Accommodating Asylum: Improving the Housing Support System for Refugee Claimants in Canada

by
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in the School of Public Policy Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Spring 2019

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Abstract

Canada has recently seen a dramatic increase in the number of refugee claims being filed in the country. A backlog in the processing of claims has left an increasing number of people dependent on limited support infrastructure. This has been particularly problematic when it comes to housing. Studies have consistently found that refugee claimants face more barriers to accessing housing than other newcomers. This is further complicated by the growing dearth of affordable housing in Canada. The majority of research on this issue has been done at a regional level, with less consideration of federal factors. Using case studies and semi-structured interviews, this study attempts to fill that gap by examining what changes need to be made at a federal level in order to facilitate access to housing support for refugee claimants nationally. The three recommended policy options are designed to improve refugee claimants’ access to housing, and to lower current barriers by facilitating communication and planning.

Keywords: Refugee Claimants; Asylum; Immigration; Housing; Newcomers; Canada
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBSA</td>
<td>Canada Border Services Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCO</td>
<td>Designated Country of Origin</td>
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<td>ICAS</td>
<td>In-Canada Asylum System</td>
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<td>IRB</td>
<td>Immigration Refugee Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRCC</td>
<td>Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRPA</td>
<td>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAP</td>
<td>Resettlement Assistance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAD</td>
<td>Refugee Appeal Division</td>
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<td>RPCD</td>
<td>Refugee Protection Claimant Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPD</td>
<td>Refugee Protection Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPO</td>
<td>Service Providing Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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Executive Summary

Refugee claimants face more barriers to housing than most other newcomers to Canada (Wayland 2007). They often arrive having experienced trauma and with little money (Rose 2001; Kissoon 2010). Over the past three years Canada has seen a significant, sustained, increase in the number of refugee claims being filed (IRCC 2019a). As the number of claims has increased, so has claim processing time (IRB 2018). This has placed strain on federal, provincial, and municipal resources (PBO 2018). Until their refugee claim is approved, claimants have access to a very limited set of support services and are primarily dependent on services provided at a provincial level (IRCC 2019b; Kissoon 2010). This leaves claimants dependent on social housing which, especially in the larger cities where claimants tend to reside, is already oversubscribed to by the local population (Grant 2018a; CMHC 2018). This means that an increasing number of refugee claimants are dependent on limited housing support infrastructure. The majority of research on this issue has been done at a regional level, with less consideration given to national factors. This study attempts to fill that gap by examining what changes need to be made at a federal level in order to facilitate access to housing support for refugee claimants nationally.

Through use of a case study analysis I identified several best practices from successful refugee claimant housing systems. These best practices included: guaranteed access to housing for all refugee claimants, integration services attached to housing, and the need for an agreed upon mixed decentered-centered system. I then followed up on this by using interviews to determine how these best practices are applicable in a Canadian context and whether there is anything else that must be taken into account. These interviews identified the need to increase the amount of housing and the quality of service provision for refugee claimants. It was also emphasized that the budgeting and planning of social housing projects must take into account the needs of refugee claimants. Finally, it was emphasized that governments and service providers must work together to create a feasible approach to providing services to refugee claimants that all parties agree on and are held accountable by.
Using the findings from my methodology I developed three policy options: the construction of reception centers in high traffic areas, additions to the federal-provincial/territorial immigration agreements, and finally the provision of federal settlement services. These options were evaluated using seven criteria, which found that the immediate implementation of reception centers would be most beneficial. However, it is also recommended to implement the second option of federal-provincial/territorial immigration agreements in the medium term in order to deter conflict and ensure compliance. Aside from these two recommendations, this study also acknowledges three other considerations that must be taken into account moving forward. These include the need to increase connections between settlement services and housing, the need to acknowledge the number and needs of refugee claimants when budgeting for and building social housing, and the need to facilitate data-driven policy.
Chapter 1.

Introduction

Refugee claimants face more barriers to housing than other newcomers to Canada (Wayland 2007). They often arrive having experienced trauma and with little money (Rose 2001; Kissoon 2010). Over the past three years Canada has seen a significant, sustained, increase in the number of refugee claims being filed (IRCC 2019a). As the number of claims increased, so has claim processing time (IRB 2018). This has placed strain on federal, provincial, and municipal resources (PBO 2018). Until their refugee claim is approved, claimants have access to a very limited set of support services and are primarily dependent on services provided at a provincial level (Kissoon 2010; ISSofBC 2018). This leaves claimants dependent on social housing which, especially in the larger cities where claimants tend to reside, is unequipped to handle this sudden increase (Grant 2018a; Gibson 2018; Montpetit 2018). Providing these services on an emergency basis has been expensive, costing provinces and the federal government hundreds of millions of dollars, but there is little clarity surrounding who is responsible for funding what in terms of refugee claimant housing (Pinkerton 2019). This situation is further complicated by the growing number of Canadian citizens requiring housing assistance and who rely on the same emergency services that refugee claimants are increasingly depending on (CMHC 2018; Fox 2018; Hiebert et al. 2009).

The majority of research on this issue has been done at a regional level, with less consideration given to national factors. Using case studies and semi-structured interviews, this study attempts to fill that gap by examining what changes need to be made at a federal level in order to facilitate access to housing support for refugee claimants nationally. The three recommended policy options are designed to improve refugee claimants’ access to housing, and to lower current barriers by enhancing communication and planning.
Chapter 2 in this paper provides an overview of the Canadian asylum system, describing its legal basis and process. Chapter 3 uses data released by IRCC to provide an overview of the refugee claimants currently arriving in Canada. Chapter 4 describes the housing support system in Canada, with specific focus on the role of government, access to services, and the experience of refugee claimants in the housing market. Chapter 5 considers the literature surrounding refugee claimant housing, with special attention paid to program structure. Chapter 6 develops the policy problem and identifies key stakeholders. Chapter 7 provides an overview of the analytical methodology used in this study, which is then undertaken in Chapter 8. The secondary methodology is provided in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 describes the policy options presented and the criteria used to evaluate them. Chapter 11 consists of an evaluation of the policy options and a final recommendation. Finally, Chapter 12 offers a report summary.
Chapter 2.

The Canadian Asylum System

This chapter explains the In-Canada Asylum System including its legal basis, the restrictions placed on eligibility for the program, and the roles various levels of government play in supporting refugee claimants\(^1\) while their claim is being processed.

2.1. Refugee Protection

Refugees are people who have been forced to flee their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution (Government of Canada 2017a). There are two main ways in which refugees receive protected status in Canada (Government of Canada 2017a). The first is through the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement program. This program refers to the system by which Canada resettles people who are referred by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). People who come to Canada through this program enter the country as permanent residents and are referred to as “resettled refugees.” Resettled refugees can either be primarily sponsored by the government (Government-Assisted Refugees) or by private citizens (Privately Sponsored Refugees).\(^2\) Government-Assisted Refugees are provided with settlement services as soon as they enter the country through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). Privately Sponsored Refugees can have access to services through the RAP in exceptional circumstances but are primarily supported by the private citizens who sponsor them. The number of resettled refugees arriving in Canada generally greatly outnumbers the number of people arriving through the asylum system (IRCC 2018a).

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\(^1\) The terms “asylum claimant” and “asylum seeker” are equivalent in meaning to “refugee claimant.” This paper will only utilize the term “refugee claimant” as the term asylum does not appear in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

\(^2\) Some refugees, referred to as “Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugees,” are initially referred to Canada by the UNHCR, but are then referred by the Canadian federal government for sponsorship by private citizens. The government provides them with financial support for the first 6 months, and the private sponsor provides them with financial support for the next 6 months. This group makes up a small portion of resettled refugees and are not differentially referred to in this study.
The second major way in which refugees can receive protected status in Canada is through the In-Canada Asylum System (ICAS) (Government of Canada 2017a). People applying for protected status in Canada through this program file their refugee claim after having already arrived in Canada. Until their claim is processed, and a decision is made, people claiming refugee status through ICAS are temporary residents and referred to as “refugee claimants.” Refugee claimants do not have access to the settlement services and supports that resettled refugees do.

2.2. Legal Basis for Asylum

International treaties and domestic legislation work in tandem to obligate Canada to guarantee any foreign national who files a refugee claim in Canada to be approved if they can prove they are either a “convention refugee” or a “person in need of protection” (IRB 2016). A convention refugee refers to someone who is outside their home country and unable to return due to a “well-founded fear of persecution” based on their race, religion, political opinion, nationality or membership in a social group (IRCC 2017a). This is different from a person in need of protection who cannot return to their home country due to a danger of torture, risk to their life, or risk of cruel and unusual punishment (IRCC 2017a).

2.2.1. International Treaties

Canada has signed three major international agreements in relation to the acceptance of refugees — the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees (1951, 1967), the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), (IRB 2018b). The first agreement obligates Canada to accept convention refugees. The second agreement obligates Canada to accept persons in need of protection. Finally, the third agreement requires all parties to respect the civil and political rights of

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3 Canada acceded to both the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Related to the Status of Refugees at the same time on June 4, 1969.

4 Canada did not accede to this Covenant until May 19, 1976.
individuals, including the right to life and the right to due process and a fair trial (UNHCR 1996). Under this agreement Canada is also required to report to the UN the measures they have taken “to give effect to the Covenant” (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada 2004, iv).

2.2.2. Domestic Legislation

Along with international agreements, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms also protects the fundamental rights of refugees (IRB 2016). Canada’s obligations towards refugees are specified in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) put in place in 2002 (IRCC, 2018c). IRPA is the primary federal legislation regulating immigration to Canada. IRPA emphasizes the need to resettle refugees based on their vulnerability and not their ability to resettle in Canada (IRCC 2018b; UNHCR 2018a). This officially establishes the objectives of Canada’s refugee protection programs in contrast with Canada’s general immigration policy, in which the merit-based system emphasizes economic benefits (Akbari and MacDonald 2014).

Aside from the type of refugees Canada must accept, domestic legislation also outlines a necessary process (IRCC 2018b). The Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) has been core to Canada’s asylum system since it was established in 1989 and is responsible for upholding the necessity for an arms-length, quasi-judicial body that can hear claims for protection in a non-adversarial hearing (IRCC 2018b). This process is legally mandated by the Singh vs Canada Supreme Court decision of 1985, and other legislation passed in the 1980s.

2.3. Restrictions on Claiming Asylum

Not all people who cross the border are eligible to claim refugee protection (IRCC 2017a). A claim may be deemed ineligible if someone has already been recognized as a

5 Landmark Supreme Court case that enshrined that where the credibility of the claimant is at stake an oral hearing must be undertaken.
6 A brief summary of restrictions to claiming refugee status are provided here. For further details refer to Appendix A.
convention refugee by another country they can return to, has previously made a claim that was not found eligible, or has previously made a claim that was rejected, abandoned, or withdrawn. A claim can also be rejected on security grounds or because of criminal activity or human rights violations associated with the claimant. Recently a restriction added in 2004, the Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA), has been receiving significant attention (Proctor 2017). The STCA requires refugee claimants to seek protection in the first country — whether that be the US or Canada — they arrive in. However, this restriction only applies to official points of entry. As of late, an increasing number of people have been crossing the border and claiming asylum at unofficial points along the US-Canada border in order to avoid the STCA’s jurisdiction.

2.4. The Process of Claiming Asylum

The current asylum system involves complex interaction between Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the Canada Border Services Agency, the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), and the Federal Court (IRCC 2018b). This means filing a refugee claim is a long process, which can take years to come to an end. The process begins with making a claim of protection, either at the border or at an inland office after arriving in the country (IRB 2019). Whether or not a claim is eligible is decided within three days. If the claim is found to qualify for consideration, it is referred to the IRB. The IRB then conducts hearings to determine if the claimant qualifies as a convention refugee or person in need of protection. If a claim is accepted, then a claimant can remain in Canada and apply for permanent residence. As of April 2019, the projected wait time for a hearing from the date of referral is 21 months.

The process does not end if a refugee claim is initially rejected. Claimants usually choose to appeal the decision, and if that fails some go on to pursue a judicial review before having to leave the country.

