

## **Interviews With Service Providers**

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## **A. Introduction**

In order to obtain a balanced view of the seven Alberta communities to which refugees have been destined, we opted to interview a range of service providers in each city. Six closely related versions of a questionnaire were developed (see Appendix III B, Volume 3), for settlement workers, adult ESL teachers, K-12 teachers, health care providers, police officials, and for general community-wide agencies (e.g., United Way, Food Bank). We conducted a total of 72 interviews (11 in Fort McMurray and Medicine Hat, 10 in each of the other sites). All but one were face-to-face, usually at the interviewee's workplace. In nine instances more than one person from an agency participated; consequently, we have responses from 81 interviewees.

## **Methodology**

Two interviewers were hired to conduct the bulk of the interviews, although in the early stages, two of the primary investigators conducted some interviews to test the questions. We attempted to develop a balanced set of interviews in each community, but we were unable to collect data from police in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie; neither could we interview a health provider in Fort McMurray. In addition, our sampling was somewhat skewed in Edmonton and Calgary in that those communities have more settlement services; furthermore, the health and police interviewees in those centres came from units that specialize in multicultural issues.

All service provider interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by the interviewers into computer files. The shared questions on the six versions of the questionnaire were then sorted by community and by question to allow direct comparisons. We also sorted the questions unique to each type of respondent and grouped those by community as well. The responses provided by settlement workers were fairly detailed throughout, whereas some of the individuals from other agencies appeared to rely more on anecdotal evidence in some cases and they were unable to answer questions in others.

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## **Background**

We were most interested in issues around the size of community (smaller cities versus Calgary and Edmonton); factors in the individual communities that might affect refugee settlement; reasons for refugees staying or leaving a given community, and overall integration of refugees within each of the cities. To gain a picture of the similarities and differences across respondents, we collected some basic demographic information, which is found in Tables 1 to 3.

When asked what sorts of changes they had seen in their communities over the last 15 years, the respondents from Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Red Deer focussed primarily on the increase in immigration, particularly of visible minorities. Some participants from Medicine Hat also noted increased cultural diversity, but the main issue in that city was the aging population. Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie interviewees discussed the economic growth of their respective communities, but did not comment on immigration.

## **Settlement Connections**

Across all settlement agencies, refugees tend to be assigned to a specific settlement worker (in the smaller centres there is often only one person to serve all immigrants); however, volunteer interpreters and other volunteers may also interact with the refugees.

In every community the respondents reported networking with other agencies in order to assist refugees, but in Calgary and Edmonton the networking was more structured, with interagency meetings, both among other settlement agencies and in conjunction with health care workers, police, private sponsors, etc. The settlement agencies in the two larger centres also reported contributing to policy issues at provincial and national levels. In the smaller centres, the contacts were informal and on a personal level (e.g., “The contact I have is through the church, through my friend who has worked with refugees in Fort McMurray for at least five years”).

Although the settlement agency workers in all centres were aware of differences between refugees and immigrants, some of the service providers in other community agencies did not distinguish between the two groups. Among the settlement workers there was general agreement that refugees often have more health problems, both mental and physical, than immigrants. In addition, they have greater need of financial and psychological support, particularly in the first few months. Several people commented that one fundamental difference between immigrants and refugees is that immigrants made a choice to come to Canada, and have the option of returning home if things don't work out.

**Table 1**  
**Respondents' Number of Years with the Agency**

<b>City</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Calgary	1.5 – 10	7.6
Edmonton	2 – 25	7.8
Fort McMurray	.2 – 9	5.4
Grande Prairie	.5 – 12	5.2
Lethbridge	6 – 19	12.8
Medicine Hat	.8 – 22	7.6
Red Deer	7 – 15	11.9

**Table 2**  
**Percentage of Respondents Who had Experience with Refugees Prior to Current Position**

<b>City</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Calgary	57%
Edmonton	67%
Fort McMurray	75%
Grande Prairie	33%
Lethbridge	67%
Medicine Hat	57%
Red Deer	50%

**Table 3**  
**Respondents' Number of Years in the Community**

<b>City</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Calgary	7 – 30	16.8
Edmonton	3.5 – 40	17.9
Fort McMurray	1.5 – 30	13.4
Grande Prairie	8 – 30	16.7
Lethbridge	3 – 30	17.2
Medicine Hat	1 – 30	17.9
Red Deer	7 – 21	15.8

### **Refugee Clients' Settlement Patterns**

The settlement workers were asked where most of their clients have come from in the last five years. All centres reported having received former Yugoslavians, Iraqis, Africans (primarily Sudanese, Ethiopians and Eritreans) and Central Americans. Some individuals named countries that have not been or are no longer refugee-producing

nations (e.g., Hong Kong, Vietnam), but as one person pointed out, many family class immigrants come with refugee issues.

