equals to the Canadian-born population. Long-term settlement includes civic participation and issues related to citizenship. This phase may not be achieved until the “second generation,” that is, by the Canadian children of immigrants. This view of settlement extends beyond settlement policy as defined and funded by CIC, as well as beyond the programming offered by most of Canada’s immigrant serving agencies that comprise the “settlement sector.”

In brief, a comprehensive understanding of settlement issues and experiences of immigrants and refugees indicates that successful settlement is not the work of an isolated, discrete sector, but is rather integrated into other socio-political institutions (Omidvar, 2001, p. 8, as cited in Wayland, 2006, p. 3). Settlement services can include:

- 1) Translation services for documents/hearings, or assistance to arrange these services;
- 2) Assistance filling out forms and applications;
- 3) Language classes;
- 4) Support and assistance finding a job or training; and
- 5) Information about other community services and resources, (e.g., schools, health care) (“Survival to Success: Transforming immigration outcomes – report from the panel on employment challenges of new Canadians,” 2015, p. 15).

In the metro Vancouver specifically, settlement and referral services are offered through agencies such as MOSAIC.⁴⁰ In addition, there are many settlement and employment agencies which provide employment counselling and skills development in different first languages,

⁴⁰ On the MOSAIC website, a few of the programs are described including *Community Outreach, the Moving Ahead Program and NUYU: A Newcomer Youth Popular Theatre*. For additional information, visit the MOSAIC BC website at <https://www.mosaicbc.org/>

which may include one-on-one counselling and workshops on career training and computer literacy (Refugee Sponsorship Settlement Handbook, 2016, p. 15).

Federally, the issue of employment for immigrants is dealt with in a number of ministries. For example, a recent report by the Ministry of Employment and Social Development Canada (2015) addresses many of the main issues. In the report's Executive Summary it was reported:

Local Immigration Partnerships

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPS) in BC build on local services to optimize engagement planning and coordination in the area of newcomer settlement and integration. As one example elsewhere, the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association undertakes labour operations in its mandate.

The Panel on Employment Challenges of new Canadians learned that there is nothing irrevocably wrong with our system of integrating skilled immigrants. It simply doesn't work well enough, seamlessly enough, or quickly enough. Our challenge is to transition those immigrants who are in Canada from survival jobs to jobs where they can best use their skills and experience and to ensure future immigrants get jobs commensurate with their skills and experience ("Survival to Success: Transforming immigration outcomes – report from the panel on employment challenges of new Canadians," 2015, p. 3).

To help immigrants find work faster in jobs commensurate with their abilities and experience, we need:

- 1) **The right skills for newcomers:** At the pre-arrival stage, the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials, although improved, is still a complex and disjointed process. When immigrants arrive, there is insufficient emphasis on follow-up for alternative careers and enhanced soft-skills training.
 - a. And medium-sized employers and a silo mentality among supporting organizations undermine labour market integration and prevent newcomers from developing social capital and networks.
- 2) **The right attitude for stakeholders:** Low levels of engagement among small and medium-sized employers and a silo mentality among supporting organizations undermine labour market integration and prevent newcomers from developing social capital and networks.
- 3) **The right information for newcomers:** Pre-decision and pre-arrival labour market information is complex, redundant and not comprehensive enough to allow immigrants

to make informed decisions about vocation and location—or to match supply with demand.

- 4) **The right place to settle:** Immigrants often land in a community where there are no jobs in their field of work, or where remoteness and unfamiliarity make settlement difficult.
 - a. MOSAIC also recently sponsored a free one-day conference to assist newcomer Canadians “kick start” their careers. There can be challenges in securing positions in areas in which they were trained in their homeland because their credentials need to be evaluated, which, in some cases could take years. According to Abraham Asrat, a MOSAIC spokesperson, the agency tries to empower the immigrant to help themselves, which includes learning about the labour market and related fields of work (Morton, 2016).

In a recent overview of access to a variety of provincial and national social services and immigration policies for women who are without legal immigration status and are deemed out-of-status or non-status women, Ardanaz (2017) spoke to the lack of eligibility to access work, income assistance, and support subsidies as constituting a major barrier to accessing health and housing services in BC. These considerations bound to eligibility and accessibility of employment for out-of-status or non-status women demonstrates how these issues affect their access to provincial housing services. For example, income assistance policies have created barriers for out-of-status and non-status women to achieve housing stability, which hinders their ability to move forward with other ministerial applications (Ardanaz, 2017).

3.3) Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement Key Themes

Key themes emerged from the research team’s consideration of the systematic literature review and related materials in the area of immigration, refugee, and settlement. In the section below, we extract the key elements that have the potential to impact or influence whether or not there are successful immigration, refugee, and settlement outcomes:

Elements that Impact Successful Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement:

Key Indicators of Success	Key indicators of successful immigration into Canada are welcoming communities, accessible / affordable / sustainable / adequate housing (i.e., temporary and long-term accommodations), access to language and skill-based
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	education (i.e., support, opportunities), sufficient employment and income, and community integration.
Key Challenges to Success Asylum Claim Process: Refugee Protection Division Hearing Timelines	There are very short timelines for filing forms and for the refugee hearing (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2013, p. 1). Concerns here relate to women not having sufficient time to prepare for their hearings, especially with respect to speaking about traumatic experiences and experiences of violence, and the documentation required for some cases is not always available within short timeframes, such as in cases pertaining to human rights abuses. Further, country designation has been established, and certain countries are listed as generally non-refugee producing (as per the <i>Designated Country of Origin</i> policy – DCO policy).
Irregular Arrivals	It was earlier thought that the mandatory detention of irregular arrivals under the <i>Designated Foreign Nationals</i> policy (2012) would have worrisome implications for mothers, because it might put them in a position to choose between keeping their children incarcerated with them in detention or handing them over to a child welfare agency (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2013, p. 1). However, in reality, there were only 85 people who were so designated in 2012 and no further designations have taken place since that time.
Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)	In recent years, Canadian immigration has shifted toward privileging temporary migration and the TFWP. ⁴¹
Housing Policies	Canadian housing policies and systems privilege homeownership, but most IRW and children rely on the rental market during the settlement process.

⁴¹ Ardanaz (2017) notes that the negative outcomes resulting from a lack of eligibility for income assistance and other provincial services could be mitigated by access to a regular income. Without that access, a non-status woman leaving a violent and abusive sponsor may be quite challenged to be able to live independently from her sponsor (p. 5).

One Size Doesn't Fit All

Many critiques exist of one size fits all policies and models for housing, which raise important issues related to current policies and populations with diverse needs, such as immigrant and refugee groups.⁴²

Several authors have tackled issues relating more generally to Canadian immigration and refugee policies. For example, Alboim and Cohl (2012) wrote about the rapidly changing nature of those policies. Potentially positive changes listed by them included (p. 2):

- 1) the increased focus on the Federal Skilled Worker Program;
- 2) plans to introduce a program for skilled tradespersons;
- 3) access to an appeal for some refugee claimants; and
- 4) transition to PR status for eligible students and temporary workers.

The authors (2012) also point to other changes occurring between 2008 and 2012 in Canada, however, which have the potential to negatively impact immigrant and refugees, which include (p. 2):

- 1) restrictions being placed on family sponsorship;
- 2) the government's growing focus on the economic class and short-term labour market needs; and
- 3) a less welcoming environment for the people Canada needs to attract.

Gender Bias and Rights: Which Policy Values Get Priority?

The Canadian Council for Refugees (2013) raised a concern over labour and market needs to say that the government was moving toward short-term labour needs and how that especially affected women and girls:

While the Canadian Experience Class offers a pathway to permanent status for some workers, statistics show that the class is less accessible to women (p. 2).⁴³

⁴² One example might be not allowing a teenage boy to stay with his mother in the transition house, if he is over the age of eligibility (i.e. 16).

⁴³ The Canadian Experience Class (CEC) offers a route to permanent residence for some workers with a temporary status, based on "skilled" work experience. However, the CEC excludes the "lower skilled" temporary foreign workers. Most of those excluded are racialized and women.

Another example of gender bias in the labour/market process for women is “that it is likely that the economic self-sufficiency criteria (for working in Canada) have more negative implications for women than for men” (Neilson, 2017, sec. 22.4.4.6). At a more global level, a report on Canada from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was recently released. It covered a range of issues, from the gender pay gap to poverty and violence against women. Of note, the World Economic Forum placed Canada in 35th spot in its latest gender-gap report, down five places from last year and, the UN’s gender-inequality index showed Canada in 25th place, down from its first-place ranking in 1995 (Grant, 2016). Further, federally gender bias can affect eligibility to immigrate. Concerns remain regarding the fact that a number of immigration criteria and rules make it easier for men than for women to immigrate to Canada as independent immigrants. For example, programs that favour male applicants encourage women’s dependence on men for their immigration status (The Immigrant Women’s Project, 2012, p. 131).

Another dimension of the rights issues emerging from the literature is the observation that many reports gloss over the differentiation of experiences among immigrant and refugee groups and often treat them homogeneously. The research team, however, wishes to acknowledge that within and among immigrant and refugee groups there are different experiences based on intersecting identify markers such as gender, culture, religion, legal status, and sexual orientation. Overall, though, immigrant and refugee groups can share common stressors, barriers, and vulnerabilities related to housing, health, immigration, refugee, and settlement within the broader contexts of their status and their experiences of abuse. In order to assure all the rights of the women from those differing locations are being treated with substantive equality attention should be paid to those differences and necessary intersectional analyses.

[Child Protection and the Family Justice System Policies](#)

Children emerge as a primary focus in the relatively new BC *Family Law Act* (the FLA) in which the “best interests of the child” is the governing policy intent. Family Court judges are to

consider whether family violence is involved in a custody dispute which could make the child vulnerable to harm. Section 13 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* (CFCSA) also lists a number of grounds under which a child may be in need of protection. An Amendment to this section includes reference to domestic violence. The amendment brought the Act in line with other child welfare legislation in most other jurisdictions in Canada. The purpose is to clarify

Risk of Future Harm: Family Violence and Information Sharing Between Family and Criminal Courts

In a study examining child protection and family justice issues, Jackson and Martinson (2010) observed that the difficulties with the assessment of risk information in such cases were made more challenging for women of minority status. Intersecting diversity issues impact on both risk and responses to domestic violence.

This impacts in particular aboriginal, *immigrant, and refugee women. Factors that are significant include: (1) minority status; (2) language/cultural challenges; (3) sponsorship threats; (4) poverty/lack of access to services; (5) social and geographic isolation; and (6) lack of services and/or lack of access to services (p. 12)*

Jackson and Martinson's discussion paper is available at: <http://fredacentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Discussion-Paper-Jackson-Martinson-Risk-Of-Future-Harm-Family-Violence-And-Information-Sharing-Between-Family-and-Criminal-Courts-January-2015.pdf>

that there are situations in which the presence of domestic violence can be emotionally harmful to children and increase the risk of physical harm, and, if so, that protective services may be needed (Community Coordination for Women's Safety, 2016, p. 1).

Of note, an ongoing problem is that important information about the risks of further domestic

violence is often not shared among criminal court, if there is a case of domestic violence proceeding, and family court, where proceedings may be for guardianship of the child(ren) decisions, and child protection hearings. As noted during a key informant interview, the

Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), while still involved in the taking away of children of IRW, appears to have become more aware of domestic violence issues and dynamics now; MCFD Best Practices guidelines set those out. For out-of-status women with children, for example, MCFD can assist with their protection if financial assistance is needed.

Specific to the child protection issue, it has been argued that understanding and responding to refugee families presents a significant challenge for child protection agencies (Dumbrill, 2009). This is in large part because of the multiple intersecting problems those families often experience, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), settlement issues, lack of natural support networks, housing, employment, and language and cultural barriers. Finally, it has also been suggested that refugee families may arrive in Canada having had negative experiences with authorities, and as such they may not trust government agencies to assist them (p. 146). One Canadian study undertaken to examine this issue used a participatory action research approach to gain knowledge from refugee parents who had experienced the challenges first-hand or close at hand. In the conclusion to the study, it was noted that “despite the concerns the refugee parents had about child welfare services they were keen to work with service providers to ensure the social work systems did act in the best interests of children” (Dumbrill, 2009, p.

Key Recommendation

Ardanaz (2017) recommends that access to the *Child Care Subsidy Act* should be allowed for temporary resident permit holders in order to support a woman facing the loss of her status. Otherwise, she may have to consider staying with the abuser or may even be forced to leave her child with the abuser sponsor (p. 4).

165). Dumbrill (2009) concludes that “the idea of initiatives where child protection agencies and child welfare policymakers build links and relationships with refugee communities, through which they can review and plan with these families the best way to protect and promote the well-being of children in these communities” (p. 165). Another protection related issue can emerge from the potential loss of access to child support for women without status. A non-

status woman leaving a violent and abusive relationship may consider staying in the relationship or perhaps even leaving the child with the abusive partner without that child support.

Forced Marriage and Cultural Practices

Current sections of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* appear to be broad enough to address situations of forced marriages. On June 10, 2015, a regulatory amendment to increase the minimum age of a recognized spouse from 16 to 18 in all permanent and temporary immigration programs came into effect. The intention of this amendment is to decrease the number of potentially vulnerable young spouses immigrating to Canada who had not yet reached full maturity and/or who might not have the capacity to act in *their own best interest*. The hope was that this could prevent some forced marriages from occurring. On the same date, a regulatory change came into force that no longer recognizes marriages where one or both parties are not physically present at the marriage ceremony across all permanent and temporary immigration programs (e.g., marriages that were conducted by proxy, telephone, fax, Internet, or other similar forms). In any event, forced marriage is not solely an immigration issue. Of note, IRCC is currently a member of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Early and Forced Marriage, “Honour” Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting which is co-chaired by the Department of Justice and Status of Women Canada. This group has membership from 15 federal government departments that collaborate to tackle these issues within their fields.

The Tilson report (2016), entitled *Strengthening the Protection of Women in our Immigration System*, is the most recent and significant federal government report to be released on issues such as forced marriage and spousal sponsorship. Its mandate was to:

study how to strengthen the integrity of the Immigration Spousal Sponsorship Program....to ensure sponsored spouses have the skills they need to succeed in Canada; examine how to better prevent vulnerable women from being victimized by an abusive sponsor; and as a consequence any potential penalties to the sponsor” (pp. 33-34).

The areas to be studied specifically were: “forced marriages, polygamy, proxy marriages, immigrant women in the workforce and helping women break out of isolationism” (pp. 33-34).

The Tilson (2016) report also considers options to prevent violence and improve recourse/support for sponsored spouse victim-survivors.⁴⁴ Witnesses to the committee stressed, for example, the importance of language training, and the fact that settlement organizations offer free language training to all PRs. Not unlike what occurs with accessing transition houses, however, many sponsored women do not attend. It was speculated that, again, as with transition houses, many sponsored women are unaware of these services or their sponsor discourages and/or prevents them from attending (p. 28). One recommendation was to put them in touch with the settlement organizations as soon as they receive their PR visa, or, to automatically register them in the courses at that point. Additional recommendations include:

- Financial security/independence: one recommendation was to provide counselling for financial independence as part of settlement services offered. Another was to require that the sponsored person be required to set up a bank account in the spouse’s name, but from which she could draw herself.
- Counselling services more generally for the sponsored women were also thought important for them in order to deal with the abuse and trauma they experienced. Again, it was suggested this occur through settlement services.

Recommendations to address forced marriage were also provided by the witnesses who gave testimony to the Senate committee, such as how awareness of the issue should be raised in the training of CIC officers and adjudicators, especially around matters of abuse. Another witness suggested that forced marriage should be a criminal offence, and another felt that more understanding and knowledge were needed. The report concludes by indicating that an effective response involves many parties, such as frontline settlement and abuse-prevention organizations, religious and community leaders, and governments at all levels.

⁴⁴ See Chapter 3 of the Tilson report.

Tabled in the Senate on November 5, 2014 as Bill S-7, the *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act* (the Act)⁴⁵ sets out to provide improved protection and support for vulnerable individuals, primarily immigrant women and girls, including (Government of Canada, 2014; Government of Canada, 2015):

- Creating a new measure under the Canadian *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) that will render PRs and TRs inadmissible to Canada if they practice polygamy;⁴⁶
- Strengthening the *Civil Marriage Act* by codifying existing legal requirements at the national level for “free and enlightened consent” and establishing a new national absolute minimum age of 16 for marriage;⁴⁷
- Criminalizing certain conduct related to early and forced marriage ceremonies, including the act of removing a child from Canada for the purpose of such marriages; and
- Limiting the defence of provocation so that it would not apply in so-called “honour” killings and many spousal homicides. A new court-ordered peace bond will also be created to protect potential victims of early or forced marriages where there are grounds to fear that a person may commit a forced or early marriage offence.

The *Civil Marriage Act* amendments are now in effect, as they also came into force upon Royal Assent. The passage of this piece of legislation was intended to reaffirm the government’s ongoing efforts to end violence against women, and girls (see Quick Facts box on page 75).

3.4) The Role of IRCC in working with Service Providers

IRCC’s own policies and programming link to other policies in several ways. Through the Settlement Program, the IRCC provides funding to service provider organizations to deliver a range of services that support newcomer settlement and integration. Some of the supports

⁴⁵ Senate did approve the bill to remove the use of the term “barbaric cultural practices”: <https://www.nationalnewswatch.com/2017/12/12/senate-passes-bill-to-remove-mention-of-barbaric-cultural-practices-from-law-passed-by-harper-conservatives/#.WIAFaiMZNE4>

⁴⁶ Although the bill has obtained Royal Assent, and amendments to the *Criminal Code* and the *Civil Marriage Act* have come into force, the inadmissibility related to the practice of polygamy under IRPA has not yet come into force.

⁴⁷ The Act now currently reads:

Marriage of person under 16 years of age

- 29** (1) Except as provided in subsections (2) and (3), a marriage of any person under 16 years of age must not be solemnized, and a license must not be issued.(2) If, on application to the Supreme Court, a marriage is shown to be expedient and in the interests of the parties, the court may, in its discretion, make an order authorizing the solemnization of and the issuing of a license for the marriage of any person under 16 years of age.

funded by the Settlement Program aim to mitigate the risks of exposure to gender-based violence by strengthening knowledge of Canadian laws, social cohesion and providing information on rights and responsibilities. These services are provided both pre- and post-arrival, through online resources, publications, and a variety of in-person services, as well as through referrals to important community supports. Examples of this are:

- Ensuring that service providers offer culturally and linguistically appropriate counseling and support groups that help newcomer women obtain relevant information and understand the cycle of abuse.
- Some organizations assist clients in developing safety plans and building confidence, obtaining medical and social services and navigating the legal system. Other prevention activities include comprehensive needs assessments, counseling services and referrals for newcomers in abusive and vulnerable situations.
- “Women’s only” language classes, employment programs, and support groups are in place and provide a safe and open space for newcomer women.
- Support is also provided to front-line workers in the form of training and workshops.
- Support services, such as child care and transportation, interpretation and translation, facilitate access to settlement services for vulnerable groups. Many clients for these services are often women who would not otherwise be able to benefit from settlement programming.

Many of these organizations have also established connections with relevant housing supports in their communities and serve clients who are seeking safe and secure housing through referrals to other resources or services. Additionally, in November 2017, the Government of Canada released a National Housing Strategy (NHS) to re-establish the federal government’s role in supporting affordable housing and facilitating access to a range of housing options for all Canadians, including vulnerable populations such as immigrants and refugees.⁴⁸ For example, at the federal level, Liberals indicate that they will inject more than 2.3-billion dollars into a series of affordable-housing measures, including a new program to offer low-cost loans to developers to build as many as 10,000 rental units (McMahon, 2016).

As one example of the collaborative approach, IRCC has been a partner in the development of the NHS, and also supported the work of the Canada Mortgage and Housing

⁴⁸ For more information on Canada’s National Housing Strategy see p. 115 of the housing section.

Quick Facts

In 2014, Canada contributed \$20 million over two years to UNICEF toward ending child, early and forced marriage. The UNICEF project aims to accelerate the movement to end child marriage in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia and Zimbabwe.

Consular services are available 24 hours a day to Canadian victims of forced marriage abroad.

Since 2007, over \$2.8 million has been approved through Status of Women Canada for community-based projects that address harmful cultural practices such as “honour”-based violence and forced marriage.

“Our Government is committed to ensuring that women and girls have the freedom to control their own destiny. In Canada, we value cultural diversity, but we are sending a strong signal that certain cultural practices that victimize vulnerable women and girls, including forced marriages and so-called “honour” killings, will not be tolerated in this country. I am pleased that our legislation is standing up for victims and gives us more tools to address these serious crimes, to provide women and girls a more secure future”

- Peter MacKay, then Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

Corporation through consultations and information sharing. The intent is to ensure that the needs of immigrants and refugees of these populations, including long-term housing outcomes, are considered and reflected in the NHS. As well, through an online consultation process, key stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on the housing needs of newcomers directly to the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation.

When interviewed for this project, a key informant spoke of the resettled refugee component, due to Operation Syria Refugee, as the one having gone through the most change in recent times. IRCC’s Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) provides Government-assisted refugees (GARs) and other eligible clients with direct financial support, typically for one year, and funds

service provider organizations to deliver immediate and essential services. These services which are delivered upon arrival and include temporary housing (i.e., typically for two weeks) and then assistance finding permanent housing. As part of this assistance, GARs and eligible clients are informed about housing realities, and the importance of making their housing decision in a timely fashion is emphasized because continuing to turn down offered housing options can be problematic. Additional support services are also offered to eligible clients, such as orientation, life skills training, and referrals to other federal and provincial programs and services. Privately-sponsored refugees receive financial support as well as immediate and essential services, including support with housing, directly from their sponsors. Additionally, blended visa officer referred refugees receive a mix of both government funding and private support.

If a GAR secures employment, they must report that employment to IRCC. They are allowed to keep earnings up to half of their monthly income support amount. For example, if a GAR is receiving \$1,500 a month in salary, IRCC will take back \$750 of their income assistance for that month. They also indicate to them that there are certain realities about securing housing and that to continue to turn down offered housing options can be problematic. If they do secure a job, the federal IRCC will take back half of the assistance funding they have been provided. These employment rules do differ when on provincial social assistance.

IRCC also funds settlement programming for refugees and other PRs, which can be accessed during the RAP period and for as long as they remain a PR. This includes such services as language classes, children's programming, case management for vulnerable newcomers and workshops on various topics such as life skills, resume preparation and parenting in Canada among other services.

During Operation Syria, there were 25 Refugee Response Teams (RRT's)⁴⁹ in place in the province. Membership on the team included community members to talk about community preparedness to handle these situations. Unfortunately, the RRT's were only funded to the end

⁴⁹ In late 2015 the B.C. government created a \$1 million *Refugee Readiness Fund*, designed to augment federal government efforts in aid of Syrian and other *refugees*. Half of the funds were earmarked for five regional *refugee response teams* formed to proactively plan for the settlement of *refugees* in their communities.

of 2016, but there are other options refugees can source for funds. And other agencies, such as MOSAIC, can work around IRCC-funded programs. Because of the terms and conditions of the settlement program, IRCC cannot provide funds for services for refugee sponsors, for example, but MOSAIC can.

As a federal agency, IRCC funding does not normally cover health, housing, and mental health costs or in other areas for which provinces have responsibility. IRCC can, however, fund crisis situations. Provincial Homeless Prevention Programs (HPPs) can similarly provide rental supplements for women leaving violence and abuse.⁵⁰ IRCC also funds settlement programming for refugees and other PRs, which can be accessed during the RAP period and for as long as they remain a PR. This includes such services as language classes, children’s programming, case management for vulnerable newcomers, and practical workshops on various topics (e.g., life skills, resume preparation, parenting in Canada).

RAP’s (see BC Housing, n.d.) financial support includes a one-time start-up amount for items, such as furniture, linens, and other staples, required to set up a new home. Monthly income support includes funds for basic needs (food and incidentals) and shelter, intended to be aligned with the basic provincial social assistance rates in their province, as well as a transportation allowance for adults and a discretionary housing supplement (i.e., \$75/\$100 for singles and families during Operation Syria). To administer RAP income support, a local IRCC officer meets with clients shortly after their arrival to review the RAP entitlements and associated policies. For example, clients must report their earnings to IRCC and are subject to a 50% RAP income earnings “claw back” provision. This provision allows clients to keep monthly earnings of up to half of the amount of their RAP monthly income support before their support is reduced dollar for dollar.