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7 See Appendix B for a full explanation of the process of claiming asylum in Canada
In 2019, Canada introduced the short hearing process and file-review process for “less complex claims” (Hill 2019; IRB 2019b). The short hearing process involves a much shorter hearing than for the general process, and can be concluded within two hours. This process can be used for claims which have only one or two determinative issues. The file review process does not involve a hearing and allows claims to be accepted based on submitted documentation. While an exact time estimate is not provided, the lack of hearing suggests that the file review process is shorter than both the short hearing process and the general process.

2.4.1. Issues with program efficiency

Long wait times and case backlog have been an issue for ICAS since the program was formally established (Figure 1) (IRCC 2018b). Reforms in 2010 and 2012 led to a drastic decrease in pending cases, but the system has been unable to cope with the increase in refugee claimants that began in 2016.

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8 Further details concerning these two processes are available in Appendix B.

9 The claim processing backlog shown in Figure 1 is that associated with the Refugee Protection Division, which is responsible for hearing and deciding claims for refugee protection.
Figure 1. Claim Processing Backlog, 1989-2018\textsuperscript{10}
Source: IRCC (2018b); IRB (2018c)

The outcomes for cases that started the claims process in 2017 or later are estimated to take several years to be reached. The IRB departmental plan released in 2018 notes that there is an average wait time in excess of 12 months at the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) and the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) (IRB 2018a).\textsuperscript{11} In order to resolve this issue, it acknowledges that it must decrease the gap between its case input and output. Given that the IRB has no control over input levels, it plans to address this issue by increasing its efficiency. Its current plan concludes in March of 2021 and hopes to limit the growth of refugee determination backlogs and reduce the backlog of immigration appeals. It will do this in part by shifting its focus to finalizing claims in the order in which they were referred to the RPD. Given the recency of their implementation, it is unclear how significantly the newly available short-hearing and file review processes

\textsuperscript{10} Input refers to the number of claims being filed, and output refers to the number of claims on which a decision has been reached.

\textsuperscript{11} For details on the role of the RPD and the RAD see Appendix B.
will impact average processing times. However, news sources have noted that a significant number of claims currently being filed should be eligible for these new processes (Hill 2019).
Chapter 3.

Refugee Claimants in Canada

This chapter provides an overview of the number of refugee claimants arriving in Canada and puts the current increase within a historical and global context. It also includes key demographic information about the refugee claimants currently arriving in Canada.

3.1. Recent Increase in Arrival of Refugee Claimants

The number of refugee claimants arriving in Canada more than doubled in 2017 — going from 23,894 to 50,390 — and continued on at a similarly high level in 2018 (Figure 2). Despite representing a significant increase, this number of refugee claims is not unprecedented in Canada. In 2001, 44,640 refugee claimants arrived in Canada, and as recently as 2008, 36,856 people claimed refugee status in Canada. However, this is the first time in recent years the country has seen such a sustained increase.

![Figure 2. Refugee Claimants arriving in Canada from 2001-2018](source: IRCC (2017b), IRCC (2019a))

Currently, the number of refugee claimants being received has varied significantly across provinces (Figure 3). The majority of refugee claimants arrive in Central Canada, and in 2018, Québec and Ontario received more than 90% of them.
Québec has seen the largest increase in refugee claimants received, with the number of arrivals in 2018 being more than five times the amount it was in 2016 (Figure 4).

However, other provinces have also been markedly affected by the recent increase in refugee claimants (Figure 5). Manitoba and British Columbia (BC) were the most impacted, with the former seeing more than double the number of claimants, and the latter seeing an increase of more than 70% between 2016 and 2018. Alberta also saw a significant increase of nearly 60%. Saskatchewan and the Atlantic Provinces saw little shift in overall numbers (IRCC 2019a).
3.2. Global Context

Canada is not alone in their reception of increasing numbers of refugee claimants. In fact, the recent increase is far smaller than what is being experienced by many countries with similar levels of wealth. The UN Refugee Agency’s annual global trends study found that more than 68.5 million people were displaced from their homes in 2017 (UNHCR 2018b). Of these people, 25.4 million were refugees — an increase of almost 3 million from the year before. The number of people waiting for decisions on their asylum applications has also increased globally, up 300,000 to a figure of 3.1 million. Canada’s geographical isolation, with its only land border being the United States, offers it a great deal of control over its border and prevents it from being hugely impacted by much of this global movement (Arbel 2013; Proctor 2017).
3.3. **Key Demographic Information**

In terms of demographics, the largest proportion of claimants are adults aged 30-44, but there are significantly more youth than elderly people claiming asylum in Canada (Figure 6). The ratio of ages of refugee claimants was consistent across 2016, 2017, and 2018, suggesting that this is the distribution of ages which Canada can expect future refugee claimants to fall under as well.

![Figure 6. Refugee claimants arriving in Canada by age range from 2016-2018](source: IRCC (2019a))

More refugee claimants identify as men than women, but the difference is not exceptionally large, with less than five thousand more men than women arriving in Canada in 2017 (Figure 7). Whether the gender gap is as minimal at all age ranges is unclear as data released by IRCC does not allow for cross-tabulation.
Figure 7. Gender of Refugee Claimants Arriving in Canada from 2016-2018\textsuperscript{12}
Source: IRCC (2019a)

\textsuperscript{12} The number of people who did not identify themselves as a particular gender are not reflected because the number of people who identified as such was between 0 and 5. This is a small enough number that Statistics Canada is unable to release the data due to privacy concerns.
Chapter 4.

Housing Support System

This chapter provides an overview of the division of responsibility for the provision of services for refugee claimants, discusses housing supports available at a provincial level, and examines information available about the housing experiences of refugee claimants in Canada.

4.1. The Role of Government

Federal, provincial, and municipal governments all play important roles in receiving and providing supports to refugee claimants, but there is limited official agreement on which level of government is responsible for what. Under the Canadian Constitution responsibility for immigration is shared between federal and provincial/territorial governments (IRCC 2018c). Every province and territory (except Nunavut) has a Federal-Provincial/Territorial Agreement that outlines how this responsibility is shared (IRCC 2018c). Each agreement is separately negotiated to address specific priorities and needs. In accordance with these agreements, the federal government is responsible for the In-Canada Asylum System, which includes the initial intake and screening of refugee claimants, the processing of claims, and the enforcement of decisions. However, aside from this, these agreements do not clearly allocate any responsibilities for specific levels of government in relation to refugee claimants. Claimants are primarily noted only as a factor that will be considered when deciding how many resettled refugees will be going to a specific province.

Currently, in addition to the In-Canada Asylum System, the federal government has taken responsibility for the provision of interim federal health care coverage, which allows refugee claimants access to health care until they are eligible for provincial or territorial health coverage (Government of Canada 2019). All remaining settlement

13 More details on the In-Canada Asylum System are located in Chapter 2.
services that are available to refugee claimants are provided through the combined efforts of provincial governments, municipal governments, and non-profit organizations. The major services that can be provided by provincial and municipal governments are access to social housing, access to social assistance, and legal aid (Canadian Red Cross n.d.; ISSofBC 2018). However, the costs associated with services provided by provinces and municipalities has become a very public, conflict-ridden, subject of discussion (Montpetit 2018; The Canadian Press 2018; Gibson 2018; Pinkerton 2019).

There is no written agreement that specifies what costs associated with supports for refugee claimants the federal government is required to pay for or subsidize (PBO 2018). The main way in which the federal government can provide funding for settlement services is through the Canada Social Transfer, which is the federal block transfer to the provinces and territories in support of post-secondary education, programs for children, social assistance, and other social programs (IRCC 2019b). The sum a province or territory receives through the social transfer is determined on an equal per capita basis to the provinces in accordance with Statistics Canada’s annual population estimates. These population estimates include people who are claiming refugee status. Over the last year, the federal government has also announced additional transfer payments, in addition to the sum mandated by the federal block transfer, aimed at reimbursing provinces who have seen the largest numbers of refugee claimants with the cost of housing and social services. However, the transfers announced do not come close to the amount that the provinces say the increase in the number of claimants has cost them, specifically with regards to housing. It has been noted or implied in several federal reports and media releases that they are under no obligation to provide further funds, or even those that have already been provided (though usually with phrasing much less direct) (PBO 2018). This view does not appear to be shared by the provinces and municipalities which have seen the largest number of refugee claimants, with all having made public pleas for further

14 The federal government sometimes funds housing in emergency situations (Forrest 2018). This is not discussed in detail because there are no guidelines for when this does or does not happen.

15 In order to mitigate temporary housing costs being faced by provinces and municipalities the federal government announced $50 million in funding in June 2018 and an additional $114.7 million in January 2019. This funding is all targeted at Ontario, Québec, and, to a lesser extent, Manitoba.
funds from the federal government (Montpetit 2018; The Canadian Press 2018; Gibson 2018; Pinkerton 2019).

It is also important to note that almost all funding put towards addressing housing issues associated with the recent spike in refugee claimants has been distributed on an emergent or ad-hoc basis. Federal budgets from 2017 onwards do no mention housing costs associated with the spike in refugee claims, despite the federal government having to announce additional transfer payments to cover costs. Provincial budgets also very minimally refer to refugee claimants and the greater majority of budgets do not note an allocation of additional funds.16

4.2. Access to Services

Refugee claimants can access government services once they are issued their Refugee Protection Claimant Document (RPCD). The RPCD is issued when a claim is found to be eligible for consideration17 and identifies the holder as a client of Canada’s refugee protection system (IRCC 2019c; IRCC 2019d). However, this document does not provide refugee claimants with access to the same supports and services as resettled refugees (IRCC 2019b). The only standardized service provided to all refugee claimants is the Interim Federal Health Program (IRCC 2019b). The ways in which other services such as social assistance, education, emergency housing, and legal aid are provided varies both based on the money possessed by the claimant and the province or territory they are residing in (Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) n.d.-a). In all provinces, once refugee claimants have their RPCD they can apply for social housing, social assistance, and a work permit (CCR n.d.-a). Usually in order to gain access to a work permit18 and social assistance refugee claimants must prove that they do not otherwise have the funds to support themselves.

16 A notable exception is the 2017 Manitoba Provincial Budget which specifically recognized the increase in refugee claimants in the province and allotted funding to provide supports.

17 In some cases an RPCD is also provided to people who are found to be ineligible to make a refugee claim if they are eligible for a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment.

18 If a claimant is from a Designated Country of Origin this does not apply. They must wait until they receive a positive decision on their claim or until 180 days have passed since their claim was referred to the IRB (Legal Aid Ontario).
In the time before a refugee claimant receives their RPCD form they are entirely dependent on emergency housing that does not require documentation and non-profit organizations that are able to help refugee claimants. There is limited up-to-date literature that allows an understanding of the capabilities and funding available to non-profit service-provider organizations to help refugee claimants. However, a 2002 study conducted in Toronto (which is home to one of Canada’s largest populations of refugee claimants) found that a minority of service-providers receive funding to service refugee claimants, yet 81 percent say they provide direct services to claimants (Junaid). This suggests that much of the availability of services to refugee claimants is due to choices made by non-governmental organizations rather than provincial, municipal, or federal intention. While the study this assumption is based on is from 2002, both media coverage of service-provider organizations and the fact that the structure of settlement services funding remains the same, make it likely this has not changed.

The literature offers a few different explanations for the difference in services offered to refugee claimants in comparison to resettled refugees. The first is the lack of clarity of responsibility for cost noted in section 4.1. The second major reason is that settlement services in Canada are largely provided through non-profit groups (Yu et al., 2007). While some of these groups do have funding from provincial and municipal governments, they are not national organizations. Given that there is no legislation that requires non-profits to provide specific services, these organizations do not provide the exact same standardized supports and services in different locations (Yu et al., 2007).

4.2.1. Provincial Variation in Housing Supports

Access to and the structure of housing supports differ significantly across Canada. In Québec, refugee claimants are eligible to receive support services in finding permanent accommodation (Québec Ministry of Diversity and Inclusion 2018). In other provinces, such as Ontario, BC, and Alberta, there exists no such strict eligibility. This does not mean that refugee claimants in these provinces have no housing supports available to them, but rather that they are dependent on the level of emergency housing available in the city they arrive in, and the number of non-profits able to help claimants. Non-profit
organizations providing housing services are present mainly in larger cities. Housing services provided by non-profit organizations range from informational support to short-term and long-term housing (Yu et al., 2007). Short-term, and longer-term housing support is provided in different ways by different organizations. One of the most popular options is transitional housing where people can stay for a few months. One of the more unique programs was included within Vancouver’s Inland Refugee Society of BC, which allowed people to sign up to host a refugee claimant in their home. However, any available housing tends to fill up very quickly. This leaves refugee claimants dependent on emergency shelters unless they have connections in Canada who are able to help them. The four largest city centres currently appear to be Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Winnipeg, however exact numbers are unknown because municipal data is not publicly released.