When asked whether government versus private sponsorship influenced whether refugees stay in a community, in general, providers either thought it was not a factor or that private sponsors offered more personal support and therefore refugees were more likely to stay. Private sponsors may be relatives of the refugees or a community organization such as a church. Small centres appear to favor and generally be more positive regarding private sponsorship, whereas larger centres tend to think sponsorship is not particularly relevant to a refugee's decision to stay or leave. In the larger centres there are often existing ethnic communities that the newcomer can join, whereas the government sponsored refugee in a smaller centre may feel isolated by comparison if there is no compatriot community.

Table 4 indicates the advantages and disadvantages that respondents cited for destining refugees to their own communities. There are some interesting differences between the larger and smaller cities. For instance, providers from Calgary and Edmonton saw a large compatriot group as an advantage for destining newcomers to their communities, while interviewees from Grande Prairie, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat reported the lack of gangs in their communities as an advantage. This is particularly striking, given that the popular media often portrays gangs as a consequence of ethnic diversity.

The service providers gave a range of answers when asked how long refugees stay in their community. It appears they were responding on the basis of specific cases with which they were familiar rather than on the basis of an established pattern. Respondents from Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie, for instance, generally felt that refugees tended to stay in those communities permanently or at least for two to three years. Settlement workers in Calgary and Edmonton felt that a small percentage leave after a short time (within the first three months), but that, for the most part, refugees stay well beyond the first year of their settlement period.

**Table 4**  
**Advantages and Disadvantages of Destining Refugees**  
**to Providers' Own Cities**

Providers	Advantages	Disadvantages
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– large compatriot group</li> <li>– mainstream culture gains</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– reduced speed of services</li> </ul>
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– cost of living</li> <li>– educational opportunities</li> <li>– large compatriot group</li> <li>– creates more jobs</li> <li>– diversity enhances city</li> <li>– greater support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ghettoization</li> <li>– weather</li> <li>– all areas should enjoy diversity</li> <li>– crime problem</li> <li>– not the same job opportunities</li> <li>– no socialization</li> </ul>
Fort McMurray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– economy is booming</li> <li>– accepting community</li> <li>– enrich community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– location</li> <li>– lack of compatriot group</li> <li>– cost of living</li> <li>– weather</li> <li>– small community</li> </ul>
Grande Prairie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– good place to start with nothing</li> <li>– good support</li> <li>– less threatening</li> <li>– sense of belonging</li> <li>– no racial problems (e.g. gangs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– can't use skills</li> <li>– feelings of isolation</li> <li>– intolerance</li> <li>– not enough services</li> <li>– cost of living</li> </ul>
Lethbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– cost of living</li> <li>– no groups or gangs (unlike large centres)</li> <li>– broaden perceptive of mainstream society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– highly educated have problems</li> <li>– lack of jobs</li> </ul>
Medicine Hat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– cultural diversity</li> <li>– no gangs of kids</li> <li>– breakdown barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– discrimination/redneck</li> <li>– lack of services</li> </ul>

Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– the college-individual attention</li><li>– tolerant community</li><li>– resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– lack of jobs</li><li>– misconceptions/lack of acceptance</li><li>– demand for some skills higher in larger centres</li></ul>
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When asked to comment on specific groups that left early on, most providers were unable to generalize. They cited individual cases, but were inclined to say that not many (no more than 10%) leave. The exception here was Medicine Hat, where the providers stated that most Iraqi men leave to find work elsewhere. Another reason for their leaving, according to the service providers, is the lack of a mosque in Medicine Hat. They pointed out that the overall figures for Iraqis tend to remain constant because of secondary migration of people who are employed by the Lakeside Meat Packing Plant in Brooks. Lethbridge also reported losing Iraqi men; in addition, some who were destined there never arrived. When asked how long refugees had stayed, if they left before their first year was up, most respondents from smaller cities indicated that people left after 2 – 10 months. The reports, however, were very anecdotal. Providers from Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge all indicated that some people who had been destined to their community never arrived.

