

## Community Input and Feedback on the Tri-Cities Refugee Support Forum November 2, 2016

### About the Tri-Cities Refugee Support Forum

The Tri-Cities Local Immigration Partnership (TC LIP) convened its first Refugee Support Forum on November 2, 2016 at the Evergreen Cultural Centre in Coquitlam, British Columbia. The objective of the Refugee Support Forum was to provide an opportunity for agencies in the Tri-Cities to work together to enhance service supports for refugees. Over 100 participants representing 36 Tri-Cities service provider organizations (TC SPOs) actively dialogued to identify the strengths, opportunities and challenges experienced in serving refugees in the Tri-Cities' many communities.

The following statements were identified by the TC Refugee Support Forum participants as the current strengths, opportunities and challenges within the Tri-Cities service community to support refugees.

#### Tri-Cities Service Agency Strengths in Providing Services to Refugees

- Strong community leadership and partnerships.
- Collaboration and shared responsibility among service providers to minimize service duplication.
- Sharing of information among organizations.
- A comprehensive continuum of services and support programs for refugees.
- Diverse and multilingual staff in many TC agencies.
- Many significant volunteer contributions.
- Knowledge of integration process and labour market to provide needed help to refugees.
- Shared experience in resolving complex community issues regarding refugee settlement and integration.

#### Tri-Cities Service Agency Opportunities in Providing Services to Refugees

- Sustainable funding and greater collaboration and shared responsibilities between TC SPOs.
- More networking opportunities and professional development training for service providers in the TC to learn about refugee needs and service responses.
- More bilingual case managers and settlement practitioners in the TC region.
- More affordable housing and child care services.
- More employment bridging and mentorship programming for skilled refugee clients in the TC.
- Create an online directory of services in the TC that provide information, resources and services to refugees.

### Tri-Cities Service Agency Challenges in Providing Services to Refugees

#### Limited Agency Capacity in Terms of Resources

- There are needs for sustainable long-term funding to strengthen the collaborative working environment amongst TC agencies.
- Many agencies have a limited numbers of bilingual staff as well as limited time and funds to provide professional development training and knowledge support for staff.
- More staff needed for outreach to vulnerable refugees and refugee families.
- RAP services are essential and referrals between agencies are important.
- Limited knowledge about needs of Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR).
- Scheduling of settlement programs overlap at times. For instance, language programs are delivered at the same time as employment programs.
- Agencies have resource limitations in managing volunteers who work with vulnerable clients.

## Tri-Cities Service Agency Challenges in Providing Services to Refugees (Contd.)

### Employment

- Limited resources and programs to bridge employers (especially smaller employers) with refugee clients.
- Refugees need more programs to learn about their workplace rights in Canada.
- Fewer employment opportunities for refugees with limited English language skills.

### Children and Youth

- Need for services that focus on youth/teenagers.
- More funding needed for schools to support refugee students.
- Older refugee youth have greater challenges adapting in school due to language and other challenges.

### Language

- Long waitlists for language classes.
- Promotional materials for services not always available in Arabic.

### Health

- There is a need to increase health programs and to support access to physical and mental health services.
- Limited number of health care professionals speak refugees' first languages.

### Housing

- Affordable, stable, and appropriate housing needed to accommodate refugees with large families.

### Transportation

- Transportation costs create barriers for some refugees. For instance, some refugees need to travel to other municipalities to access to health care services.

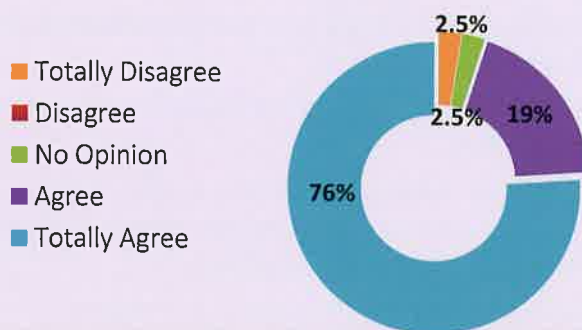
### Women

- Women's experiences of gender inequity and isolation.
- Limited involvement in communities due to linguistic/cultural differences as well as lack of child care.

## Summary of the Forum's Evaluation

95% of the Forum's participants learned about and networked with refugee support services and other TC SPOs, and would recommend others to attend future forums hosted by the TC LIP.

I would recommend others to attend a TC LIP hosted Forum in the future.



Over 80% of the Forum's participants increased their understanding of refugee services in the TC.

I have an increased understanding of services available for refugees when they arrive in Canada and settle in the Tri-Cities.