4.3. Experiences of Refugee Claimants in the Housing Market

All newcomers face barriers to obtaining safe, affordable, and secure housing in the Canadian housing market (Hiebert 2011; Bucklaschuk 2019). The literature shows that regardless of where people settle, these barriers are quite predictable and include housing affordability, income levels, language barriers, a lack of knowledge of the housing system, and discrimination (Bucklaschuk 2019; Preston et al. 2011; Hiebert, Addario, Sherrell 2005; Rose 2001). New immigrants have increasingly been becoming the “hidden homeless,” sharing crowded spaces and struggling to find security (Wayland 2007). The increasing erosion of available social housing and the lack of growth in affordable housing threatens to further worsen the situation. Most studies have found that while all newcomers and refugees face barriers to housing, those experienced by refugee claimants are often more severe (Hiebert 2011; Murdie 2008). Claimants tend to have lower income levels than other newcomers and have usually experienced trauma before arriving in Canada (Preston et al. 2011; Rose 2001). They also arrive as temporary

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19 This was evaluated using both literature and jurisdictional scans of resources available in specific regions by Ready Tours, a collaborative initiative between Kinbrace, the UNHCR, and the Immigration Refugee Board

20 This was recently closed due to a lack of funding
residents which both causes stress and, combined with their general lack of references, can make landlords reluctant to rent to them (Wayland 2007; Murdie 2008; ISSofBC 2018). Refugee claimants specifically have been observed to spend a detrimentally high percentage of their income on rent (Rose 2001; Yu 2007; Wayland 2007; ISSofBC 2018). Studies have also noted that refugee claimants are not generally found to be living on the streets, but do frequently experience sub-standard living conditions or hidden homelessness (Hiebert et al 2005). Claimants also tend to be more dependent on the social capital of existing ethno-cultural communities within the areas they reside in (Hiebert et al. 2009). This may be connected to the fewer services they have access to in comparison to resettled refugees.

A study published in 2001 found that gender has a notable impact on a refugee claimant’s experience in the Canadian housing market. More women than men report facing discrimination from their landlords (9% versus 5.5%) in a survey conducted in 2000 (Rose). Women are more likely to live with family or friends, and men are more likely to be housed at the YMCA. Women are also more likely than men to ask for help finding initial housing. This result is supported by a recent report which found that immigrant women are at an increased risk of experiencing housing insecurity, and are more likely to be taken advantage of or report racial or cultural discrimination from landlords and service providers (Government of Canada 2018).

LGBT people have also been found to face additional barriers in the Canadian housing market. After coming to Canada, the marginalization of LGBT refugees and newcomers has been noted to be exacerbated by intersecting stigmas associated with sexuality, race, gender, class, and immigration status (Logie et al., 2016). This contributes to significant barriers to basic needs such as secure housing and employment. Not much work has been done on the specific experiences of LGBT newcomers and refugees in Canada, and no studies were found on the specific experiences of LGBT refugee claimants (Logie et al., 2016). However, work done in the United States notes a lack of LGBT competent health services, housing insecurity, and legal concerns (Logie et al., 2016).
4.4. Housing Affordability

Affordability is commonly acknowledged to be one of the biggest, if not the biggest, barrier to housing for refugee claimants. However, they are not the only group in Canada for whom this poses a significant problem. Canada, like many developed countries, is experiencing a trend of deteriorating housing affordability, especially for people with low incomes, younger households, the elderly, and single people (Cheong & Li, 2018). In September 2018, RBC reported that Canadian housing affordability is the worst it has been since 1990.

Figure 8 represents the housing options that meet people’s needs and preferences. Canadians are currently struggling to find housing that they can afford that fits their needs and preferences. This has been linked to a lack of housing across the spectrum (CMHC 2018).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Shelters</th>
<th>Transitional Housing</th>
<th>Social Housing</th>
<th>Affordable Rental Housing</th>
<th>Affordable Home Ownership</th>
<th>Market Rental Housing</th>
<th>Market Home Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Figure 8. Housing Continuum**
Source: CMHC (2018); Multi-Agency Partnership BC (2018)

This affordability crisis significantly contributes to making social assistance inadequate to cover the cost of living (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2018). In order to pay for shelter, people are having to sacrifice other basic necessities. This makes it even more difficult to get to a place where social assistance is not required, because there is no money that can be put towards personal development (ISSofBC 2018).

In response to national concerns about housing affordability, the federal government recently released Canada’s first ever National Housing Strategy (NHS) (Government of Canada 2018). This $40 billion, ten-year plan aims to bring together public, private, and non-profit sectors to make housing more affordable for Canadians. Its primary focus is meant to be meeting the needs of vulnerable populations. However, the plan makes little reference to refugees, and when it does, links their experience to immigrant women. The plan was also criticized by non-profit groups because it makes no
reference to refugee claimants, despite them being a vulnerable population with a housing shortage.

Housing affordability and the increasing number of refugee claimants are issues that have been growingly discussed in tandem (Fox 2018). This is because the social housing being used to house refugee claimants is the same supply that is meant to house Canadians (Fox 2018; Hiebert et al. 2009). Both issues must be addressed simultaneously moving forward.
Chapter 5.

Literature surrounding Refugee Claimant Housing

This chapter provides an overview of literature surrounding refugee claimant housing, with a focus on the importance of stable housing for refugee claimants and program structure. While emphasis was placed on Canadian literature, studies from other Western countries were also surveyed. This was partially due to the dearth of work done in Canada and partially to ensure that when considering program structure various available types were reviewed.

5.1. Importance of Stable Housing for Refugee Claimants

Housing is a foundational element of the settlement process, and acts as the base from which all other elements of the process develop (Bucklaschuk 2019; Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Immigrant Sector Council of Calgary, 2015). While all groups have been found to benefit from the provision of safe and stable affordable housing, refugee claimants have been found to derive specific benefits. Claimants arrive in Canada after experiencing significant physical and psychological upheaval, and with few material possessions (Rose 2001). This means that their economic need is often greater than other low-income immigrants, making stable housing of even more importance. However, housing is noted to be important for more than just physical needs. Studies show that the stability provided by longer-term housing is also very psychologically significant. Refugee claimants face a lot of uncertainty in the years that it can take for their protected status to be approved, and having stable housing in an environment that is not isolated from other groups is important for non-marginalization and social integration. Overall, proper housing has been found to have a positive impact on education, community development, and healthcare, leading to faster resettlement (Rose 2001; Murdie 2008).
5.2. Program structure

All refugee claimant housing programs are either primarily centralized or decentralized (Støa and Denizou 2017). If a housing system is centralized it means that residents live in one larger, usually urban, institution (Støa and Denizou 2017). If a housing system is decentralized it means that residents live in housing dispersed across an area (Støa and Denizou 2017). This section provides a brief overview of the literature surrounding both of these options.

Employees in centralized centers have been found to be better able to prevent isolation and loneliness, something which is noted to be especially important for single minors, refugee claimants who suffer from mental health issues, and other particularly vulnerable groups (Støa and Denizou 2017). However, other research has shown that it is very important that refugee claimants move into a decentralized housing situation as soon as possible in order to allow them contact with the host society (Scholten et al., 2017).

Implementing a decentralized housing system is complicated by dispersal policies. Different countries utilize different criteria to determine where refugee claimants should be housed (Konle-Seidle and Bolits 2016). There is also no consensus among international organizations as to how these policies should be designed, and how much weight should be given to freedom of movement (Konle-Seidle and Bolits 2016). Dispersal policies often severely restrict people’s ability to choose for themselves where they wish to live. This is usually a choice they make based on where their larger cultural community resides, the proximity to jobs, and the general reputation of an area (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001; Fasani 2018). Claimants have been found to have an easier time integrating when located in areas where they have a significant community, and the opportunity to work (Fasani 2018; Konle-Seidle and Bolits 2016). However, these communities and jobs are usually in a few select places and if all refugee claimants relocate to these areas it complicates service provision (Konle-Seidle and Bolits 2016).

Most studies suggest some combination of centralized and decentralized housing, but no report was found that recommends this option and puts forward a specific method of doing so (Støa and Denizou 2017).
Chapter 6.

Policy Problem and Stakeholders

My policy problem is that an increasing number of refugee claimants are dependent on limited housing support infrastructure. As indicated in Chapter 3, over the last three years there has been a large increase in people claiming asylum in Canada, which has placed a strain on federal, provincial, and municipal resources. This has led to a backlog in the processing of claims, leaving a growing number of people dependent on limited and relatively stagnant support infrastructure (see Chapter 4 for more details). The majority of refugee claimants tend to relocate to larger Canadian cities. This has put pressure on temporary housing and affordable housing options in these cities. Responses to this issue by federal, provincial, and municipal governments have been clouded by a confusion as to responsibilities surrounding cost. This project will focus specifically on what changes need to be made at a federal level in order for the provinces and municipalities dealing with an increasing number of refugee claimants to effectively provide housing support. Given the time and word constraint placed on this project, only housing options and issues associated with housing during the refugee claimant process will be considered. Housing issues encountered after a claim has been rejected or approved are outside the scope of this project.

The main stakeholders are service providing organizations (SPOs), advocacy groups, and refugee claimants themselves (usually represented by advocacy groups and the media). SPOs have direct contact with refugee claimants and are responsible for the provision of all housing support services available to them. Multiple SPOs have come together in BC, Ontario, and Manitoba to work together to address common issues, and in many cases, municipal, provincial, and federal partners attend their meetings in order to be more aware of their concerns. Advocacy groups, such as the Canadian Council for Refugees, do not provide services, but advocate for the rights of refugee claimants. Their voices, along with those of the media, inform public knowledge of refugee claimant issues, and therefore affect public influence on policy and programs.
Chapter 7.

Analytical Methodology

This study utilizes both a major primary analysis and a minor secondary analysis. The primary methodology is a multiple case study analysis that is used to identify overlapping attributes of successful refugee claimant housing programs. The secondary methodology is then used to confirm these results and understand any potential complications in their application to the Canadian context. Further details concerning the secondary methodology are provided in Chapter 9.

A case study methodology is used in this study due to the explanatory nature of the inquiry. Yin (2003) identifies three types of case studies, descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory. This study falls under the explanatory category due to its intention to not only explore and describe different cases, but also explore causal relationships. In line with this approach, there is a clear set of questions that guides information extraction (Mills et al., 2010).

7.1. Case Study Selection

The chosen case studies are of refugee claimant housing policies in Germany, Norway, and Sweden. These cases were selected based on four main criteria: First, their housing programs are among the most successful at providing safe, stable housing for refugee claimants; second, these countries have strong integration policies; third, these countries have experienced sudden increases in the number of people claiming asylum at their borders; and fourth, all countries had processing times of over three months. The first two criteria were chosen to ensure these cases represent successful refugee claimant housing programs that are supportive of long-term integration outcomes. The latter two criteria are necessary in order to ensure that the housing systems reviewed in this analysis are comparable to Canada, in terms of seeing a sudden increase and having the beneficiaries of the system reliant on it for a longer-period of time.
Multiple cross-jurisdictional reports and studies were used to determine which countries have successful refugee claimant housing systems (Scholten et al., 2017; Baptista et al. 2016). Countries were ruled out if homelessness was a major issue with their asylum system, as is currently the case in the UK, Australia, Spain, Italy, and Denmark (Scholten et al. 2017). The second criteria was evaluated using the 2018 Commitment to Development Index, which scores migration policies based on six indicators, including the strength of their integration policies.\textsuperscript{21} Canada ranks sixth on the index, with the previous five being Sweden (ranked first), Germany (second), New Zealand (third), Luxembourg (fourth), and Norway (ranked fifth) (Center for Global Development, 2018). New Zealand and Luxembourg were eliminated due to their lack of a comparative spike in refugee claimants. Table 1 provides an overview of the three cases selected.