Service providers were asked whether refugees should stay longer in the first host community in order to integrate better. Although some commented that if individuals cannot find suitable employment they should move to a larger centre, several respondents from smaller cities suggested that refugees should stay in the first host community in order to adjust to a new environment and culture. Respondents from smaller cities felt that they provided better support than refugees would find in larger communities, e.g., “because the rural areas can provide support, they [the refugees] can also take a longer time to settle. People are more receptive here and on-on-one help is available” (Ft. McMurray). “I honestly believe they should. Every time you move you have to integrate again; the situation changes and re-orientation is required. If you move within the first year it is added stress and a financial burden as this move is not compensated” (Grande Prairie). “I believe that we are a smaller community and we can give them more care.

The longer they stay, the better care they can get” (Lethbridge). “I think it is hard for the children to move from another country, then move to a new school, and then to be uprooted and moved again” (Medicine Hat). “You get better support, and I am telling you this, that small cities are much better to learn the system than the big city” (Red Deer). Two respondents from smaller cities reinforced these opinions by offering examples of refugees who had listened to friends or family in other locations, who convinced them to move, only to discover that they were better off in the first location.

Some of the service providers in Calgary and Edmonton suggested that the refugees may not be comfortable in a given community, or may have more supports or opportunities elsewhere, and should therefore move. They emphasized the degree of cultural distance between the refugee and the host community, indicating that the ideal length of time in the first community would vary depending on the individual. One provider commented on the experiences of privately-sponsored refugees who had been sent to very small communities such as Barrhead, Wainwright and Bonnyville. “In order to have financial support they had to stay for the first year and after that they moved to Edmonton. Almost all of them, roughly 14 out of 15 cases. When they learned about opportunities of employment as well as educational opportunities, they told me they could stay for one year in the smaller community but it would be a waste of time.”

Respondents from both large and smaller centres identified similar factors that contribute to a refugee’s decision to stay or leave after arrival in a specific community. Nearly every respondent cited the availability of jobs as the most important determinant as to whether an individual will stay or leave a community. Refugees’ decisions were also influenced by the presence of an ethno-cultural community or at least some family and friends in a given location. The possibility of speaking one’s first language with others, and receiving moral support to alleviate the sense of isolation was cited as a significant factor. The overall support of the host community was also mentioned, in particular, in the level of discrimination felt by newcomers. “Some races may be more accepted than others, for example, here Blacks are more accepted than Orientals” (Medicine Hat). The issue of discrimination was raised by four individuals in Medicine Hat, and only one or two in each of the other cities. Other factors seen to contribute to integration were the

availability of support services, climate, adult educational opportunities, affordable housing (only an issue in Calgary, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray) good schools for children, and personal motivation to make the integration process work.

When asked whether refugees ever return to the first host community after leaving, respondents from larger centres and Lethbridge reported they don't come back or that only a few return, but providers from the other smaller centres stated that they do. This suggestion appears to be based on a limited number of cases. For example, a respondent from Grande Prairie said the following, "One former Yugoslavian family went to Windsor because they had relatives there and they thought that they would get better jobs there. They went there and stayed for awhile, but were back within a year." It is possible that service providers in smaller centres are more aware of individual refugees who return because of the nature of living in a small city (i.e., the workers would be more likely to see the same clients again), whereas providers in Calgary or Edmonton may never run into some of their former clients.

## **Factors Affecting Degree of Integration**

### ***Language***

When asked which factors facilitate integration into the mainstream community, providers from all centres agreed that English language skills are crucial. The consequences of not having English are serious. A provider from Calgary gave the following example: "What often happens is that parents' language skills are so poor, the kids end up having to do a lot of the business for their parents because they have the language skills. They are involved in stuff that a 12-to-14-year-old should not have any care or concern for, and what that does is ostracize the parents further from being mainstreamed into the community because they don't have the language skills, money or economic power." On the other hand, some providers felt that children play a role in the integration of the whole family. One respondent in Grande Prairie stated, "Children help their parents to integrate into the larger community as they are involved in activities." Another respondent (a former refugee) stated, "I had no choice. I had to integrate into the community and go to the school and volunteer and see who is teaching my kids and who is sitting with my kids."

***Age***

Most respondents commented that age is an important variable; children are integrated through school-related activities and younger adults appear to have an easier time adjusting than older ones do. Settlement workers in Calgary and Edmonton suggested that seniors should not be sent to smaller centres; the respondents said that older people require the support of a compatriot community.

***Employment & Previous Occupation***

Employment was also cited by providers in most centres as an important contributor to integration. For instance, a Grande Prairie provider noted “for employment they integrate, but to socialize, they stay to themselves.” Respondents from Calgary and Edmonton generally agreed that refugees start out in low paying jobs. Women often find jobs in cleaning companies while men find blue collar jobs such as work in manufacturing, meat processing plants, and driving taxis. A provider from Calgary stated that women might find it easier to get work. “For women there is more opportunity, not necessarily a high paying job, but maybe women are more flexible.” The entry level jobs obtained by newcomers reflected some aspects of the demographics of the cities involved. Medicine Hat, for instance, which is an older community, has jobs for women in nursing homes, while the other locations have more positions in daycare.

