

From: Minister, JTST JTST:EX
Sent: Wednesday, December 2, 2015 10:58 AM
To: 'arichmond@cariboord.bc.ca'; Minister, CSCD CSCD:EX
Subject: Letter from the Honourable Shirley Bond
Attachments: 111374 Signed (12).pdf; 111374 Attachment 1 - GoC NR Communities Welcome Syrian Refugees.pdf; 111374 Attachment 2- GoC Canadian Syrian Population Profile.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: FYI/File

Please find attached your copy of 12 letters from the Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour.

Thank you,

Office of the Minister
Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
and Minister Responsible for Labour.

CORRESPONDENCE SERVICES
Received: DEC 3 2015
Sent: DEC 7 2015
ASSIGN TO: CS
<input type="checkbox"/> MINISTER'S RESPONSE
<input type="checkbox"/> DM RESPONSE
<input type="checkbox"/> DIRECT REPLY
<input type="checkbox"/> NECESSARY ACTION
<input type="checkbox"/> COMMENTS/ADVICE
<input type="checkbox"/> PREMIER'S RESPONSE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INFO/FILE



Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Derek Corrigan
City of Burnaby
4949 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC V5G 1M2

Dear Mayor Corrigan:

I am writing to you about your important role in the resettling of Syrian refugees to communities across the province. With the promise of the newly-elected federal government to resettle 25,000 refugees from Syria to Canada by March 2016 has come a remarkable response from British Columbians in every corner of our province. Premier Christy Clark has shown British Columbia's (BC) support by stating that the province is able to welcome up to 3,500 refugees.

Your community has equally stepped up as it will be one of the first communities in BC to receive refugees. Details on the first wave of privately sponsored refugees were announced by the federal government on November 29 and can be accessed here:
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Since meeting with municipalities at the UBCM Convention in September to discuss the province's \$1M Refugee Readiness Fund, the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training (Ministry) has been working diligently with the federal government, other BC Ministries, and community stakeholders across the province to prepare for the arrival of refugees to BC. That work positioned us well to support the implementation of the new federal government's more ambitious commitment. Through our ongoing engagement with Ottawa, we now have more detailed information on the federal resettlement plan to share with you, including a comprehensive profile of the Syrian population, which I have attached for your reference.

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Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and
Skills Training and Minister
Responsible for Labour

Office of the Minister

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9071 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2
Phone: 250 356-2771
Fax: 250 356-3000

Location:
Room 138
Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC

www.gov.bc.ca/jtsl

Historically, most refugees settle in the Lower Mainland; however, our government has a strong interest in settling refugees in other areas of the province where there are labour market opportunities and a lower cost of living. In order to provide the best supports for the newly arriving refugees, we need to ensure the communities have capacity and willingness to welcome refugees. The first details from the federal government show that some settlement of privately sponsored refugees will be occurring outside of the Lower Mainland; we would like to ensure that the government sponsored refugees who are expected to begin arriving in early 2016 will also have opportunities to live and work across the province.

As part of our ongoing engagement, I would like to invite you to a teleconference on Friday, December 4, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. to share information and discuss your communities' interest in, and capacity for, receiving government-assisted refugees. The teleconference details are as follows: 1 877 353-9184 / Participant Conference ID: 2149126.

Ministry staff are also engaged in discussions with Mr. Al Richmond, President, UBCM. While our initial outreach is focusing on those communities we know will be receiving the first wave of privately sponsored refugees, I am open to including other Mayors and interested communities in our discussion. We will work with President Richmond to ensure the invitation is extended to all those interested in supporting this important initiative.

Sincerely,



Shirley Bond
Minister

Attachments

pc: Mr. Al Richmond, President
Union of British Columbia Municipalities

Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development
and Minister Responsible for TransLink



Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Jonathan Cote
City of New Westminster
511 Royal Avenue
New Westminster, BC V3L 1H9

Dear Mayor Cote:

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Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

Her Worship Mayor Linda Hepner
City of Surrey
13450 - 104 Avenue
Surrey, BC V3T 1V8

Dear Mayor Hepner:

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Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Colin Basran
City of Kelowna
1435 Water Street
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1J4

Dear Mayor Basran:

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Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Malcolm Brodie
City of Richmond
6911 No. 3 Road
Richmond, BC V6Y 2C1

Dear Mayor Brodie:

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Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Richard Stewart
City of Coquitlam
3000 Guildford Way
Coquitlam, BC V3B 7N2

Dear Mayor Stewart:

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Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Gregor Robertson
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor Robertson:

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Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

Her Worship Mayor Lois Jackson
City of Delta
4500 Clarence Taylor Crescent
Delta, BC V4K 3E2

Dear Mayor Jackson:

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Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

Her Worship Mayor Lisa Helps
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Helps:

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Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Lyn Hall
City of Prince George
1100 Patricia Boulevard
Prince George, BC V2L 3V9

Dear Mayor Hall:

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Since meeting with municipalities at the UBCM Convention in September to discuss the province's \$1M Refugee Readiness Fund, the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training (Ministry) has been working diligently with the federal government, other BC Ministries, and community stakeholders across the province to prepare for the arrival of refugees to BC. That work positioned us well to support the implementation of the new federal government's more ambitious commitment. Through our ongoing engagement with Ottawa, we now have more detailed information on the federal resettlement plan to share with you, including a comprehensive profile of the Syrian population, which I have attached for your reference.