Table 1. Overview of Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Norway</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugees per 1000</td>
<td>11.82</td>
<td>11.17</td>
<td>24.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inhabitants (2018)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim Acceptance Rate</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claim processing time</td>
<td>10.8 months</td>
<td>4 months\textsuperscript{22}</td>
<td>4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for claims filed in 2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public housing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>program for refugee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>claimants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for</td>
<td>Shared, National and Municipal</td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>Federal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


7.2. Evaluation Framework

There are four dimensions in the evaluation framework: direct housing support, indirect housing support, community involvement, and program structure (Table 2). The first dimension, direct housing support, was chosen based on the literature, and the

\textsuperscript{21} Other indicators include participation in international migration conventions, receptiveness to asylum seekers, refugees, foreign students, and migrants.

\textsuperscript{22} Varies significantly based on country of origin and age
logical need to gather specific information about the structure and consequences of a particular housing system. The characteristics associated with this dimension — access to public housing, safety concerns, access to government housing support services, and integration support services connected to housing — allow an understanding of the services provided through the refugee claimant housing programs and policies associated with these cases. The second dimension, indirect housing support, was chosen to understand how else, other than the direct provision of housing, refugee claimants in the selected cases can afford housing. The only characteristic associated with this dimension is monetary support because it is the sole alternative to the provision of housing that allows access to housing. The third dimension, community involvement, was chosen due to the significant role played by the community (through non-profit organizations) in housing refugee claimants. The fourth and final dimension, program structure, was selected based on literature discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.2. The characteristics considered in this dimension — decentered/centralized approach to housing, freedom of movement, and dispersal policies — were all noted to be important elements of program structure.

Table 2. Evaluation Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Housing Support</td>
<td>Access to Public Housing</td>
<td>Are refugee claimants legally entitled to housing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do all refugee claimants have access to housing throughout their entire claim process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does housing stock available to refugee claimants meet demand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do multiple groups rely on the same stock of housing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are there significant safety concerns with refugee claimant housing facilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are refugee claimants provided with housing that meets their needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to government</td>
<td>Access to government housing support services</td>
<td>Do refugee claimants have access to housing support services such as house hunting aid and education about their legal rights as renters?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are the housing services available diversity-responsive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are service providers able to meet demand for service?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration support</td>
<td>Integration support connected to housing</td>
<td>Are there other support services associated with provided public housing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Housing Support</td>
<td>Monetary support</td>
<td>Are refugee claimants entitled to social assistance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are refugee claimants permitted to work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>Role of non-governmental organizations</td>
<td>Do organizations or institutions that are not run by the government help support refugee claimants’ housing needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program structure</td>
<td>Decentered/Centralized approach to housing</td>
<td>Does the program take a decentered or centralized approach?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding Framework</td>
<td>How is the refugee claimant housing support system funded?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom of Movement</td>
<td>Are refugee claimants free to move to the area of their choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dispersal policy</td>
<td>Do dispersal policies consider employment opportunities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do dispersal policies aim to facilitate community support networks?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 8.

Case Study Analysis

The analysis presented here first describes each dimension’s characteristics, and then evaluates them on a case-by-case basis. A basic summary of results is available in Table 3 (located at the end of section 9.4), and section 9.5 provides an analysis of the key findings.

8.1. Direct Housing Support

This section considers the performance of each case in terms of the characteristics of direct housing support that are noted in Table 2.

8.1.1. Access to public housing

Germany recognizes a legal responsibility to house refugee claimants in accordance with Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also party to the European Parliament’s 2013 Directive concerning reception conditions, which acknowledges refugee claimant’s right to housing. This right is acknowledged in practice, and refugee claimants in Germany are guaranteed access to housing by the government. During the Syrian Refugee Crisis Germany accepted and housed more refugee claimants than any other country in Europe. As of 2018, 0.24% of Germany’s population consisted of refugee claimants (Centre for Global Development 2018). In order to cope with the increased demand for housing caused by the increase in refugee claimants and costs associated with construction, Germany made changes to its construction planning laws. The first major amendment was the 2014 Act on Refugee Accommodation Measures, which allowed certain initial reception facilities, where refugee claimants stay for the first six months, to build accommodation in industrial estates and on under-used sites (Grote 2018). Further amendments were made in 2015 through the Asylum Procedures Acceleration Act of 2015, which allowed an easing of the requirements for the establishment of accommodation in mobile containers as well as a reduction of the
requirements and exemptions related to provisions set by Germany’s Renewable Energy Sources Act (Grote 2018; IFHP 2016). During certain periods, refugee claimants were placed in containers, tents, unused army barracks, warehouses, aircraft hangers, administrative buildings, community centres, hotels, department stores, schools and gymnasiums. In 2015 and 2016 Germany developed numerous new accommodation facilities, many within the space of a few days (Grote 2018).

Like Germany, Sweden too recognizes a legal responsibility to house refugee claimants in accordance with Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is party to the European Parliament’s 2013 Directive on reception conditions (Refugee Rights Europe 2018). During the Syrian Refugee Crisis, Sweden accepted the highest number of refugees per capita of any country in Europe. In 2018, 0.21% of Sweden’s population consisted of refugee claimants (Center for Global Development 2018). Sweden prefers renting private accommodation for refugee claimants rather than having specific buildings constructed for their use, however the increased number of refugee claimants and Sweden’s housing crisis have made this more difficult in recent years (Scholten et al., 2017). In 2015-2017 the majority of refugee claimants were housed in large, institution-like housing facilities, sometimes even after their claim was approved (Leiler et al. 2018). Public lists of the other locations of planned and established refugee claimant housing were no longer revealed to the public after an escalating number of fires began to target temporary asylum accommodation in 2015 (Sveriges Radio 2015).

Norway also acknowledges a legal responsibility to house refugee claimants, but solely through Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which lacks specificity on reception conditions. This right is enforced, and in Norway all refugee claimants are guaranteed access to housing. In 2018, 0.06% of Norway’s population consisted of refugee claimants (Center for Global Development 2018). All claimants are housed in buildings constructed and meant for refugee claimants, unless they have close family or special needs that allow them to reside elsewhere (The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) n.d.-a; UDI n.d.-b; Hauge and Støa 2016). A need for long-term

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23There are many restrictions on being allowed to reside outside of a reception centre. https://www.udi.no/en/have-applied/protection-asylum/ordinary-asylum-reception-centre/alternative-reception-centres/
housing solutions was noted in 2015 during the Syrian Refugee Crisis, due to the varied quality of housing often being very basic, maintenance not being prioritized, and refugee claimants having little private space (Hauge and Støa 2016). Accommodation provided is designed for a relatively short stay, but in 2014 it was noted that one in four residents lived in a centre for more than 3 years (Hauge and Støa 2016). Norway had difficulty finding housing for the refugee claimants arriving in the country during the Syrian Refugee Crisis, and in an attempt to cut down on housing costs, started offering a short-term financial incentive to refugee claimants who agreed to return to their home countries (Frej 2016).

8.1.2. Safety concerns

In Germany, reports acknowledge several major safety concerns in their refugee claimant system (Kalkmann 2018). The initial reception centers do not follow a strict common standard. There are national “sanitation plans,” but conditions have been known to vary (Kalkmann 2018). Many of the centres are refurbished army barracks. Centers suffered from significant over-crowding in 2016 and 2017, which led to some policies — such as accommodating single women and families in separate buildings or wings of a building — being frequently dropped in many facilities (Kalkmann 2018). This has led to a lack of security, particularly for women and children. However, occupancy rates have since dropped significantly, improving conditions (Kalkmann 2018). When the system is operating under non-crisis-level circumstances, refugee claimants in Germany who are not from designated safe countries of origin are sent to local accommodation centres (Kalkmann 2018). In the last few years specifically, there have been safety concerns in these facilities as well. Living conditions differ significantly from region to region (Scholten et al. 2017). Concerns have been raised about limited space for recreation for children (Kalkmann 2018). In addition to general living conditions, the security of refugee claimants has also been a significant concern (Kalkmann 2018). Approximately

24 If an asylum claimant arriving in Germany is not from a designated country of origin, they spend up to, but legally no more than, six months in “initial reception centres.” If they are from a designated safe country of origin, asylum claimants are obligated to stay in the initial reception centre until a decision is reached on their asylum.
313 attacks on accommodation facilities took place in 2017 (a drop from 900 reported attacks in 2016) (Kalkmann 2018). Temporary facilities in Germany also posed a safety risk to some refugee claimants (Kalkmann 2018). During peak periods, facilities frequently did not comply with basic standards. Depression as well as alcohol and drug abuse have been commonly reported in temporary facilities in Berlin.

In Sweden the targeting of refugee claimant housing by arsonists led to the locations of planned and established refugee claimant housing no longer being revealed to the public (Sveriges Radio 2015). Outside of concerns associated with this, physical well-being is not noted to be a significant concern for refugee claimants in the housing system. In 2015-2017 the majority of refugee claimants were housed in large, institution-like housing facilities, sometimes even after their claim was approved (Leiler et al. 2018). Individuals residing in refugee housing facilities have shown high levels of psychological distress and rate their quality of life as low (Leiler et al., 2018). It is unclear how much of this distress is associated with housing conditions and how much is associated with claim processing times, but both have been identified as contributing factors. If refugee claimants chose to seek private accommodation with friends or relatives Sweden is unable to guarantee the safety and appropriateness of their housing (Williams and Hallstedt 2018).

It should be acknowledged that it is unclear from publicly available information whether the numerous safety concerns in German refugee claimant accommodation facilities are solely due to over-crowding, or if there is fault in the system. However, the lack of reports of similar concerns in Sweden (which also has a very high influx of refugee claimants), suggests that some aspect of the German system contribute to the problem.

There have been no reports of concerns for refugee claimant’s physical safety in Norway’s refugee claimant housing system, and Norway has not acknowledged any concerns. Refugee claimants living in centralized housing in Norway have been found to experience more psychological distress than those living in decentralized housing (Hague and Denizou 2016).
8.1.3. Access to government housing support services

Both Germany and Norway provide housing for refugee claimants and mandate that they remain in this accommodation until their claim is approved (Kalkmann 2018; UDI n.d.-c). This means that unlike under other systems it is unnecessary to provide this population with house-hunting aid or other housing support services such as these (Kalkmann 2018).

Sweden allows, but does not require, claimants to find private housing. Claimants who do decide to find private housing do not seem to have access to services designed for their specific needs (Williams and Hallstedt 2018).

8.1.4. Integration support services connected to housing

In Germany, refugee claimants who are considered to have a high chance of receiving refugee status are given access to Germany’s main integration program under the 2016 German Integration Act (Konle-Seidl 2018). This program involves 600 hours of German language training and 100 hours of civic orientation (Konle-Seidl 2018). It is unclear how access to this program may differ based on what type of housing refugee claimants reside in, and how connected this integration program is with housing.

In Sweden, the government has provided funding to non-governmental organizations and educational associations to provide meaningful activities that aid integration for refugee claimants and to set up venues where they can form a community. Activities can include language courses, information about the asylum process, children’s activities, supports, and informational sessions about wider Swedish society (Williams and Hallstedt 2018). However, refugee claimants in Sweden do not have access to the country’s main integration program until they have been settled in a municipality25 and their claim has been approved (Konle-Seidl 2018).

Norway has specific services available to aid refugee claimant integration (UDI 2015). However, these services are only available to claimants who qualify for the

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25 Severe housing shortages in Sweden have delayed the start times of the integration program even longer.
integration reception centre. This centre is aimed at refugee claimants who will most likely be granted residence permits, according to Norway’s initial assessment of their case (UDI n.d.-b). While in the centre they participate in the full-time integration “qualification program” offered by the municipality where they are located (UDI n.d.-b).

8.2. Indirect Housing Support

In Germany, refugee claimants have access to income that can be used in support of housing in two ways — benefits and through employment. Refugee claimants have access to benefits (mandated by the Asylum Seeker’s Benefit Act) from the time they make their application (MacGregor 2018). The amount available depends on family size, whether they are staying inside or outside an accommodation centre, and whether or not they are employed (MacGregor 2018). If a claimant is staying in an accommodation centre, they have access to low levels of benefits because they are provided with food, heating, clothing, and other necessities such as sanitary products (MacGregor 2018). In terms of employment, German refugee claimants should technically have access to the labour market after three months in the country (Kalkmann 2018). However, refugee claimants are not permitted to work while they are living in an obligatory initial reception centre. The maximum period of stay in these centres is supposed to be six months, but as of July 2017, Federal States may impose a 24-month obligation to stay in the reception centres (Kalkmann 2018). After the waiting period has ended, access to the labour market still has some restrictions. Claimants must first apply for an employment permit, the application for which requires proof that they have a concrete job offer (Kalkmann 2018). Until 2018, refugee claimants also had to pass a “priority review” for any position they apply for within the first 15 months (Konle-Seidl 2018). This means that it must be proven that there is no one with a more certain immigration status who could be hired instead. Refugee claimants may not be self-employed for the duration of their refugee claim process.

In Sweden, when a refugee claimant arrives in the country they inform the migration agency of their resources. If their resources are limited or non-existent, claimants gain access to daily compensation to cover their daily expenses
(Migrationsverket 2018a). The amount a refugee claimant is entitled to varies depending on where they are living, whether food is included with that accommodation, their age, and their family size (Migrationsverket 2018a). In order to gain employment refugee claimants must have a certificate (AT-UND) stating that they have all the necessary requirements, which include having proper identification papers, and solid reasons for their application for asylum (Migrationsverket 2018b).

In Norway, all refugee claimants living at a reception centre are given what is referred to as the “basic amount.” No application is necessary to receive this amount. How much is received depends on both application status and the type of reception centre the refugee claimant is residing at. The basic amount received by refugee claimants has changed multiple times in the past few years (Kvittingen 2017). Norway allows refugee claimants to apply for and be granted a work permit if they have had their asylum interview, there is no doubt about their identity, and they have yet to receive an answer to their application for protection (UDI n.d.-d). If a claimant is from Syria or Eritrea, which makes it highly likely their claim will be approved, they need not have had their interview (UDI n.d-d).

8.3. Community involvement

Germany sub-contracts non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to run some of their accommodation centres. In Germany whether responsibility for these centres is delegated to NGOs or municipal governments in a specific region is decided by German state governments (Kalkmann 2018).

Norway also sub-contracts NGOs to run some of their accommodation centres, but whether NGOs, municipalities, or private commercial actors are given responsibility for a specific centre is based on a public tender (Larsen 2014). The contract specifies certain conditions that must be followed (Larsen 2014).

In Sweden, NGOs are not responsible for specific centres, but are funded by the government to provided services that aid integration to claimants being housed by the government (Williams and Hallstedt 2018).
All three countries also have other NGOs supporting refugee claimant housing that do not work with the government, but instead rely on private donations (Mayblin and James 2017).

8.4. **Program Structure**

This section explores how Germany, Norway, and Sweden compare in terms of program structure.

8.4.1. **Decentralized/Centralized approach to housing**

Germany makes significant use of centralized accommodation, but after six months, a primarily decentralized structure is utilized (Scholten et al., 2017). There are some mandatory national guidelines that must be adhered to (such as basic levels of sanitation, minimum space that must be provided to each person), but significant authority is given to local governments to determine how centers are run (Kalkmann 2018).

Sweden has a more decentralized approach from the start, because it prefers renting private accommodation for refugee claimants to having specific buildings constructed for refugee claimants to live in (Scholten et al., 2017). However, everything is still organized by the federal government, and these decentralized accommodation spaces are rented and paid for through Sweden’s Migrationsverket (Migration Agency). The housing system is designed to be able to scale up and scale down quickly in response to current needs (Fratzke 2017). In order to retain this flexibility, the Migrationsverket obtains facilities through a combination of standing contracts with landlords, housing providers, and public procurement calls, rather than maintaining its own properties (Fratzke 2017). The guidelines followed by non-decentralized centres, where many refugee claimants have had to live since 2015 when demand exceeded what was able to be provided using the decentered approach, are also set nationally.

Norway initially has an entirely centralized approach, but this only lasts one week, after which refugee claimant housing is primarily a decentralized responsibility.
However, while local centres are run by municipal governments or NGOS, the guidelines they must follow are set nationally (Scholten et al., 2017).

8.4.2. Funding Framework

In Germany, the federal government offers block grants covering the cost of housing and social benefits to sub-national governments (OECD 2017). The German federal government claims that it covers approximately 70% of the fiscal cost of refugee claimants to sub-national governments (OECD 2017). The German States claim that they actually cover closer to 40% of costs (OECD 2017).

In Sweden, the federal government (through the Swedish Migration Agency) is entirely responsible for funding housing for refugee claimants (Fratzke 2017).

In Norway, funding refugee claimant housing is entirely a federal responsibility (Scholten et al., 2017).

8.4.3. Freedom of movement

Refugee claimants in Germany have no right to choose their place of residence (Kalkmann 2018).

Refugee claimants in Sweden are able to choose their place of residence if they acquire housing privately rather than through the Swedish Migration Agency (Williams and Hallstedt 2018).

Refugee claimants in Norway have an extremely restricted ability to decide where they will live (UDI n.d.-c). Health related issues or presence of family in a specific area may allow them to qualify to live in an area, but claimants are not free to choose.

8.4.4. Dispersal policies

As soon as refugee claimants in Germany come into contact with authorities, they are sent to a central accommodation centre where they are registered and informed of the asylum procedure (Scholten et al., 2017). The next day, they are transported via bus to the central office of the arrival centre where it is determined whether the asylum
procedure will be carried out in Berlin or another State (Kalkmann 2018). This is determined using the “EASY” Distribution system. The system takes into account the tax income and population of each German state before allocating responsibility for refugee claimants (Scholten et al., 2017).

In Sweden, allocation of refugee claimants is based on each municipalities’ labour market, its population size, the number of newly arrived refugee claimants in the area, and housing availability (Scholten et al., 2017).

In Norway, refugee claimants are assigned to reception centres based on available space and if the accommodation is adapted to their needs (UDI n.d.-c). All municipalities are free to accept how many and which refugees to settle, given their capacity to provide public social, health and educational services with the financial support provided by the federal government (Larsen 2014).

Table 3. Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
<th>Norway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Housing Support</td>
<td>Access to Public Housing</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety Concerns</td>
<td>Difficulty finding housing that suits needs, some concern about risk to physical and mental well-being</td>
<td>Difficulty finding housing that suits needs, some concern about risk to physical and mental well-being</td>
<td>Difficulty finding housing that suits needs, some concern about risk to mental well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to government housing support services</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration support services connected to housing</td>
<td>Yes, but not universal</td>
<td>Yes, but limited</td>
<td>Yes, but universal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Housing Support</td>
<td>Monetary support</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>Role of non-governmental organizations</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, but minimal</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program structure</td>
<td>Decentered/Centralized approach to housing</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding Framework</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>Federal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Norway</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of Movement</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispersal policy</td>
<td>Yes, criteria-based system</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, criteria-based on participation in government housing program</td>
<td>Yes, based on space and municipality’s preference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**8.5. Analysis of Key Findings**

As identified in Table 3, my analysis found seven common characteristics in all three cases: access to public housing, the presence of safety concerns, integration support services connected to housing, monetary support, non-governmental organizations having a role, a mixed decentered/centered approach, and a dispersal policy. Of these, three are already present in Canada — safety concerns, monetary support, and a significant role for non-governmental organizations. The ways in which these commonalities are present is, however, different from how they are presented in any of the cases. To start, the safety concerns present in Canada are associated with homelessness. The majority of safety concerns in the case studies are associated with the large complexes in which refugee claimants are housed for long periods of time in Europe. These do not exist in Canada. In terms of the attacks on refugee claimants and refugee claimant housing that were seen in one of the cases, Canada saw one arson attack on a hotel where refugee claimants were residing, but there has been little indication that this will continue to be an issue. The ways in which these safety concerns were dealt with (trying to normalize the type of housing provided to refugee claimants as much as possible and keeping locations of refugee claimant housing discreet) should be considered when designing policy options. The second joint commonality — monetary support — is comparably present in both Canada and the case studies discussed. All refugee claimants in Canada also have access to work permits and social assistance.\(^{26}\) In terms of the third joint commonality, the role of non-governmental organizations, Canadian organizations are actually responsible for more than they are in the case studies considered. This is because Canadian governments

\(^{26}\) Much like in the cases there are time and other constraints on this. See Chapter 4 for more details.
take far less responsibility for the housing of refugee claimants than the governments of the cases considered.

The remaining four common characteristics are not clearly presented in Canada or are problematically presented. The first of these is guaranteed access to housing. In all the cases considered refugee claimants are legally guaranteed access to housing, and significant efforts have been put in to build housing specifically for claimants. Neither of these are true of Canada. The second problematically presented characteristic is the presence of integration supports connected to housing. This is present to a limited extent in the cases considered, primarily targeted at those who it seems are most likely to have their claim accepted. However, this is a completely non-existent government priority in relation to claimants in Canada. While some integration services are available to refugee claimants, the government has not designed nor funded any specifically for their use. Third, all cases had a mixed centered-decentered approach to housing. While the Canadian federal government has provided some emergency funds to help provinces and municipalities cover the cost of housing, they do not acknowledge any specific responsibility to do so. This is nothing like the responsibilities acknowledged in the mixed decentered-centered systems in place in the cases considered. Finally, the fourth characteristic that is present in all cases considered but not Canada is a dispersal policy. Canada does not have a policy or any incentives in place encouraging the dispersal of refugee claimants across either provinces or the country.
Chapter 9.

Secondary Methodology

The validity of the case study findings are evaluated in this section using semi-structured interviews. The four main practices considered are access to public housing, integration support services, the use of a decentered/centralized approach to housing, and the use of dispersal policies.

9.1. Access to Public Housing

Access to housing for refugee claimants was noted to be a significant issue by all interview participants. However, when asked, respondents often struggled to define exactly how big of an issue it is. While refugee claimants have to keep the federal government informed of their location for the purpose of their claim, cities seem to lack information about how many refugee claimants are in the city and their demographics. The issue of data becomes more pronounced when considering cities like Toronto, which see a lot of secondary migration with refugee claimants coming to the city from Québec. However, respondents from non-profit organizations in Vancouver and Toronto spoke anecdotally of hidden homelessness among refugee claimants, such as multiple families sharing single family apartments and instances of claimants living in housing that “nobody else would take if they had some buying power” (Loren Balisky, Kinbrace Refugee Housing and Support). The prevalence of these sorts of issues are backed up by studies that were done between 2000-2010, when there was more affordable housing available than there is now.

In terms of Canada’s response to issues with the lack of affordable housing for refugee claimants, a respondent from the BC provincial government noted that they “don’t think policy has caught up with reality yet.” Interviewees note that despite Canada having seen spikes in refugee claimant numbers previously, this spike has been more

27 Interview guide and interviewee details are available in Appendix C.
28 For more details see Chapter 4.
sustained than those previously witnessed. The need for a plan for future spikes, and to
deal with the continued higher level of refugee claimant influx is a consistent theme
among all the interviews. All provinces that were interviewed for this study noted that
they are now working on planning for future spikes. The majority of planning being
undergone by governments was noted to be fairly broad, with provinces and cities
focusing on understanding what resources are available, what resources could be made
available, and how different groups would respond in the face of a spike. Non-profit
service-providing organizations interviewed as a part of this study have also been
undergoing planning processes. However, this experience was described very differently
by the participants. The Vancouver non-profit was able to secure funding from the
provincial government and is currently mapping affordable housing available in the city.
The Toronto non-profit, on the other hand, will stop receiving funding from the
provincial government on April 1, 2019, and currently does not have anything to replace
it.

Something specifically noted by service-provider organizations is the connection
between access to information and access to housing. Having a single place, such as a
reception or welcome centre, refugee claimants can be directed to is acknowledged to be
an enormous resource. However, it is also noted that the effectiveness of implementing
this option is limited if the reception centre is unable to find housing which claimants can
be referred to.

