

# Welcoming Communities, Local Immigration Partnerships, and Municipalities' Involvement in a New Settlement Landscape

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Blair Cullen, Wilfrid Laurier University

Dr. Luisa Veronis, University of Ottawa

Dr. Margaret Walton-Roberts, Wilfrid Laurier University

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# Key Concepts and Policies

## Welcoming Communities Approach

- Sees settlement as a two way process
- In settlement, the onus is not solely on newcomers but rather a partnership amongst all stakeholders involved
- At an institutional level, settlement process is no longer only the domain of settlement service agencies but also of school boards and mainstream social service organizations (Esses et al. 2009)

## Local Immigration Partnerships

- Introduced in 2008 as part of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement
- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada funded multi-sectoral community-based councils
- Purpose is to develop a local settlement strategy to produce a more welcoming community
- Policy embodiment of welcoming communities approach

# Research Question:

How does the Welcoming Communities approach to settlement change the role of local stakeholders, specifically municipalities, in the process of settlement?



## Methods

- Primary data collection (Dec. 2016-June 2017):
  - Immediate aftermath of the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative (SRRI)
- 21 key informant interviews
  - A dozen different sectors
- Secondary data collection
  - Analysis of publically available, LIP applicable documents
- Ideal timing to measure municipal involvement



Source: <https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/warm-hearts-cold-reality/>

## Case Study Areas: Second-Tier Cities in Southern & Eastern Ontario

\*RAP Cities \*IRCC's First LIPs \*Comparable Demographics

Demographic Category	Ottawa	Waterloo Region
Total CMA pop (2015)	904,905	511,300
Immigrants as % of pop (2011)	24.5	22.3
#GAR	1533	1086
#PSR	447	207
#BVOR	280	150
Total	2260	1443

Source: IRCC (2017b)

## Important Context: SRRI Sibling Bodies

- In each city, the LIP was not the sole body responsible for local community's SRRI response
  - Ottawa: Refugee 613
  - Waterloo: Waterloo Region Refugee Steering Committee
- Each LIP collaborated with the bodies each community developed for the SRRI
  - Albeit to varying degrees
- This environment shaped not only LIP participation but municipal involvement in LIPs during the SRRI



## Role of Regional Municipality of Waterloo in Waterloo Region's Immigration Partnership (WRIP) (PT. 1)



- Since WRIP's inception in 2008, the Regional Municipality has been WRIP's contract holder
- This arrangement facilitated several in-kind contributions which WRIP utilized during the SRRI:
  1. Regional Municipal digital and communications infrastructure
  2. WRIP staff housed in Regional Municipal office space
  3. Access to and familiarity with Regional Municipal corporate leadership

“WRIP staff is known within the Regional Municipality and its institutions”

## Role of Regional Municipality of Waterloo in WRIP (PT. 2)



- Being part of the Regional Municipality gives WRIP a legal backbone and financial stability
  - SRRI Budget: **“we didn’t budget, we just did it”**
- Aside from technical and monetary contributions, participants also identified a particular mindset within the Regional Municipality, one, in the eyes of participants, far from guaranteed simply because the municipality is the contract holder.



## Role of City of Ottawa in Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) (PT. 1)



- The Catholic Centre for Immigrants is OLIP's contract holder
- The City is a member of OLIP's council, no different from other members
- During the SRRI, the City's and OLIP's relationship remained business as usual
  - City staff continued to participate in OLIP sector tables
  - On occasion, the City leveraged some of the relationships it built through OLIP for activities related to the SRRI
- The lack of change is attributable to OLIP's limited role in the SRRI:

"I don't think OLIP was positioned to support the direct response [SRRI]"

## Role of City of Ottawa in OLIP (PT. 2)



- Outside of OLIP, the City played a number of roles:
  - “convener-catalyst, direct support, and service provider”
- Created the Mayor’s Public Forum on Syrian Refugee Resettlement Efforts and helped launch the United for Refugees campaign
- City staff participated in multiple Refugee 613 tables
  - Information sharing, grant proposal writing, and acting as service provider – e.g., public health
- Despite the City’s efforts, some participants identified a gap between the City’s words and deeds

## LIPs' Influence on Municipal Involvement in Immigration

- The City of Ottawa's work during the SRRI represents a departure from its history with immigration (Vineberg 2010)
  - Seed planted by OLIP since 2009
    - Stems not only from City sources
- Several participants pointed to OLIP as responsible for the City's evolution on immigration:

If this [the SRRI] had happened five years ago, municipal government would have said: "Yeah this is funded by IRCC. What does this have to do with us?"

- At a different stage of LIP development, a similar situation played out in Waterloo Region (Janzen et al. 2012)

## What Do Our Findings Mean?

- A well-developed settlement/advocacy sector or the rapid growth of immigrant groups can cause municipal movement on immigration
- In spite of legal and constitutional constraints in addressing immigrant settlement, municipalities' relations with the community or developments in the community – e.g., LIPs – can influence municipal behavior on immigration
- A welcoming communities approach has changed how municipalities see their local immigration mandate
  - Expanding understanding of how different settlement models work, especially outside gateway cities

## Research Limitations

- Unique timing of data collection
- The SRRI = once in a generation event
  - Caught the Canadian government's and public's attention in a way few migration issues ever do (Walton-Roberts et al. 2020)
- This national issue trickled down to a local level
  - Opportunity for municipalities to get involved or face pressure to do so.
- There are both pros and cons
  - Important to acknowledge when looking at our analysis



## Acknowledgements

- SSHRC-IRCC
- Research participants
- More information can be found here:

<http://imrc.ca/comparative-evaluation-of-local-immigration-partnerships-lips-and-their-role-in-the-syrian-refugee-resettlement-process>

- Thank you to our partners:

