

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A NATIONAL VIRTUAL DIALOGUE ON SUPPORTING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DURING COVID-19

Wednesday, June 17, 2020



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INTRODUCTION

Danielle Ungara, CWICE Team Leader

It is important to us at Peel CAS to acknowledge the land, time, and context surrounding our meeting. We want to show recognition that we have joined this national dialogue virtually from different parts of Turtle Island. We recognize the Indigenous People of this land have lived here since time immemorial. As settlers, we should be grateful for the opportunity to meet, work and live here. We wish to thank the generations who cared for this land, and those who continue to care and be knowledge keeps of this land today.

It is also important to us at Peel CAS to acknowledge the power and privilege imbalances, violence and systemic racism that is continuing to be enacted against Indigenous and Black communities across Canada, south of the border and across the World. This requires more than a pause for reflection. It calls for equity practices to abound, allyship to flourish, and it requires each of us to do some very deep individual thinking, and collective work.

Through our collective work at the CWICE National Dialogue, we hope to keep equity practice at the forefront of the discussion, continue to work together to develop responsive child welfare services that meet the unique needs of children, youth, families and communities across Canada.

WELCOME

Rav Bains, CEO, Peel CAS

Following discussions from our inaugural meeting in Ottawa, the key themes that were addressed incorporated the continued assessment of global trends and acknowledging their local impact while ensuring the collection of robust identity data which includes immigration status.

In May, the United Nations found that migrants (particularly in lower paid jobs) may be more affected by, and in turn more vulnerable to, the spread of COVID-19. The UN also identified that migrants of different age groups were facing varying vulnerabilities where 12% of all internal migrants are 65 years and older. Over 130 refugee-hosting countries, including Canada, have reported local transmission of COVID-19 as of May 9, and there have been 71 million people forcibly displaced.

Key findings from our forum on June 17 reviewed the above in accordance with COVID-19 trends, including inequities during the pandemic, increased vulnerabilities facing families served by CWICE teams, and the inherent need to be flexible and innovative in our work.

Key Note Speakers

- Dr. Barbara Fallon, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Child Welfare, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto
- Sarah Filotas and Giuseppe Basile, Consular Services, Global Affairs Canada
- Kim Gunshoner, Assistant Director Asylum Program Division with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



DR. BARBARA FALLON

Professor & Canada Research Chair Child Welfare, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

DEFINING A NEWCOMER HOUSEHOLD WITHIN THE OIS-2018

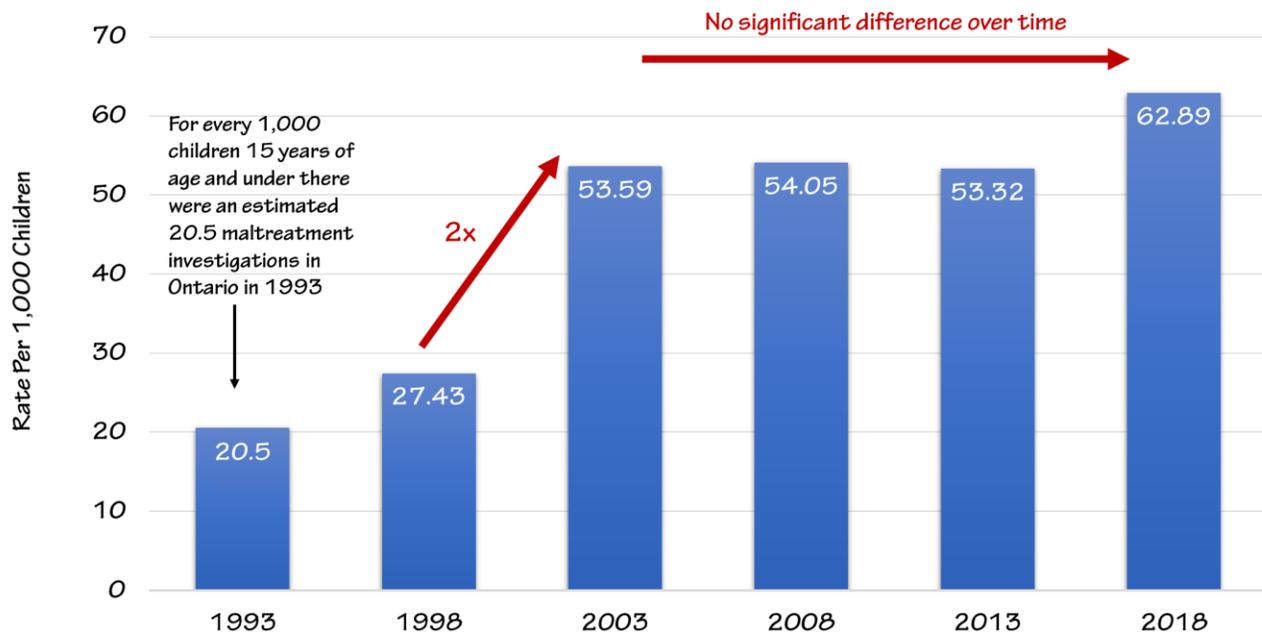
The Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (OIS) is a provincial study examining the incidence of reported child maltreatment and the characteristics of the children and families investigated by child protection services in Ontario. The OIS began in 1993 and has been conducted every five years.