One of the biggest barriers to dealing with the issue of refugee claimant housing is
that they are not the only group struggling due to a lack of affordable housing. As a
respondent from the BC government summarized, “the housing need for several
demographic groups is so great that the housing need of this subset is not exceptional, but
actually consistent with what others are experiencing in the market.” The wider
Canadian struggle with access to affordable housing means that it would be difficult for
the government to publicly justify building long-term housing specifically for refugee
claimants, especially when refugee claimants have access to the same social and
emergency housing other Canadians do. This inability to justify addressing refugee
claimant needs is further aggravated, interview participants note, by Canadians’ negative
perception of refugee claimants in comparison to resettled refugees. One provincial
government official specifically pointed to discrimination that results from this negative perception as the “biggest challenge” faced by refugee claimants. They note that having a provincial government that is “not fond of refugee claimants” and private citizens who are less willing to be involved are significant potential barriers to appropriate action being taken.

Respondents also highlight the issue with assuming refugee claimant housing issues will be solved as general affordable housing problems are dealt with. Most interviewees noted that claimant needs are often not considered when thinking about the construction of social housing. For instance, the national housing plan released by the federal government in 2018 does not directly refer to refugee claimants. Multiple respondents suggest that it is important for refugee claimants to be specifically referred to when planning for and considering the housing needs of vulnerable groups in Canada in order to ensure actions taken are effective.

9.2. Integration Support Services

The importance of integration support services is most highlighted by interview participants from non-profits. As delineated in the case studies, integration support services are generally provided only to claimants who governments feel are most likely to have their claim accepted. While the majority of refugee claims in Canada are currently being accepted, no claimant has access to an integration program. Interviews from non-profits emphasize the need for governments to treat refugee claimants as “persons of potential” and “future Canadians.” The path to this, participants from a non-profit background noted, is to provide claimants with services that allow them to integrate into Canadian society.

Provinces also spoke to integration, but in a different way. Integration was noted to be a reason why it might not be beneficial to have refugee claimant housing facilities that separate refugee claimants from the rest of the population. This is supported by the fact that in case studies and general literature it is noted that refugee claimants have higher levels of psychological distress when in centralized housing meant for refugee claimants than when in decentralized housing.
9.3. Decentered/Centralized approach

As acknowledged in Chapter 4 there is a significant lack of clarity as to the exact nature of the responsibilities of the federal government and of provincial governments. This confusion is reflected in interview responses. In response to the recent influx of refugee claimants all interview participants note that their province or municipality has been planning for the future. A common factor among almost all interviews was a wish for a locally-driven, regionally tailored approach to housing refugee claimants. While all respondents expressed the wish for the federal government to take on more financial responsibility, the general belief seems to be that systems are better, longer-lasting, and more effective when designed and implemented on a regional basis. When asked what an optimal system would look like the provinces interviewed for this study described a process which would involve reimbursement of costs, not direct provision of services. A respondent from the City of Toronto noted that the municipality has also asked for reimbursement of incurred costs. However, they have additionally recommended that the federal government widen access to the settlement services to include refugee claimants. These services are currently only provided to permanent residents. Non-profit, service providing organizations did not note a preference for whether funding should be funneled through the provincial or federal government, but did note a need for consistency, and for whatever is put in place to be grounded in the community. As a respondent from Vancouver non-profit, Kinbrace Refugee Housing and Support, puts it “I’m interested in something that lasts, and the longest lasting thing is what is embedded in the community, and that is driven by more of a non-profit set of values.” Non-profit organizations also noted that not all provincial governments are equally open to playing an active role in the provision of services to refugee claimants, with Ontario pushing back, and BC being more involved. This is, however, noted to likely be correlated with the vast difference in the number of arrivals in the two provinces.

9.4. Dispersal Policies

Unlike in the cases considered in the case study analysis, freedom of movement is a Charter right in Canada which refugee claimants cannot be denied. This means that
refugee claimants cannot be told to settle and stay in a specific place. Due to this, while interview respondents note that a dispersal policy might be useful in terms of moving refugee claimants to places where housing might be more affordable, an incentivization of this move would be required. Further complicating this situation would be the fact that refugee claimants generally move to seek employment opportunities or cultural communities. The presence of both of these factors increases integration outcomes in the long-term. Multiple interview participants, from both provinces and non-profits, note that it is important to pay attention to the natural flows of refugee claimants. There is also the issue that refugee claimants require access to certain services, such as legal aid, language services, and even housing support, that is generally only available in large centres. The interviews highlighted the fact that a dispersal policy that does not take into account cultural communities, employment, and access to services along with housing is not likely to be successful as a whole. It is also unclear based on the literature if a dispersal policy that takes all of these factors into consideration would have a result much different from the natural flows of secondary migration currently being experienced.

9.5. Summary of Findings

In summary, the case studies and interviews both point towards a need to improve access to housing, the integration services attached to housing, and the need for an agreed upon, mixed decentered-centered system. In terms of access to housing, there are three key areas of focus — increasing the amount of housing, improving the quality of service provision for refugee claimants, and ensuring that refugee claimants are included when budgeting and planning social housing projects. When considering the integration services attached to housing, the main change that must be made is making it both a factor and part of what is available to refugee claimants. Finally, when considering the implementation of a proper mixed decentered-centralized approach to housing refugee claimants it must be made certain, first, that all parties agree and are held accountable, and second, that the system is financially and logistically feasible. The system must also allow for the incredible regional variance present across Canada and allow for it to be as locally-driven as possible.
Chapter 10.

Policy Options and Criteria

As noted in Chapter 6, the policy problem addressed by this capstone is that an increasing number of refugee claimants, who experience significant barriers to housing, are dependent on limited housing support infrastructure. This chapter develops policy options that work to improve the experience of refugee claimants in Canada, and to ensure they have access to safe housing while their claim is being processed. The options presented aim to do this by increasing access to housing and lowering current barriers through enhanced communication and planning. All options presented are designed to be flexible to account for: one, fluctuations in the number of refugee claimants who arrive in the country, two, the decrease in claim processing time reform is likely to bring, and three, the diversity of needs in different provinces.

10.1. Policy Options

In this section, three policy options derived from the case studies and interviews are presented. Given that this report focuses on the provision of service and the facilitation of services at a national level, policy options focus on the federal government.

10.1.1. Option 1. Reception Centres

This policy option improves access to housing in two main ways. First, by improving access to housing in the time when claimants first arrive in Canada, and second by increasing access to information surrounding housing.

There are three major components to this option. The first is having the federal government fund reception centers within close proximity to major points of border

\[\text{29} \] In Chapter 2 it was noted that the government recently announced new approaches to claim processing that are likely to significantly decrease the time it takes to reach a decision on a notable number of claims. These and other reforms are planned in order to address the growing backlog of claims. It can reasonably be assumed that these will be somewhat effective.
crossing and in all major city centers where the majority of refugee claimants reside. These centers must act as a point of first contact for refugee claimants and must be aware of and kept informed of all housing vacancies. In the short-term, these centers will likely have significantly limited or no housing attached to them. However, in the medium to long-term, in areas where large numbers of refugee claimants consistently arrive, the reception centers must be attached to emergency housing. The second major component of this policy is to ensure that a recent and up-to-date “map” of affordable housing available in the region is accessible to all centres. This involves the cataloging of available housing, under-utilized housing, and potential new housing in an area. Finally, this policy recommends the utilization of these centers to collect better data and have a greater understanding of the population of refugee claimants in an area and of the specific issues they are facing. Cities and service-providers have little information about the population of refugee claimants in their region. Having all refugee claimants pass through a reception centre means that data can be collected, and future policy and operational decisions can be made with more knowledge of the target population.

While the federal government would fund these centers, it is recommended that the day-to-day operation of each center be contracted out to either a provincial government, a municipal government, or a service-providing organization. The federal government should, however, establish national standards that all centers must follow. Some provinces (namely Manitoba and Québec) already have a reception process similar to this in place. The implementation of this option would require the funding of these centers and also the regulation of these centers to ensure that they meet the national standards set.

10.1.2. Option 2. Federal-Provincial/Territorial Agreement

This policy option involves adding a section or annex to the federal-provincial/territorial agreements that govern the sharing of responsibility for immigration between each regional government and the federal government. This addition to the agreement would address two main things: the division of costs associated with housing
refugee claimants and the division of service provision responsibilities associated with refugee claimants.\textsuperscript{30}

Different provinces offer their residents different housing support services. This is true not just for refugees, but for all their denizens. This makes it difficult to put forward a single model for cost splitting that should be included in the agreements made by the federal government and every province. This policy puts forward two funding options that the federal government should offer when negotiating this agreement: first, the coverage of a specific percentage of costs associated with housing services, and second, the provision of a fixed amount per refugee claimant. The amount of money and the strict division of financial responsibility decided on in the final agreement is not of relevance to this policy option; what matters is strictly establishing both parties’ financial responsibilities. By making it clear who is responsible for what, all parties can better plan and budget for the future. However, if the second funding approach is chosen, it is recommended that the amount be indexed, and the compensation agreement be modeled on the one present in Annex B (compensation for resettlement programs) of the Canada-Québec Immigration Agreement.

In terms of the division of responsibility for service provision, it is important that the agreement clearly note what will be provided by the federal government (if anything) and what will be provided by the provincial government. If there is a division of responsibility it must be a clean division, with little to no overlap. This is necessary in order to avoid conflict and the potential for some refugee claimants to fall between the cracks.

\textbf{10.1.3. Option 3. Federal Settlement Services}

This policy option provides refugee claimants with access to the settlement services that are available to resettled refugees through the federal Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). RAP is the system through which resettled refugees arriving

\textsuperscript{30} This policy option would likely also be well suited to developing a cohesive approach to the provision of other services (such as legal aid) to refugee claimants. However, making specific recommendations as to the inclusion of such language is outside of the scope of this project.
in Canada are provided integration services. The program includes a start-up allowance, monthly income support, temporary accommodation, assistance finding permanent accommodation, and access to additional allowances to aid in setting up a household. Income support provided is based on social assistance rates in the province a refugee claimant resides in. Temporary housing is funded by the federal government. Permanent accommodation is found for people in the RAP program by regional RAP service-provider organizations. Recipients pay for this housing themselves using their monthly income support or other funds.

The structure through which services are provided through RAP would need to be significantly modified to fit the needs of refugee claimants. Usually RAP services begin with arranging for resettled refugees to be received at the airport. Given that refugee claimants file their claim once they arrive in the country, this option recommends that refugee claimants gain access to RAP after a refugee claimant is determined to be eligible to file a claim in Canada. Another major factor that will have to be accounted for is the lack of ability to control where refugee claimants arrive and reside. Resettled refugees are dispersed across the country, but this would not be the case for refugee claimants. This has the positive implication of not requiring an expansion of settlement service-provision capabilities equally across the country. However, it does require that the federal government pronouncedly increase capacity in high-traffic areas.

10.2. Evaluation Criteria

Seven criteria are used to evaluate which policy option is best able to improve the access and quality of housing support services available to refugee claimants. These criteria are: effectiveness, equity and fairness, cost, administrative complexity, compliance, public acceptance, and stakeholder acceptance. The measures for each criterion are indicated in the table below (Table 4). The total value of each option is computed with each criterion being of equal weight.
Table 4. Criteria and Measures Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Outcomes</td>
<td>Does the policy directly or indirectly help refugee claimants gain access to housing?</td>
<td>Type of impact on housing: • Direct access to housing • Indirect impact on access to housing • Little or no impact on access to housing</td>
<td>High = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity &amp; Fairness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability of policy options for diverse refugee claimant population</td>
<td>Does the policy take into account the needs of various age groups, genders?</td>
<td>Equally beneficial to all groups Some groups benefit less than others Some groups do not benefit at all</td>
<td>High = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to federal government</td>
<td>Annual cost of each option</td>
<td>More than $500M Between $164.7M and $500M Less than or equal to $164.7M</td>
<td>High = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Complexity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of negotiation</td>
<td>Number of actors who must sign off on agreed upon policy</td>
<td>1-2 actors 2-3 actors 4 or more actors</td>
<td>High = 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low = 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of administration</td>
<td>Number of actors who must be involved in day-to-day administration</td>
<td>1-2 actors 2-3 actors 4 or more actors</td>
<td>High =1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low = 0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of all parties playing their part in the policy</td>
<td>Likelihood of compliance No compliance issues expected If partial compliance with no recourse is possible If it is likely compliance will be an issue and no recourse is possible</td>
<td></td>
<td>High = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of public acceptance</td>
<td>Likelihood of public support for policy option</td>
<td>Public Support Neutral Negative</td>
<td>High = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from stakeholders</td>
<td>Support from non-governmental service-provider organizations</td>
<td>Expected support/opposition: Support Neutral Oppose</td>
<td>High = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low = 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10.2.1. Effectiveness

Effectiveness considers whether the policy being considered directly improves access to housing for refugee claimants. A score of 3 is given if the policy provides direct access to housing. Direct access is defined as the provision of housing to refugee claimants. A score of 2 is given if the policy indirectly improves access to housing through monetary support. A score of 1 is given if the policy does not directly provide housing or monetary support.