Most individuals have to apply for a job to get provincial funds, or have an employment plan in place, but many need to access language and other settlement services before being ready for a job, and there can be long wait lists for language classes. Refugees are given priority

⁵⁰ See page 96 of the housing section for additional information about HPPs.

in all RCC-funded language classes. However, they are also immediate PRs with all the same rights as citizens, except for the ability to vote. IRCC also provides support through its IFHP,⁵¹ which provides limited and temporary coverage of health-care benefits to resettled refugees, asylum claimants, and certain other groups as described in the policy until they are eligible for provincial or territorial health-care coverage after the three-month post-arrival waiting period ends.

As stated above, RAP income support and private sponsor support, which is typically provided for 12 months. Some resettled refugees then transfer to provincial social assistance after their first 12 months, which can be lower than RAP and private support depending on each family's circumstances⁵². One problem is that the application is online and language challenges can impact on the person's ability to complete the form. Language competency must be at a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level of 4 for citizenship, but many of these individuals are at a CLB level 1 or 2.

IRCC also works with the Provincial Office Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour. It also meets regularly with managers who deal with claims to train them to provide programs for settlement workers and refugees, too, but currently do not have sustainable funding. The training was provided by IRCC, BC's Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR)⁵³ which is an IRCC service provider. It informed settlement workers about provincial social benefits and the application process for them. Additional financial support is available to eligible refugee families via the Canada Child Benefit along with the federal goods and services tax rebate and provincial tax rebates.

⁵¹ For more information about the IFHP see page 129 / subsection 5.6 of the health section of this report.

⁵² There are different rates of social assistance in Year 2, depending on the refugee category. According to the Resettlement Evaluation Report, in Figure 1, in Year 2, GAR's rate was 70%. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/resettlement.asp#fig-1>

⁵³ At the time this research was conducted, the Ministry was titled Social Development and Social Innovation (SDSI).

3.5) Provincial and Local Plans and Initiatives in BC

Provincial Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction Policy/Programs

In addition to the Federal IRCC ministry already discussed, similar functions are served at the provincial level through the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) (Government of British Columbia, n.d.b). Policies that support persons fleeing abuse is divided into four areas:

- 1) Exemptions for Persons Fleeing Abuse;
- 2) Income and Assets / Hardship;
- 3) Health and Safety Concerns; and
- 4) Supplements for Persons Fleeing Abuse.

When an applicant discloses they are fleeing abuse on the application or during the Stage 1 interview, the applicant is given critical priority and must be scheduled for an interview within one business day. The applicant is exempt from the requirement to perform a work search and must immediately proceed to Stage 2 of the application. Staff must ensure in the interim the immediate needs of the applicant are met. The Person Fleeing Abuse Alert must be applied to each contact on the case. If minor dependents are involved, MCFD must be contacted if there is reason to believe the children are at risk.

Recipients	<p>When a recipient discloses they are fleeing abuse they must be given critical priority and must be scheduled for an interview within one business day.</p> <p>No contact is to be made with the accused abusive partner/family member with regard to the recipient.</p> <p>The Person Fleeing Abuse Alert must be applied to each contact on the case (see Procedures – Current Assistance Recipients Disclosing as Persons Fleeing Abuse).</p> <p>If minor dependents are involved, the Ministry of Children and Family Development must be contacted if there is reason to believe the children are at risk (see Procedures – Current Assistance Recipients Disclosing as Persons Fleeing Abuse).</p>
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	<p>All applicants or recipients who have disclosed they are fleeing from abuse must be made aware of all the exemptions or supplements to which they may be entitled.</p>
<p>Adding and Removing the Person Fleeing Abuse Alert</p>	<p>The Person Fleeing Abuse Alert is added to each contact on the case when the case is opened. The abuse does not need to be verified by a third party, only disclosed.</p> <p>The Person Fleeing Abuse Alert should only be removed when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) it is explicitly requested by the client; or 2) an Employment Assistant Worker (EAW) has spoken with the client and determined the client and their dependents are willing to have the Alert removed and are fully independent of the accused abuser and a Supervisor has approved its removal. <p>For example, when the client is ready and able to create an Employment Plan, either before or at the conclusion of the six-month exemption period from employment obligations is an appropriate time to consider removing the Alert.</p>

Family Composition – Residing Together

If the applicant or recipient has advised that they are “not residing” with the abusive spouse or family member but is living in a separate living space at the same address or property, as described in the *Family Composition* policy, policies and policy exemptions for Persons Fleeing Abuse still apply. Any policy or exemptions listed below apply where appropriate (Government of British Columbia, n.d.a; see also Government of British Columbia, n.d.c).

The following applicants and recipients are exempt from meeting the Social Insurance Number (SIN) requirement when determining eligibility for income assistance or disability assistance:

- Refugee claimants
- Temporary Resident Permit holders

- Those who qualify for an exemption from citizenship requirements
- Those with PR status waiting to receive a Social Insurance Number.

Specific to Exemptions

Effective: October 29, 2013

Refugee claimants include persons who: (1) have made a claim for refugee protection with the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB); (2) have been denied protected person status by the IRB (Convention refugee and person in need of protection) and are appealing; and (3) are requesting a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA) by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) or are applying for judicial review by the Federal Court of Canada.

This includes: (1) PRRA applicants who have exhausted appeals for refugee protection through IRB; (2) refugee claimants whose claim was refused, withdrawn, or abandoned; and (3) refugee claimants who are inadmissible for referral to the IRB but may still qualify for protection through PRRA or the judicial review by the Federal Court of Canada are subject to a removal order issued by CIC when the order has been stayed or cannot be executed (i.e., no travel documents).

BC CCWS Information Bulletin: March 2014 Revised Income Assistance Policies

In collaboration with Community Coordination for Women’s Safety (CCWS), the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR) amended its *BC Employment and Assistance Program* policy and procedures to streamline the process for individuals fleeing abuse who apply for income assistance. The decision about eligibility for applicants who have indicated they are fleeing abuse is to be expedited and they are exempted from the following standard eligibility requirements:

- 1) Completion of a work search;
- 2) Two-year Financial Independence Test; and
- 3) Employment-Related Obligations.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ The revised policy and procedures can be found at the following link: <http://endingviolencecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Persons-Fleeing-Abuse-Bulletin-March-2014.pdf> (Effective December 2012)

In December 2016, it was announced in BC that the government was granting most of a \$630,000 fund to two programs run by MOSAIC. One will provide 28 immigrant job seekers paid training on information systems analysts in Delta. This will involve classroom training. The other program is based on a “hope-centered” approach to assist refugees in finding jobs. This part of the fund will help two groups of 15 refugees with programming offered in both English and Arabic. The other funding recipient is the Immigrant Employment Council of BC; they will use the funding to focus on developing job opportunities in Surrey and Abbotsford, as well as document the skill profiles of refugees in those cities and identify barriers faced by employers in hiring refugees.

3.6) Additional Key Policy Barriers

Legal Assistance and Legal Aid

There are minimal legal aid supports and resources available to IRW. While knowledge of available systems and laws operates as a barrier for IRW, the lack of legal aid support available to these populations further hinders their ability to navigate and/or receive support from Canadian legal systems. Language issues can also be a problem. This issue was identified in *The Immigrant Women’s Project* (2012) report, but it persists to-date. This is concerning, as the lack of availability of Legal Aid services for IRW leaving violence and abuse continues to be a barrier today, as was true in 2009. The barriers and risks faced by IRW should establish this group as among the highest priorities for receiving Legal Aid to assist them in their legal struggles to gain permanent status, to retain custody (i.e., guardianship) of their children, and to address other serious family law matters (p. 176).⁵⁵

To address this issue, the BC Government needs to fulfill its obligations under *the Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, and the *UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and*

⁵⁵ Although women who are sponsored cannot accrue sponsorship debt, they may be negatively affected by the sponsor accruing such debt. He may become angry at her, or try to have her removed to prevent arrears from increasing, but she herself does not need to be relieved of the debt.

Cultural Rights by providing adequate funds to Legal Services Society to ensure that those who have legitimate needs for legal representation on serious family or immigration matters and cannot afford to pay for it are able to obtain legal representation through Legal Aid (p.178). Just as IRCC should coordinate over health issues, it should also coordinate with the BC Family Justice system with regard to unresolved custody (i.e., guardianship) issues.⁵⁶ Coordination may assure the woman (i.e., mother) not be removed from Canada and therefore the custody to remain her own (p. 209). According to one key informant, while there is little funding for such purposes, a volunteer lawyer who assists women at one second stage transition house is an exception. The key informant provides legal assistance to IRW in need (e.g., applying for temporary residence permits). Also, in their Mothers Without Legal Status (MWLS) program,

Key Recommendation

Immigration counsel availability should be expanded beyond duty counsel. Duty counsel for immigration issues is only available to those who are detained. Further, according to a key informant, women who currently meet the criteria for legal aid are frequently being told that certain classes of immigrants and refugees are being prioritized to receive such services before women leaving violence and abuse.

the Rise Women’s Legal Centre has recently started assisting such mothers with their applications on H&C. It also helps mothers without status, who cannot leave with children. Legal Aid is also needed to assist with the H&C application. One H&C application has a \$1500 application fee which can prove to be a huge and very impactful barrier. However, that fee could either be

waived, or, as suggested, Legal Aid could assist.

On June 26, 2017 BC Legal Services Society (BCLSS) posted a news release stating that they will no longer be able to provide support for immigration and refugee cases due to

⁵⁶ While our focus here is on the BC situation, it is true that the family law and immigration law intersection has proven to be problematic elsewhere in the country, with different problems and solutions in different jurisdictions.

insufficient funding. This removal of support subsequently came into force on August 1, 2017.

The full statement made by BCLSS is provided below:

Effective August 1, 2017, the Legal Services Society will no longer accept applications for immigration and refugee cases due to a lack of funding. The global refugee crisis has resulted in a 145 percent increase in refugee cases over the past three years. Funding for refugee services, which is provided by the federal government, has, however, not kept up with demand. LSS must stop issuing new contracts for immigration and refugee services on August 1 to ensure it has enough money to pay for those contracts that have already been issued (Legal Services Society, 2017, n.p.).⁵⁷

The insufficient federal funding provided to LSS demonstrates one way in which the Canadian government fails to meet some of the needs of immigrant and refugee groups, such as the constitutional right to legal aid.

Employment and Assistance

A clarification of the BC *Employment and Assistance Act* and policy related to women receiving benefits is necessary for women to receive them sooner – fast tracking H&C applications would be helpful in that regard. It can take up to one to two years in principle, but often for about three years. All of this can be drawn out further if the matter proceeds to Family Court. For example, getting an order for child support also takes a long time, with the woman having no income while waiting; this can also

Family Court

As a sidebar to the mention of the Family Court, a comment was made in one interview about the ineffectiveness of mediation as a tool to assist IRW leaving violence. The fact that the relatively new BC *Family Law Act* encourages mediation at the beginning of a process for dealing with a domestic violence situation in family court was not seen to be encouraging. Costs for such a process may mean that a woman would no longer have money for the trial option, should the mediation not be successful. On the other hand, many IRW do not want to go the trial route because of how that may affect their ability to keep their children and/or their inability to remain in Canada.

⁵⁷ Further to this announcement, the Legal Services Society indicated that the funding would continue to mid November 2017.

be true for IRW with status. The need is to have the government provide funding for the woman and children to get into market housing. One recommendation is for a standardization of data collection to be established within and across provinces to be able to assess the reality of such situations and how best to address their challenges.⁵⁸ A similar suggestion was made by a key informant (see section 3.4 above).

In general, economic problems can be very impactful; this is especially important in cases where there is no family support either by family here or in the woman's country of origin, or if the woman is a student. For example, it can be difficult for family court to provide timely orders for child and/or spousal support to assist her, which may result in the woman being forced into staying in relationships with abusers for financial support. Financial assistance is needed to take the woman out of the spiraling down effect of first having to leave the abuser, and if accessing transition housing, the transition house, then also for the second stage and finally for securing a longer-term housing arrangement. Financial assistance for Co-op Housing is available. Cooperative Housing Federation of British Columbia (CHFBC) recommended that coops set aside every third coop opening for women who were experiencing abuse. Currently, money is available for them to borrow to pay the share purchase⁵⁹ interest-free which can be a significant barrier. This is through the CHFBC *Opening Doors* policy, which is available to all women leaving violence and abuse.

Threat/Risk of Deportation

Although Vancouver is seen to be a "sanctuary city," it can fail to meet this designation because of potential disjunctures between provincial and federal agencies' policies and procedures for IRW leaving violence and abuse, which may actually be counterproductive to each other's policy intents. For example, a non-status woman may have secured a place in a provincially funded Transition House and be given an extension to her 30-day stay. The CBSA,

⁵⁸ The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) of 2002 provides the legislative authority for Canada's immigration program. IRPA contains various provisions that allow the Minister to issue special Instructions to immigration officers to enable the Government of Canada to best attain its immigration goals. Ministerial Instructions (MIs) are typically issued for limited periods of time, and can touch on a diverse range of issues, from temporary resident processing to federal skilled worker selection and application intake measures. A suggested request for one ministerial instruction by the YWCA is for the Ministry of IRCC to create an application process for MWLS that has no fees.

⁵⁹ Coops require share purchases – they are similar to a rental damage deposit.

however, may show up at their door to take the woman away for deportation, even if she might currently be in the process of making an application. As well, there is a problem with what is perceived to be the need to report women without status to CBSA by public institutions such as hospitals. Therefore, the woman may fear attending a hospital even if medical assistance is needed because of her fear that the hospital will report her and her children to CBSA. However, such reporting is no longer a requirement on the part of hospitals.

Another example of where it is not necessary to report in BC is on Sky Train usage. While that was required and occurring in previous years, it is no longer the case. Women who receive some counselling about getting reported are often also told that whatever they do, they must not “get caught” at breaking the law, as that can potentially get them reported to CBSA, which can result in their being possibly deported. In addition, sometimes the abusive sponsor will report the woman to MCFD as being negligent in her care of the child(ren) in order to gain custody (i.e., guardianship) of them, or, in fact for the opposite reason of wanting to be rid of both the mother and child(ren). Because of these uncertainties, a clearer understanding about the reporting requirements is needed. In fact, as noted above, in many instances there is no longer a legal requirement to report. Further, according to two key informants, in cases of the women who have experienced abuse, reporting of their status, or subsequent deportation, should not happen.

Discrimination

Related to the earlier section on Gender Bias and Rights more generally, from our Phase I Report findings, many IRW participants reported experiencing discrimination in their search for safe housing specifically. They described racial and gender discrimination, particularly when interacting with landlords, and discrimination on the basis of poverty, particularly if they were unemployed and/or receiving income assistance.⁶⁰ Women with children faced additional barriers to housing and were sometimes judged based on their children’s behaviour when

⁶⁰ Immigrant women are adversely impacted by discrimination, especially with respect to gender and poverty. As Wright (2018) explained, “immigrant women in Canada face greater employment barriers and earn less money than both male immigrants and Canadian-born women” (p. 4), which is due in part to the lack of labour market support in both policy and practice for immigrant women.

meeting with housing providers. Knowledge that a woman was leaving a violent and abusive relationship could also impact her access to housing if housing managers feared that her abusive (ex-) partner may create a safety risk for them or other residents.

Half of the multi-service agency survey respondents in the Phase I research of the Building Supports project reported that discrimination by landlords (e.g., related to race, gender, violence, having children) was a barrier to housing for IRW after leaving violence and abuse. In the same research, 63% of transition house staff identified discrimination as a barrier to housing

The findings from our Phase I Report regarding discrimination are consistent with a study undertaken in 2014 by Nermin Karim for the Vancouver YWCA. The title of her research is “Battered Women: Housing Discrimination.” While the study was not focused specifically upon IRW, the design allowed for an examination which included possible discriminatory responses to women seeking secure housing who had an audible accent in speech. The researcher used a paired testing method described by the Toronto Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA) Racial Discrimination Method. Basically, she matched two profiles for all relevant characteristics of women seeking housing, except for time in a transition house (both profiles included a caller with an audible accent/name). On the phone, the script was the same except in one it was a caseworker calling on behalf of a client who was seeking the housing. The woman was described as having been in a TH for 1.5 years and was with an abusive husband before that. The other caller was calling for herself and indicated she had reached them through Craig’s List – no other referencing of her abusive situation. The responses were then categorized according to “No Discrimination;” “Level 1 Discrimination;” “Level 2 Discrimination;” and “Level 3 Discrimination.”

Briefly, no discrimination occurred in 47 percent of the Caseworker control calls; 26% of the Level 1 calls (hesitant/negative comment); 16 percent Level 2 calls (overt discriminatory statement or question); and 22 percent Level 3 calls (changed the objective rental criteria originally posted). Interestingly, the West End/ Downtown and the Fraser Valley – Surrey gave evidence of the least discrimination, while Suburban Vancouver gave evidence of the most. The author suggested that more awareness/education is needed for landlords in order for them to deal with queries equitably.

after IRW moved on from transition housing, though only 14% identified discrimination as a barrier for IRW in accessing transition housing. Housing managers who participated in the research described how various forms of discrimination intersect in the lives of IRW leaving violence and abuse and impact their access to long-term housing in significant ways. For example:

Discrimination leaving an abusive relationship to begin with and now if you add on that she's an immigrant woman, a lot of landlords have a lot of stereotypes about immigrant women. A lot of landlords don't want to deal with somebody who doesn't speak English as a first language. A lot of landlords have judgments about different ways of parenting, about stereotypes about food smells, or—it's awful.

There's definitely a barrier 'cause racism exists everywhere so it's an added challenge. So it's a challenge for all of our women because they typically are on income assistance, they are fleeing violence so there may be a violent person that is going to show up and do something terrible. And then you have on top of that, when you have immigrant women you're also dealing—you're dealing with, you know, the violence and the fact that they're poor—the poverty issue and the violence and then on top of that you're dealing with racism and prejudice and stereotypes, so yes.⁶¹

⁶¹ In addition to the *BC Human Rights Code*, arguably the *Charter of Rights* Sec. 15(1) Equality section would also be appropriate here in examining the Phase 1 Report's and the above study's outcomes.

Section 4) Housing Policy Analysis

4.1) Introduction to Housing for Immigrant and Refugee Populations

Housing is a fundamental human right to which all Canadians are entitled (Burns, 2010; Building Supports Phase I Report, 2015) and, as identified in the Phase I report, access to housing is key in enabling and supporting women and children to leave violent and abusive relationships and homes (p. 3). There are many housing barriers faced by women and children leaving violence and abuse, such as availability and accessibility of stable, safe, and appropriate short- and long-term housing. The existing obstacles are, however, compounded by the intersecting vulnerabilities faced by immigrant and refugee women (IRW), such as language, legal status, social supports, limited access to culturally safe and appropriate services, and lack of knowledge of, or even access to, Canadian systems (e.g., healthcare). These barriers further compromise their ability to leave violence and abuse and locate safe, appropriate housing.

According to the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies (AMSSA) (2016), locating and obtaining acceptable and appropriate housing is identified as “a primary concern for many newcomers” (p. 1; see also CMHC, 2007), and this concern is more pronounced among newcomers to Canada than it is in non-immigrant populations. For example, AMSSA (2016) notes that, “[i]n 2011, newcomers who had been in Canada for five years or less were almost three times more likely to be in ‘core housing need’ (29.6%) than non immigrants (11%)” (p. 1). While immigrant and refugees’ housing and overall economic circumstances tend to improve with length of stay in Canadian society, certain barriers decrease newcomers’ likelihood of successful integration and upward mobility. Of these barriers, obtaining appropriate and secure housing, both short- and long-term, is one of the primary indicators of success for immigrant populations (Teixeira & Halliday, 2010); this is exemplified through common housing trajectories and pathways into homelessness among newcomers.

4.2) Housing Trajectories of Newcomers in Canada

Within Canada, the majority of newcomers settle in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal (AMSSA, 2016; Hiebert, 2010), and most rely on the private rental market upon arrival

The Issue of Housing Supply

According to a key informant, there are three key issues challenging the provision of affordable housing in BC. The first of these issues is *supply*.

Supply of housing and securing affordable housing for use are the most important issues in BC.

These issues can be remedied through development of more affordable rentals for low- and middle-income individuals and those with distinct needs, such as IRW.

In addition, BC Housing and the Ministry work closely with non-profit housing groups. They assist with the provision of affordable housing and serve to release pressure off the local rental markets. They help target individuals who are low income and may have distinct needs, such as those with disability, being a youth, and/or Aboriginal.

(Wayland, 2007). Of these cities, the

housing sector in Vancouver is marked by limited rental markets (CMHC, 2007), issues of affordability (e.g., high cost of rentals and real-estate), availability (e.g., high rates of occupancy and lower than average rates of vacancy), and quality (Hiebert, 2010). The levels at which these circumstances impact newcomers, however, depend largely on incoming class (i.e., economic, family, refugee) and social determinants of settlement, which effect housing trajectories and overall integration into Canadian society⁶².

The hypothesis of a “progressive housing career” for newcomers identifies the link between

income level upon arrival and successful settlement (Hiebert, 2010, p. 8). For example, Newbold (2010) suggests that while “most immigrants are initially settled in poor or temporary housing, the foreign-born tend to follow a progressive housing career, whereby

⁶² Hiebert (2017) makes the relevant point in connecting economic class and housing in his report (see footnote 28 on page 54). His analysis of Statistics Canada data points out the conflicting narratives of well-off immigrants increasing housing costs in Canada’s major cities, while lower-income immigrants are struggling to pay for shelter.

homeownership rates rise over time as income increases” (p. 30). Consistent with the progressive model, there have been relatively high rates of success in settlement, housing, financial independence, and upward mobility for a large number of newcomers. For example, The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) suggests that “[i]nitially, immigrants tend to rent their accommodation, but as they integrate into Canadian society and labour markets, their household income tends to raise, as does their rate of homeownership” (p. E-4). Findings such as this, however, neglect that the newcomer experience is not homogeneous, and the role of social determinants of settlement and integration in dictating newcomers’ economic mobility and social capital.

Economic and social capital are the strongest predictors of newcomers’ housing trajectories (Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009). Not all immigrants and refugees follow the progressive housing career or experience upward mobility with respect to income, housing, settlement, and/or integration post-arrival (Newbold, 2010). Access to, and retention of, affordable, appropriate housing is largely dependent on financial independence, existing support systems, and initial location of settlement. Some newcomers “have little choice but to spend a large portion of their income on shelter or live in crowded conditions or with family” (Newbold, 2010, p. 30), which creates barriers to economic and settlement success.

Initial arrival and settlement conditions are predictive of mobility and integration in Canadian society, and of these, housing is key. Newcomers who settle into socially disenfranchised areas tend to remain in marginalized positions or become increasingly marginalized over time; this is due to economic barriers, adverse health conditions, and exclusion from social and support systems (Newbold, 2010, p. 30).

Incoming class also impacts newcomers’ experiences with settlement, integration, and obtaining housing. Economic class newcomers experience relative success in locating and obtaining appropriate housing (Hiebert, 2010). In general, family class immigrants arrive with low incomes, they are “relatively well housed” within “composite households” upon arrival through kinship networks (p. 12). Refugees, however, are in the most vulnerable position with

The Issue of Integration and Collaboration Between Government and Community Agencies

According to a key informant, there are three key issues arising challenging the provision of affordable housing in BC. The second major issue is the one of *integration and collaboration between government and community agencies*. It is essential that housing and community services partner more generally, especially in light of the finding from our Phase I Report which demonstrated that IRW are often not aware of transition housing or associated services. It speaks to the need to have better integration of community services with housing and to nurture a trusting relationship with them, especially immigrant settlement services.

As one example of integration and consolidation, in 2009, there was an integration of the Emergency Shelter Program and Transition Housing into the BC Housing portfolio.