In smaller centres the emphasis tends to be on getting one’s ticket (e.g. improving language proficiency in order to obtain a ticket). Respondents cited the need for people who could fill skilled labour positions, noting that there are not as many opportunities to upgrade (for example, Medicine Hat doesn’t have a university). Respondents from all cities agree that professionals have a hard time initially. They are not able to reenter their professions quickly and yet they generally have high expectations on arrival.

***Gender***

Providers from Calgary, Ft. McMurray, Medicine Hat and Red Deer all mentioned gender roles as affecting integration. “I remember with the Lebanese community, the mums were not allowed to drive, they had to be dressed in ethnic attire, and the dad had to do all

of the negotiating with the schools and everything. And then he left the family and she did not have a clue where to begin. That becomes a difficulty.” A respondent from Medicine Hat stated, “The stay-at-home mums really do stay at home. They don’t get out much, or have much contact with other people. They get into a rut.”

### ***Religion***

Providers from all the centres mentioned the role of religion in integration, but only when the refugees shared a religion with people already established in the city. A Calgary respondent stated: “We have people that come here as Christians and they get involved with the churches that help them.” One Fort McMurray provider noted: “Hispanics integrate to a greater extent; partly because of the Catholic faith, you will find them in church settings. One Hispanic group will bring up a Spanish speaking pastor once a month from Edmonton and we conduct services here in homes and they will invite non-Hispanic people to their services.” The availability of religious facilities not usually associated with the Canadian mainstream (e.g., mosques, Buddhist temples) was not identified specifically as having a role in integration by the service providers.

### ***Ethno-cultural Community***

A common theme was the role the compatriot community plays in the integration of the individual. This can be either a negative or a positive influence. For instance one respondent in Grande Prairie stated, “I see the Vietnamese community staying together and this is a multigenerational situation by now. There is no need for integration.” On the positive side, a respondent from Lethbridge commented, “At the beginning, they tend to be more together with their ethnic group. Later on, the more they know English, they gradually get Canadian friends and fit into the mainstream, but still they have some ethnic community in the background as a basic support.” Unlike the providers from the smaller cities, those from Edmonton and Calgary suggested the ethno-cultural community should be sufficiently large to provide support and role models. It was felt that this is especially important at the beginning of the settlement period. Despite their general support for large ethnic communities, participants in Edmonton and Calgary indicated that some people prefer to associate with Canadians rather than their compatriots. As a settlement provider explained, “I don’t want to be involved with my ethnic group and deal with the

old issues and problems that we had in our old country.” This sentiment did not arise in the other cities, where ethno-cultural groups are relatively small.

### ***Education***

The role respondents attributed to education levels was inconsistent, although most agreed education would have an effect on integration. Some felt that those with higher education would achieve greater integration as a result of higher language proficiency and more open attitudes. Others felt that people with lower levels of education would integrate better (i.e., these people would better satisfied with lower status jobs and would have lower expectations. One respondent compared education to the amount of baggage a refugee brings with him/her. According to this individual, there is an inverse relationship between the amount a person brings and final level of integration).

### ***Attitudes of Host Community***

Providers in smaller communities mentioned that the attitude of the host community was important. Many of the respondents reported that men tend to integrate better because of opportunities to interact with Canadians at work and because there are not the same social restrictions on men as women. On the other hand, a respondent from Medicine Hat stated, “The Iraqi men stick together. People in Medicine Hat are afraid of them. They look fairly fearsome. You get a group of 8 – 10 bearded, dark skinned men and people are afraid of them. If people get to know them individually, it might be different. They also have their own religion and their own social rules.”

When asked whether there are any characteristics of the refugees who choose to stay in a community that are common across nationalities, respondents from Calgary tended to mention personal factors such as expectations, commitment and conservative values, whereas Edmontonians focussed on jobs and cost of living issues. The smaller centres listed a wide variety of factors: possessing a strong work ethic, desiring to be part of the community, having access to good jobs, liking the life of a small town, buying a home, and being a risk taker.