Ontario Incidence Study-2018 Major Findings

- Sixth provincial study of child maltreatment-related investigations
- An estimated 148,536 maltreatment-related investigations were conducted in 2018
- More than six percent of children ages 0-15 in Ontario were involved in maltreatment-related investigations (a rate of 62.89 investigations per 1,000 children)
- 64% were maltreatment investigations which focused on a concern of abuse or neglect
 - 26% of all investigations were substantiated
 - 45% of substantiated investigations identified exposure to intimate partner violence as the primary form of maltreatment
- Families are referred to ongoing services in approximately 20% of cases (1 in 5 cases)
- Placements (both formal and informal) occur in less than 3% of cases

Incidence of Maltreatment-Related Investigations

Between 1998 and 2003, the OIS found that rates of investigated maltreatment had nearly doubled. Over the past four study periods - 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018 – the number of investigations did not change significantly.



Newcomer Households

*Statistics Canada defines recent immigrants as those who have migrated to Canada and acquired their landed immigrant or permanent resident status within the five-year period preceding the national census

The OIS-2018 defined a “newcomer” as a caregiver who moved to Canada within the last five years, as identified by the investigating worker. A newcomer household is categorized as a home in which one or both caregivers (i.e. either the

primary, secondary or both caregivers) moved to Canada within the last five years. In the OIS-2018 newcomer households represented 8% of investigations (n=12,090). The majority (59%) of newcomer caregivers investigated for a child maltreatment concern in Ontario do not speak English or French as their primary language. While other major findings are in the process of being published by the OIS team, led by Dr. Fallon, the study reviewed the ethno-racial composition of newcomer families, investigation outcomes for the families, the primary reason for referral and investigation, identifying referral sources and the rate of investigations that transfer to ongoing services. Through Dr. Fallon's leadership and her team's focus on newcomer data in child welfare, the sector will for the first time have a better understanding of the unique identities of families receiving service.

For more information, please visit the Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal at www.cwrp.ca