In the 2014 report, *Housing Matters BC*, a specific client-centred approach as a focus was set out in order to better meet the needs of individuals in need of housing. That required a partnering with stakeholders, such as the non-profits. Collaborating with non-profits is critical because the non-profit housing sector manages over 90 percent of the social housing stock and understands community needs.

Housing also partners with health and other community-based services, such as child mental health, child protection services, and the corrections system. For example, good relationships have been developed with local health nurses and set the stage for client-centred immigrant settlement services. Health is attuned to the citizenship status and the cultural issues surrounding IRW. Partnering with policing is important as well to ensure that health services have a good relationship with police staff.

respect to locating and obtaining appropriate housing, as they face a “combination of uncertain legal status, lack of language ability, and unfamiliarity with Canadian society” (D’Addario, Hiebert, & Sherrell, 2007, p. 170). In Metro-Vancouver, for example, by comparison to economic and family class newcomers, refugees experience the highest rates of inadequate housing access,

marked by a lack of resources, increased levels of conflict, and high rates of unaffordable, overcrowded, and poorly maintained housing (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Newbold, 2010, p. 30). Among newcomers, refugees are also the most likely to “fall between the cracks’ of the housing system” (D’Addario et al., 2007), and face the highest rates of relative and absolute homelessness (Francis & Hiebert, 2014). Concerns related to housing for non-status and out-of-status immigrants is also of concern, as they do not have access to the necessary provincial and federal systems and supports to locate and secure appropriate housing.

Greenberg and Martinez-Reyes (2009) identify the three primary issues that impact housing experiences for newcomers in general, but refugees and vulnerable family class immigrants more specifically, which are affordability of housing, access to information, and existence informal networks (pp. 14-15). Of these, affordability is “the most consistent and pressing barrier to securing and maintaining housing for all low-income people, including newcomers” (Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009, p. 14; see also CHRA 2014; Cohen, 2007; Dale, 2007; Francis & Hiebert, 2014). Affordability is a barrier for low-income newcomers and native Canadians alike, and Fleury (2007) suggests that in isolation this barrier is experienced similarly by all low-income populations in Canada. Newcomers, however, face the intersecting barriers of inconsistent or inaccessible information about Canadian supports and systems, as well as reliance on information networks and supports, which fundamentally distinguishes their housing experience from other low-income families.

Greenberg and Martinez-Reyes (2009) emphasize that the lack of knowledge about Canadian systems, as well as housing and tenancy supports, processes, and rights, and inadequate access to language-specific information about these systems and processes greatly increases newcomer’s risks of inadequate housing and/or rates of homelessness. This is further impacted by issues of legal status and access to governmental supports at federal and provincial levels. Further, newcomer’s reliance on informal support networks, such as family and friends, for information and support further mitigates their access to information and supports through formal systems (e.g., settlement supports).

In addition to economic capital, as previously noted, social capital is one of the strongest predictors of settlement success (D'Addario et al., 2007). Newcomers are more likely to rely on informal networks as opposed to traditional formal supports to obtain information about housing, Canadian systems, and supports and resources. Further, contrary to the large body of research that measures settlement success in economic terms alone, the importance of community connectedness and integration cannot be overstated. For example, Jackson (2012) notes that within the Canadian context measuring the successful settlement and integration of immigrant and refugee populations "... purely on an economic basis, omits social factors that contribute to settlement and arguably sustain economic outcomes over the long-term" (p. 18). Familial, friendship, and community-based supports, however, which are paramount in contributing to settlement success, are generally not included in assessments and measurements of settlement outcomes. This trajectories framework also illustrates how incoming class in combination with economic and social vulnerabilities dictates opportunity for successful settlement.

4.3) Homelessness in Canada

The Canadian Homelessness Research Network (CHRN) (2012) defines homelessness in Canada as:

... the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing (p. 1).

To provide additional context for experiences of homelessness, the CHRN (2012) provides specific typologies for homelessness, which includes 1) being unsheltered; 2) residing in an emergency shelter; 3) living in provisional accommodations (e.g., transitional housing, living in relative homelessness); and 4) being at risk of experiencing homelessness due to unstable

housing and/or insecure economic positions (see also Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2012).⁶³

Homelessness in Canada should be examined through an intersectional lens that demonstrates an understanding of the impacts of, and interlinkages among, individual-, structural-, and system-level factors (Anucha, 2005; see also Duchesne, 2015). For example, Anucha (2005) contends that individual (e.g., circumstances, lived experiences) and structural (e.g., un/underemployment, poverty, unaffordable housing, inaccessible healthcare) perspectives on homelessness need to be analysed alongside one another due to their multidimensional nature (see also Duchesne, 2015); this type of analysis would highlight the flaws that exist when focusing dominantly on individual-level factors as a primary cause of homelessness and shift the focus to structural and systematic factors that increase one's risk of relative and absolute homelessness. This is exemplified through the increasing rates of homelessness in Canada generally, and British Columbia (BC) more specifically, are linked to the rising cost of

The Issue of Housing Affordability

According to a key informant, there are three key issues challenging the provision of affordable housing in BC. The third key issue is *affordability*.

In BC's housing market, there is a lack of affordable housing. To address this issue, it is first necessary to have the setup of a funding framework within the province that is flexible enough to incorporate IRW's needs. But as well, it's important to have better communication among services. For example, it may be that community services are unaware that non-profit settlement services have funding that they can and do dole out to provide financial supplements. Or, transition houses may be unaware that local non-profit housing agencies can provide financial supplements under the umbrella of individuals being "at risk" of becoming homeless – this applies to other categories as well as IRWs, such as youth at risk and mentally disabled individuals.

⁶³ Within the immigrant and refugee context, the at-risk of homelessness category should be expanded to include those experiencing abuse, facing immigration-related barriers (e.g., language, poverty), and/or with precarious legal status or non-status.

housing as well as “reduced eligibility for social assistance,” “cutbacks in government housing programs,” and “a reduced supply of low-cost housing” (Patterson, 2007, p. 7). The increasing cost of living, rising rates of precarious economic positions, and reduced social supports for housing adversely impact many populations, but the impacts are most pronounced among vulnerable groups (pp. 7-8); these groups include, but are not limited to, families in unstable economic positions, women and families experiencing abuse, immigrants and refugees, Indigenous peoples, and those struggling with addictions and mental illnesses. Each of these groups have unique vulnerabilities, which compound their risks of homelessness.

4.4) Contextualizing Homelessness as Problematic within Vulnerable Populations

Homelessness is not an individual problem, but rather a social problem resulting from the failure of federal and provincial governments to provide adequate support for appropriate housing (CHRN, 2012). The CHRN (2012) note:

The problem of homelessness and housing exclusion refers to the failure of society to ensure the adequate systems, funding and support are in place so that all people, even in crisis situations, have access to housing. The goal of ending homelessness is to ensure housing stability, which means people have a fixed address and housing that is appropriate (affordable, safe, adequately maintained, accessible and suitable

BC’s Homelessness Prevention Program

The Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) provides portable rental supplements of up to \$450/month for up to one year to eligible individuals and families, including women who have experienced violence or are at risk of violence. Funding for the HPP is provided by BC Housing and is generally administered by Housing Outreach Programs (HOP)/Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Programs around the province. The portable rental subsidy provides eligible individuals and families access to the private (non-subsidized) housing market generally for one year.

Women without status are eligible for the HPP program. However, as noted by a key informant, some women are reluctant to accept HPP rent supplements and supports due to concerns about the potential impacts on their H&C application status.

in size) and includes required services as needed (support), in addition to income and supports (p. 1).

The impact of inadequate social supports is more pronounced among vulnerable populations, such as immigrant and refugee populations and women and children leaving violence and abuse. For these groups the lack of support is compounded by intersecting vulnerabilities.

Families in poverty and within markets lacking affordable housing options, such as Vancouver or Toronto, face increased risks of relative and absolute homelessness (Patterson, 2007, pp. 7-8). The risk of homelessness within families is heightened during separation and/or breakdown, which is exacerbated in instances of abuse when physical and emotional safety is compromised. In addition to poverty and unaffordable housing, immigrants and refugees experience added and intersecting vulnerabilities that further hinder their ability to obtain secure, affordable, and appropriate housing, such as:

- 1) ***a lack of suitable housing given family size*** (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Patterson, 2007; Teixeira & Drolet, 2016);
- 2) ***poor and/or unsafe neighbourhoods*** (Teixeria & Drolet, 2016; Teixeira & Halliday, 2010);
- 3) ***social isolation*** (Thurston, Roy, Clow, Este, Gordey, Haworth-Brockman & McCoy, 2013; Patterson, 2007; Wachsmuth, 2008);
- 4) ***unsafe housing conditions*** (Patterson, 2007);
- 5) ***shared accommodations and overcrowding*** (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Hiebert, 2010; Patterson, 2007);
- 6) ***cultural barriers to supports*** (Fleury, 2007; Teixeira & Drolet, 2016; Patterson, 2007);
- 7) ***language barriers*** (D'Addario et al., 2007; Dale, 2007; Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009; Hiebert, 2010; Hiebert, Mendez, & Wyly, 2008; Newbold, 2010; Teixeira & Drolet, 2016; Patterson, 2007; Sherrell, 2009; Wachsmuth, 2008);
- 8) ***bias and racism*** (Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009; Seifi, 2015; Wachsmuth, 2008); and
- 9) ***lack of knowledge of Canadian systems and supports*** (D'Addario et al., 2007; Wachsmuth, 2008).

Legal status further impacts newcomers' ability to obtain appropriate and secure housing, as precarious and non-status immigrants are often unable to access formal channels and/or governmental supports to obtain housing (Paradis, Novac, Sarty, & Hulchanski, 2008; West

Coast LEAF, 2012). For example, due to limited formal supports, non- and precarious-status women in Canada are forced to “go through informal networks to secure housing” which further increases both their risk of homelessness and stressors related to migration, settlement, and integration (Duchesne, 2015, p. 12).

The factors leading to both relative and absolute homelessness among all populations are:

- 1) **structural** (e.g., inadequate income, lack of access to affordable or appropriate housing, discrimination);
- 2) **failures of the system** (e.g., inadequate supports, supports that do not meet the needs of vulnerable populations); and
- 3) **individual / relational** (e.g., loss of home, breakdown of the family, experiences of violence) (Gaetz et al., 2013).

Of these factors, Gaetz et al. (2013) highlight that the “lack of support for immigrants and refugees” is a **system failure** (p. 13), which can be intensified by structural, individual, and relational factors.

Of note, domestic violence is considered to be “a leading cause of homelessness among women” (Tabibi & Baker, 2017, p. 1), and risk of homelessness is further compounded by intersectional barriers and vulnerabilities faced by IRW. Contemporary research draws strong links between IRW leaving violence and abuse and risk of homelessness, both relative and absolute (for example, see Building Supports Project Phase 1 Final Report: Housing access for immigrant and refugee women leaving violence, 2015; Tabibi & Baker, 2017). Tabibi and Baker (2017) explain that “[o]verall estimates of violence have not been found to be higher in immigrant and refugee communities, however, their positions as immigrants and refugees contributes to the barriers faced when accessing services and supports” (p. 1) whereby hindering access to supports and services that would prevent, intervene in, or minimize the risk of both domestic violence and homelessness (e.g., social, housing, anti-violence). Barriers to accessing supports and services are, however, only some of the contributing factors that make IRW leaving violence and abuse more at risk of relative and absolute homelessness. Inter-linkages between many factors including, but not limited to, “sponsorship relationships, pre-

migration experiences, migration journeys, acculturation and settlement stressors, economic insecurity, cultural norms and traditions, and unfamiliarity with Canadian laws and regulations” (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2016, as cited in Tabibi & Baker, 2017, p. 1) create intersectional vulnerabilities and heighten IRW and their child(ren)’s risk of both domestic violence and homelessness (see also Building Supports Project Phase 1 Final Report: Housing access for immigrant and refugee women leaving violence, 2015).

4.5) Hidden and Absolute Homelessness among Newcomer Populations

The relative success of settlement and homeownership among economic and family class immigrants overshadows issues of relative and absolute homelessness among vulnerable newcomers, such as those with precarious or non-status, experiencing abuse, or facing poverty and un/underemployment. Relative homelessness, often used synonymously with “hidden homelessness,” refers to a somewhat non-visible population who experience varying forms of homelessness due to unstable or insecure housing (AMSSA, 2016; D’Addario et al., 2007; Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009; Francis & Hiebert, 2014). These precarious living arrangements include, but are not limited to, “... those living outside, in emergency shelters, and who spend most of their income on rent, or live in overcrowded, substandard conditions that are therefore at serious risk of becoming homeless” (Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009, p. 3) and “sofa surfing]” by residing with family and friends (AMSSA, 2016, p. 2).

Relative homelessness is the most common form experienced by newcomers in Canada and often is a result of economic conditions (AMSSA, 2016; Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009, p. 4). Rates of relative/hidden homelessness are high among immigrant and refugee populations, as newcomers are more likely to reside with family and/or friends than access supports through formal systems and/or shelters (AMSSA, 2016). Of newcomer populations, instances of relative homelessness are most pronounced in refugee populations, which AMSSA (2016) attributes to financial barriers and limited social capital within the host country. Hidden homelessness is also seen at much higher rates among incoming immigrants who have limited

economic capital. In addition to experiences of relative homelessness, vulnerable newcomers are more likely to experience economic homelessness as a result of being unable to “... find a job or make enough money to support themselves” (Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009, p. 4). Experiences of relative and economic homelessness are intersectional in nature, as family status (e.g., presence of children, single parent households) and gender are highly predictive of immigrant and refugees’ ability to secure stable, long-term housing after bouts of homelessness (Teixeria & Halliday, 2010, pp. 4-5). Teixeria and Halliday (2010) suggest that the impacts of homelessness are more pronounced for immigrant and women, especially those that are economically vulnerable, “regardless of country of origin” (pp. 4-5).

Consistent with the emphasis on the importance of informal support networks and social capital being predictive of immigrant and refugee success in Canada, Hiebert et al. (2005) contend that:

When facing a lack of secure housing ... members of established ethno-cultural groups stay with family or other acquaintances, instead of relying on emergency shelters. For those lacking secure accommodations, these networks may be tapped to provide temporary accommodations. While established ethno-cultural communities may have the ability to ‘take care of their own’, other groups who lack extensive social networks, including recently arrived individuals and refugee claimants, may fall through the cracks (p. vii).

Provincial Housing

Christy Clark (then Premier) unveiled funding on Sept. 19, 2016 saying she would use \$500 million in property transfer taxes from the real estate sector to identify and approve construction on 2,900 rental units. She billed it as a way to address a housing affordability crisis in which rising home prices were squeezing out both homeowners and renters from the market.

The money is intended to specifically help provide below-market housing to at-risk tenants such as seniors, students, First Nations, transitioning youth, the disabled, and **women and children leaving violent and abusive relationships**.

As previously mentioned in the immigration, refugee, and settlement and integration analysis, this reliance on informal support networks not only stresses the need for non-traditional

housing supports and culturally safe awareness-raising campaigns aimed to connect with immigrant and refugee populations, but also increases the vulnerabilities and risks for these women to experience violence when those informal supports they must rely upon may not be stable, safe, or secure. For example, to address the issue of violence specifically for women in these populations, the Canadian Council for Refugees (2017) has, as one of its seven keys to protecting and welcoming Refugee and Newcomers, set out the need to provide access to adequate protection in the immigration system for women in situations of violence.

Among immigrant and refugee populations who have secured some form of housing, within lower-income populations overcrowding is a common feature (Fleury, 2007). Some authors suggest that overcrowding is a component of relative homelessness (see Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes 2009), while others suggest that there is merely a *fine line* between overcrowding and homelessness (Francis & Hiebert, 2014, p. 74). Additional housing conditions to which socially and economically insecure newcomers are subjected include:

- 1) economically disenfranchised neighbourhoods;
- 2) neighbourhoods and communities with limited social resources and supports;
- 3) lack of available, quality subsidized housing; and
- 4) limited affordable and or socialized housing overall, which is especially pronounced in areas such as Metro Vancouver and Toronto (for example, see Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009).

Further, as Greenberg and Martinez-Reyes (2009) contend that, in Canada “[n]ewcomers found that subsidized housing that was available did not meet their safety requirements to raise a family” (p. 14).

4.6) Acceptable versus Core Needs Housing

CMHC (2014) sets the threshold for *acceptable* housing as being 1) “adequate in condition” (e.g., not in need of substantive repair, meets safety standards); 2) “suitable in size” (i.e., has sufficient space for all cohabitants and meets requirements set by the *National Occupancy Standards*);” and 3) “affordable” (i.e., housing that consumes 30 percent *or less* of a household’s net monthly income) (ch. 1, p. 17). *Core housing need*, however, refers to

accommodations that fail to meet one or more of the above outlined criteria, such as housing that is in need of substantive or structural repairs or does not provide suitable space relative to the number of occupants. Further, accommodations that qualify as *core housing need* are those that require more than 30 percent of the net household income to meet the criteria of being *adequate, suitable, and affordable* (CMHC, 2014; see also AMSSA, 2016).

Households that spend more than 30 percent of their net monthly income on housing, which includes costs such as water, heat, and electricity, are classified as “at risk,” and those who spend more than 50 percent of their pre-tax income on housing and housing-related costs are classified as “high risk” (CMHC, 2007, p. 4). Further, due to the growing reliance of newcomers on the private rental market (Wayland, 2007) and overall lack of affordability of rental housing in Vancouver (Hiebert et al., 2008), the rent-to-income ratio of newcomer populations is becoming greater. CMHC (2007) classifies newcomers in the *at risk* and *high-risk* housing groups who have high rent-to-income ratios as vulnerable, as they are at much greater risk of homelessness.

Culturally Informed Guides on Housing and Tenants Rights Federally and Provincially

Housing for Newcomers by CMHC (available in 8 languages):

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/newcomers/en/index.html>

Housing for Newcomers to Canada by Service Canada:

<http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/audiences/newcomers/housing.shtml>

Tenant Handbook by BC Housing (available in English, Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Punjabi, and Tagalog):

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/tenants-programs-resources/information-for-tenants>

4.7) Housing as the Key Component of Settlement

As previously discussed in the immigration, refugee, and settlement analysis, housing patterns and access to appropriate housing are “markers” for successful settlement and considered the “primary indicator for their successful integration” (D’Addario et al., 2007, p.

107). With the system in its current form, however, low-income immigrants and refugees are set up for failure. The current lack of affordable housing and limited access to appropriate housing in hubs for settlement in Canada such as Vancouver, has the potential to “trap newcomers in a ‘cycle of deprivation’,” (p. v) wherein out of necessity immigrants and refugees devote the vast majority of their income to sustaining rental housing alone.

The understanding that housing is a key component of settlement is integrated into Canadian immigration, refugee, and settlement services and supports. For example, as previously noted in the immigration, refugee, and settlement section, many organizations, such as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), have established connections with relevant housing supports in their communities, and serve clients who are seeking safe and secure housing through referrals to other resources or services.

4.8) *The Housing First Model*

With challenges brought forth by reliance on kinship networks, lack of knowledge of Canadian systems and housing processes, and higher rates of hidden homelessness among vulnerable immigrant and refugee groups, shifting to a culturally safe *Housing First* model is paramount (for example, see Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, OCASI, 2015). The *Housing First* model identifies that safe, adequate, and accessible housing needs to be the first priority of all levels of government (OCASI, 2015). One problematic component of the *Housing First* framework, however, is that intersecting vulnerabilities that increase one’s risk of homelessness, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and culture, are often not taken into account, nor do these models address the necessary components of harm reduction that should accompany housing initiatives (Homes for Women, 2013). Housing as a first priority is foundational, but risks and barriers linked to issues of precarious housing and homelessness bound to intersecting vulnerabilities must inform the manner in which housing is provided to unique and vulnerable populations, such as immigrant and refugee groups. Therefore, initial

research and development of a culturally safe and gender aware *Housing First* model is key to ensuring that this framework will meet the needs of IRW and their children.

4.9) Policy Barriers to Housing

During the process of settlement and integration into Canadian society, immigrants and refugees seeking safe, secure, and appropriate short- and longer-term housing face barriers specific to their cultures and lived experiences, such as language, access to training and appropriate employment, poverty, lack of knowledge of Canadian systems, and social isolation. These barriers are amplified when examined through an intersectional lens with a focus on access to housing.

Barriers to accessing and obtaining secure, appropriate, acceptable housing for newcomers exist on three different levels: (1) primary barriers; (2) secondary barriers; and (3) macro/systemic barriers (AMSSA, 2016; Wayland, 2007). These barriers are more pronounced among family and refugee class newcomers (Francis & Hiebert, 2014), and adversely impact precarious and non-status newcomers and out-of-status immigrants. AMSSA (2016) divided these barriers into three categories (i.e., primary, secondary, and systemic), which is consistent with a nested ecological approach.

Primary Barriers

Primary barriers are “unchangeable characteristics of a person/household which many influence their housing needs or experiences in the housing market, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, disability, or religion” (AMSSA, 2016, p. 1).

Primary Barrier	The Immigrant and Refugee Experience
<i>Race / ethnicity, culture, and religion</i>	Although biases related to race / ethnicity, culture, and/or religion are not explicitly stated, research suggests that newcomers face difficulties to obtaining housing on the private rental market due to either overt or underlying biases from individual landlords (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009; Seifi, 2015; Wachsmuth, 2008; YMCA Canada, 2013). Tensions related to racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious bias within communities also hinders social integration for

	newcomers, further compromising successful settlement (Wachsmuth, 2008).
<i>Gender</i>	Gender is identified as a primary factor that impacts one’s ability to locate stable secure housing, especially following experiences of homelessness, “regardless of country of origin” (Teixeira & Halliday, 2010, p. 5). For IRW, however, gendered experiences are interrelated to cultural identifies, as well as the gendered and familial expectations therein, further compromising their ability to locate housing without extended family and/or limited social capital (Simich, 2010, p. 70). Gender also, of course, also plays a role in the IRW increased risk of the violence itself, which in turn increases their risk of homelessness.

Secondary Barriers

Secondary barriers are “characteristics of a person/household which can and do change over time, such as: income levels, family/household size, language skills, and knowledge/experience of relevant institutions, systems, and cultures” (AMSSA, 2016, p. 1).

<i>Secondary Barrier</i>	<i>The Immigrant and Refugee Experience</i>
<i>Adverse or non-existent credit history</i>	Upon arrival in the host country, newcomers often do not have established credit histories in Canada, and immigrants and refugees who have begun the settlement process may struggle with adverse or poor credit scores due to being in a precarious financial position (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; YMCA Canada, 2013). Further, women leaving violence and abuse and/or leaving abusive sponsorship relationships often lack individual credit or are not in a position to establish a positive credit score during this time of transition (YMCA Canada, 2013). No or poor credit history functions as a deterrent for potential landlords and may hinder newcomers’ ability to obtain housing.
<i>Family Size</i>	Issues of unaffordable and/or inappropriately sized housing are exacerbated by newcomers with larger families (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Teixeira & Drolet, 2016). For newcomers without the social or economic capital necessary to locate accommodations of sufficient size and quality, these families may either be forced to live in overcrowded conditions

	and/or substandard conditions to account for family size (Fleury, 2007; Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Hiebert, 2010, 2011; Sherrell, 2009).
<i>Lack of awareness about available systems and services</i>	Many newcomers are unaware of the processes within and functions of the Canadian housing system, as well as the laws and policies in place for their protection. Further, often those in need of housing assistance and support may be unaware what supports are in place, such as subsidized housing, and uncertain of how to access these supports (Teixeria & Drolet, 2016).
<i>Language</i>	As identified in the Phase I report, underdeveloped English language skills among newcomers and inconsistent and/or insufficient supports offered in alternate languages operates as a primary barrier limiting IRW's access to housing supports and services, and ultimately hinders their safety and security.
<i>Legal Status</i>	Newcomers with uncertain status (i.e., refugees), dependent status (i.e., in a sponsorship relationship), and non-status are at an increased risk of homelessness due to their precarious legal statuses <i>and</i> potential inability to obtain housing through formal systems (D'Addario et al., 2007; Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Paradis et al., 2008; Sherrell, 2010; Wachsmuth, 2008). Precarious legal statuses can also impact the willingness of some landlords to rent property in the private rental market, as in a market where there is a limited supply of housing landlords often "have more freedom to select tenants" (Sherrell, 2010, p. 55).
<i>Low-income, insufficient employment, and/or poverty</i>	In a housing market that lacks affordability, newcomers without sufficient economic capital due to un/underemployment and/or living in poverty, obtaining appropriate, safe, and stable housing is a challenge. Poverty is one of the primary predictors of housing instability, relative/hidden homelessness, and absolute homelessness among immigrant and refugee communities in Canada (Fluery, 2007; Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009; Paradis et al., 2008; Wachsmuth, 2008).