***Recreational Activities***

Table 5 indicates the degree to which respondents felt refugees were participating in integrated recreational activities. Calgary and Edmonton interviewees suggested that adult recreation and leisure activities tend to be related to the refugees' own cultural group. Representatives from the smaller communities reported that there was more mixing of groups, in part because "there is no group big enough to organize anything like that" and "because we are a smaller community, I think they blend in more. I've seen them out at hockey games, you know yelling and rooting for our players" (Grande Prairie). "We try to drag them out" (Medicine Hat).

Table 6 indicates the leisure activities that interviewees thought were most favoured by refugees. Most of the responses included sports, especially soccer. Social activities such as picnics were mentioned often, and various forms of gambling were noted in five cities. There didn't appear to be significant differences in the types of recreational activities chosen by refugees across communities.

Representatives from all of the cities indicated that refugees have some problems accessing recreational activities, including lack of money and time. Interviewees from the two larger centres and three smaller centres all mention that drinking is a problem for some refugees. In Lethbridge, for instance, "young men do the bar scene and they get into trouble with Canadian women."

**Communities' Capacity for Refugees**

When asked whether there an optimal size of community for settling refugees, most tended to say that the clients' needs should determine their placement (e.g., if one is from a small city, that person should be placed in a small city; if an individual has low language proficiency he/she should be placed where appropriate language training is available). Job opportunities were also mentioned as an important variable here.

**Table 5**  
**Degree to Which Refugees Participate in Integrated Leisure Activities**

<b>City</b>	<b>Level of Integration</b>
Calgary	Most respondents report that refugees stay within their own culture, although age is a factor (i.e., children tend to mix with mainstream)
Edmonton	The majority stated that refugees and immigrants tend to stay within their own culture.
Fort McMurray	Respondents reported that refugees tend to participate in mainstream activities, as well as their own cultural community activities.
Grande Prairie	The majority of respondents felt that refugees and immigrants participate in mainstream cultural activities. It was suggested that the ethnic groups are too small to organize specific activities.
Lethbridge	Most respondents stated that refugees tended to participate in activities both within the mainstream community and their own ethnic community.
Medicine Hat	Respondents reported that there was not any ethnic groups large enough to organize activities. Most felt that refugees and immigrants participated in mainstream activities.
Red Deer	The majority of respondents felt that refugees and immigrants tend to participate in both mainstream activities and activities within their own cultural community.

**Table 6**  
**Types of Recreational Activities in Which Refugees Participate**

<b>City</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Calgary	Soccer, cultural activities, basketball, watching television, cleaning their homes, drinking, gambling, school activities, picnics, hockey, volleyball, swimming.
Edmonton	Soccer, all kinds of sports, basketball, ethnic dances, hockey, religious activities, badminton, tennis, bingos, baccarat, swimming, drinking, fishing.
Fort McMurray	School activities, Multicultural festivals, skating, skiing, basketball, soccer, lotteries, picnics, playing cards, church activities.
Grande Prairie	Visiting friends, soccer, participating in multicultural association, badminton.
Lethbridge	Soccer, school related activities, swimming, hockey, baseball, going to the bar, casinos, ethnic events, picnics.
Medicine Hat	Soccer, baseball, gambling, school related activities, religious activities.
Red Deer	School related activities, drinking, soccer, basketball, boxing club, cultural activities, visiting family and friends, swimming, dancing, hockey, baseball, arts and theatre.

When asked about the capacity of their communities for refugees, the respondents differed somewhat (see Table 7). Calgary and Edmonton were generally positive, although some people expressed the caveat that additional money would be required to provide services. Calgaryans, in particular, expressed concern over housing. Among the smaller cities there was a greater diversity of responses. Interviewees from Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie were concerned about housing shortages; otherwise, they were favourably disposed towards an increase in the number of refugees to be destined there. Respondents from Lethbridge were in favour of increased numbers of refugees, but they were concerned that there might not be enough jobs to support a substantial increase in newcomers. Providers in Red Deer generally felt that that community could handle more refugees, although a few respondents had some concerns with regard to discrimination; they were worried about a backlash if too many people arrived at once. The majority of respondents from Medicine Hat were reluctant to consider increased

numbers of refugees, especially if the newcomers were from the same ethnic background. They felt that they don't have the services to accommodate larger numbers; in addition, they were worried about a lack of housing.