.../2

Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and
Skills Training and Minister
Responsible for Labour

Office of the Minister

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9071 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2
Phone: 250 356-2771
Fax: 250 356-3000

Location:
Room 138
Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC

www.gov.bc.ca/jtst

Historically, most refugees settle in the Lower Mainland; however, our government has a strong interest in settling refugees in other areas of the province where there are labour market opportunities and a lower cost of living. In order to provide the best supports for the newly arriving refugees, we need to ensure the communities have capacity and willingness to welcome refugees. The first details from the federal government show that some settlement of privately sponsored refugees will be occurring outside of the Lower Mainland; we would like to ensure that the government sponsored refugees who are expected to begin arriving in early 2016 will also have opportunities to live and work across the province.

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Ministry staff are also engaged in discussions with Mr. Al Richmond, President, UBCM. While our initial outreach is focusing on those communities we know will be receiving the first wave of privately sponsored refugees, I am open to including other Mayors and interested communities in our discussion. We will work with President Richmond to ensure the invitation is extended to all those interested in supporting this important initiative.

Sincerely,



Shirley Bond
Minister

Attachments

pc: Mr. Al Richmond, President
Union of British Columbia Municipalities

Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development
and Minister Responsible for TransLink



Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Ted Schaffer
City of Langley
20399 Douglas Crescent
Langley, BC V3A 4B3

Dear Mayor Schaffer:

I am writing to you about your important role in the resettling of Syrian refugees to communities across the province. With the promise of the newly-elected federal government to resettle 25,000 refugees from Syria to Canada by March 2016 has come a remarkable response from British Columbians in every corner of our province. Premier Christy Clark has shown British Columbia's (BC) support by stating that the province is able to welcome up to 3,500 refugees.

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and Minister Responsible for TransLink



Ref: 111374

December 2, 2015

His Worship Mayor Darrell Mussatto
City of North Vancouver
141 West 14th Street
North Vancouver, BC V7M 1H9

Dear Mayor Mussatto:

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→ Communities Across Canada Preparing to Welcome Syrian Refugees

News Release



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Communities Across Canada Preparing to Welcome Syrian Refugees

November 29, 2015 – Ottawa, ON – As the Government of Canada has stepped up efforts to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada, communities from coast to coast to coast are also preparing to welcome Syrian refugees with open arms.

A significant portion of refugees arriving in Canada by the end of December will be privately sponsored and already have destination communities large and small that are eagerly anticipating their arrival. As of November 24th, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is actively processing 4,511 files of Syrian refugees who have been sponsored by organizations and groups of Canadians outside of Quebec. While decisions are not yet finalized in many of these cases, a list of communities, outside of Quebec, where private sponsors have put forth an application for a Syrian refugee is available on our [website](#). In Quebec, sponsorship cases are approved by the provincial government.

The majority of these privately sponsored refugees will arrive before the end of December, as their applications are already in process. They will contribute to the goal of bringing in 10,000 Syrian refugees by December 31. Growing numbers of government assisted refugees will begin arriving later in December and into next year as the government seeks to bring in 25,000 Syrian refugees overall by the end of February.

Government-assisted refugees will go to communities across Canada where funded service providing organizations with support services are available to help them integrate. We anticipate more communities will get involved in supporting the settlement and integration of these refugees.

The Government of Canada continues to work closely with provincial, territorial, municipal, and other partners to ensure the successful integration of Syrian refugees into their new host communities, where they will begin to build their new lives in Canada.

Quotes

"It is so encouraging to see communities, large and small, coming together in support of this complex initiative and welcome these Syrian refugees. The generosity and compassion of Canadians will help them successfully transition to life in Canada."

– Hon. John McCallum, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Quick facts

- Private sponsors in more than 100 communities have applications in process to sponsor a Syrian refugee.
- The Governor General will be hosting a Forum on Welcoming Syrian Refugees to Canada on December 1, 2015.
- The 25,000 refugees to be settled, including privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) and government-assisted refugees (GARs), are in addition to the 3,089 Syrian refugees who have already arrived in Canada from January 1, 2014, to November 3, 2015.