<p><i>No references or guarantor</i></p>	<p>One of the common requirements within the private rental market is the provision of references from previous landlords and/or a guarantor. Newcomers often times lack both of these resources, which further hinders their ability to obtain suitable housing upon arrival (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Homes for Women, 2013).</p> <p>It is clear that there is a need to make exceptions for IRW’s references on rental applications. Of note, BC’s <i>Ready to Rent</i>⁶⁴ program is a certificate program that acts in the place of a reference and is a remedy for this barrier in communities where the program is offered.</p>
<p><i>Social Isolation</i></p>	<p>Newcomers tend to rely on informal social networks and supports (Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009), which is fostered and perpetuated by experiences of social isolation (Thurston et al., 2013; Wachsmuth, 2008) and the lack of awareness of formal systems and supports (Teixeria & Drolet, 2016). Reliance of informal social networks, along with other barriers such as language and unfamiliarity with Canadian systems, renders formal housing supports inaccessible for many immigrants and refugees (Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009).</p>

Macro-level/Systemic Barriers

Macro-level barriers are “broader, societal-level factors that generally fall outside of a person’s ability to change, such as governmental housing policies and the structure of housing markets in a given community” (AMSSA, 2016, p. 1).

<p>Macro-level Barriers</p>	<p>The Immigrant and Refugee Experience</p>
<p><i>Affordability</i></p>	<p>Housing affordability is “the biggest housing-related barrier facing newcomer populations” (Wayland, 2007, p. 8), and the most commonly identified concern of newcomers (Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009, p. 14; see also CHRA 2014; Cohen, 2007; Dale, 2007; Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Building Supports Phase I Report, 2015). Unaffordable housing is the key barrier to successful settlement in Canada (Teixeria & Drolet, 2016).</p>

⁶⁴ More information on the *Ready to Rent* program is available on their website: <http://www.readytorentbc.org>

<i>Bias related to race, ethnicity, religion, and/or culture</i>	Research suggests that bias and discrimination have a negative impact on newcomers' ability to obtain appropriate and secure housing (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Greenberg & Martinez-Reyes, 2009; Seifi, 2015; Wachsmuth, 2008; YMCA Canada, 2013).
<i>Lack of cultural safety and competence in systems and services</i>	Culturally safe, appropriate, and competent service provision is paramount in creating connections between service providers and newcomer populations. Many services and supports, however, offer a one-size-fits all approach, which limits immigrants' and refugees' willingness and/or ability to seek and access housing assistance (for example, see Seifi, 2015).
<i>No child policies</i>	Rental properties may instate informal "no children" policies, or policies that limit the number of occupants allowed within any given unit (Sherrell, 2010, p. 55; Pruegger et al. 2007). Sherrell (2010) contends that these policies were encountered "frequently" by immigrants and refugees seeking housing, who were refused rentals once disclosing they had children regardless of if vacancies were advertised at the building (p. 55).
<i>Overcrowding</i>	Refugees and low-income immigrants face higher rates of overcrowding, which speaks to issues of affordability and access to appropriate housing (Francis & Hiebert, 2014). Francis and Hiebert (2014) contend that when "renters are forced to live in over-crowded dwellings" it is evidence that "they cannot afford housing that is large enough for their family" (p. 74).

Experiences in Metro-Vancouver

Of the barriers identified above, newcomers to the Metro Vancouver area experience the most housing-related barriers with respect to the following (Francis & Hiebert, 2014; see also AMSSA, 2016):⁶⁵

⁶⁵ "Affordability" was not one of the barriers listed in the study, although it has already been mentioned as one by the key housing informant and was a finding in the Building Supports Phase I report.

Housing Related Barriers	Family / Economic Class Immigrants	Refugees
Unhealthy living conditions	47%	73%
Overcrowding	49%	65%
Unsafe / inadequately maintained housing	40%	60%
Too isolated / distant from work and/or school	55%	44%

4.9) Housing and Violence

As established in the Building Supports Phase I Final Report, “[h]ousing is a core human right and critical resource to facilitated women’s ability to leave domestic violence and to re-establish health and wellbeing” (p. 3). Newcomers to Canada, and more specifically newcomer women, however, experience increased barriers to housing by comparison to their Canadian- born counterparts based on their social, economic, and status-related vulnerabilities and barriers. Experiences of violence further exacerbate the vulnerabilities experienced by IRW seeking housing, and these women “... identify housing as one of the under-provided services required to leave a violent and abusive relationship, especially housing that is appropriate, safe, and secure” (Phase I Report, 2015, p. 3).

The Building Supports Phase I Final Report (2015) further contextualizes how and why understanding IRW’s experiences of violence is of paramount importance, especially in the context of housing:

... violence against women does not occur more frequently in immigrant communities; however, ‘the experiences of immigrant women in domestic violence situations are often exacerbated by their specific position as immigrants, such as limited host-language skills, isolation from and contact with family and community, lack of access to dignified jobs, uncertain legal statuses, and experiences with authorities in their original countries’ (Menjivar & Salcido, 2002, p. 898). Furthermore, violence experienced by immigrant women is often invisible or silenced (Hancock, 2007; Hyman et al., 2006). Cultural contexts and attitudes and legal status play a role in immigrant women’s increased vulnerability of violence, experience of domestic violence, and access to supports and services, including housing (Abu-Ras 2007; Galano, 2013; Keller & Brennan, 2007; Kim-Goa & Baello, 2008; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Thurston, 2013) (pp. 3-4).

Barriers in Transition Housing

Experiences of non-status women:

“[m]others without status who were able to stay at transition houses found the limited duration of permitted stay a source of anxiety, as they struggled with the uncertainty of where they are their children go next” (Burns, 2010, p. 30)”

Mothers with teenage sons: “[m]any transition houses will not accept mothers who have teenage sons, fearful that the presence of older boys will cause anxiety among other women and children who have been abused by men” (Burns, 2010, p. 30).

These barriers are being addressed in policy and practice within BC. BC Housing updated the BC Society of Transition House member housing policies to reflect that women can have their 30-day stay extended based on need and individual circumstances. Further, this policy template states that male and female dependent children under 19 are eligible to stay in transition housing. The implementation of these two policy directives are, however, at the discretion of each transition house, which means that there is inconsistent application and implementation across the province. The full policy template is available at: http://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/BCSTHPolicyTemplateGuide_Final.pdf

According to the Burns (2010), across Canada “the shortage of housing options available to women escaping violence in their homes has reached crisis proportions” (p. 21).

As previously noted, relative/hidden homelessness is a common phenomenon experienced by newcomers in Canada, and informal housing supports such as family and friends is also a regularly utilized support for IRW leaving violence and abuse (Building Supports Phase I Final Report, 2015). Barriers to services and formal housing supports further reinforce IRW’s reliance on informal housing and compound their experiences of vulnerability and relative homelessness.

IRW tend to under-utilize formal supports and services and rely on informal systems of support, which exacerbates already existing barriers between these vulnerable women and the resources and supports available in Canadian society. Further, when experiencing abuse and/or leaving a violent and abusive home, the first point of contact between IRW and formal supports may not be the anti-violence sector. Instead, IRW women are more likely to seek assistance through programs or systems with which they are

already familiar and have pre-existing relationships (e.g., settlement services, the health sector). This emphasizes the need for coordination and collaboration between these different sectors to support IRW in locating and obtaining both short- and long-term housing. Further, reliance on informal networks also demonstrates that collaboration needs to occur through partnership and integration of both formal and informal/community-based programs and supports to assist with intervention and prevention of violence in immigrant and refugee populations. In this respect, using collaborative service models to raise awareness among IRW about the housing supports available to them *and* connecting women to these supports is also key.

In instances in which IRW women access formal supports, also known as *transitional housing*, the options available to in BC include (see Building Supports Phase I Final Report, p. 4):

Transition Houses	Transition housing provides “... temporary short- to-long-term shelter for women and children leaving violence” (p. 4) with a stay up to 30 days.
Second Stage Houses	Second stage housing offers “... affordable temporary housing (3-12 months) with built-in support and programming” (p. 4).
Third Stage Houses	Third stage housing provides “... independent long-term housing (2-4 years) for women after leaving violence” (p. 4).
Safe Houses	Safe houses “... are private homes that offer short-stay placements for women and their children fleeing violence in small rural communities” (p. 4).

The housing available to IRW and children leaving violence and abuse comes in the form of emergency shelters (i.e., temporary, free communal living often co-ed and not comfortable to women or accessible for women with children), first, second, and third stage transition housing

(see table above), housing co-operatives, staying with friends or family, and housing on the rental market (Burns, 2010). It is, however, difficult for immigrant, refugee, and non-status women to secure long-term housing through these means, as “[t]hey don’t have income to pay for market rental housing, but they don’t qualify for many forms of subsidized housing” (p. 30). This, in turn, operates as a barrier for IRW and children to leave a violent and abusive home, and can also contribute to experiences of both relative and absolute homelessness. These barriers are further compounded by issues of status. As Burns (2010) note, “BC Housing, the Provincial Crown agency that assists those in need with affordable housing options, cannot provide housing to mothers without status until they receive their permanent resident status” (p. 30). Non-status women, however, can access transition houses, as well as receive support and advocacy from transition house workers during the immigration application process.

While the housing options available to IRW and children leaving violence and abuse provide safety, security, and well-being in a time of need, there are concerns and barriers associated with each. Burns (2010) provided the following account of barriers, which were described by non-status women who sought housing in the Metro-Vancouver area:

- 1) **Emergency Shelters**⁶⁶ offer safety in a free, communal living and often co-ed setting for women leaving violence and abuse. These accommodations are, however, short-term and temporary, and there are policies and barriers in place related to funding and legal status. For example, YCWA Canada (2010) notes that “... many shelters receive no funding for clients who are not receiving income assistance, so some shelters impose limits of a few days for people without status” (p. 30). Further, it is difficult for women in general, and immigrant, refugee, and non-status women more specifically, to obtain additional time in a shelter because they are often at capacity and some shelters “... have policies stating that women cannot come to their shelter if they are leaving another one” (p. 30). Women with experiences of violence often feel unsafe in a co-ed shelter environment.
- 2) **Transition Housing** is in place specifically for women and children leaving violence and abuse, and some of the barriers present in shelters do not exist within transition house practices (e.g., there is no requirement for income assistance). While policies and practices differ between transition houses, they generally “... offer free shelter and food

⁶⁶ In most other places in Canada, as well as internationally, the term “shelters” refers to transition houses.

in a communal living setting for up to 30 days, but occasionally will give mothers without status extensions to stay longer”, as well other women if they have extenuating circumstances (YCWA Canada, 2010, p. 30).

- 3) **Second Stage Transition Housing** is a form of long-term housing for women and children leaving violent and abusive homes and relationships. Generally speaking, there are fees or charges associated with staying in second-stage housing, but the housing sometimes offers partial or full subsidies to assist women who are low-to-no income (Burns, 2010, p. 30). Second-stage housing is generally apartment-style, which may be furnished. As Burns (2010) explained, however, “[m]ost second-stage programs don’t provide food and they are reluctant to take women who don’t have any means of buying their own food” (p. 30). Therefore, while some subsidies and supports may be provided through second stage for low income and impoverished women, poverty still largely dictates their ability to obtain such housing. Burns (2010) did find, however, that the few non-status “... women who stayed in second-stage housing identified it as extremely helpful as they were allowed to stay until their status was finalized, which provided stability to them and their children” (p. 30).
- 4) **Housing Co-operatives** are a viable option for non-status women and mothers in Canada, because many “... do not ask about status on their applications or in their interviews” (p. 30). Co-operatives, however, are not necessarily easy to access, as they “... often have long waitlists” (Burns, 2010, p. 31). Further, financial well-being plays a role, because some co-operatives require some source of income or financial stability during the application process, and “... some do not accept applications from people needing subsidies” (p. 31). As highlighted throughout this report, many vulnerable IRW and children live in poverty due to un/under-employment, limited-to-no financial assistance or governmental support, and/or dependence on an abusive spouse. Therefore, requiring income and/or some form of financial stability from IRW applying for co-operative housing hinders the ability of some of the women who need the housing the most to be able to access it.
- 5) **Staying with friends and/or family** is a common form of temporary housing post-separation for many IRW. This is, however, a temporary and often unsustainable form of housing for IRW, and also constitutes a form of relative or hidden homelessness. While it is common for IRW to stay with friends or family after leaving violence and abuse, this is often not a viable option due to the nature of collectivist cultures, IRW’s experiences of social isolation, and/or relying on social networks that are tied closely to their abusive partners. Further, not only does this constitute a form of relative homelessness, relying on informal support networks further isolates vulnerable IRW with experiences of abuse

from formal supports and services necessary for intervention, prevention, and successful settlement and integration in Canadian society.

- 6) **Rental market housing** in Vancouver is unaffordable and, what is available, often does not satisfy standard of living or space requirements for families – especially low-income women and mothers. The assumed availability of and/or reliance on rental housing for IRW leaving violence and abuse is not an acceptable option, especially in the rental climate in Metro-Vancouver. For example, Burns (2010) explained that, within their sample of non-status women, that “... few of the women interview could afford to pay market rent,” and “... those who tried to find accommodation encountered difficulties with landlords who didn’t want to rent to single mothers without permanent status” (p. 31).

An additional concern when providing crisis and temporary housing and support to women who experience abuse is how to balance temporary, immediate intervention, support, and accommodation with long-term housing and support. Dale (2007) notes that “violence is not a one-time event, and shelters, however critical an emergency response, are not the only answer to the problem” (p. 4). Shelter and transition house models (i.e., crisis, first, second, and third stage housing), while crucial for the health, well-being, safety, and autonomy of IRW and children leaving violent and abusive relationships and homes, exemplify concerns related to continuity of services and housing trajectories.

Non-Status Women’s Experiences with Transition Houses and Shelters

Burns (2010) explained that “[m]ost shelters and transition houses lack the funding to provide free, long-term housing for mothers without status. It is estimated that mothers without status spend about two years moving from home to home. Given that mothers without status are victims of abuse and are not able to leave the country, it is unacceptable that they must live such transient lives while they await the outcome of applications for status and until they are able to legally work in Canada” (p. 44).

Experiences of abuse and homelessness, albeit relative or absolute, tend to be cyclical in nature (Dale, 2007). Burns (2010) refer to this as the “shelter-to-couch-to-transition house-to-shelter” model, wherein IRW women generally, and non-status women more specifically, shift between bouts of relative and/or absolute homelessness, shelters, and transition houses (p. 44). In part, these struggles and the lapse in services is due to under-funding of shelters, transition houses, and initiatives that provide long-term subsidized housing. Another issue that arises, however, is a lack of coordination and collaboration between the necessary supports and services to ensure continuity of housing (e.g., shelter to transition house to long-term

Policy Recommendation

Burns (2010) recommends that “... the provincial and federal governments provide ongoing funding for the implementation, maintenance and staffing of second-stage houses for mothers without status” (p. 44).

subsidized housing), ultimately hindering immigrant, refugee, and non-status women and mothers’ ability to progress on a successful housing trajectory after leaving violent and abusive relationships and homes and furthering the *cycle of*

homelessness for abused IRW (i.e., crisis housing/shelter → transition house → absolute or relative homelessness → shelter) (for example see Dale, 2007).

Intersecting vulnerabilities experienced by IRW impact their ability to obtain housing, both short- and long-term, when leaving violence and abuse. For example, as discussed above, non-status women are in a unique position where their vulnerabilities are compounded by lacking legal status in Canada in addition to the barriers they would experience as part of an immigrant group (e.g., language, lack of knowledge of Canadian systems).

4.10) Culturally Safe and Culturally Appropriate Housing Models

In order to provide appropriate and safe housing to IRW and children leaving violent and abusive homes, it is also important to ensure that culturally appropriate and safe housing services are in place and that the supports provided to these women are culturally safe and informed. As highlighted through the earlier discussion on the *one size doesn’t fit all* approach

to working with IRW in the immigration, refugee, and settlement sector, approaches to and the provision of housing for IRW also needs to be appropriate and geared toward the needs of these varying and diverse cultures. Approaches that are Westernized and/or treat immigrant and refugee groups as homogeneous neglect the variety of culturally informed needs and

Policy Recommendation

Burns (2010) recommends that “[h]omelessness programs and initiatives should include assistance to mothers without status and funding should not be limited to those women who have status in Canada” (p. 44).

practices within these groups, and, therefore, operate as a barrier between IRW and obtaining appropriate, safe, and secure long-term housing when leaving a violent and abusive relationship or home.

4.11) Canada’s National Housing Strategy

One approach to managing the current housing crisis in Canada (i.e., lack of available, affordable, safe, appropriate, and/or subsidized housing) is the development of a National Housing Strategy (NHS), which occurred in the latter half of 2016 and underwent recent consultations in April-May 2017 (Government of Canada, 2017b). The findings of these consultations conducted through the *Let’s Talk Housing* initiative highlighted the primary issues that exist within current Canadian housing policies and housing systems, which are:⁶⁷

- 1) *Help those in greatest need;*
- 2) *Help Indigenous peoples achieve better housing outcomes for themselves;*
- 3) *Eliminate homelessness;*
- 4) *Make housing more affordable;*
- 5) *Adopt a housing systems perspective;*
- 6) *Housing policies should center on people and place;*
- 7) *Set clear outcomes and targets;*
- 8) *Deliver long-term and predictable funding;*
- 9) *Realize the right to housing;*
- 10) *Improve data collection, analysis and research; and*
- 11) *Take a collaborative approach to housing* (Government of Canada, 2016, pp. 4-5).

⁶⁷ The italicized list below is quoted directly from the Government of Canada’s (2016) report (see pp. 4-5).

These findings highlight the need for housing policy and practice that not only addresses issues of supply, affordability, and availability in Canada, but also housing that is location- and population-specific.

The general consultations and broader development of the NHS have concluded, and the Government of Canada (2017b) has shifted to “specific discussions around program and process design” (n.p.). This marks an important milestone in the development of the NHS, as *Let’s Talk Housing* has moved forward to developing inclusive, population-specific housing supports and initiatives nation-wide. Supported through the 2017 federal budget,⁶⁸ the on-going process of the NHS development and implementation will continue to occur.

The Government of Canada (2017b) notes that they are “committed to releasing a comprehensive National Housing Strategy in the fall of 2017” (n.p.). With a focus on the needs of specific and vulnerable populations, the NHS aims to support and assist Canadians in need of housing and those who belong to vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous peoples and immigrants and refugees, who may experience additional barriers to accessing affordable, safe, and secure housing. This involves, but is not limited to, developing and implementing solutions to address the limited supply and availability of affordable, safe short- and long-term housing nation-wide (Government of Canada, 2017b).

In the *Vancouver’s Vision for a National Housing Strategy* report, the City of Vancouver (2016) outlined potential challenges for implementing the National Housing Strategy, including how the rising cost of market and rental housing in Vancouver is:

...putting even greater pressure on Vancouver’s most vulnerable residents, many of whom are already struggling to access or maintain basic shelter as a foundation for their quality of life because of inadequate provincial shelter assistance and social supports. These include Vancouver’s Aboriginal communities, youth leaving foster care, women, refugees, and all those struggling with serious mental health and addictions (p. 3).

Additional key concerns were raised specific to the housing landscape in Vancouver, such as how housing has become a “commodity” whereby long-term economic and social equality are

⁶⁸ In addition to financial support through the 2017 federal budget, the Government of Canada (2017a) has committed to “investing more than \$30 billion over the next 11 years through to National Housing Strategy,” aimed to develop and improve housing systems Canada-wide (n.p.).

undermined (p. 3). To address these issues, the report provides Vancouver-centric recommendations including, but not limited to, (1) “a commitment to long-term investment in the supply of affordable rental housing in Canada’s cities” (p. 8) and (2) “a commitment to ending homelessness and addressing the systemic and structural drivers of the homelessness crisis in cities” (p. 14).

Collaboration as a Key Promising Practice

As one example of the collaborative approach, IRCC has been a partner in the development of the NHS, and also supported the work of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation through consultations and information sharing. The intent is to ensure that the needs of immigrants and refugees, including long-term housing outcomes, are considered and reflected in the NHS. As well, through an online consultation process, key stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on the housing needs of newcomers directly to the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation.

In November 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos announced the 10-year National Housing Strategy, which allots 40 billion dollars of federal funding to homelessness reduction and improvements to quality and availability of housing nation-wide (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2017). Following the formal release, however, two housing experts in BC raised concerns that while the strategy is “a step in the right

direction,” it may not have a meaningful impact on the issues of affordable and rental market housing in BC. This is due to the report’s focus on home ownership and limited emphasis on support for non-profit and rental market housing (CBC News, 2017). Similar concerns were raised earlier in 2017 when critiques emerged that the strategies efforts to prioritize housing “fail[ed] to address key market-related issues,” mainly affordability (Karl, 2017).

4.12) Recent Developments in Vancouver's Housing Markets

The NDP's 2018 budget includes housing funding for populations who are at an increased risk of homelessness, including women and children leaving violence and abuse. As Robinson (2018) explained:

[i]ncluded in the budget was about \$565 million for new units of housing and homes for those facing homelessness and for women and children fleeing domestic abuse. The spending on housing for women and children is touted by the government as the first significant investment of its kind in the last two decades (para. 5).

This is a seemingly progressive step toward improving safety, security, and well-being for these women and their children, as well as fostering equality on the housing market. In close succession to the NDP's announcement, however, the City of Vancouver revised their definition of "for-profit affordable housing" to include "affordable" rental rates ranging from \$3,702 per month for a three-bedroom apartment to \$1,496 for a studio apartment in West Vancouver (Pablo, 2018, paras. 1-5). Considering the city's efforts to improve affordability and accessibility of housing, the new definition of "for-profit affordable housing" is problematic. Arguably these rates are less than affordable, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations such as IRW who face increased rates of poverty and un(der)employment. Further, this framework of "affordability" exists in stark contrast with on-going provincial discussion about utilizing affordable housing as a strategy for poverty reduction (Luymes, 2018) and remedy for homelessness. However, amidst the on-going discussions about affordable housing in British Columbia, Vancouver residents have voiced increasing concerns about issues such as eviction, accessibility and affordability of housing, and threats of homelessness in increasingly expensive and limited accessible housing markets (Luymes, 2018; see also CTV Vancouver, 2018).⁶⁹

BC's NDP government is working to address the province's rental market housing affordability crisis. Of note, on April 10th, 2018 BC's NDP announced the creation of the Rental Housing Task Force, which will examine the existing tenancy laws and recommend affordability-

⁶⁹ Affordability of rental housing in Vancouver has reached "crisis level," with over 1/5 of Metro-Vancouver residents spending more than 50% of their net monthly income on rent (Chan, 2018, para. 1; see also BC Non-Profit Housing Association, 2018) with the national rental affordability threshold at approximately 30% of net monthly household income.



based reforms (Lupick, 2018). As Premier John Horgan explained, “our laws haven’t kept up with the changing housing market, and that has left both renters and landlords vulnerable” (para. 9). As a component of the systematic review of provincial tenancy laws, this taskforce will consult with key stakeholders, landlords, and tenants to create policy reform that improves “security and fairness” for all parties involved while nonetheless “addressing the challenges of affordability” (para. 3). It is not clear, however, if the unique needs of vulnerable populations, such as IRW and their children, will be considered in this review.