Global Affairs
Canada

Affaires mondiales
Canada

GLOBAL AFFAIRS: CANADA'S CONSULAR SERVICES

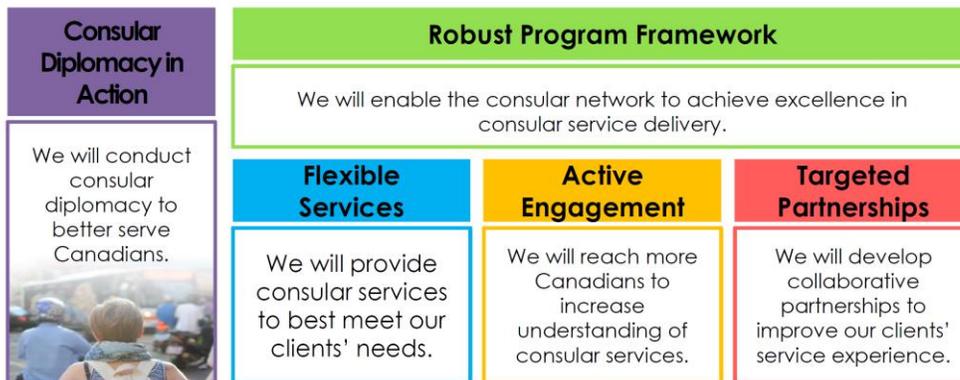
Sarah Filotas and Giuseppe Basile

OUR PRIORITY: HELPING CANADIAN'S ABROAD

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) provides timely and appropriate consular services for Canadian citizens abroad, contributing to their safety and security.

Canada's Consular Strategy

- Our strategy is guided by the Government of Canada's priorities and GAC's departmental priorities as well as the departmental results framework of helping Canadians abroad



Global Affairs Canada Operations Overview

- 260 points of service in 150 countries
- The majority of services are offered at missions through a network of trained consular officers, supported from Ottawa 24/7 by the Emergency Watch and Response Centre, and the Consular Operations Bureau
- In locations where Canada does not have a mission, services can be offered through our network of Honorary consuls or by like-minded missions (ex. Australia)

GAC Services include:



- **GAC** provides emergency assistance to Canadians abroad: to replace a passport, provide lists of doctors, hospitals, lawyers, service providers, advocate for fair treatment under local laws, assist with repatriation of remains, and in emergency situations assist with the transfer of funds

Consular Landscape

- In 2018/19 GAC opened 203,000 cases and 6,683 were consular-related
- The Top 7 types of consular cases include: requests to assist in arrests/deportation, death, medical assistance, child & family related, wellbeing checks, other distress and assault.
- The Top 5 countries with the most consular cases include: The United States, Mexico, China, Cuba and Thailand.
- **Key Fact:** A traveller's main source of information when visiting destinations are friends and family who have been or live in that destination.

TRENDS IMPACTING CONSULAR ASSISTANCE DURING COVID-19

- GAC assisted Canadians abroad to return to Canada in the largest repatriation effort in Canada's history;
- Since COVID-19 began, we saw 1 million Canadians return to Canada primarily from USA
- Increase in travel among older and younger Canadians
- Rapid technological changes, enhanced citizen inter-connectedness and media spotlight of complex cases
- Dual Nationals may be as viewed not as foreigners but citizens of the country subject to local rules

CHILDREN AND SAFETY

Regarding adoptions, restrictions on international travel and quarantine measures have limited parents' ability to unite with their babies/children. Increased demands on consular services, for instance to coordinate entry and exit with foreign authorities, costs related to the babies/children ongoing care while they wait for their parents to travel etc.

**Especially when children and youth returning to Canada might be lacking provincial/territorial documentation to access social and health services. Children may not have lived in Canada at all or lived abroad for years.*

SPECIAL NOTE FOR CHILD WELFARE

Notification of Child Foreign Nationals in Out of Home Care in Canada

- There are specific domestic obligations to child foreign nationals under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations
- Child protection authorities have the duty to inform the embassy or consulate of the nationality of the child in Canada
- Child protection authorities should inform the child of the possibility of consular access (along with providing them with adequate interpretation services, if required)*

**CWICE has developed responses to deal with these matters, and recommend you consult in these situations with CWICE*

CONSULAR SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN TIMES OF COVID-19