The interviewees were asked whether it would be preferable to destine all refugees in Alberta to Edmonton and Calgary. The results in Table 8 indicate that, for the most part, providers in Calgary and Edmonton see far more advantages than disadvantages to the proposal that all refugees be sent to their two cities. They and the respondents from most of the smaller cities noted that, overall, communities benefit from receiving refugees. People in the smaller centres stressed that if newcomers were sent only to Calgary and Edmonton, they would not integrate into Canadian society as quickly; they see their own locales as offering better service and better integration opportunities. Respondents were asked to suggest criteria that should be taken into account when developing a rationale for sending people to their communities. The following is a compendium of the suggestions that were given most frequently:

- Consult the city in question regarding employment needs in the community
- Provide realistic orientation for refugees prior to their arrival
- Provide overseas officers with accurate, up-to-date information on the cities
- Destine people to places where they have friends or relatives
- Match the occupation and education of the refugee with the needs of the community

**Table 7**  
**Respondents' Perceptions of Communities' Capacity for Refugees**

City	Perceptions
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- most agreed that numbers could increase</li> <li>- some mentioned that more money needs to be spent on support services</li> <li>- housing shortage is a major drawback</li> </ul>
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tend to be positive</li> <li>- most agreed that numbers could increase</li> <li>- most felt that there are employment opportunities</li> <li>-</li> </ul>
Fort McMurray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mostly positive</li> <li>- jobs are not being filled</li> <li>- lack of housing</li> </ul>
Grande Prairie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- not enough available housing</li> </ul>
Lethbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- generally positive regarding increase</li> </ul>
Medicine Hat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- some expressed a fear of large concentrations of refugees</li> <li>- concern over the number of working-poor families</li> <li>- could take more if services are increased concomitantly</li> </ul>
Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- generally positive</li> <li>- some expressed concern over discrimination</li> </ul>

**Table 8**  
**Advantages & Disadvantages of Destining All Refugees**  
**to Edmonton and Calgary**

Providers	Advantages	Disadvantages
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- large compatriot group</li> <li>- reduce cost</li> <li>- more community support</li> <li>- isolation</li> <li>- more sensitivity to cultural issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- stress on resources</li> <li>- other communities would not benefit</li> </ul>
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cost of living</li> <li>- educational opportunities</li> <li>- large compatriot group</li> <li>- creates more jobs</li> <li>- diversity enhances city</li> <li>- greater support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- other communities would not benefit</li> </ul>
Fort McMurray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- greater access to services</li> <li>- more resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- get lost in the system</li> <li>- loss to smaller centres</li> <li>- slower integration</li> <li>- overwhelming experience</li> <li>- segregation</li> </ul>
Grande Prairie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reduced secondary migration</li> <li>- larger compatriot group</li> <li>- better services</li> <li>- centralized agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ghettos</li> <li>- smaller centres more personalized</li> <li>- no feelings of community</li> </ul>
Lethbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- specific services</li> <li>- open to new ideas</li> <li>- job opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- refugees don't integrate</li> <li>- smaller centres would lose out</li> </ul>
Medicine Hat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- more jobs</li> <li>- more efficient funding</li> <li>- more services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- larger centres might resist</li> <li>- loss for smaller centres</li> <li>- ghettos</li> </ul>
Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- size of programs</li> <li>- diversity of jobs</li> <li>- more comfortable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- overwhelmed</li> <li>- loss for smaller centres</li> <li>- no integration</li> <li>- discrimination</li> </ul>

### **B. Specific Provider Information**

In addition to the general questions posed to all service providers, we asked specific questions that related to each provider's area of expertise. What follows is a summary of their responses.

**Police (no respondents from Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie)**

Here were no notable differences between the two large centres and the smaller ones, aside from the fact that in Calgary and Edmonton, police receive 40 hours of training in multicultural issues, while officers in other areas learn on the job.

The primary challenges in terms of refugees in all of the communities are a lack of familiarity with Canadian laws and a fear of police based on experiences in their own countries. When asked about under- or over-representation of refugees in any criminal area, the respondent from Edmonton cited domestic violence is over-represented. Although the representatives from the other cities did not indicate an over-representation, police from Lethbridge and Medicine Hat also said domestic violence was a problem. The only other extraordinary crime reported was a shop-lifting ring with ties in Montreal organized by Central Americans in Medicine Hat.

**Health Care Workers**

As with the police, there were no real differences in responses based on size of community in the health field, other than scope: Calgary and Edmonton offer more specialized services to refugees, particularly in the first language of the clients. All centres offer immunization clinics and most cited TB testing as a priority.

The health challenges that the respondents viewed as most significant are the following: missing or falsified vaccination documentation; inadequate dental hygiene, both for children and adults; and a lack of information regarding birth control. In Medicine Hat, the health workers said that the problems faced by refugees were not out of the ordinary, aside from chronic pain as a result of torture.