Section 5) Health Policy Analysis

5.1) Health Contexts

Violence against women is an important public health issue. The short- and long- term health impacts of experiencing violence are diverse and far-reaching even long after the violence has ended. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2013), these impacts can include physical, mental, sexual, reproductive, and other health problems, such as chronic pain, headaches and/or migraines, injuries, gastro-intestinal disorders, sexually transmitted infections, abortions, unwanted pregnancies, depression, anxiety, addictions, eating disorders, sleep disorders and extreme stress (see also Guruge, 2012). Violence does not, however, solely impact a woman's health and well-being, but also her social condition including:

- 1) financial stability (e.g., poverty, legal costs, loss of wages, inability to access financial aid, unemployment or underemployment);
- 2) housing security (e.g., insecure housing, homelessness, unsafe or poor housing conditions);
- 3) immigration status (e.g., sponsorship withdrawal, fear of deportation, lack of status); and,
- 4) and social situation (e.g., isolation, exclusion from family and cultural community, stigma, threat of child apprehension, custody battles, fear of deportation and children remaining in Canada) (for example, see Newbold, 2010; Guruge, 2012; Thurston, 2013).

Regarding the health and well-being of immigrant and refugee women (IRW), those with the most resources pre-migration tend to fare better, and refugee women are considered more vulnerable as their *pre-migration* resources are compromised (e.g., income, education, social supports) (Pederson et al, 2014). Refugee women's chance of exposure to war-related trauma, torture, and sexual violence will further compound the physical and mental health and social impacts of violence in their relationships and migration experiences.

It is important to note that violence against women does not occur more frequently in immigrant communities. As McKeary and Newbold (2010) state that among refugee communities, however, women have heightened risk of experiences of physical and sexual violence. Guruge et al. (2012) also point out that migration to a new country can contribute to an increased risk of violence against women, and that the complex processes involved in

Gender-Based Violence and Intersectionality

A key informant noted in her work with IRW that it is important to appreciate the cross-overs and intersections between the social determinants of health, such as income and social status, social support networks, education, employment, and personal health, and factors which have been shown to be effective in a successful outcome for immigration, refugee, and settlement, such as employment, community and family supports, and personal health.

She emphasized it is very important to increase awareness of gender-based violence, and recognize existing disjunctures across policy and practice, particularly among those who develop and analyze policy and practice.

“migration and (re)settlement may include shifts in power dynamics between spouses and leave women especially vulnerable to partner violence” (p. 2). Further, cultural context and attitudes, language barriers, lack of knowledge of rights, mistrust of authorities, economic insecurity, fear of child protection involvement, lack of familial and/or community support, fear of being rejected from her communities (i.e., Canada, home country), and legal status (i.e., precarious status, non-status, and out-of-status) play an important role in immigrant women’s

vulnerability to violence, experience of violence and access to supports and services, including housing and health (Provincial Office of Domestic Violence, 2014; Thurston, 2013; Abu-Ras, 2007; Galano, 2013; Keller & Brennan, 2007; Kim-Goa & Baello, 2008; Raj & Silverman, 2002).

As stated in Pederson et al. (2014):

Like culture, gender crosscuts and interacts with all other determinants of health, yet gender is often ignored when developing and implementing health interventions. When it comes to understanding newcomer immigrant women’s health, it is therefore important to recognize both their unique and common gendered experiences, both with other immigrants but also in relation to other women (p.14).

Thus, immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, health, and experiences of violence are important and interconnected public policy issues. Accordingly, when looking to improve health outcomes for IRW, broader social determinants of health need to be considered; these

determinants include, but are not limited to housing, income and its distribution, unemployment and employment security, experiences of violence and trauma.

5.2) Health, Migration, and Settlement

Even without experiences of violence, IRW's health and well-being may be affected by the process and stresses of migration. As discussed in previous sections and also impactful on immigration, refugee, and settlement, integration, and housing, these include adjusting to a new country and culture, as well as stresses of leaving friends and family (Dean, 2009; Newbold 2010; Pahwa, 2012). IRW's individual experiences of violence both pre- and post-migration, and, thus, their health and access to health care are compounded by structural inequities (e.g., race, gender) and, at times, structural violence (Hyman, 2009; Prus, 2010). The lived experiences and vulnerabilities of immigrant women experiencing violence which impact access to healthcare and health outcomes are "often exacerbated by their specific position as immigrants, such as limited host-language skills, isolation from contact with family and community, lack of access to dignified jobs, uncertain legal statuses, and negative experiences with authorities in their origin countries" (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002, p. 898 as cited in Building Supports, 2015, p. 3). Pederson et al. (2014)

Policy Recommendation

Similar to recommendations resulting from the settlement and housing analyses, within the health system, **system coordination** is necessary so that IRW's health needs are met and in a timely, seamless and culturally safe manner.

Health impacts are ongoing after women leave abuse. Better system coordination will improve IRW's health, well-being, and safety, because their experiences and needs will be linked.

Involvement in and support from systems needs to be simultaneous and coordinated, which will afford IRW the opportunity to move in and out of different systems. This access and mobility is essential given that the impacts of abuse and women's subsequent needs are not linear.

add to this list citing "acculturation; language, unemployment and deskilling; access to health care and social support; finding appropriate housing; coping with discrimination and racism and maintaining family dynamics and relations" (p. 10) as factors contributing to IRW's health and access to health services.

Research suggests that foreign-born individuals often arrive in Canada in good health, and, of note, often times in better than the health of the native-born population (Newbold, 2010; De Maio & Kemp, 2010; Fuller-Thompson, 2011; Gagnon, 2013; Vang, 2015). This is referred to as the *Healthy Immigrant Effect* (HIE). Due to a number of factors, however, an immigrant's physical and mental health declines with increasing duration of residence in Canada; these factors include poor standard of living (e.g., poor or overcrowded living conditions), socio-demographics, stresses related to challenges finding an adequate source of income, language difficulties, rebuilding social networks, barriers to health care, limited social supports, and challenging settlement experiences (Newbold, 2010; Dean 2010; Fuller-Thompson, 2011; Kirmayer, 2011; Pahwa, 2012; Hudon, 2015). As Newbold (2010) states:

For immigrants, and particularly vulnerable populations including refugees and the elderly, poor economic conditions and low income, social exclusion (the detachment of individuals from social institutions, preventing them from full participation in society), settlement in marginalized areas, poverty, language barriers and mental health issues may combine with poor economic opportunities and limited affordable housing to restrict housing opportunities, while settlement in marginal areas may have long-term implications for both health and housing options. In both cases, the end result may be homelessness (p. 28).

The inequalities and discrimination that impact the decline in immigrant health are not necessarily produced by a lack of health care services; therefore, improvements cannot be the sole responsibility of the health sector (De Maio & Kemp 2010; Pederson, 2014). Hyman (2009) echoes this sentiment, pointing to systemic racism and unequal access to healthcare among racialized groups, particularly those who have intersecting experiences of "race, immigration, gender, poverty and health" (p. 7).

It is interesting to note that overall measurements suggest immigrants in Canada are at an advantage with respect to health. When examined in greater detail, however, these health measurements only show certain immigrant groups as having an advantage. Thus, the health of immigrants and refugees, as well as the HIE, should be situated within the classical social determinants of health inequalities framework (for example, see Marmot, 2005). Marmot's (2005) framework demonstrates that individuals who have high levels of control over their contexts (e.g., voluntary migrants, economic class immigrants) are likely to have greater health advantages than those who have low levels of control over their contexts (e.g., resettled refugees, refugees fleeing violence). These unequal health advantages and the HIE can be reinforced in Canada by selecting for human capital capacity in the economic class, meaning that the immigration process tends to privilege higher status, high-control individuals which can falsely inflate health measurements for immigrant classes as a whole.

Refugees and asylum seekers, for example, will probably not only have lower levels of control over their health and contexts, but also may face additional exposures, risks, and intersectional challenges as part of their migration trajectory which can further compromise their health and well-being. Thus, while there are many immigrants and refugees who do experience worsening health post-migration, it is also likely, at a population-level, that some individuals may arrive in Canada already possessing significant health issues.

In any case, it is clear that unequal and hindered access to healthcare can lead to negative health outcomes. Despite the universal and comprehensive framework of Canada's health care system, IRW experiencing violence are encountering many barriers to accessing emergency and necessary health care; these barriers include, but are not limited to:

- 1) language barriers;
- 2) lack of cultural safety;
- 3) limited to no health care coverage or, if ineligible socially supported health care (e.g., provincial, healthcare provided under the *Immigrant and Refugee Health Protection Act*), cost of health care;
- 4) isolation;
- 5) poverty; and,

- 6) transportation issues (The Immigrant Women’s Project, 2012; De Maio & Kemp, 2010; McKeary, 2010; Pederson, 2014).

These barriers have negative impacts on IRW’s health outcomes, as they hinder access and quality of healthcare. Similarly, immigrant, refugee, and non-status women’s access to British Columbia’s (BC) Medical Service Plan (MSP) is complex as eligibility and wait times vary with immigrant or refugee status. As such, there is often much confusion in regard to their health rights, who has access to health care, how to access it, waiting periods and if there are fees for access, resulting in significant additional barriers to women accessing health care.

There has been criticism of the Canadian health care system “for responding inadequately to the needs of newcomer immigrant women by neglecting their specific health care needs and inappropriately addressing their expectations” (Marshall et al., 2010 as cited in Pederson et al. 2014, p. 25). For example, most health authorities do not have formal interpretation policies or have ready access to appropriately trained interpreters. IRW are unsure about how health insurance works and what coverage it provides, and many do not know how to access health care services. As noted in the recommendations section, these critiques should be understood within a rights-based framework, as access to healthcare for IRW needs to be considered a fundamental right within Canadian society.

For IRW that have access to and/or do access Canadian health services, the issues of language barriers and access to appropriate and safe translation,⁷⁰ as well as concerns about confidentiality and issues of trust with health care providers, impact a IRW’s experience, including whether she returns and/or discloses her experiences of abuse. For example, IRW who participated in the Building Supports Project Phase I research discussed having a lack of information about systems, such as how to navigate them and what to expect when they do reach out for support. Concerns based on misinformation that is shared among community members regarding various supports and negative impacts of reaching out, particularly in relation to punitive institutional power (e.g., child protection involvement, removal of children,

⁷⁰ Provincial Language Services (PLS) is currently implementing a pilot project providing phone interpreting services to X General Practitioner (GP) offices across BC.

deportation) significantly impacted whether and to whom IRW sought support regarding their experiences of violence. Further, if IRW do access health care, there is no guarantee that they will disclose their experiences of abuse to a health care provider – even when asked. The systemic, linguistic, and socioeconomic barriers discussed above, in addition to the shame and stigma attached to experiencing abuse, create significant barriers to disclosure.

Recommendations on intimate partner violence from the Canadian Collaboration for Immigrant and Refugee Health recommend against routine screening. It is, however, a complex issue. While screening and identification of women experiencing violence can result in re-traumatization, which puts women’s safety at increased risk and additional harms, some evidence suggests that culturally diverse women want to be asked (Kaur, 2017). For many reasons, including concerns around safety, trust, and uncertainty about what will happen if they disclose abuse, many women will not disclose when they are asked about experiences of abuse by a health care provider. However, others will only disclose when asked; A “lack of direct questioning about experiences of abuse has been reported as a disclosure barrier in culturally diverse women” (Cherniak et al., 2005, as cited in Hassan et al., 2011, p. 4). Cherniak et al. (2005) also suggests that if language is a barrier and/or if there is no trust or rapport between the woman and a health care provider, even when asked she will not disclose the abuse. A violence- and trauma- informed approach to healthcare does not rely on screening to identify and support women with experiences of violence, but instead relies on health care professionals being aware of the possibility of violence, being attuned to the impacts and the potential barriers and harms of disclosure and responding accordingly.

5.3) The Impacts of Immigration Status on Health Outcomes Post-Migration

As explained above (see section 5.2), the health of immigrants and refugees is influenced by their contexts, of which immigration status is paramount. It is true that, with post-arrival in Canadian society, access to services in general may be an issue for many

immigrants, but access to health coverage specifically can also be differentially impacted, depending on which category of refugee class the individual belongs.

1. **Resettled refugees** who receive PR status upon arrival are given similar provincial health coverage to other immigration classes (i.e., 90 day waiting period, which is waived by some provinces), as well as supplementary coverage from the Interim Federal Health Plan (IFHP) comparable to what is available under provincial social assistance (e.g., prescription medication, counselling, dental). Resettled refugees' access to health services is, however, contingent on their ability to locate a registered IFHP provider.
2. **Asylum claimants** who are eligible to make a claim to the IRB receive supplementary coverage from IFHP, as well as basic coverage such as treatment by a physician or hospital, contingent on access to a registered IFHP provider. Asylum claimants receive this IFHP coverage until their claim is approved by the IRB at which point they transition to provincial health coverage or they leave Canada (in the latter case, all the way through the steps of the Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA)/Judicial Review/and Deportation Order).
3. **Non-status** individuals have no health insurance coverage, such as irregular migrants who have over-stayed a TR but are not able to make an asylum claim to the IRB.⁷¹

Continuity of care when transitioning from IFHP to provincial health coverage may also be an issue for these groups.

5.4) The Nexus of Health and Housing

Housing is a core human right⁷² and an important social determinant of physical and mental health and positive health outcomes (Cohen, 2007; Maqbool, 2015). For instance, affordable housing frees up resources to pay for health care and food, high-quality housing limits exposure to environmental toxins, and stable affordable housing reduces stresses (e.g., financial), as well as decreases risks of depression and anxiety (Maqbool, 2015). Conversely, without safe, affordable housing an individual's health declines. As one Building Supports research participant shared,

⁷¹ The aforementioned groups may self-identify as refugees, which makes it potentially difficult to differentiate among them within the context of qualitative, community-based studies.

⁷² See Section 6/recommendations for a discussion of how and why health also needs to be framed as a core human right for immigrants and refugees.

It's very stressful, yeah. So bloody stressful. I get in depression, I get very hard problems with my health. And, you know, believe me, I take medication to sleep [...]. I was a lot of issue in that period. I was taking like five or six months trying to find a place to rent, and nobody wants you rent. Yeah. It's stressful (Building Supports Project, 2015, p. 28).

According to Hyman (2009), racialized individuals experience higher rates of inadequate housing than non-racialized groups. Finding appropriate housing is a key barrier identified by IRW and many are forced to live in impoverished, urban areas (Building Supports, 2015; Dumbrill, 2009).

Concerns with Disclosure

Without being asked women often do not disclose experiences of violence. Even when asked, many women do not disclose.

Existing tools used to screen for violence are most often in English and any translations that exists are most often not attentive to culturally safety.

Kaur (2017) notes that IRW have additional concerns about disclosing, including: (1) a lack of information about what will happen if they do disclose; (2) even though family doctors are generally the first point of contact women may not disclose the abuse because of a lack of established trust, perceived caring, and/or support from the family doctor; (3) fear that children will be taken away if they disclose; (4) often the reality is that once IRW disclose things often get worse, such as involvement of MCFD and/or police, being alienated from family and community, and increased threats and safety risks.

As discussed in the housing analysis, newcomers to Canada are in a distinctly vulnerable position related to locating, securing, and retaining appropriate and safe housing, and are at greater risk of facing housing inequalities. For example, low quality housing in marginalized areas compromises health, well-being, and safety, and individuals who settle into poor housing tend to stay in these areas and become increasingly marginalized (Newbold, 2010).

Neighborhood conditions, including the social, physical and economic characteristics have

short- and long-term effects on health (Braveman, Dekker, Egerter, Sadegh-Nobari, & Pollack, 2011). Further, many newcomers have “little choice but to spend a large portion of their income on shelter and live in crowded conditions” (Newbold, 2010, p. 30) which can lead to physical illnesses, infectious diseases and psychological distress (Braveman et al., 2011; Cohen, 2007; Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, 2008). For example, exposure to high/low temperatures without proper heating or air conditioning, carcinogenic air pollutants, injuries resulting from “structural features of the home such as steep staircases and balconies, lack of safety devices such as window guards and smoke detectors, and substandard heating systems” (Braveman et al., 2011, p. 2) are characteristic of poor housing and contribute to an individual’s health and well-being. Individuals and families often need to compromise basic needs like food in order to pay for housing costs.

The linkages between housing and both physical and mental health outcomes for immigrants and refugees was discussed during the Building Supports Project Phase I research (2015):

[p]articipants spoke a great deal about the impacts not only of violence, but also of insecure housing and the stress brought on by searching for safe, secure, and affordable housing. The physical and mental health impacts of woman abuse have been well documented in the literature, and leaving violence may be a particularly stressful time given the evidence of increased risk of violence during this period. Women leaving violence are often in crisis, and the stress of searching for housing, long waitlists, rejections, and frequent moves may have a significant impact on their already compromised health and well-being, and the health of their children (p. 28).

Without access to safe affordable housing, women may never leave, or may attempt to leave but return to the abuser, rather than put her and her children at risk of homelessness. And as previously stated, the health impacts of living with abuse are extensive. Further, women with children who do not have stable housing, may be less inclined to access health and/or social services due to fear of child protection involvement if her housing situation became known. From a policy perspective, access to safe, adequate and affordable housing is an investment in good health for IRW leaving violence and abuse and for their children as well as a strategy to

“save a lot in health care” because health risks related to poor and unaffordable housing will be minimized (Wachsmuth, 2008, p. 9).

5.5) Health and Income and Its Distribution

Household income is a strong determinant of health outcomes (De Maio & Kemp, 2010). In the 2006 Canadian Census, over one in three immigrants who arrived two-years prior fell below the poverty line. More recently in 2011 Statistics Canada, 16.5 percent of Immigrants were “low-income” for 7 of their first 10 years in Canadian and all immigrants are more likely to be low income than native-born Canadian's. Financial wellbeing and related socio-economic factors are linked to the ability to obtain quality housing (Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, 2008). Per the latest Statistics Canada report on immigrant women, “in 2010, immigrant women and girls were more likely than their Canadian-born counterparts to be living in a low-income household, according to the National Household Survey after-tax low-income measure,” and the “prevalence of low-income was highest among recent immigrants at 28.3%” (Hudon, 2015, p. 32). Women in the Building Supports Project Phase I research (2015), as well as IRW who participated in other studies, indicated challenges associated with downward social mobility through the process of migration (for example, see Pederson et al., 2014)

Low income results in limited and often poor housing options. When there is a lack of affordable safe housing, individuals and families have insufficient funds for other essential needs such as, but not limited to, food and health care. Further, as previously noted, low income and socioeconomic status are also predictors of higher levels of mental distress, poor housing, and experiences of violence; these lead to negative physical and mental health outcomes and hinder access to health care, reinforcing the intersections between these issues (Pahwa, 2012; Reid, 2008).

5.6) Unemployment and Employment Security

Un/underemployment and the lack of recognition of foreign credentials are common challenges for newcomers to, and IRW in, Canada (Dean, 2009; Pederson, 2014). According to the Statistics Canada report on immigrant women, immigrant women take longer than immigrant men to integrate into the labour force (as cited in Hudon, 2015). This delayed and often disadvantaged position within the labour market is related to “several factors including: family responsibilities, ability to converse in a local language and other settlement issues” (Hudon, 2015, p. 27). Further, data from the 2011 National Household Survey indicate that “immigrant women of core working age had an unemployment rate of 14.7% compared to 5.2% among Canadian born population” (Hudon, 2015, p. 27). Additionally, once employed, there is a significant degree of education to job mismatch and immigrant women end up working in low-paid service positions since their foreign credentials are not recognized by Canadian employers and institutions (Pederson, 2014). For instance, Hudon (2015) states:

for the core working age group of 25 to 54 year olds... 48.7% of immigrant women and 30% of Canadian-born women with a bachelor's level degree or higher were working in jobs that typically require less education. Recent immigrant women were least likely to be employed in positions that matched their education. Of those in the core working age group who had attained a bachelor's level degree or higher, 60.1% were employed in positions that did not match their education level (p. 28).

The subsequent “lack of income, loss of employment related skills, loss of social status and family pressures” results in a number of physical and mental health impacts and difficulties securing and affording adequate housing (Dean, 2009, p. 185).

5.7) Impactful Policies in the Health Sector

Immigrant, refugee, and non-status women’s access to health care coverage in BC is complex and varies with immigrant or refugee status. Below is a list of the primary policies which impact the experiences of these groups:

Interim Federal Health Program

The Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)⁷³ provides limited and temporary health benefits to people in the following groups who are not eligible for provincial or territorial (PT) health insurance:

- protected persons, including resettled refugees;
- refugee claimants;
- and certain other groups.

As of April 1, 2017, the IFHP expanded to cover certain services for refugees who have been identified for resettlement before they come to Canada. These services will include: coverage of the immigration medical examination, pre-departure vaccinations, services to manage disease outbreaks in refugee camps, and medical supports during travel to Canada.

Canada Universal Health Care

All Canadian citizens and permanent residents (PR) may apply for public health insurance. When individuals have it, they do not pay for most health-care services as health care is paid for through taxes. Each province and territory have their own health insurance plan which varies in terms of what is covered. All provinces and territories will provide free emergency medical services, even if individuals do not have a government health card. However, restrictions may apply depending on immigration status.

New BC residents who are eligible for medical coverage through MSP are eligible only after they have completed a waiting period. The BC Medical Services Plan (MSP) website states that an individual must be a resident of B.C. in order to qualify for medical coverage under MSP. A resident is a person who meets all the following conditions:

- must be a citizen of Canada or be lawfully admitted to Canada for permanent residence;
- must make his or her home in B.C.;
- must be physically present in B.C. at least 6 months in a calendar year;

⁷³ The IFHP is a Cabinet-approved departmental program and not part of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA). While the IFHP provides health support for many newcomers, it does not create services for immigrants and refugees. The IFHP provides reimbursement for services and is subject to provincial billing code structures.

- and dependents of MSP beneficiaries are eligible for coverage if they are residents of B.C.⁷⁴

The date residency is considered to have been established is determined by the Ministry of Health based on several factors, including the type of immigration status held. For some persons, the wait period does not start when they arrive in the province - it starts later. For example, a person who arrives as a tourist or visitor may later receive a change in immigration status in Canada that qualifies the person for MSP coverage. Because of the up to 3-month wait period, individuals need to apply for supplemental private health insurance while being sponsored and waiting for care card. This information however is not widely known, and many

Promising Practice

BC Women’s Hospital runs the Newcomer Women’s Health Clinic that accepts women without documentation as well as those who do. The New Beginnings Maternity Clinic at BC Women’s Hospital provides maternity care for women who do have MSP coverage and have significant financial hardship.

immigrant women and their families do not have any health coverage in these first 3 months. Non-status women, in addition to not having access to income assistance or subsidized housing, do not have access to health care or any other essential emergency health or dental care,

Promising Practice

Provincial Language Services (PLS) is currently implementing a pilot project providing phone interpreting services to General Practitioner (GP) offices across BC. The pilot began October 1, 2017.

placing her and her children at risk of health problems, poverty, and homelessness (The Safety of Immigrant, Refugee, & Non-status Women Project, 2012). Further, non-status women may be hesitant to access health care as it may put them at risk of deportation and there are few services in BC that provide free medical care to those without coverage, which places non-status women, and their children’s health, at increased

⁷⁴ Some holders of study and/or work permits issued under the federal *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* are deemed to be residents, but tourists or visitors to B.C. do not qualify... (Ministry of Health Services, 2010)

risk. Ardanaz (2017) echoes this concern and recommends that Provincial Health Authorities establish more free-access clinics and health care resources that do not bar access based on MSP eligibility for non-status women, such those as offered by the British Columbia Multicultural Health Services Society.

What is Needed Now?