- Restrictions on international travel and quarantine measures have limited parents' ability to unite with their babies/children. Increased demands on consular services, for instance to coordinate entry and exit with foreign authorities, costs related to the babies/children ongoing care while they wait for their parents to travel etc.
- International adoptions already in progress but processing has slowed down/temporary stopped due to impacts of COVID-19 (limited flights, paperwork processing stalled, families stranded while waiting to come back to Canada, etc.)
- Domestic violence and forced marriage cases more difficult to manage (e.g. difficulty with coordinating safety plans with closure/limits on social services, domestic and international travel, safe houses, etc.)
- Canadian shelters are at capacity, travellers returning to Canada have to quarantine and are put in isolation centres upon arrival (if no where else to go) but even more challenging after for some as they have no housing and no social network
- Family reunifications are impacted as travel restrictions are preventing families from being together

- Job losses might further impact families as parents might no longer be able to provide for the kids who are in another country, and they can't reunite because of restrictions
- Requests for consular officers to travel with children back to Canada, for instance in terms of Hague orders where abducted children are supposed to return but can no longer come back due to travel restrictions. Left-behind parents cannot travel to pick up their kids, and there's no one abroad to bring them home
- Increases in requests for assistance to locate and distribute medication (not a consular service that we normally provide)
- Some of these cases don't qualify for the COVID-19 Emergency Loan Program
- Challenges with families with *mixed* citizenships (e.g. already living apart but need to reunite in Canada however non-Canadians don't qualify for an entry exemption or don't have Canadian visitor visas)
- Regular cases are also impacted, for instance in terms of wellbeing visits, referrals to social services, meetings with different levels of authority, facilitating exits at airports, etc.
- Service barriers have included, shelters in some countries having closed and Canadian child welfare organizations refusing to provide services to foreign nationals



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP CANADA

Kim Gunshoner, Assistant Director, Asylum Program Division

IRCC REFUGEE INTAKE DURING COVID-19

Special Measures

- Since mid-March, IRCC has been accepting refugee claims from persons who are in Canada via e-mail. Claimants receive an auto-reply explaining what to do next
- Claimants who provide all of the required information receive an Acknowledgement of Claim document, which shows that they have made a refugee claim and are benefitting from Interim Federal Health Coverage. This document can be used as proof to service providers that a refugee claim has been made in Canada
- We have received over 4,000 claims since this process was put in place, which is still a 35% decrease from normal volumes
- There will be a new process to assist persons whose Refugee Protection Claimant Document has been lost or stolen (*launching in September*).
- For more information on COVID-19 special measures:
 - General: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-covid19.html>
 - Refugee-specific: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/coronavirus-covid19/refugees.html>

The Border

- Since late March, Orders in Council (OIC) have prohibited entering Canada *from the USA* to make a refugee claim.
- Under the OIC, foreign nationals seeking to make a refugee claim between ports of entry (e.g. Roxham Road) are directed back to the United States temporarily and an appointment will be scheduled at a later date. There is an exception for unaccompanied and separated minors in certain circumstances.
- People may make a refugee claim at land ports of entry, although they are subject to the Canada-USA Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA), which requires that people seek refugee protection in whichever of the two countries they arrived in first. There are a few exceptions to the STCA, including one for unaccompanied and separated minors
- There are 6 hotels located along the border if refugees don't have a plan for the 14 day isolation period then they will be given space at these hotels
- Link to the OIC: <https://orders-in-council.canada.ca/attachment.php?attach=39383&lang=en>

Business Resumption at IRCC

- IRCC has been unable to interview or collect fingerprints (14 yrs+) from those who have e-mailed claims. Refugee eligibility decisions will not be made until this is possible; we are exploring ways to safely collect the biometrics
- There is a plan for the gradual re-opening of IRCC offices, which may vary, as this will happen in accordance with local public health authorities' guidelines across Canada
- Those who have submitted a claim through email will be contacted to schedule an appointment once offices re-open, and IRCC is exploring options to expand this approach to ensure we continue to be able to maintain health and safety measures
- IRCC will also ensure needed resources (such as interpreters) are available, so that the client only needs to attend the office once, and for a limited duration
- It is envisaged that we will have a system that allows for secure electronic transmission and sharing of application forms and documents (*Note: e-post was launched July 8, 2020*)