10.2.2. Equity and Fairness

Equity and fairness assesses whether a policy is diversity-responsive and does not benefit some refugee claimants over others. A score of 3 is given if a policy is supportive of diversity-responsive service provision and does not prioritize one group of refugee claimants over another. A score of 2 is given if a policy is expected to benefit some refugee claimants more than others. A score of 1 is given if a policy does not benefit some refugee claimants.

10.2.3. Cost

Cost is measured as impact on the federal budget. To receive a score of 3 (representing low cost), a policy option has to cost less than or an equal amount to what the federal government has spent this year on emergency housing alone ($164.7 million) (Pinkerton 2019). To be considered medium cost a policy option has to cost more than $164.7 million and less than $500 million, which is how much the Ontario and Québec provincial governments — where the majority of claimants arrive and remain — claim refugee claimants have cost them (Pinkerton 2019). To be considered high cost, a score of 1, a policy option has to cost more than $500 million.

10.2.4. Administrative Complexity

Administrative complexity considers how difficult the policy is likely to be to administer and implement. This is measured in two ways. First, in terms of how many
actors must approve the policy before it is administered, and second in terms of how many actors are involved in its administration. Given that there are two measures of this criterion the maximum score possible for each will be cut in half. For both of the measures, a score of 1.5 means that it requires only one actor’s approval or involvement, a score of 1 means it requires two to three actors’ approval or involvement, and a score of 0.5 means it requires three or more actors’ approval or involvement.

10.2.5. Compliance

Compliance allows for the consideration of whether all parties involved are likely to play their part in the policy, whether that be funding or service provision. A score of 3 is given if there are no compliance issues expected. A score of 2 is given if partial compliance with a policy option is possible. A score of 1 is given if a party involved in the policy would strongly benefit from non-compliance and there are few measures holding them accountable.

10.2.6. Public Acceptance

Public acceptance evaluates public support for the proposed policy option. A score of 3 is given to policy options which are predicted to be supported by the public. A score of 2 is given to policy options which the public are expected to be neutral about. A score of 1 is given to policy options which the public is likely to disagree with.

10.2.7. Stakeholder Acceptance

Stakeholder acceptance considers support for the proposed policy options among key stakeholders. This is scored as expected support from service-provider organizations and advocacy groups. A score of 3 means the policy is expected to be supported, a score of 2 means that it is expected to be viewed neutrally, and a score of 1 means it would be opposed.
Chapter 11.

Evaluation of Policy Options

This section evaluates the policy options presented in the previous chapter using the criteria provided in Table 4 (available in Chapter 10). The results are available in Table 5 at the end of section 11.3.

11.1. Evaluation of Option 1: Reception centres

Effectiveness: Studies have consistently found that the period directly after refugee claimants arrive in Canada is when they are most precariously housed (ISSofBC 2018; Hiebert et al. 2009). During this period, claimants also have access to a limited set of services (see Chapter 4 for more details). This policy option would ensure that refugee claimants have access to safe housing during this initial period either by directly housing them or referring them to available housing. The use of reception centers is standard practice in European countries who receive a high volume of refugee claimants. This model has prevented homelessness among refugee claimants even at peak rates of influx because the region is always aware of where every refugee claimant is, exactly how much space is available, and the options open to each claimant. Given that this policy involves direct access to housing, the score given to this criterion is 3.

Equity and Fairness: This policy provides services to every refugee claimant equally. It also offers the opportunity to be diversity-responsive by holistically considering the needs of each claimant before referring them to housing services. There is no reason to expect that one group of refugee claimants will benefit more than another under this policy. The score given to this criterion is 3.

Cost: In February 2019, two service-providing organizations from Metro Vancouver proposed the foundation of a reception center to a standing committee on Citizenship and Immigration (Grunau 2019). They envision this center as one that would provide information and house refugee claimants for two to four weeks. They estimate the capital cost of establishing this one center as in-between $5 and 10 million, with the
operating cost being several million dollars annually (Grunau 2019). Assuming that under this option there would be one center near every major point of entry for refugee claimants and one in every city with a larger refugee claimant population, this would require about 15 centers as a starting point in Canada. Assuming costs will be in the higher range for all of these, establishing these centers would accrue $150 million in capital costs. The cost of some centers will be significantly more than others overall given that the value of land and the number of refugee claimants varies significantly across the country. There will also be some provinces, such as Québec and Manitoba, that already have facilities that can be capitalized on and better utilized under this system. The cost of mapping affordable housing, which was also associated with this policy, cost the BC government a maximum of $70,000 to complete (Grunau 2019). Given this, it can be estimated that reception centers will cost the Federal government more than $164.7M and less than $500M. This means this policy receives a score of 2.

*Administrative Complexity:* Four or more actors — including the federal government, provincial government, municipal government, and service-provider organizations in a region — must work together to effectively implement this policy. This gives this policy a score of 0.5 on the first measure. However, once a reception center is established administrative complexity decreases significantly as the federal government will only need to provide funding and the party that is contracted to run the center can operate independently. This means the policy receive a score of 1 on the second measure. The total score assigned for this criterion is 1.5

*Compliance:* This policy option requires consistent funding from the federal government that is responsive to the number of refugee claimants arriving or predicted to arrive in a region. There are anticipated to be significant compliance issues for this option. Should there be a decrease and then an increase in the number of refugee claims being filed in the country, or in a particular region, there is a strong likelihood that the federal government will not immediately raise funding at the first sign that numbers will

31 The Multi-Agency Partnership in BC was funded by the Province of BC to complete a project entitled “Towards a Housing Solution for Refugee Claimants in BC” (Grunau 2019). A significant part of this project included the conducting of research and asset mapping. In an interview conducted for this study with Loren Balisky, who is involved in the project, it was noted that the total funding provided was $70,000.
once again be growing. This can be inferred from the current tendency among all governments in Canada to respond to refugee claimants only when forced and on an emergency basis. There are no measures under this policy that hold the government accountable to provide funding until it becomes publicly apparent that a problem has arisen. The score for this criterion is 1.

Public Acceptance: Public perceptions of refugee claimants have been found to be very negative, especially in comparison to public perceptions of resettled refugees (Grove and Zwi, 2006; Huot et al., 2016). However, there is unlikely to be significant public outcry about reception centers unless it is announced as a high cost investment into refugee claimant housing. If this policy succeeds and leads to fewer media reports of refugee claimants in emergency housing it is likely that this policy would be received fairly neutrally by the public. Therefore, the score for this criterion is 2.

Stakeholder Acceptance: This policy option is one that service-provider organizations across the country have been advocating for over a significant period of time (Grunau 2019). This means it is likely to be well received. The score for this criterion is 3.

11.2. Evaluation of Option 2: Federal-Provincial/Territorial Agreement

Effectiveness: This policy does not involve the provision of housing or monetary support to refugee claimants. It is not guaranteed to change the services that are currently available to them. It will lead to less conflict between federal, provincial, and municipal governments, which would make a more organized approach to housing refugee claimants easier to accomplish. However, no direct results can be guaranteed. The score given to this criterion is 1.

Equity and Fairness: This policy was designed specifically to be flexible in order to accommodate the diversity of regional approaches and considerations. However, different systems have different benefits. Through this system the federal government would essentially be ensuring the housing services available to a refugee claimant are the same as those available to others in the province they reside in. This leads to equity issues
because some provinces have better social housing systems than others, meaning that refugee claimants across the country will not have equivalent experiences. The score given to this criterion is 2.

Cost: This policy option is considered to be fairly low cost because it involves negotiation between the provinces and the federal government. However, the results of this agreement need not be low cost. The expense that will be associated with the result of this policy option is dependent on the federal government’s ability to negotiate. The score provided to this criterion does not take excess expenses that may result from this into account and therefore the score is 3.

Administrative Complexity: The administration of this policy is fairly complex and requires extensive communication and negotiation between the federal and provincial government, as well as extensive consultation between the provincial government and invested parties in the region. The score for the first measure is, therefore, 0.5. However, once an agreement is made it will likely simply require healthy communication between the province and federal government, ensuring clarity on both sides. For the second measure the score is 1. The total score for this criterion is 1.5.

Compliance: Placing language surrounding the responsibilities of different levels of government in relation to refugee claimants in the Immigration Agreement between the two provinces should mean that there are no compliance issues. There have been no significant issues noted to occur in relation to the basic reimbursement language in the Canada-Québec Immigration Agreement which has been in place for over 30 years. The score for this criterion is 3.

Public Acceptance: Public reaction to this proposed policy option is expected to be fairly neutral. There is nothing to suggest that a particularly negative reaction would result from the addition of language related to refugee claimants in the Immigration Agreement. The score for this criterion is 2.

Stakeholder Acceptance: There has been no visible advocacy for this option by any non-governmental service-provider organizations or advocacy groups. Reaction to this policy option is therefore expected to be fairly neutral. The score for this criterion is 2.
11.3. Evaluation of Option 3: Federal Settlement Services

*Effectiveness:* This policy option makes a certain group (RAP SPOs) responsible for finding refugee claimants permanent housing. Until they find that permanent housing, the federal government is required to fund temporary housing for refugee claimants. Given that housing is directly provided to refugee claimants, the score for this criterion is 3.

*Equity and Fairness:* Under this policy, access to housing and other services would not be available until a claimant is deemed eligible to file a protection claim. This takes three days after a claimant presents themselves. The majority of the time claimants present themselves almost immediately, but sometimes they do not. Until they are deemed eligible to file a claim, refugee claimants would be dependent on available emergency services. For this reason, the score for this criterion is 2.

*Cost:* This policy option is high in cost. It requires the federal government to essentially take full responsibility for refugee claimants from the time their claim is deemed eligible. This involves finding both temporary housing and permanent housing very quickly as well as the provision of income support. All of these cost significant amounts of money. The money spent on income support would virtually be equal to that which the federal government transfers the provinces yearly to reimburse them for the costs of providing social assistance to refugee claimants. However, the start-up funds provided to refugee claimants, and housing costs would be new. A single adult without dependents is provided with $3,056 in start-up costs (RSTP 2017). Given that 55,025 people filed a refugee claim in Canada in 2018, this would result in an upper limit of $168,156,400 million dollars (IRCC 2019a). This is an upper limit, because as mentioned in Chapter 3, not all refugee claimants are adults — a significant portion are children. However, the number of families is unknown, making it difficult to take that into account when calculating a cost estimate. It is very difficult to estimate the housing costs. However, given that it requires significant emergency housing, and that all this emergency housing must now be funded solely by the federal government, it is unlikely the costs associated with emergency housing will go down. This places this policy option in the high cost range, giving it a score of 1.
Administrative Complexity: The expansion of RAP to allow it to aid refugee claimants is administratively complex. It will require extensive communication between regional RAP offices, the provincial government, municipal government, and regional services providers to determine how this new system will work. This means it receives a score of 0.5 on the first measure. However, once the policy is implemented, its everyday operation will only require communication between the RAP offices and service providers in the area. This means it receives a score of 1 on the second measure. Altogether this criterion receives a score of 1.5.

Compliance: This policy option gives the federal government full responsibility, and makes refugee claimants part of an already existent and well-functioning program. It is unlikely, and there is little motive to not comply with the option once it is implemented. The score for this criterion is 3.

Public Acceptance: Canadians perceive refugee claimants very differently from resettled refugees, and this difference in perception is what would likely make this option quite controversial. A lot of “myth-busting” surrounding refugee claimants consists of explanations that they do not have access to RAP, in order to assuage public concerns of refugee claimants being “queue jumpers” (CCR n.d.-b; Puzic 2015; Grant 2018b). This means that providing a more robust set of services to refugee claimants is likely to encourage public discourse of and fears surrounding “queue jumping.” This criterion is given a score of 1.