The World Health Report (2013) calls for:

- 1) Increased international and national investment and support in research aimed specifically at improving coverage of health services within and between countries.
- 2) Closer collaboration between researchers and policymakers (i.e., research needs to be taken outside the academic institutions and into public health programmes that are close to the supply of and demand for health services).
- 3) Countries to build research capacity by developing a local workforce of well-trained, motivated researchers.
- 4) Every country to have comprehensive codes of good research practice in place.
- 5) Global and national research networks to coordinate research efforts by fostering

Access to Interpretation and Translation Services in Health Centres

Policy regarding

provision of language interpretation services to patients who do not speak English is set at the Health Authority level. Not all Regional Health Authorities in BC have policy that appropriate language interpreter services will be provided to non-English-speaking patients. Some health authorities, such as Fraser Health, offer interpretation in over 150

languages but ask that patients request the interpreter prior to their visit which may not always be a possibility, especially if women are in crisis because of abuse. Women may not even know that they can ask for interpretation which again may prohibit them from accessing health care. Ardanaz observes that the Provincial Language Service (PLS) is intended to provide health authorities in BC with formal interpretation and language services, including access to properly

trained interpreters. It is, however, a discretionary program with no statutory provisions to ensure funding and availability of the service which is needed by immigrant women and children leaving violence and abuse (Dumbrill, 2009).

Lack of Culturally Safe and Accessible Health Services and Policies

Cultural safety training and training in the unique dynamics and impacts of violence for immigrant, refugee and non- status women is developed and administered at the health authority level. Women’s experiences when accessing health care vary, but generally their interactions are challenging and at times feel unsafe. There is a need for cultural safety training across health care systems to ensure that no matter where a woman accesses health services, she is met with culturally safe and appropriate responses.

Promising Practices

Culturally Connected is a tool to support the development of cultural safety through the application of cultural humility and health literacy skills. It was developed through a partnership between BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, BC Children’s Hospital, and BC Women’s Hospital and Health Centre.

BC Women’s Hospital and the Ending Violence Association of BC (EVA BC) are developing an **online training** to enhance the health sector’s response to gender-based violence.

Section 6) Recommendations/Solutions Grid for Improvement and Change to Barriers

Resulting from the above analysis of the experiences of immigrant and refugee women (IRW) leaving violence and abuse, with an emphasis on immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, and health, numerous potential barriers and corresponding recommendations/solutions emerged. These recommendations and solutions are framed within social justice and human rights frameworks, as these values are central to policy recommendations.

Each of the sections below provide a list and detailed explanation of the potential barriers and recommendations for each of the three identified sectors as well as overall and intersecting recommendations, which were identified and developed by the research team. During the Phase III Advisory Committee (AC) workshop, important potential barriers and related recommendations were also identified and prioritized by key stakeholders (see methodology section 2.1). The top three potential barriers and recommendations ranked by the AC members are also included in the list below and clearly marked as insights from these key stakeholders. The lists in the sections below are broken down by potential barrier type.

6.1) Overall and Intersecting Potential Barriers and Intersecting Recommendations

Areas of Focus	Potential Barriers and Recommendations
<p>Awareness of, and Access to, Services and Resources</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information; • Lack of multilingual information; • Lack of support for navigating systems and resources; and • Lack of accessible knowledge mobilization. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Link IRW with resources and create awareness of existing services and supports.</p>

	<p>This requires <i>raising awareness of available resources and supports through means such as</i> culturally safe and appropriate awareness raising campaigns are key in accessing these populations.</p> <p>Building <i>advocacy navigating systems</i> for the women to work their way through legal barriers is also beneficial.</p> <p><i>(2) Provide information about violence against women and supports in multiple languages and in various mediums prior to and upon a woman’s arrival into Canada.</i></p> <p>In that regard, multi-service and housing organizations are encouraged to hire staff that reflect the diversity of the women they serve, as well as build cross-sectoral relationships with multilingual services who they can call on when needed.</p>
<p>Knowledge of Canadian Laws and Systems</p> <p>Legal Support</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information regarding, and support for, navigating Canadian systems; and • Lack of legal aid and legal support. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <p><i>(1) Increase access to legal aid and legal information and resources.</i></p> <p>To address this issue, it is key for the British Columbia (BC) government to fulfill its obligations under the <i>Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i>, the <i>UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</i>, and the <i>UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i> by providing adequate funds to Legal Services Society to ensure that those who have legitimate needs for legal representation on serious family or immigration matters and cannot afford to pay for it are</p>

	<p>able to obtain legal representation through Legal Aid (p. 178).⁷⁵</p> <p>(2) Just as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) should coordinate over health issues, it should also coordinate with the BC Family Justice system with regard to unresolved custody (i.e., guardianship) issues.</p> <p>(3) Provide additional support and funding for existing programs that aid IRW in navigating legal and immigration systems.</p> <p>For example, the Rise Centre for legal aid services in Surrey, BC currently provides 25 hours of legal support to each client and is working to increase the hours available.</p>
<p>Discrimination</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination; • Poverty; • Un/underemployment; and • Language. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Create and implement poverty reduction and prevention strategies for IRW and their families.</p> <p>Poverty reduction and prevention strategies are essential to address the bigger picture issue that IRW and their families are often low-income and struggling to meet essential needs.</p> <p>Important provincial and federal poverty reduction and prevention strategies include, but are not limited to, increasing accessibility to education and training</p>

⁷⁵ Unfortunately, as of June 2017, it was announced by Legal Services Society BC will no longer accept applications from immigrants and refugees for assistance with legal services as of mid-November 2017, because of lack of funds.

programs, improving access to- and retention of- stable affordable housing, and promoting social inclusion.

(2) Understand poverty in context, because economic well-being is interconnected with housing, health, and successful settlement. “If housing is the cornerstone of settlement, economic resources are perhaps the most important ingredients needed to lay a good foundation of adequate, suitable, and affordable accommodation” (Francis & Hiebert (2014, p. 73).

(3) Review of income assistance rates and policies to ensure an increase to a livable wage for IRW and their families.

The policy analysis findings highlight the obvious need for income assistance rates to increase to a livable income. The current rates make it nearly impossible for IRW to secure safe housing that meets their and/or their child(ren)’s needs.

(4) Acknowledge foreign credentials of IRW to prevent qualified women from having to work in survival jobs.

Instead, it is crucial to assist IRW in securing both secure, as well as financially and professionally rewarding, employment.

(5) Require each regulated occupation to develop a single pan-Canadian standard instead of each province and territory having its own standards of occupation.

(6) Support settlement agencies to work in collaboration with employers.

This recommendation emerged from the Phase III AC workshop and includes, but is not limited to:

- a) use jobs as a means through which IRW can learn and/or improve their English language skills (e.g., through interaction), network, and communicate;

	<p>b) make links between training offered and skills/language needed;</p> <p>c) micro-financing to aid in starting businesses, which is a source of income and empowerment (e.g., purchasing sewing machines creates an opportunity for IRW to work from home); and</p> <p>d) programs such as <i>Diversity</i> in Surrey, BC which provides 50/50 funding to employers of immigrants and refugees for the first 4 months to improve the likelihood of employment and retention of IRW.</p> <p>(7) Emphasize and account for the importance of language classes, as well as and opportunities for training and education, to IRW.</p> <p>Language classes are a key opportunity for outreach and information sharing about violence and housing with both the IRW attending classes and the teachers and staff that support them.</p> <p>(8) Address language barriers in the provision of services.</p> <p>Easy access to interpretation and information in multiple languages will support women reaching out and accessing community and health services. This can be accomplished through initiatives such as hiring multilingual staff, improving access to translators, and providing information in multiple languages.</p>
<p>Relationships that Affect Help-Seeking</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited supports; and • Lack of relationships that support help-seeking. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Develop and utilize culturally informed means of reaching out IRW.</p>

	<p>Informal networks are the most commonly utilized by immigrants and refugees, and even if formal supports are available. Fostering relationships in communities and connecting with informal networks to provide support in immigrant, refugee, and non-status communities is key.</p> <p>(2) Highlight and utilize primary points of access to reach IRW, such as settlement and health services.</p> <p>Common supports for status immigrants (as opposed to non-status or out-of-status immigrants – see glossary) are settlement and health services, versus traditional anti-violence programs and supports.</p> <p>(3) Community relationships are key, and informal support networks are most commonly accessed, even more so than settlement and health sectors.</p> <p>Accordingly, collaboration and coordination between formal agencies/programs (e.g., settlement, housing, health) and informal supports would improve IRW’s access to resources.</p> <p>It is imperative to develop community relationships and utilize informal support networks for IRW, which will require communication, connection, collaboration, and coordination between formal agencies/programs (e.g., settlement, housing, health) and informal supports.</p>
<p>Collaboration, Connection, Coordination, and Communication</p>	<p>Potential Barrier:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cross-sectoral collaboration, connection, coordination, and communication. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Enhance cross-sector support and collaboration.</p> <p>Cross-sector partnerships, collaboration and coordination can greatly improve the success of individual providers or</p>

agencies in assisting and advocating for housing for IRW leaving violence and abuse.

(2) Improve coordination and collaboration between justice systems.

BC's Fifth Justice Summit in 2016 focused upon the need for collaboration and information sharing between justice systems, as in between the family court and criminal court justice systems, but even more holistically, they are needed among those systems and others such as BC Housing, the child protection system, immigration, refugee, and settlement services, education, health care, labour, etc.

These types of holistic service provision and collaboration are needed not only at the provincial level but the federal one as well.

(3) Consult with the community and foster relationships with agencies such as community-based immigrant and refugee services and informal community support networks.

A key "take-away" point/principle from the many reports reviewed is the importance of not only hearing the voices of not only the IRW leaving violence and abuse but also those of the community itself, especially those of the community-based immigrant and refugee services.

(4) Address the siloed nature of the family and criminal legal systems.

In addition to the lack of collaboration and connection at the institutional level as noted above, there exists a siloed nature amongst the different sets of laws themselves.

Policy Review	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current challenging policies in federal and provincial housing, immigration, refugee, and settlement, and health; and • Examining policy intent with policy outcomes. <p>Recommendations: (1) Ensure that flexible and responsive policies and regular policy review become an important part of organizational culture.</p> <p>Regular policy review processes enable organizations and ministries to adapt to the needs of individuals accessing services is needed.</p> <p>(2) Create clearly defined and accessible policies, including transparency about eligibility and processes for IRW who are trying to navigate local and government systems.</p>
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6.2) Immigration, Refugee, and Settlement Potential Barriers/Intersecting Recommendations

Areas of Focus	Potential Barriers and Recommendations
Community and Community Integration	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited community integration; and • Limited and variations in community capacity. <p>Recommendations: (1) Emphasize welcoming communities and community integration for IRW and children.</p> <p>(2) Building of community capacity.</p> <p>A key recommendation is to focus on building community capacity, which holds similar importance for both rural and urban settings.</p>

	<p>(3) Address programming and budgets by placing emphasis on welcoming committees and outreach programs.</p> <p>(4) Give immigrant serving agencies multi-year, stable funding.</p> <p>(5) Provide interpretation services for all sectors.</p> <p>(6) Facilitate and support the involvement of religious leaders, because they are often the first point of contact.</p> <p><i>Recommendations 3, 4, 5, and 6 above were identified and developed by the AC, and were prioritized as the second key considerations for the immigration, refugee, and settlement sector which was <u>community integration</u>.</i></p>
<p>Federal and Provincial Regulations and Procedures</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal jurisdiction procedure for supports; • Provincial jurisdiction procedure for supports; • Challenging immigration applications (i.e., federal jurisdiction - IRCC); and • Impacts of sponsorship laws and processes (i.e., federal jurisdiction). <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Review IRCC policy intents and outcomes related to support for IRW, and determine if the supports and assistance offered are sufficient.</p> <p>If you are bringing in the most vulnerable, certain questions should be asked of these policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is providing the income assistance they do offer too much or not enough? • How long should the assistance be provided? <p>There are specific challenges in having to do all that is required in 12 months, which is the current IRCC approach.</p>

IRW are often high needs individuals and, therefore, these questions highlight the need for multiple services. IRCC also has no control over BC Housing and, thus, are limited in how much they can assist the refugees/immigrants in that process of securing housing.

(2) Enable temporary resident permit holders access to the Child Care Subsidy Act (see section 5 of the regulations) (Ardanaz p.4)

(3) Standardize intake and accounting/reporting practices across Canada. The need exists to standardize intake and accounting/reporting across the country, including in that exercise a consideration of regional differences.

(4) Streamline labour market integration for immigrants and refugees.

Six steps are recommended to streamline the labour market integration process:

- a)** Require each regulated occupation to **develop a single pan-Canadian standard**, and insist that the assessment process be **initiated from abroad** by prospective immigrants and tracked in the immigration system.
- b)** Develop a **broader strategy for alternative careers with a more prominent role for regulators**. Require regulators to advise newcomers who are unsuccessful in the licensing process in finding an alternative career.
- c)** Foster leadership, support and a **shared responsibility** among all stakeholders for helping immigrants find jobs. Large and small employers, immigrant-serving organizations and governments must work more closely together.
- d)** Establish a “**Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group for Better Immigrant Employment Outcomes.**” This group of employers, regulators and immigrant-serving organizations would monitor and report to governments on progress in implementing the

	<p>recommendations, advise governments on broader issues involving the labour market integration of immigrants and champion the shared commitment of hiring newcomers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Federal, provincial and territorial governments could produce more comprehensive labour market information targeted at newcomers. f) Educate communities on how to increase retention outside large metropolitan areas <p><i>(5) Expedite the application process for immigrants and refugees who are seeking employment, and address challenges related to immigration applications and processing, such as “fast tracking” IRW with experiences of violence and abuse.</i></p> <p>In the BCPNP Program, the government can already expedite the processing of a case with a green sticker designator on the envelope, in order to give a certificate which provides express entry. This could also be made possible with the provision of a green sticker to <i>fast track</i> abused women to receive a certificate for them to proceed with securing an application.</p> <p><i>(6) Expand, expedite, and improve access to temporary work permits</i>, which are especially problematic for non-status women.</p> <p><i>(7) Facilitate eligibility widening for temporary work permits to be more inclusive.</i></p> <p><i>(8) Establish a “Multi-Stakeholder Advisor Group for Better Immigrant Employment Outcomes”</i></p> <p><i>(9) Address the “accreditation issue”</i></p> <p>Training in professions and labour in another country should be assessed carefully for equivalencies.</p>
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	<p><i>Recommendations 6, 7, 8, and 9 above were identified and developed by the AC, and were prioritized as the first key considerations for the immigration, refugee, and settlement sector which was <u>labour and employment for IRW leaving violence and abuse.</u></i></p> <p>(10) Review of sponsorship laws and processes in cases when a woman is being abused by her sponsor.</p> <p>There is still an evident need to increase awareness for both women and service providers of a woman’s rights and legal processes when there is sponsorship breakdown due to an abusive sponsor.</p>
<p>Special Senate Recommendations: Federal Jurisdiction and Procedure</p>	<p>The additional recommendations listed below pertain to federal jurisdiction and procedure. These recommendations were derived from <i>The Tilson Senate Committee 2015 Report on Citizenship and Immigration</i>:</p> <p>(1) The Tilson Senate Committee 2015 Report on Citizenship and Immigration recommends that the Government of Canada expand pre-arrival orientation to ensure sponsored spouses receive information in a language they understand and to ensure that the topics covered include gender equality, women’s rights, their legal rights, what constitutes abuse in Canada and how to seek help. This information should be included in Citizenship and Immigration Canada publications, such as <i>Discover Canada</i>.</p> <p>(2) The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada amend the <i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations</i>, section 72.1(6) to include forced marriage as a ground for exception from the condition on permanent resident (PR) status.</p> <p>(3) The Committee recommends that the CIC designated help-line for victims of domestic violence be assessed to ensure that victims have timely and efficient assistance in their usual language.</p>

<p>Discrimination</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination and gender bias in policies and practice; • Provision of training and hiring; and • Labour and employment. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Address challenges related to immigration applications and processing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) “Fast track” women with experiences of abuse for their own protection and those of their children. b) IRCC to develop protocol to offer legal information about navigating the immigration legal system <p>(2) Improve the expedition of temporary work permits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Temporary work permits should be expedited to provide the immigrant woman some financial independence, and b) IRCC provide work permits instead of extending a visitor’s visa to people applying for PR status. <p>(3) Allow non-status women leaving a violent and abusive spouses to work in Canada without a work permit.</p> <p>Temporary Work Permits are administered and regulated by the Ministry of IRCC and Employment and Social Development Canada. The <i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)</i> states that a non-resident can only work under a temporary work permit. Ardanaz (2017) recommends that Sec. 186 of the IRPA regulations allow for a non-status woman leaving a violent and abusive spouse to work in Canada without a work permit.</p> <p>(4) Address and minimize gender bias in immigration processes at the federal level.</p> <p>Gender bias even affects one’s eligibility to immigrate. There remain concerns about the fact that a number of immigration</p>
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	<p>criteria and rules make it easier for men than for women to immigrate to Canada as independent immigrants.</p> <p>(5) Complete a gendered analysis of the <i>Balanced Refugee Reform Act (Bill C-11)</i> and the <i>Protection of Canada’s Immigration System Act (Bill C-31)</i>.</p> <p><i>Bill C-11</i> and <i>Bill C-31</i> both came into force on December 15, 2012, the question is whether both have undergone a gendered analysis.</p> <p>(6) Conduct a gender and safety audit of all existing programs.</p> <p>One action suggested previously was to also conduct a gender and safety audit of all existing programs, legislation, guidelines and criteria to assess for gender bias that might make IRW and their children leaving violence and abuse more vulnerable.</p>
<p>Collaboration, Connection, Coordination, and Communication</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination of responses for services and benefits. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) As noted in the overall recommendations, there should be coordination of IRCC with other federal and provincial government agencies/ministries to ensure that women and their children leaving violence and abuse have access to services, such as essential health and dental care and subsidized child care while engaged in and awaiting the result of an H&C application.</p> <p>In that regard, one recommendation is for temporary resident stakeholders to be allowed access to child subsidies under the <i>Child Care Subsidy Act</i>, in order to support a woman facing the loss of her status (Ardanaz 2017).</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Legal and Procedural</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onus of burden of proof for IRW; • Legal; • Procedural; and • Policy challenges. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Reduce barriers to collaboration that exist between government departments and jurisdictions, as well as between the public and private sector.</p> <p>(2) Strengthen Family Class immigration by reducing processing times for immigration and family sponsorship.</p> <p>(3) Reduce the number of persons living in legal “limbo” by making PR status automatic upon recognition as a Convention refugee. Note, however, that the Protected Person Status is a permanent, legal status. Give immigration authorities the ability to revoke that status in cases of genuine identity, security, criminality, or other concerns.</p> <p>(4) Immigrant serving agencies should be given multi-year, stable funding, as well as more flexibility in programming. Interpretation services for health care providers, legal services, schools, social services, and other areas of need should be professional and funded by key stakeholders.</p> <p>(5) Build the capacity of educators to meet the language and other needs of immigrant children and youth.</p> <p>(6) Address issues related to burden of proof that act as a barrier for IRW leaving violence and abuse.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A related issue has been that the burden of proof for establishing abuse in order to qualify for an exception is upon the woman, which may present a barrier to her applying for an exception.
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	<p><i>(7) Address the burden of proof issues for establishing abuse.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, one recommendation is to shift responsibility for issues related to burden of proof from IRW to IRCC and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) for establishing abuse in order to qualify for an exemption in cases of sponsorship. <p><i>(8) Immigration counsel availability should be expanded beyond duty counsel.</i></p> <p><i>(9) Advocate for more legal aid services for IRW.</i></p> <p>For example, the Rise Centre in Vancouver, BC is a potential helpful service in that regard.</p> <p><i>Recommendations 7, 8, and 9 above were identified and developed by the AC, and were prioritized as the third key considerations for the immigration, refugee, and settlement sector which were <u>legal structures, procedures, and systems.</u></i></p>
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6.3) Housing Sector Potential Barriers/Intersecting Recommendations

Potential Barrier	Needed Change and Recommendations
<p>Access to and Knowledge of Existing and Available Housing</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of information and knowledge about available housing; and • Lack of supports for navigating housing systems. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <p><i>(1) Create and disseminate clear message about housing availability and access.</i></p> <p>Provide accessible information in multiple languages about what market and social housing is available and how to access it.</p>

	<p>Use a variety of methods of information sharing, including through community newspapers, brochures, DVD's, posters on transit, ethnic TV and radio programs in multiple languages and information sessions at language classes.</p> <p>There is need for a marketing campaign for transition houses where the assumptions and perceptions about transition houses are clarified by providing information such as, what they look like inside, who is eligible and what happens when you get there. Having this information widely available would help to increase awareness of transition house's as well as challenge existing assumptions about them and hopefully increase IRW's comfort in accessing them. A Public Awareness Campaign, <i>You are not alone</i>, has been created and launched in response to the Phase I research findings.</p>
<p>Supports for Obtaining Housing</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited supports for IRW to obtain housing; and • Limited cross-sectoral collaboration, connection, coordination, and communication. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Provide assistance for women to help them navigate Canadian systems and find affordable housing.</p> <p>There is a need for outreach and accompaniment is significant for IRW experiencing abuse. Given the isolation and language and cultural barriers IRW face, coupled with their lack of information about local systems and services, the importance of outreach in women's ability to access support and secure housing cannot be understated.</p> <p>It is crucial to provide assistance that is holistic and ongoing what would provide IRW with a continuum of care even once they have left the abuser and secured housing. This would include, but not be limited to, access to ongoing support, particularly counseling to begin to cope with the impacts of abuse.</p>

	<p>It is imperative to provide assistance (e.g. knowledge mobilization, multilingual information, access to translators, outreach) to IRW to help them navigate Canadian systems, as well as find and secure affordable housing.</p> <p>Part of the necessary support for IRW is to forge relationships and foster collaboration cross-sectorally to support IRW/mothers and their children in obtaining short- and long-term housing.</p> <p><i>(2) Forge relationships and foster collaboration cross-sectorally to support IRW and their children in obtaining short- and long-term housing.</i></p>
<p>Federal and Provincial Jurisdiction and Procedure</p>	<p><i>Potential Barriers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal and provincial housing policies which disadvantage IRW; and • Housing budgets which affect IRW’s ability to secure needed housing. <p><i>Recommendations:</i></p> <p><i>(1) Implementation and on-going review of the National Housing Strategy to improve affordability and availability of housing nation-wide, as well as making housing more accessible to vulnerable groups such as immigrant, refugee, and non-status women leaving violence and abuse.</i></p> <p>The National Housing Strategy has been developed, and the parties involved emphasized the need for a focus on supporting vulnerable populations, including IRW. It is important, however, to ensure the continuing review of this strategy to ensure that it reflects the unique needs to IRW, and their children, especially within the context of leaving violent and abusive relationships.</p> <p>Following the release of the NHS in November 2017, it is apparent that systematic review and subsequent reforms to the strategy are necessary to address recent critiques and</p>

	<p>concerns raised regarding the limited support for rental market and non-profit housing offered in the strategy.</p> <p>Affordability-focused policy reform is needed during the subsequent development and implementation of BC's provincial housing strategy.</p> <p>To improve affordability and availability of housing, it is important for the City of Vancouver's to develop and implement their own housing plan to address the challenges that are more pronounced in the Greater Vancouver Area, such as high cost of rentals and insufficient rental availability.</p> <p><i>(2) Review of BC Housing Policies.</i></p> <p>As identified in the Building Supports Phase I Final Report (2015) and remains relevant to-date, until more affordable housing is built, amend current housing regulations and allow flexibility in policies so that they better reflect the realities of IRW leaving violence and abuse.</p> <p>Given there is a dearth of larger units that can accommodate large families, there is an apparent need to address CMHC National Occupancy Standards and allow flexibility about the number of children who can stay in a room, thus enabling larger families to access housing (see the Phase I Report).</p> <p>Additional points for review of BC Housing policies should include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) improve the accessibility of BC Housing's website and online application process (e.g., language, ease of access);(2) examine the housing registry process to ensure it meets the unique needs of IRW and their children; and(3) ensure housing access and eligibility for non- and precarious status women (e.g., during/after the breakdown of a sponsorship arrangement).
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	<p>(3) Improve housing budgets for immigrants and refugees at the policy-level, which can be accomplished through increased funding overall and more specific funding allocation within existing housing budgets for vulnerable populations, including immigrants and refugees.⁷⁶</p> <p>At a policy/government level, it is key to prioritize recognizing the number of refugees and immigrants entering Canada within provincial and federal housing budgets.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Discrimination</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination in access to housing for IRW; • Limited access to appropriate and secure housing; • Racism as it affects access to market and non-profit housing for IRW; • Treatment of tenants; and • Bias in the rental market. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) There is limited access to both secure and appropriate housing for IRW generally, let alone in the context of leaving violence and abuse. This can be addressed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Placing emphasis on both accessible and appropriate housing in the development of policy and funding structures; b) Building more affordable housing and improve access to safe, adequate, and stable housing for IRW/mothers and their children; and c) Improving and increasing accessibility in the public housing sector to reduce health risks related to poor housing.

⁷⁶ Of note, the BC NDP’s 2018 budget includes funding for housing for populations who are at an increased risk of homelessness, including women and children leaving violence and abuse. As Robinson (2018) explained, “included in the budget was about \$565 million for new units of housing and homes for those facing homelessness and for women and children feeling domestic abuse. The spending on housing for women and children was touted by the government as the first significant investment of its kind in the last two decades” (para. 5). For more information see: <http://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/b-c-budget-2018-1-6-billion-allocated-for-housing-but-no-rebate-for-renters>.

	<p>(2) Focus on <i>appropriate</i> housing.</p> <p>In addition to making housing more accessible for IRW and children leaving violence and abuse, an emphasis on <i>appropriate</i> housing for these populations is key.</p> <p>Appropriate housing comes in many forms, but ensuring the, at minimum, housing meets <i>core needs</i> and safety standards, provides sufficient space for a mother and her children, and is in line with culturally safe housing models would improve IRW’s experiences with obtaining and retaining appropriate housing.</p> <p>(3) Increase awareness of racism and discrimination and its impacts on access to housing to improve IRW’s equitable access to housing and thus improve health outcomes.</p> <p>Increase awareness of racism and discrimination and its impacts on access to housing for IRW/mothers and their children.⁷⁷</p> <p>Improve tenants’ rights and protections, as well as accessibility of such knowledge for immigrant and refugee populations.</p> <p>This can be accomplished through initiatives such as increasing awareness of existing rights and protections within provincial tenancy agreements, improving enforcement powers within the Residential Tenancy Board, and determining what needs to be changed within the Residential Tenancy Agreement to appropriately address discrimination against vulnerable populations such as IRW and their children (e.g., removing the fixed term tenancy loophole⁷⁸).⁷⁹</p>
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⁷⁷ The recently authorized reestablishment of the BC Human Rights Commission should assist in that regard.

⁷⁸ British Columbia’s *Residential Tenancy Act* (RTA) was revised in late 2017 to address the fixed term tenancy loophole and vacate clauses. Effective December 11, 2017, the RTA now reads “... a tenancy agreement may only include a requirement that the tenant vacate the rental unit at the end of a fixed term if: the tenancy agreement is a sublease agreement; or the tenancy is a fixed term tenancy in circumstances prescribed in section 13.1 of the Residential Tenancy Regulation.” While the fixed term tenancy loophole has not been fully removed from the RTA, the revisions limit the ambiguity within this legislative framework. For more information see: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/ending-a-tenancy/tenant-notice>

⁷⁹ More enforcement powers were granted to the Residential Tenancy Board in the last provincial budget, which will allow for the continued review and enforcement of the *Residential Tenancy Act* provincially.

	<p><i>(4) Improve tenants’ rights and protections, as well as accessibility of such knowledge for immigrant and refugee populations.</i></p> <p>Create guidelines for immigrant and refugee specific protections, concerns, and issues within policies and practices governing tenants’ rights.</p> <p>Improve awareness of, and dissemination of information about, the available guidelines. For example, there are BC-specific housing and tenants’ resources available in many different languages for newcomers (links provided in footnote below).⁸⁰</p> <p><i>(5) Provide cultural competency training and education about the dynamics and impacts of abuse to housing managers, landlords and other service providers supporting IRW.</i></p> <p>It is apparent that there is a need for both cultural safety training and education about the dynamics and impacts of abuse for housing managers, landlords and other service providers supporting IRW.</p> <p>Providing housing managers with more and accurate information would help to reduce their fears and concerns about renting to women leaving violence and abuse and hopefully encourage them to find a way to balance their concerns about community safety and offering IRW leaving violence and abuse safe affordable housing.</p> <p><i>(6) Advocates are needed to support IRW in navigating housing systems, dealing with issues that arise within the</i></p>
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⁸⁰ Housing for Newcomers by CMHC (available in 8 languages): <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/newcomers/en/index.html>

Housing for Newcomers to Canada by Service Canada: <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/audiences/newcomers/housing.shtml>

Tenant Handbook by BC Housing (available in English, Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Punjabi, and Tagalong): <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/tenants-programs-resources/information-for-tenants>

housing systems, and locating and securing both short- and long-term housing.

- a) Increased funding and support are needed for existing advocates and the hiring of additional advocates.
- b) The assistance of housing advocates for IRW is necessary to provide these women with information on available housing, obtaining housing, and managing issues that arise. For example, a key stakeholder emphasized that housing advocates are needed when issues arise between IRW and their landlords, so that they know where to take issues to get them resolved without repercussions (e.g., Landlord BC) and have support while going through this process (e.g., language, system knowledge).

(7) Shift approach for supporting IRW on the rental market through supporting housing memberships (e.g., buy-in shares/co-op models for IRW leaving violence and abuse), developing strategies that are appropriate for each location (e.g., urban versus rural), and increasing and improving home ownership programs (e.g., availability, eligibility, cost, shared equity models of home ownership).

(8) Review and reform existing laws and policies governing the rental market to ensure that the needs of vulnerable populations, such as IRW, are considered and included.

This would include a review of the Residential Tenancy Board and agreement and Landlord BC, as well as advocating for reform of the existing *Tenancy Act*.

(9) Prioritizing education of landlords and housing managers regarding the unique needs and circumstances of vulnerable populations, as well as rights-based education and awareness raising within immigrant and refugee communities, such as the need to make exceptions for IRW's references on rental applications, supporting programs like BC's *Ready to Rent* program (i.e., a certificate program that acts in the place of a reference) through making Landlord BC

	<p>education-focused, and making Landlord BC more education-focused.</p>
<p>Housing-Specific Challenges</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited priority of housing for IRW. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Research and develop culturally safe Housing First models locally, provincially, and nationally.</p> <p>Housing is generally agreed to be the primary factor in determining successful settlement and upward mobility in Canadian society. Consistent with <i>Housing First models</i>, making housing a top priority pre- and post-migration will improve settlement success. A culturally safe <i>Housing First</i> model could also provide a strong basis for the development of the National Housing Strategy.</p> <p>Examine existing research to understand how Housing First models could be adapted to meet and be implemented in a culturally safe manner that addresses the housing needs of IRW, as well as conduct any necessary further future research on the appropriate design and implementation of culturally safe Housing First models.</p> <p>Once understood, make the appropriate adjustments to Federal Housing Partnering Strategy (HPS) program to ensure that the needs of IRW leaving violence and abuse are being met.</p> <p>Create affordable housing supply across the housing continuum to ensure an adequate supply for meeting the needs of IRW leaving violence and abuse.</p>
<p>Institutional-level Considerations</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional and systemic

	<p>Recommendations: (1) Address the institutional and systemic barriers to housing for IRW, which subsequently also impact experiences in settlement and health sectors.</p> <p>This can be accomplished through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that housing supports, services, and programming is culturally safe, informed, and appropriate; • Raising awareness about the supports and services available to IRW leaving violence and abuse, such as is being done through the Phase II Building Supports Project Awareness Campaign entitled <i>You are not alone</i>; • Providing cultural safety training to housing managers and landlords at the operational level, as well as to government administrators at the institutional level; • Implementation and enforcement of policies to eliminate institutional racism that creates barriers to housing access for immigrants and refugees; • Providing cultural safety training to housing managers and landlords; and • Providing training on the dynamics and impacts of violence, especially within immigrant and refugee communities, to housing managers and landlords.
<p style="text-align: center;">Development</p>	<p>Potential Barriers: Challenges of current short- and long-term housing models.</p> <p>Recommendations: (1) Support short-term, crisis, and transitional housing, and place emphasis on IRW’s ability to connect with and retain long-term housing.</p> <p>There is a demonstrated disconnect between short- and long-term housing, which is contributing to experiences of relative/hidden and absolute homelessness among IRW leaving violence and abuse.</p>

	<p>Collaboration and coordination between crisis, transitional, and long-term housing is needed, as well as systematic and financial support for such collaboration.</p>
<p>Highlighting Key Considerations: Supply, Accessibility, and Availability of Housing</p>	<p>There are three key challenges to the provision of affordable housing in BC.</p> <p>(1) Supply is the first and most important challenge. Securing affordable housing for use is the biggest issue and can be remedied through the development of more affordable rentals for low- and middle-income individuals and those with distinct needs, such as IRWs.</p> <p>During the Phase III AC meeting, the key stakeholders also prioritized supply and availability of housing. Their recommendations were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Shift the priority system for housing allocation to needs-based; and b) Specify which sections/blocks of new housing goes to which populations (e.g., IRW). <p>(2) The second major issue is the one of <i>affordability</i>.</p> <p>It is first necessary to have the set-up of a funding framework within the province that is flexible enough to incorporate IRW's needs. Further, it is important to have better communication among services.</p> <p>This can be accomplished thorough focusing on what can be done internally within their own agencies to support IRW leaving violence and abuse to obtain stable short- and long-term housing. In this regard, it is also imperative for funding frameworks to be more flexible to account for the unique needs of vulnerable populations, such as IRW leaving violence and abuse.</p> <p>The needs of vulnerable populations must be a focus in the review and reform of all provincial tenancy laws. For example, during the upcoming review of provincial tenancy</p>

laws led by the Rental Housing Task Force under BC's NDP government, the unique needs and realities of IRW and their children must be considered and addressed through the stakeholder consultations and subsequent affordability-based recommendations and reforms.

Recommendation 2 above was identified by the housing key informant during an in-person interview and further developed by the AC, and was prioritized by the AC as the first key consideration for the housing sector which was affordability.

Housing partnerships can be forged with health as well through working with their community-based services, such as for child mental health, child protection services, and the corrections system. It is also essential for housing to partner with community services more generally.

(3) A third key issue is the one of *integration and collaboration*.

Housing partnerships can be forged with health as well through working with their community-based services, such as for child mental health, child protection services, and the corrections system. It is also essential for housing to partner with community services more generally.

(4) *Build more affordable housing and improve access to safe, adequate, and stable housing for IRW and children.*

(5) *Secure affordable housing through the development of more affordable rentals for low- and middle-income individuals and those with distinct needs including, but not limited to, IRW.*

Recommendations 3, 4, and 5 above were identified and developed by the AC, and were prioritized as the second key considerations for the housing sector which were supply and availability.

	<p>(6) Place emphasis on both accessible and appropriate housing in the development of policy and funding structures.</p> <p><i>Recommendation 6 above was identified and developed by the AC, and were prioritized as the first key consideration for the housing sector which was <u>accessibility</u>.</i></p>
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6.4) Health Sector Potential Barriers/Intersecting Recommendations

Areas of Focus	Potential Barriers and Recommendations
<p>Federal and Provincial Government</p>	<p>Potential Barriers: Current challenging policies, programs, and budgets.</p> <p>Recommendations: (1) Increase health budgets to reflect the health needs of immigrants and refugees in Canada.</p> <p>It is important to recognize at a policy/government level the number of refugees and immigrants entering Canada and coupling this with increases in health budgets specifically aimed at assisting these populations.</p> <p>(2) Increase health budgets to reflect the health needs of IRW and children in Canada.</p> <p>(3) Prioritize policy development to reduce racism and promote cultural safety.</p> <p><i>Recommendation 2 and 3 above were identified and developed by the AC, and was prioritized as the third key consideration for the health sector which were <u>government, policy, and funding structures</u>.</i></p>
<p>Discrimination</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination; • Institutional racism; • Language barriers; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of medical coverage and/or access to emergency care. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Prioritize policy development and implementation to reduce racism and promote cultural safety.</p> <p>Develop, implement and enforce policies to eliminate institutional racism across the sectors (e.g., housing, income, health, justice, immigration).</p> <p>(2) Implement and enforce policies to eliminate institutional racism.</p> <p>For example, shift the burden to communicate in English off of the patient and onto the system to provide translation.</p> <p>(3) Prioritize the translation of relevant information and improve health literacy and accessible information by providing information about health services, how to access them and health rights in different mediums (i.e., video, audio, written).</p> <p>This includes prioritizing translation and multilingual access within the health sector, such as awareness of existing multi-language supports, support for translation for additional languages, and funding for more translators on units. For example, BC Women’s Hospital has built translation for the top five languages (i.e., Chinese, Cantonese, Punjabi, Korean, and Tagalog) into future budgets.</p> <p>(4) Create and promote awareness of multilingual information and resources related to status and immigration-related concerns, including health care.</p> <p>Emphasize the importance of the BC government working with IRCC officials to ensure that linguistically-specific information materials for immigrant, refugee, and non-status women entering BC strongly advise that they not allow a temporary permit to expire, that if it expires they renew it</p>
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	<p>without delay, and the consequences – including for health care coverage – of being without legal status.</p> <p>(5) Collaboration between BC health ministries, health authorities, hospitals, clinics, health care professionals, universities, and the Provincial Language Service to ensure that regardless of where a non-English-speaking patient in BC seeks health care services, she will be provided with appropriate interpretation services in a timely fashion.</p> <p>(6) The Provincial Health Authority continues to dedicate resources to interpretation services (Ardanaz, 2017, 1.2.2).⁸¹</p> <p>(7) Increase access to health services.</p> <p>This can be achieved through the provision of emergency and essential health care services in BC to IRW without medical coverage, regardless of their immigration status. For instance, the establishment clinics and other strategies across BC to provide accessible health care services to non- status women and their children.⁸²</p> <p>(8) Ministries overseeing health programs should enact policies of transparency with regard to discretionary approvals for services (Ardanaz, 2017, p. 7).</p> <p>(9) Expedite H&C applications for non-status women experiencing abuse and engaged in the H&C process. Also, ensure these IRW have access to essential and emergency health and dental care.</p> <p>(10) Develop culturally safe health services and policies across the health authorities to create a culture of safety and encourage women to reach out for health services.</p> <p>This would include better equipping front line workers to respond to and support IRW. A collaboration between PODV and the BC health ministries and health authorities to develop</p>
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⁸¹ See Promising Practices above (p. 139) regarding interpretation in GP offices across BC.

⁸² See Promising Practice above (p. 139) regarding the Newcomer and New Beginnings Clinics through BC Women’s Hospital.

and train health care providers on culturally safe health services and the unique needs of immigrant, refugee and non-status women experiencing violence is recommended.

(11) Increase public and health provider awareness of racism and discrimination and its impacts on access to health services and health outcomes to improve immigrant, refugee and non-status women's equitable access to health care.

(12) Increase and support cultural safety training within the health sector.

For example, as highlighted by a key stakeholder during the Phase III AC workshop, BC Women's Hospital in partnership with BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services and BC Children's Hospital, developed the Culturally Connected tool, available at culturallyconnected.ca. This cultural competency tool is situated within a cultural humility framework, and focuses on ways to improve communication and raise awareness for health sector staff about unique considerations for immigrant and refugee populations.

(13) Prioritize the translation of relevant information to improve health literacy and access to information.

(14) Create and promote awareness of multilingual information and resources related to status and immigration-related concerns including health care.

Recommendations 13 and 14 above were identified and developed by the AC, and were prioritized as the second key considerations for the health sector which was discrimination.

(15) Develop culturally safe health services and policies across the health authorities to create a culture of safety and encourage women to reach out to health services.

Recommendation 15 above was identified and developed by the AC, and was prioritized as the third key consideration for

	<p><i>the health sector which was <u>the lack of culturally safe supports and services.</u></i></p>
<p>Practice and Procedure</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of culturally safe supports and services; and • Lack of violence- and trauma-informed practices. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p><i>(1) Prioritize the development of violence- and trauma-informed health services and policies.</i></p> <p>Godard and Joseski et al. (in press, 2017) suggest moving towards a relational understanding of women’s health and support needs, such as with a violence- and trauma- informed approach.</p> <p>Culturally safe and violence- and trauma- informed approaches can foster trust and safety within the health care context and thus increase conversations that enable women to discuss their safety and health concerns with health care providers. As will the focus on empowerment of women by offering her options and requiring consent prior taking any action.</p>
<p>Collaboration, Connection, Coordination, and Communication</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination between IRW servicing agencies, government, and other sectors. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>Collaboration can be particularly useful to provide feedback on policy development cross-sectorally.</p> <p><i>(1) Promote and support coordination and collaboration to provide essential health care to non-status women.</i></p> <p>It is recommended that IRCC coordinate with other federal departments and the BC Government to ensure that non-status women and their children have access to services such</p>

	<p>as essential health and dental care and subsidized child care while engaged in and awaiting the result of an H&C application.</p> <p>It is also recommended that IRCC, the police, provincial justice ministries, provincial health ministries, Regional Health Authorities, and hospitals work together to ensure that non-status women experiencing abuse, who access health care, are not placed at risk of deportation (The Safety of Immigrant, Refugee, & Non-status Women Project, 2012).</p> <p>(2) Collaboration to improve health outcomes.</p> <p>Collaboration among health ministries, the police, provincial justice ministries, IRCC, housing ministries, and income and employment ministries to address systemic barriers and biases in sectors external to the health field in order to improve health outcomes is recommended (The Safety of Immigrant, Refugee, & Non-status Women Project, 2012).</p>
<p>Development</p>	<p>Potential Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current framework for understanding “health;” and • The need for a rights-based health framework for IRW. <p>Recommendations:</p> <p>(1) Physical health, while of great importance, must not be the sole focus when addressing IRW’s health needs.</p> <p>Access to appropriate mental health services is an important element of the healthcare provided to IRW, as practitioners, women with lived experience, and the literature all highlight the mental stressors (e.g., migration, acculturation, abuse) and negative health outcomes linked to them.</p> <p>During the Phase III AC meeting, a key stakeholder emphasized the importance of making mental health services accessible to IRW through improvement of the services and supports available, as well as increasing awareness among</p>

	<p>IRW of what mental health supports are available and how to access them.</p> <p><i>(2) Shift policies and practices to reflect IRW's health concerns as rights-based.</i></p> <p>Through an interview with a key informant, the issue of understanding health as an issue of human rights and/or <i>Charter</i> rights emerged.</p> <p>It is important to apply a human rights and/or <i>Charter of Rights</i> perspective to make the argument for why an enhanced and increased response is needed to the violence against women issue, especially for example, when there may be discrimination against specific populations of women.</p> <p><i>(3) In-line with a rights-based framework, more funding and support is needed for health advocates for IRW</i> to improve their ability to navigate systems and obtain safe, secure, and appropriate physical and mental health services.</p>
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Section 7) Synopsis and Discussion: What does policy have to do with it?

Synopsis Backdrop

Prior to and upon arrival in Canada, immigrant and refugee women (IRW) and their children face complex and often intersecting systems that impact their experiences with safety, security, and well-being, as well as settlement and integration overall (see Figure 1 on p. 47). Of these, (1) immigration, refugee, and settlement, (2) housing, and (3) health sectors have great potential to collaboratively facilitate safety and security for IRW and can offer discrimination-free supports and services that enable successful settlement and integration into Canadian society. Accordingly, Phase III of the Building Supports Project research (i.e., the Policy Component) examined provincial (i.e., British Columbia) and select federal policy solutions that can be created to reduce or eliminate the barriers that exist for IRW in *accessing safe, secure, affordable, and appropriate short- and long-term housing*.

This Report on the Policy Component began with an examination of the immigration, refugee, and settlement policies, as the policy landscape within this sector often dictates access to housing for IRW due to issues such as legal status, incoming immigration class, and sponsorship requirements. This sector is closely connected to the other two key sectors examined in this policy analysis (i.e., housing and health), which is most clearly seen in how the immigration, refugee, and settlement policies and processes differentially impact benefits and social supports provided to these women. The immigration, refugee, and settlement sector characteristics establish the backdrop for this research as a necessary component for suggesting changes to policies and practices aimed to assist IRW to achieve safety and wellbeing. The recommendations included, but were not limited to, facilitation of community integration, improvements to provincial and select federal regulations and procedures, development of coordinated responses for services and benefits, addressing gender discrimination and other discriminatory practices, and legal and procedural considerations.

The housing sector and related policy analysis, which was the primary lens through which this examination occurred, demonstrated how accessing secure and appropriate housing

can be a vastly different experience for IRW than for their Canadian born counterparts. While closely linked to immigration, refugee, and settlement experiences, IRW and their children's access to safe, secure, affordable, and appropriate housing is adversely impacted by their unique vulnerabilities, social positioning, and barriers they face within Canadian society (e.g., language, legal status, knowledge of Canadian laws and systems, poverty, un/underemployment). Resulting from this analysis, key recommendations were made that would aid in enabling IRW's access to safe and secure housing, such as facilitating access to and knowledge of available housing, providing support for obtaining housing, considerations for provincial and select federal regulations and procedures, addressing experiences related to racism and discrimination, and housing-specific challenges (e.g., supply, accessibility, availability).

Intersecting with the immigration, refugee, and settlement and housing sector analyses, this report provided an analysis of IRW's experiences with the health sector and impactful policies therein. This analysis demonstrated the barriers in health policy and practice that hinder the safety and well-being of IRW and children, as well as how these barriers are intricately interlinked with migration and settlement experiences (e.g., access to the Canadian healthcare system) and access to housing (e.g., social determinants of housing and health, health impacts of insecure or inadequate housing). Accordingly, policy recommendations were made to facilitate the health and well-being of IRW through changes to policy and practice within the health sector, such as increased access to health services and addressing language barriers, which can be achieved through collaborative efforts with other intersecting sectors, such as immigration, refugee, and settlement and housing.

Discussion

The result of the Policy Component analysis is a policy matrix/frame within which to identify the barriers and challenges for IRW and their children leaving violence and abuse. In addition to solutions for obtaining safe and secure housing, the intention was to provide overall and sector-based recommendations for policy and practice-based solutions to ensure that IRW

can safely leave violent and abusive relationships without increasing risks to their own and their children's safety and well-being.

The report uses a rights-based approach stemming from the overarching policy values set out in the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and British Columbia's *Violence against Women in Relationships* (VAWIR) policy. This policy analysis demonstrates how securing safe and affordable short- and long-term housing for the IRWs can help achieve the policy intents of both those documents, that is, equality in practice and the safety and wellbeing of the IRW. In this report, the safety and well-being of the women and their children is considered primarily through a housing lens. However, by also considering other sectors' impacts, such as immigration, refugee, and settlement, health, and, indirectly, justice, the research team found not only that many of the same challenges and factors, both positive and negative, can affect all of these sectors, but also that these sectors can impact one another's policies and thus procedures.

Negative factors, for example, such as but not limited to discrimination, poverty, power imbalances, or lack of community support, can result in barriers for IRW and their children cross-sectorally. The barrier of discrimination alone is quite complex, as it breaks down into bias against people on the grounds of gender, race, ethnicity, class, culture, and/or disability, to name a few, within all the sectors, not just housing. Further breakdown demonstrates how IRW's ability to access justice, health services, and employment are negatively impacted in large part by language barriers and a lack of awareness of available services and supports. All of these factors can be interactive, suggesting that the sectors and systems need to be holistically considered in the development of solutions for IRW leaving violence and abuse.

Unfortunately, what emerged from the research team's examination was that these sectors often operate in silos. At times, the siloed nature of the systems works counter-productively, as can be seen in the case of IRW seeking safe and secure housing but who are limited in their search because of status restrictions. Legal status alone has many complicated layers which can impact all the other sectors examined, and subsequently the safety, security,

and well-being of these women such as fears related to reporting experiences of violence of possible deportation, and loss of their children, as shared by IRW research participants.