ROUNDTABLE DIALOGUE

Open Discussion and Updates from each Province
Liz Okai, CWICE Team Leader

Ontario

- Ontario's Population is 14.5 million, with 1 in 5 residents are foreign born
- Over its first two years since launching in 2018, CWICE has had over 900 referrals, and is facilitating close to 60 children, youth and young adults move toward Canadian citizenship
 - 74% of the referrals from the province of Ontario are immigration status inquires
- Trends during COVID-19:
 - Pearson is one of three airports that remained opened in Canada
 - We anticipate a surge in migration globally, and within Canada, as the borders start to re-open
- There is a large financial impact for many of the families we serve, which may be complicated because of their unresolved immigration status
- During this time, evictions are suspended in Ontario, however some families still experience this and we have also been doing advocacy work to ensure landlords don't evict these families
- There are increased difficulties facing clients who are international students, as they have limited networks and may be disconnected from their families
- CWICE has developed a training curriculum for child welfare staff to learn more about the intersection of immigration and settlement in our sector and this is launching in Fall 2020

Alberta

- A major concern is many children have been waiting, since October, to enter Canada and some are sick and awaiting medical treatment
- They have been increasing their advocacy efforts for these children for special permission to come to Alberta to be with their adoptive parents and receive medical treatment

Northwest Territories

- Many services have been suspended due to COVID-19 and they have experienced tight restrictions despite having only a few cases of COVID-19
- This is due to the fact that there may be fewer medical resources available
- They are working to be innovative in how to engage, focusing on emotional intelligence, as using virtual assistance is difficult due to low bandwidth capacity and access to internet across the territory
- They are working closely with service partners, such as RCMP and healthcare nurses for referrals

Nova Scotia

- They continue to conduct quarterly reporting on immigration issues with the children and youth served.
- They have a population of 1 million, and currently 5 children/youth in care have Canadian residency issues.
- They have reached out to work with CWICE

- They have seen a decrease in referrals due to COVID-19, approx. 65% of referrals are investigated and a higher increase on response times
- The recent mass shooting in Nova Scotia has also heightened advocacy efforts in the province
- Heightened focus on Indigenous child welfare and they are working on 3 phases of work which includes training, amending policy, and staff development with respect to cultural familiaration and they are currently focused on ensuring Anti-Racism practices

Nunavut

- Though there continues to be minimum involvement with regards to immigration, since January's meeting Nunavut has had a request for the adoption of 3 children from the Phillipines
 - They worked with partners and relied on support from other provinces to provide service

Saskatchewan

- There have not been observed immigration or settlement issues and they meet regularly with settlement offices to review tactics and remain innovative in approach with families

British Columbia

- Since January, BC leaders have attended the immigration detention centre to build relationships and service understanding
- There has been 30% drop in referrals due to COVID-19, however there are concerns about heightened newcomer isolation and domestic violence
- There is also a large increase in services to children/youth with special needs, as there is a lack of access to these services during COVID-19
- They also have extended services to kids who are transitioning out of care

Yukon

- The territory leaders remain committed to the discussions that occurred in January 2020
- COVID-19 has been the focus of service deliver at this time, and we will continue to focus on this important work

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- CWICE Training Series – Launching Fall 2020, subscribe to newsletters for upcoming opportunities
- To receive related news stories in your inbox, or CWICE newsletters, please email dungara@peelcas.org
- Updated *Immigration Status Matters Guide* OACAS members site (2019):
<http://www.oacas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Guide-Immigration-Status-Matters-September-2019.pdf>

To contact CWICE:

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THANK YOU to our Key Note Speakers and Provincial/Territorial Delegates!