Stakeholder Acceptance: The need to think of refugee claimants as future Canadians and to focus on permanent settlement is one that advocacy groups and service-providers have long advocated for. Recently, the Immigration Services Society of BC even recommended expanding eligibility for some federally-funded settlement services (ISSoBC). This all makes it likely that, in general, stakeholders will support this option. This criterion is given a score of 3.
Table 5. Policy Option Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Outcomes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity &amp; Fairness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitability of policy options for diverse refugee claimant population</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to federal government</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Complexity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of negotiation</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of administration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of all parties playing their part in the policy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of public acceptance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from stakeholders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.4. Recommendation

Based on the analysis of the proposed policy options, the best option to implement in the immediate term is the development of reception centers. Having reception centers in close proximity to all major points of entry and in cities with large portions of the refugee claimant population will directly improve access to housing in three ways: first, by directly providing emergency housing; second, by improving access to information about longer-term housing resources; and third, by ensuring maximum usage of all available resources or easily usable resources through improved data collection and
communication. This option will cost the federal government more than they are currently spending on refugee claimant housing. However, this increase in spending will likely decrease conflict with the provinces because the federal government will be working to solve the regional housing issues caused by the recent increase in refugee claimants. This option is also fairly administratively complex, but no option that is not administratively complex will be able to deal with this issue. Dealing with refugee claimant housing involves consideration of the needs of the federal government, provincial governments, municipal governments, and service providers. Any policy option that does not consider the roles and needs of all these parties will not be successful in handling this issue. The one major weakness of this policy option is compliance. In the longer-term, especially as governments change and this issue fades from public conscience, it is likely that consistent and appropriate funding will become an issue. To handle this issue, it is recommended that in the medium term the second policy option considered, federal-provincial/territorial agreements, also be implemented. Including language in these inter-governmental agreements that specifies the role of both the federal government and regional governments — in both funding and service provision — increases the likelihood of compliance and improves accountability. Implementing policy option 2 in the medium term will also decrease the likelihood of the type of conflict that is currently being seen between provinces and municipalities and the federal government. Together these two options will both improve access to housing, and clarify the roles of government, making it easier for all parties to plan ahead.

Aside from these two recommendations, this study also acknowledges three other considerations that must be taken into account when designing policies related to refugee claimant housing. First is the need to increase connections between settlement services and housing for refugee claimants. This has long been recommended by both the literature and service-providers (Wayland 2007; ISSofBC 2018). Once a more stable system is established for refugee claimant housing, this has to become more of a consideration. A second major consideration is the need to acknowledge the number and needs of refugee claimants when budgeting for and building social housing. Major plans like the National Housing Strategy need to mention refugee claimants by name. Finally, the importance of data-driven policy must be acknowledged. Data that is collected must
be passed down from the federal government to provinces, municipalities, and service-providers.
Chapter 12.

Conclusion

Refugee claimants across Canada are struggling to access stable, safe and affordable housing. Canada’s governments and service providers are struggling to help them. It will never be possible to fully plan for the arrival and housing of refugee claimants because it is something over which the government will never have control. However, in this study I explored and made recommendations concerning what changes can be made at a federal level to better respond to the problems being faced by refugee claimants. Through use of a case study analysis I identified several best practices from successful refugee claimant housing systems. These best practices included: guaranteed access to housing for all refugee claimants, integration services attached to housing, and the need for an agreed upon mixed decentered-centered system. I then followed up on this by using interviews to determine how these best practices are applicable in a Canadian context and whether there is anything else that must be taken into account. These interviews identified the need to increase the amount of housing and the quality of service provision for refugee claimants. It was also emphasized that the budgeting and planning of social housing projects must consider the needs of refugee claimants. Finally, it was highlighted that governments and service providers must work together to create a feasible approach to providing services to refugee claimants that all parties agree on and are held accountable by.

Using the findings from my methodology I developed three policy options: the construction of reception centers in high traffic areas, additions to the federal-provincial/territorial immigration agreements, and finally the provision of federal settlement services. These options were evaluated using seven criteria, which found that the immediate implementation of reception centers would be most beneficial. However, it is also recommended to implement the second option of federal-provincial/territorial immigration agreements in the medium term in order to deter conflict and ensure compliance.
While some research has been done concerning the experiences of refugee claimants in the Canadian housing market (see Chapter 4 for more details), not nearly enough information is available. Future research should work to identify what unique barriers claimants face, both when their claim is being processed and after it has been approved. There is also very limited research available that identifies the difference in housing issues encountered based on gender, age, sexual identity, race, ethnicity, and religion. Further work in this area would allow policy solutions to better take into account the diversity of housing supports that may be necessary to support diverse groups. Given the recent expansion in approaches to claim processing (see Chapter 2 for more details), it would also be beneficial for future studies to consider the different types of support systems that may be required by refugee claimants based on the process their claim undergoes. An additional examination of ways in which integration services can best be integrated into refugee claimant housing in Canada would also be advantageous.
References


Pinkerton, Charlie. (2019). Trudeau says Quebec to get resources for asylum seekers; no word on Ontario. iPolitics. Retrieved from https://ipolitics.ca/2019/03/21/trudeau-says-quebec-to-get-resources-for-asylum-seekers-no-word-on-ontario/


Appendix A.

Restrictions on Claiming Asylum

Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement

The first major restriction on people’s ability to claim asylum in Canada is the 2004 Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA). STCA requires that refugee claimants seek protection in the first of the two countries they arrive in (IRCC). IRPA requires the continual review of all third countries that are designated as safe, and as of now, the Canadian government has always found that the US meets international standards (IRCC 2017a). Refugee claimants can be exempt from the STCA on four conditions (IRCC 2017a). First, if they have a family member in Canada, second if they are an unaccompanied minor under the age of 18, third if they are an individual holding a valid Canadian visa, and finally if they have been charged with or convicted of an offence that could subject them to the death penalty in the US or in a third country. An unofficial fifth exemption, is that if a claimant enters Canada from the US at a point that is not an official port of entry, they are also exempt from the Safe Third Country Agreement and can claim asylum.

Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act

The second major restriction on the ability of foreign nationals to claim asylum in Canada is Bill C-31, or the Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act. Bill C-31 is an amendment to IRPA introduced in 2012 (Diop 2014). Through the passing of Bill C-31, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is able to declare that some non-citizens are Designated Foreign Nationals, or irregular arrivals (Diop 2014). If such an action is taken, those non-citizens who arrive to claim asylum are put into mandatory detention with limited review and are unable to apply for permanent residence for five years, even if they are found to have a genuine claim to asylum. If a negative decision is reached, it is not subject to review. This power was later used to designate eighty-five Romanians who arrived in 2012 as irregular arrivals (Diop 2014).
**The Balanced Refugee Reform Act**

The final major restriction on the ability of people to claim asylum in Canada is Bill C-11, or the Balanced Refugee Reform Act. Bill C-11 came into force at the same time as Bill C-31 and established the Designated Countries of Origin (DCO) policy (IRCC 2017a). This policy was meant to deter abuse of the refugee system by processing the claims of people from countries which are generally considered safe faster. This means that if their claim is determined to be unsubstantiated, they are sent home quickly. If an refugee claimant from a designated country of origin receives a negative decision, they cannot apply for a pre-removal risk assessment, which means they can be deported without their risk of danger or persecution being renewed.

In short, the STCA, Bill C-31, and Bill C-11 shape Canada’s approach to, and Canadians perception of the legality of refugee claimants in Canada. The use of the STCA’s unofficial fifth exemption — commonly referred to by the media as a “loop-hole” — has been a defining aspect of the debate surrounding the number of refugee claimants entering the country (CBC 2018). The lesser referenced Bills C-31 and C-11 also have significant roles because they define both the rights of those who come to Canada to claim asylum and the ability of the government to constrain both how and whose claims are considered.
Appendix B.

Process of Claiming Refugee Status

Generic Process

The refugee claim determination process begins with a claim being filed (IRB 2016). Claims can be filed either inland with a basis of claim form being submitted at an eligibility interview or at a port of entry. If a claim is submitted inland, then an officer from Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) will determine whether a refugee claim is eligible for referral to the Refugee Protection Division (RPD). If a claim is submitted at a port of entry, a Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officer will make this decision. The IRCC or CBSA officer provide refugee claimants with all relevant paperwork and set the date for a hearing with the Refugee Protection Division (RPD). The RPD is responsible for conducting the hearing to determine if a claimant can be classified as either a convention refugee or a person in need of protection. Hearings can include multiple sittings, and usually end with the RPD decision maker providing their decision orally. A written reason for the decision is provided at a later date. If a claim is rejected, and a claimant has a right of appeal, claimants can appeal the decision to the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD). After they receive their written decision, claimants have 15 days to file for appeal. The appellant must then ensure to ‘perfect’ their appeal by filing an appellant’s record within 30 days of receiving a written decision form the RPD. The RAD is mandated to make a decision on the appeal within 90 days of it being perfected, unless an oral hearing is held. The RAD can decide to confirm the RPD’s decision, refer the case back to the RPD, or set aside the original decision and substitute its own. If a claimant has no right of appeal on their original RPD decision they can make an application for leave for judicial review in the Federal Court of Canada. All decisions made by the RAD are also subject to an application for judicial review in the Federal Court. An application for judicial review must be made within 15 days of the latest negative RPD or RAD decision received by a claimant.
**File Review Process**

The RPD can, in some circumstances, accept a refugee status claim without a hearing through what is known as the file review process (IRB 2019b). When using this process the RPD make a decision based on the confirmation of security screening, the Basis of Claim Form, identity documents, and other relevant evidence and submissions. This process will not be used if there are any security concerns, there is a complex legal or factual issue that requires a hearing to resolve, or if the Ministry’s representative intends to intervene in-person at the hearing. This process can also never be used to reject a claim.

A claimant cannot request to undergo a file review process. If they are selected to undergo this process, claimants are notified and required to submit a confirmation form. The claim is reviewed after the RPD receives the completed form, or after the 15-day time limit to return the form has passed.

**Short Hearing Process**

Under some circumstances, the RPD may determine that a claim is suited for a short-hearing process (IRB 2019b). If a claim meets the criteria set out in the Instructions Governing the Streaming of Less Complex Claims at the Refugee Protection Division, it can be processed under the short-hearing process. Country and claim types that are considered appropriate for evaluation under the file-review process may also be considered under the short-hearing process.
Appendix C.

Interview Schedule and Participants

Table C.1. Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loren Balisky</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Kinbrace Refugee Housing and Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Government Official</td>
<td>BC Provincial Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Provincial Government  Official</td>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Government Staff</td>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Government Staff</td>
<td>Provincial Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Rico-Martinez</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>FCJ Refugee Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>City of Toronto</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Guide

1. Can you tell me about your current role?

2. What do you consider the role of the federal/provincial/municipal government to be in relation to the provision of services to asylum claimants?
   a. Follow up: What role (if any) do you believe each level of government should play in providing housing or housing support services to asylum claimants?

3. What would you consider the most significant issue faced by asylum claimants?

4. What would you consider the most significant barrier to housing for asylum claimants?

5. What do you think are the major advantages and disadvantages of the current system of supporting stable housing outcomes for asylum claimants?

6. What are the main things you would change about the current system?

7. How inter-linked are the solutions for the lack of affordable housing for asylum claimants to the solutions for the lack of affordable housing for the wider population?

Questions based on Case Studies

An analysis of three well-regarded asylum claimant housing support systems found several common factors:
1) Entrenchment of the asylum claimant housing system (legal responsibility to provide housing to asylum claimants)

2) Access to public housing (asylum claimants are entitled to housing, at least one source of housing where they are not in competition with other groups in need)

3) Integration support services connected to housing

4) Mixed Decentered/Centralized approach (Centralized being purely federal, Decentered being responsibility distributed by region)

5) Dispersal policy (asylum claimants are dispersed across the country/state they arrive in based on a set of criteria).

Do you believe any/all of the above would be useful in Canada? If yes, what issues would you see with implementing/how would you implement the above?