The importance of creating positive change through the development and implementation of policies and practices aimed at facilitating safety, security, and access to resources for IRW and children is highlighted throughout this report. Rights-based, collaborative solutions are key in enabling these sectors to positively and productively assist IRW who are experiencing the kinds of challenges and barriers identified by the research team. For example, the Building Supports Project developed a very successful campaign entitled *You are Not Alone* to raise awareness about transition houses and how to access them for IRW. The *You are Not Alone* campaign has high visibility (e.g., ads in buses, bus shelters, and women's washrooms and on television and radio) and provides IRW with information about transition houses and available supports to increase access to safe, secure housing when leaving violence and abuse.

This campaign is multilingual and raises awareness about transition houses in 10 different languages, thereby addressing several of the major barriers IRW face when securing access to safe housing. Given the realities and impacts of other sectors, as well as similar issues of lack of awareness and accessible information, similar campaigns could occur for IRW leaving violence and abuse to make them aware of their rights to safety and well-being, specifically in the health sector; their legal rights in the justice and immigration systems, specifically how immigration, criminal, and family law work in their cases; and their rights in employment and labour, specifically in how they can gain educational/vocational training and employment.

Final Thoughts

Many of the same mechanisms, strategies, and programs derived from policy mandates can provide solutions to the sector barriers identified in this report. While the housing lens was the predominant perspective for the Policy Component analysis, each of the other sectors examined were situated and presented relative to that lens. It was only after more fully appreciating the interlinkages among these sectors through the analysis that their interactive

natures became more evident. These links were made clear to the research team by the IRW participants, Advisory Committee members, and key stakeholders, including members of British Columbia's Inter-Ministerial Committee on Domestic Violence.

This policy analysis stresses the importance of creating change through the development and implementation of rights-based policies, as well as the subsequent practices derived from the policies. For example, if an IRW experiences violence and abuse, that in and of itself understandably affects her and her children's health, as well as affects her ability to secure employment and to secure, safe and affordable housing. To then additionally compound the proximal effects of the abuse with other linking and intersecting factors, such as poverty, disability, language, race, ethnicity, and gender, can seriously impact IRW and their children's other rights-based access issues.

Discrimination emerged from this analysis as a major barrier throughout all of the sectors examined, but of course its effect on the primary focus and lens of securing safe and affordable housing for IRW can be crippling. There is a real need to have discrimination-free procedures and supports available for IRW and their children who are seeking safe and secure housing. Whether it is bias on the housing markets (e.g., landlord behaviour, informal no child policies), or access and eligibility to supports such as health services, legal aid, and employment, IRW and their children are placed in multiple disadvantaged settings which do not serve them well with regard to the original policy values of equality and safety and well-being.

Advocacy can be brought to bear on all of these access challenges. This means, however, that governments also need to respond and take steps to reduce or eliminate barriers and resolve procedures which may conflict with other sectors' procedures for IRW's safety, security, and well-being. In order for governments to be accountable to the overarching policies and policy intents already mentioned, revision and reform are needed, such as reducing wait times for health and financial benefits, expediting citizenship applications, increasing housing stock and affordable housing options, and making affordable (or ideally free) interim health services available for newcomers and non-status women. Community and non-profits, as well

as funded agencies, working with these women similarly need to examine and create their own policies and procedures which need to be consistent with the overarching policy intents and values that promote safety, security, and well-being of IRW.

Policy development and change in the area should be at the forefront of social advocacy, sectoral change, and political agendas. Intersecting systems (e.g., immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, health, justice, child protection) and the policies therein (e.g., federal, provincial, sector, agency-based) largely dictate IRW and children's experiences in Canada, and these policies have the potential to facilitate or hinder safety, security, and well-being. The Policy Component analysis demonstrates the instrumental nature of policy in facilitating change, safety, and well-being; however, it also highlights the need for policies and practices that enable cross-sectoral collaboration, coordination, connection, and communication-based responses to address the needs of IRW and children. The importance for these kind of links and collaborative efforts was highlighted by participants whose voices are represented in each of the individual sector recommendations.

Finally, now that all three phases of the Building Supports Project have been completed, many key resources are available: (1) the Phase I Report securing information from service providers and women with lived experience about experiences of leaving violence and abuse while trying to secure safe, affordable short- and long-term housing; (2) the Phase II Promising Practices Guide and the Awareness Campaign (Phase IIB); and (3) this Phase III Report on the Policy Component, which identifies not only sector barriers, but also existing and additional recommended cross-sectoral solutions. Our hope is that the recommended rights-based and collaborative solutions can be operationalized into action plans to reduce the barriers experienced by IRW in order to achieve the policy value outcomes of safety and security of these women and their children leaving violence and abuse, specifically through their ability to secure safe and affordable short- and long-term housing.

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Appendices

Throughout the Phase III policy report, some policies, practices, and programs have been highlighted to draw attention to the existing initiatives and supports provided to vulnerable IRW generally and newcomers more specifically. The appendices section profiles additional policies and supports that also informed the research team's recommendations and impact IRW's experiences with immigration, refugee, and settlement, housing, and health.

But first, in Appendix 1, the questions asked of the key stakeholders are provided.

Appendix 1) Policy Component Phase III Questions for Key Stakeholders

I) General Information

1. What are the current policies/reports of relevance to the topic of immigrant and refugee women leaving violence and abuse being able to secure safe housing for themselves short- and long-term?
2. What do you see as challenges/gaps in the policies in your area for the obtaining of that goal?
3. How do the policies link to other relevant policies in the area, specifically housing policies?

II) How to Proceed

4. How could/should they link better – more collaboratively?
5. Where do we *start* to make the links stronger/more consistent/not siloed?
6. Specifically, what actions could be taken to not only “harmonize” the policies better, but to advance their development collaboratively?
7. What concrete steps would you recommend (e.g., special committees, policy briefs, awareness campaigns, video)?
8. What are we missing?

Appendix 2) Provincial Three Year Domestic Violence (DV) Plan Provincial Office on DV
The Provincial Office of Domestic Violence consultation process for determining action plans for 2014-2017 Immigrant and Refugee Response resulted in this analysis.⁸³

What We Do Now:

1. The Province provides settlement services to immigrant and refugee populations, which includes providing settlement information and referral to services for immigrant families;
2. VictimLink BC (1-800-563-0808) is a free, confidential, 24/7 helpline for victims of domestic violence that provides services in over 100 languages;
3. There are numerous victim service and violence against women programs across the province that specifically serve the needs of immigrant/refugee communities. Numerous resources for victims of crime, including families impacted by domestic violence, have been translated into multiple languages and are available online;
4. Corrections Branch programming related to Relationship Violence Prevention is tailored to multicultural communities in the lower mainland;
5. Multicultural Outreach Programs identify and connect women in crisis with support services they need by providing emotional support, information and referrals, and accompaniment and transportation to other necessary services; and
6. Mothers without legal status in Canada who are leaving abusive relationships, but unable to leave the country with their children, can access income assistance in BC.

What We Heard:

Consultations identified that the unique needs of immigrant and refugee populations require special attention. A need for increased cultural sensitivity was identified by many respondents. This included understanding unique barriers faced by individuals who may not have been living in Canada for a long period of time, and to identifying social, religious, or other factors that may prevent an individual from seeking help. Several factors were identified that may contribute to increased risk of abuse for mothers without legal status in Canada. These included reliance on their partner to obtain permanent resident status and to meet their basic needs, vulnerability of deportation, language barriers and cultural differences, and a lack of knowledge about their rights in Canada, lack of a support system, and fear and distrust of authority. Also identified was a need to co-operate with different communities, and the need to involve them in addressing domestic violence. Common to these responses was a need for the community to become engaged in preventing and addressing domestic violence. Providing

⁸³ The full report and analysis quoted here is available at: http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/public-safety-and-emergency-services/domestic-violence/podv/provincial_domestic_violence_plan.pdf

information in multiple languages was viewed as an effective way to remove barriers to accessing services and supports.

What We Will Do:

1. Work with federal counterparts and Citizenship and Immigration Canada to leverage federal investment in settlement community initiatives;
2. Develop and implement prevention materials with a focus on immigrant/settlement populations who are impacted by domestic violence;
3. Develop and implement domestic violence competency and safety planning tools and resources to support the settlement sector to provide culturally appropriate services to immigrant families who are impacted by domestic violence; and
4. Identify on-going support, training and resources for staff/agencies to strengthen and enhance community-capacity to provide culturally appropriate women's transition house/safe home program.

Appendix 3) Fraser Valley Study on RRTs and Syrian Refugees

In November 2016, the Fraser Valley Refugee Response Team (RRT-FV) organized a discussion on housing for refugees in the Fraser Valley. The Province of BC had created a BC Refugee Readiness Fund which was a one-time investment for the provision of resources and supports needed, primarily for incoming Syrian refugees. A community Refugee Response Plan was developed through community consultation. In the ensuing Housing Facilitated Discussion, there were four housing needs and challenges identified:

1. Access to Affordable Housing
2. Access to appropriate housing for large family units
3. Large proportion of income spent on housing
4. Discrimination/abuse by landlords.

To address these needs and challenges, seven recommended actions emerged:

1. Review policies for resettlement and income assistance.
2. Develop a long-term housing strategy for refugees
3. Identify opportunities for collaboration and/or investment
4. Develop resources for refugees.
5. Provide information/incentives for landlords.
6. Acknowledge landlords who support refugees
7. Develop resources for settlement and other community workers.

For further information on the study, please go to:

<http://fraservalleyrrt.ca/resources/publications/>

Appendix 4) Newcomer Women's Health Project

One example of a relevant cross-sectoral, intersectional program is the *Newcomer Women's Health Project*. On the website, it is stated, “[h]ealth is an important factor in the successful settlement and integration of newcomer immigrant women.” The following is taken directly from that website:

Newcomer Immigrant Women's Health Project: <http://www.bcwomens.ca/our-services/population-health-promotion/newcomer-women>

In 2013-14, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training contracted the BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, through a partnership with BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre, to gather evidence on the health needs and health care experiences of newcomer immigrant women in British Columbia and to develop an initiative to meet the health needs of newcomer immigrant women.

Evidence gathering: To document the health needs and health care experiences of newcomer immigrant women, we reviewed the academic and grey literature, conducted an environmental scan of current health services available to newcomer immigrant women in B.C., held consultations with health care providers and settlement agency staff, and held consultations with newcomer immigrant women in English, Mandarin, Farsi and Punjabi.

Findings: Taken together, the findings of these activities suggest that to maintain and promote the health of newcomer immigrant women in the context of their settlement process in B.C., women require social support networks among family, friends and community as well as access to appropriate formal health supports and care. Services need to be known, accessible, gender-sensitive, culturally responsive and safe.

Recommendations: Further research and continued program and policy enhancements in both the health and settlement sectors could improve the availability of services for immigrant women, increase newcomer immigrant women's knowledge of the health care system in BC, and contribute to maintaining and enhancing the health and settlement experiences of newcomer immigrant women throughout the province.

Appendix 5) Acts of Relevance/Specific Sections⁸⁴

1) Overarching :

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s 15, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c11. (Federal)

<https://www.canlii.org/en/ca/laws/stat/schedule-b-to-the-canada-act-1982-uk-1982-c-11/latest/schedule-b-to-the-canada-act-1982-uk-1982-c-11.ht>

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (adopted 18 December 1979, entered into force 3 September 1981) 1249 UNTS 13.

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw>

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (adopted 16 December 1966, entered into force 3 January 1976) 993 UNTS 3.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

BC Human Rights Code, RSBC 1996, c 210, s 10. (Provincial)

http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96210_01
Discrimination in tenancy premises:

10 (1) A person must not

(a) deny to a person or class of persons the right to occupy, as a tenant, space that is represented as being available for occupancy by a tenant, or

(b) discriminate against a person or class of persons regarding a term or condition of the tenancy of the space,

because of the race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age or lawful source of income of that person or class of persons, or of any other person or class of persons.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply in the following circumstances:

⁸⁴ Appendix 5) was edited, with additional materials added, and Appendix 6 was created, by **Priya Lehal**, a law student at Kings College, London.

(a) if the space is to be occupied by another person who is to share, with the person making the representation, the use of any sleeping, bathroom or cooking facilities in the space;

(b) as it relates to family status or age,

(i) if the space is a rental unit in residential premises in which every rental unit is reserved for rental to a person who has reached 55 years of age or to 2 or more persons, at least one of whom has reached 55 years of age, or

(ii) a rental unit in a prescribed class of residential premises;

(c) as it relates to physical or mental disability, if

(i) the space is a rental unit in residential premises,

(ii) the rental unit and the residential premises of which the rental unit forms part,

(a) are designed to accommodate persons with disabilities, and

(b) conform to the prescribed standards, and

(iii) the rental unit is offered for rent exclusively to a person with a disability or to 2 or more persons, at least one of whom has a physical or mental disability.

Canadian Multiculturalism Act, RSC 1985, c. 24. (Federal)

This Act recognizes, encourages and promotes multiculturalism within Canadian society.

Potentially relevant sections:

S.3(1)(e): ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity

S.3(1)(f): encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada's multicultural character

S.3(2)(b): promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the ability of individuals and communities of all origins to contribute to the continuing evolution of Canada

S.3(2)(c): promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society

Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, SOR/2002-227. (Federal)

These regulations provide more in depth details of the rights of immigrants and refugee

claimants as set out in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. This includes details on procedures, remedies, and removal orders.

Regulations Designating a Body for the Purposes of Paragraph 91(2)(c) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, SOR/2011-142. (Federal)

This regulation may not be directly relevant, but it does outline an aspect of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, which was cited within the index.

This regulation outlines what qualifies as a designated body whose members in good standing may represent or advise a person for consideration in connection with the submission of an expression of interest or a proceeding or application under this Act.

National Housing Act, RSC 1985, c. N-11. (Federal)

This Act serves to ‘promote housing affordability, facilitate access to housing finance, and protect the availability of adequate funding for housing at low cost’.

Part X provides some details on public housing and public housing agencies; however, this seems to be more in the context of providing definitions.

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 28 July 1951, entered into force 22 April 1954) 189 UNTS 137.

This Convention defines ‘refugee’ and details the rights of individuals who are granted asylum. It also explains the legal obligations of countries that have granted protection to refugees.

Non-refoulement is a basic principle of this Convention i.e. countries may not force refugees to return to a country where they are liable to be subjected to persecution

Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 31 January 1967, entered into force 4 October 1967) 606 UNTS 267.

This protocol removed both the temporal and geographic restrictions included within the aforementioned Convention i.e. the restriction of refugee status to those who became asylum seekers due to events occurring before 1 January 1951 (this restriction gave States the option to interpret such events as occurring in Europe or as occurring in Europe and elsewhere)

Ministry of Lands, Parks and Housing Act, RSBC 1996, c. 307. (Provincial)

S8.1(1) of the Act provides details of affordable housing assistance.

It defines what an affordable housing agreement consists of and what affording housing development attempts to accomplish.

It also details any restrictions which may exist within an affordable housing agreement.

2) Specific:

Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act, SC 2012, c 17. (Federal)

http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2012_17/page-1.html

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, SC 2001, c 27. (Federal)

<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/l-2.5/index.html>

Balanced Refugee Reform Act, SC 2010, c 8. (Federal)

http://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/annualstatutes/2010_8/page-1.html#h-1

Family Law Act, SBC 2011, c 25. (Provincial)

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/11025_01

Civil Marriage Act, SC 2005, c 33. (Federal)

<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-31.5/page-1.html>

Child, Family and Community Service Act, RSBC 1996, c 46. (Provincial)

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/consol21/consol21/00_96046_01

Residential Tenancy Act, SBC 2002, c 78. (Provincial)

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02078_01

Employment and Assistance Regulation, BC Reg 263/2002, s 7.1. (Provincial)

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/263_2002#section7.1

Exemption from citizenship requirements (to receive assistance)

7.1 (1) Despite section 7 (1), a family unit that does not satisfy the requirement under that section is eligible for income assistance if the minister is satisfied that all of the following apply:

(a) the applicant is a sole applicant or, in the case of a recipient, the recipient is a sole recipient;

(b) the applicant or recipient has one or more dependent children who are Canadian citizens;

- (c) the applicant or recipient has separated from an abusive spouse;
- (d) the applicant or recipient has applied for status as a permanent resident under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada)*;
- (e) the applicant or recipient cannot readily leave British Columbia with the dependent children because
 - (i) a court order, agreement or other arrangement with respect to one or more of the dependent children provides custody, guardianship or access rights to another person who resides in British Columbia and leaving British Columbia with the dependent children would likely contravene the provisions of the court order, agreement or other arrangement,
 - (ii) another person who resides in British Columbia is claiming custody, guardianship or access rights with respect to one or more of the dependent children and the person's claims have not yet been resolved, or
 - (iii) the applicant or recipient, or a dependent child of the applicant or recipient, is being treated for a medical condition and leaving British Columbia would result in imminent danger to the physical health of the applicant, recipient or dependent child.

Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, SC 2015, c 29. (Federal)

http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/AnnualStatutes/2015_29/page-1.html

Appendix 6) Examples of Useful Programs and Services

This list is not intended to provide a comprehensive overview of all available programs and services, but rather to highlight examples of a few which exist provincially and federally to assist IRW and children.

- **Canadian Passport Order, SI/81-86 (federal)**
- **Temporary Foreign Workers Program (federal)**
 - <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/employers/temp-foreign-worker-program.asp>
- **International Mobility Program (international)**
 - <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/tools/temp/work/admissibility/open.asp>
- **Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (provincial – British Columbia)**
 - <https://issbc.org>
- **Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia (provincial – British Columbia)**
 - <https://www.amssa.org>
- **YCWA Mothers Without Legal Status Project (Vancouver, British Columbia)**
 - <https://ywcavan.org/advocacy/mothers-without-legal-status>
- **Battered Women’s Support Service (Vancouver, British Columbia)**
 - <http://www.bwss.org>
 -
- **Interim Federal Health Program (federal)**
 - <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/summary-ifhp.asp>
 -
- **Sistering (Toronto, Ontario)**
 - <http://www.sistering.org>
- **Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre (Vancouver, British Columbia)**
 - <http://dewc.ca> (Vancouver)
- **New Start Program (Victoria, British Columbia)**
 - <http://www.womeninneed.ca/new-start-program>
- **Gift Certificate Program (Victoria, British Columbia)**

- <http://www.womeninneed.ca/gift-certificate-program>
-
- **The Support Network (Edmonton, Alberta)**
 - <http://www.yourlifecounts.org/crisis-lines/support-network-distress-line>
- **Muslim Family Support Services (London, Ontario)**
 - <http://www.mrcssi.com>
- **North End Women's Centre (Winnipeg, Manitoba)**
 - <http://www.newcentre.org>

Appendix 7) Legal Obligations, Policies, and Barriers

Unsettled: Legal and Policy Barriers for Newcomers to Canada (Wayland, 2006)

Wayland (2006) sets out seven findings from research that identify legal and policy barriers for newcomers to Canada:

(1) Canadian public policy fails to recognize that the settlement process has multiple stages and involves a range of policy areas.

(2) Settlement sector programming is hampered by limited funding and government-imposed constraints on the design and delivery of settlement services by non-government organizations.

(3) Extended family separation is a costly consequence of immigration policy.

Employment is the primary settlement need for most newcomers, not least because it helps reduce other barriers to settlement.

(4) Communication barriers impede access to services and, for many, are not remedied by available language instruction.

(5) The settlement experiences of many newcomers are characterized by isolation, vulnerability, and a lack of civic engagement.

(7) Legal and policy barriers to settlement interconnect and produce systemic discrimination against newcomers (pp. 5-6). Wayland also notes that gender is a general Settlement issue, but did not elaborate (p. 14).

Responding to Domestic Violence in Cases of Family Law, Civil Law and Child Protection (Neilson, 2017)

In the document mentioned earlier, *Responding to Domestic Violence in Family Law, Civil Law and Child Protection*, Linda Neilson (2017) sets out legal obligations involved in and potential responses to domestic violence cases. One relevant section entitled, *Minority/Immigration Status in Domestic Violence Cases* (sec. 22), considers these in some detail. Twenty of those deemed of most relevance for the present report are set out below.

(1) Potential Responses to Forms of Violence.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Italicized text quoted from section 22.2.5 of Neilson's (2017) report.

- *Explaining that custody and access and child protection matters are decided in Canada on the basis of best interests of the child, not on the basis of immigration status.*
- *Examining carefully the pattern of abuse, coercion-control, and violence in the relationship as well as in the extended family in order to assess and document the type of intimate partner violence (see Chapter 4).*
- *Subject to cautionary comments outlined in section 20.3.3 of the report in connection with concerns about confidentiality, enlisting the support of and collaborating with respected leaders in the cultural community who support eradication of domestic and family violence in the search for solutions.*

(3) Options to Enhance Assessment:⁸⁶

- *Many of the options to enhance disclosure and accurate domestic violence assessment discussed at 21.2.6 in connection with disability are also useful in a minority or immigration context.*
- *An immigration and refugee expert should be able to advise the client on the steps that may be taken to ensure that disclosures resulting in legal processes do not have a negative impact on the client's immigration or refugee status and/or ability to remain in Canada.*
- *In addition, consider working with cultural experts, domestic violence experts and cultural leaders in cultural communities to design and encourage the use of specialized interview questions and protocols designed to elicit information about domestic and family violence in the context of the minority culture and the immigration process.*
- *Taking action to become informed about special forms of domestic violence associated with immigration processes, particular cultures, and family structures.*⁸⁷
- *Using specialized indicators to assess risk and danger (potential for lethal outcome) in cases involved minority cultures and/or immigration.*
- *Take time to consult minority and immigration experts about cultural forms of violence against women (and other family members; becoming familiar with services for minority and immigrating people in the community; gaining an understanding of cultural and immigration issues that prevent access to appropriate services and generating options to respond to obstacles; organizing information sessions for lawyers, services providers and judges on domestic violence, culture, and immigration issues.*

(3) Unresolved Interpretation Issues⁸⁸ *In British Columbia:*

⁸⁶ Italicized text quoted from section 22.2.6 of Neilson's (2017) report.

⁸⁷ See section 22.2.4 of Neilson's (2017) report for a discussion of special forms of domestic violence associated with minority culture and/or immigration status.

⁸⁸ Italicized text quoted from section 22.3.3.1 of Neilson's (2017) report.

... in some jurisdictions, lawyers and members of communities have taken the initiative to generate translation and interpretation services for parties involved in litigation. For example, see the Multicultural Family Law Facilitator's Project (described by Nayanika Kumar Multicultural Family Law Facilitators Project in the March 2014 issue of Law Now).

Nonetheless research and media reports tell us that policies and programs as well as access to qualified professional interpreter services are inconsistent and often inadequate in many parts of Canada.

(4) When the Targeted Person is in Canada Illegally:⁸⁹

Forced marriage, sexual assault, human trafficking and domestic violence often intersect.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada: "Protection and assistance for victims of human trafficking" authorizes renewable temporary residence permits, work permits, as well as access to health benefits. See also Government of Canada Temporary Resident Permits (TRPs): Considerations specific to victims of human trafficking.

(5) Research-Informed Options for Family Lawyers when the Targeted Adult is in Canada Illegally:⁹⁰

If children are involved, clarifying for the parties that custody and access and child protection decisions in Canada are based on the best interests of the child, not on immigration status.

Considering detailed documentation of facts and findings associated with the effects of domestic violence on the child or children. While the cases tell us that 'best interests of the child' findings in family law cases are not necessarily conclusive in an immigration case, findings of fact from a family or child protection court hearing or order and facts recited in agreements could, in appropriate cases, provide helpful information about 'best interest of the child principles' that might be useful when considered in association with an application to remain in Canada on humanitarian or on protected person / refugee grounds.

(6) Immigration Child Best Interest Considerations:⁹¹

... it is important to note that while sections 25 and 25.1 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, (Act) 2001, c.27 create an obligation, when considering an application for permanent resident status or an application for an exemption on humanitarian and

⁸⁹ Italicized text quoted from section 22.4.4.4 of Neilson's (2017) report.

⁹⁰ Italicized text quoted from section 22.4.4.4.1 of Neilson's (2017) report.

⁹¹ Italicized text quoted from 22.4.4.8 of Neilson's (2017) report.

compassionate grounds, to take into account the best interests of a child directly affected, the case law makes clear that best interests of the child considerations, while important and mandatory, are not necessarily conclusive.