There was very little mention of mental health issues; only the workers from Edmonton discussed them in any detail; the Calgary and Medicine Hat respondents reported that mental health is difficult to assess due to language barriers. The health care workers from

Lethbridge acknowledged that depression is a major problem, but that language barriers prevent many people from accessing support.

### **K-12 Educators**

The teachers working within the K-12 system were asked what the primary challenges are for refugee children. Language issues were identified by everyone and most shared a concern for students who come with educational gaps. Inadequate funding was cited as a problem in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Red Deer; some students are in need of considerably more pedagogical support (most programs have the students integrated into mainstream classrooms with some pull-out). Some respondents remarked on the difficulties students have fitting in socially, because of cultural differences, although the teacher in Lethbridge has found that refugee students there fit in right away. The teacher from Red Deer commented that some students have learning disabilities that do not surface immediately because their need for language masks them. The respondent from Edmonton pointed out that refugee students sometimes believe that their stay in Canada will be short – that it will be only a matter of months before they go back home. Those children often resist getting involved in language learning.

### **Teachers of ESL for Adults**

Calgary and Edmonton have a greater variety of ESL offerings than any of the smaller cities, particularly higher level courses and bridging programs to academic upgrading, but all communities provide the federally funded LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program. The percentage of refugees (as opposed to other immigrants) participating in LINC programs ranges from very few (only one in Fort McMurray in the past year) to 75% in two programs in Red Deer and Lethbridge. Within LINC, Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary report that most of their clients study for 40 weeks. In Lethbridge, 16 weeks of LINC and 20 weeks of workplace language instruction are provided. The other communities generally offer between 4-6 months of language instruction. When asked if people quit before their allotted language training, the Calgary respondent noted that Iraqi men leave after about 20 weeks to seek employment in order to bring their families to Canada. The respondent also stated that it is difficult culturally

for Iraqis to take instruction from female teachers and a large majority of ESL teachers are women. Fort McMurray, Lethbridge and Red Deer interviewees reported that few refugees quit early, but in Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat and Edmonton there was a sense that several people quit in order to find jobs.

Teachers were asked to describe the general proficiency level of students once they completed their LINC training. Most respondents suggested that their students achieved roughly Canadian Language Benchmarks 3/4 (i.e., very basic skills). A respondent from Lethbridge noted that “Immigration really encourages them to work.”

When asked to comment on special needs of refugee students, people from every community commented on mental stress and physical problems (especially dental problems and post traumatic stress). The respondent from Red Deer said that seniors, in particular, have a hard time and that ESL serves as both a social outlet and group therapy for participants. In Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie, refugees worry a great deal about finding jobs; the teacher from Red Deer reported that the job situation there has improved in the last few years, alleviating the concerns of refugee students. Finally, interviewees from Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Red Deer observed that their students continue to worry about the political issues that brought them here.

### **C. CIC Interviews**

In the fall of 1998, another questionnaire was developed for CIC personnel. Names of six individuals (responsible for Lethbridge/Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Calgary and Edmonton) were provided to us through the Edmonton CIC office. Each of the designated persons was subsequently interviewed by telephone (see Appendix III B, Volume 3 for interview protocol). The results of these interviews appear in Tables 9-16. Again, we were primarily interested in issues around destining of refugees, level of support in each community and factors which might affect a refugee’s decision to stay or leave a given community.

As can be seen in Table 9, it is the consensus that most refugees stay in the place where they were destined; however, if do they leave, it is generally fairly quickly after arrival. Each respondent felt that her own community was capable of doubling the number of refugees currently destined there (as long as the funding increased as well) (see Table 10). The respondents from the smaller communities were asked to comment on the level of support available to their clients. Their contrasting replies can be found in Table 11.

When asked about the advantages of destining all refugees to Calgary and Edmonton, the interviewees from the smaller centres saw none. All respondents felt that there were disadvantages to limiting the destining to the two larger centres (see Table 12). The respondents were also asked to comment on the pros and cons of destining refugees to their own communities; in each case they identified more advantages than disadvantages (see Table 13). The CIC personnel were queried about secondary migration, but they were only able to talk about individuals who had arrived within their first year and were thus still eligible for federal funding; individuals who arrived after their first year in Canada, or who found a job right away, would not be in contact with CIC (see Table 14).

We asked CIC staff to comment on the criteria that are currently being used to destine refugees to their communities. All suggested some factors that they believe are taken into consideration overseas (see Table 15), but some noted that a better policy should be put in place to make realistic matches (see Table 16).

**Table 9**  
**Number of people who leave in a year and length of stay before they leave:**  
**CIC respondents**

<b>City</b>	<b>Number of people</b>	<b>Length of stay</b>
Calgary	Most stay (two left recently)	Within the first few weeks
Edmonton	50 have transferred out mostly to BC, Ontario and southern Alberta More people come than leave	Usually go right away if they are going to go, they know they are going to leave before they arrive Some go to Cargill foods after 7-8 months
Lethbridge/ Medicine Hat	Never a large number, 5-6 families per year	Leave within two months, if not then they stay until their language training is complete
Red Deer	Depends on group - Ethiopians/Polish/ Vietnamese stayed - Serbs left because of hostilities with Bosnians	Before the year is up

**Table 10**  
**Community's capacity for refugees: CIC respondents**

<b>City</b>	<b>Capacity</b>
Calgary	Double (if there is an increase in funding)
Edmonton	Double (if there is an increase in funding) Funding is crucial, because the number one priority is quality of service
Lethbridge/Medicine Hat	Double, if we have the funding (there was a 26% decrease in provincial funding to settlement agencies in small centres and a 1% decrease in large centres)
Red Deer	We could deal with double the number very well, if we have the funding

**Table 11**  
**The level of settlement support in smaller centres compared to other communities: CIC respondents**

<b>City</b>	<b>Support</b>
Lethbridge/Medicine Hat	<p>More mainstream services in Lethbridge than in Medicine Hat</p> <p>Lethbridge has comparable services to Calgary or Edmonton, but there are substantial barriers to access of mainstream services</p> <p>More opportunities to meet Canadians (the ethnic communities are smaller)</p> <p>Edmonton and Calgary are overwhelming to people from smaller centres.</p>
Red Deer	<p>Community works together, Edmonton and Calgary are still small enough to do that,</p> <p>People in the community get involved, work closely with the City council.</p>

**Table 12**  
**The pros and cons of destining all refugees to Edmonton and Calgary: CIC respondents**

<b>City</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easier for CIC</li> <li>- Problems between ethnic groups in small centres (because they have greater contact with each other)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small centres have a lot to offer</li> </ul>
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More employment opportunities in large centres</li> <li>- Refugees don't want to stay in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie, because they aren't cosmopolitan enough</li> <li>- Accommodation and cost of living issues in Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray</li> <li>- Travel to larger centres is difficult</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Would not have diversity throughout the province</li> </ul>
Lethbridge/ Medicine Hat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lethbridge would lose diversity and growth potential</li> <li>- Big cities are isolating and have a cattle feedlot approach</li> </ul>
Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All Canada needs to be populated not just large centres</li> <li>- Small centres offer more personal approach</li> </ul>

**Table 13**  
**The pros and cons of destining refugees to own community: CIC respondents**

<b>City</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jobs</li> <li>- Large ethnic communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of housing</li> <li>- Cost of living too high</li> </ul>
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low cost of living Jobs available</li> <li>- Very good services (NGO's excellent)</li> <li>- Good community support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethnic communities are not as large as Toronto</li> <li>- Expensive housing</li> </ul>
Lethbridge/ Medicine Hat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Breathing space, place to take stock</li> <li>- Opportunities to meet Canadians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> </ul>
Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jobs and support (work quickly to alleviate problems)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New groups stand out</li> </ul>

**Table 14**  
**Number of individuals who come to community as secondary migrants: CIC respondents**

<b>City</b>	<b>Number of refugees</b>
Calgary	130 transfers this year from Ontario jobs and people from the same culture draw them
Edmonton	92 transfers this year, mostly from BC and Ontario they come to join family and friends and for jobs
Lethbridge/Medicine Hat	Don't know. The people who come to work don't receive government assistance, so we don't hear about them
Red Deer	Some they come to join family and friends and for jobs

**Table 15**  
**Criteria CIC respondents believe are currently being used for destining policy**

<b>City</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Calgary	Don't know. They need to know what the communities have to offer. We give them feedback on which groups aren't settling well
Edmonton	Where their family members are, where an ethnic community exists, target numbers
Lethbridge/Medicine Hat	Education, occupation, availability of work, wishes of refugee, where their family and friends are
Red Deer	The support systems in the community. We used to send information to the regional and national offices

**Table 16**  
**Criteria that CIC respondents believe should be considered when destining refugees**

<b>City</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
Calgary	The cost of living
Edmonton	Location of family and friends, available services, ethnic community support, unemployment rates
Lethbridge/ Medicine Hat	Overseas staff need more information about Canada and employment information
Red Deer	Newcomers need counseling overseas to promote realistic expectations, there also need to be supports in place; they should take into consideration what people will be doing when they arrive (i.e., employment)