Related products

- [Backgrounder on destination communities for privately sponsored Syrian refugees](#)
- [Map of destination communities for privately sponsored Syrian refugees](#)

Associated links

- Canada.ca/refugees
- [Governor General to Host Forum on Welcoming Syrian Refugees to Canada](#)
- [Canada Offers Leadership on the Syrian Refugee Crisis](#)

Contacts

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CIC-Media-Relations@cic.gc.ca

Building a stronger Canada: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada strengthens Canada's economic, social and cultural prosperity, helping ensure Canadian safety and security while managing one of the largest and most generous immigration programs in the world.

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Hon. John McCallum

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Government and Politics

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2015-11-29

Government of Canada activities and initiatives

Canada welcomes 25,000 Syrian refugees



The Government of Canada is taking immediate action to welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada through a five-phase national plan. #WelcomeRefugees

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Take the pledge to #EndViolence against women and girls



Gender-based violence is not just a women's issue. It's everyone's issue and we all have a role to play.



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

November 2015

Population Profile: Syrian Refugees

Citizenship and Immigration Canada



Canada

Executive Summary

The conflict in Syria, which began in 2011, has caused widespread displacement with more than 4 million Syrian refugees fleeing, mainly to neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq.

Conditions in asylum countries vary but overall are quite poor. Iraq, Jordan and Turkey are the only three countries that have formal refugee camps; however, the majority of Syrian refugees (85 percent) live in non-camp environments such as urban centers or makeshift dwellings. Syrian refugees resettled to Canada will come primarily from asylum countries such as Jordan and Lebanon where local integration is not possible due to the overwhelming number of refugees residing in those countries.

In order to prepare for the arrival of refugees, CIC compiled available information on demographics and health characteristics of Syrian refugees. Some of the most common medical conditions found include: hypertension, diabetes and visual or hearing impairment. In addition, mental illness and trauma are common given the experiences in Syria, in transit and in asylum countries. Symptoms may not appear right away and therefore, follow-up is crucial. In terms of languages, of the Syrian refugees resettled to Canada in 2014, 46 percent reported knowing at least one of Canada's official languages, making language skills training an important factor in integration.

It is essential that cultural considerations are given to Syrian refugees when providing services as there are a number of important aspects to consider such as providing culturally appropriate health care, understanding family dynamics, religious beliefs and food and dietary restrictions.

Current information on how Canada is helping Syrian refugees is available on the CIC website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/crisis/canada-response.asp>.

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Background

Introduction

Since early 2011, armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has led more than 4 million Syrians to seek refuge in the neighbouring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt, resulting in significant humanitarian needs. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), as of July 2015, an additional 7.6 million Syrians are internally displaced, with numbers increasing as the crisis continues unabated.

Situational Overview

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the ruling Ba'ath Party have been in power since 2000. Protests began after many years of political repression and government corruption. Protestors called for democratic reforms, the release of political prisoners, multi-party elections and, in many cases, the end of the regime. The Syrian government responded to anti-regime activity with widespread arrests, beatings, interrogations, torture, and the use of live ammunition and snipers on protestors as well as barrel bombs and chlorine gas on areas viewed as anti-regime strongholds.

Since 2011, an estimated 1,500 armed rebel groups, with ever-changing alliances and factions—some secular and some Islamist—have become active in Syria.

Two notable Islamist groups also vying for territorial control in Syria are Jabhat al-Nusra, an arm of Al Qaeda, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

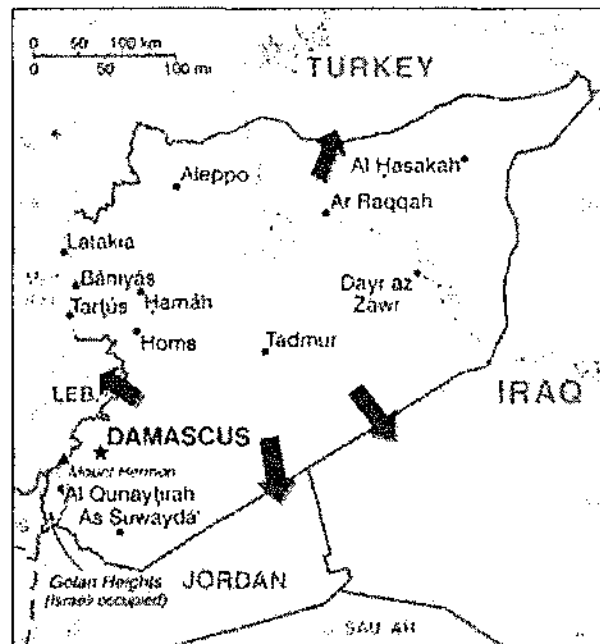


Figure 1: Map of Syria. Source: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). 2014.

Syrian Communities in Canada

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, there were 40,840 people in Canada reporting Syrian ethnic origin. The largest percentage of people of Syrian origin live in Quebec (44 percent), followed by Ontario (39 percent). The cities with the highest percentages of people of Syrian origin are Montréal (40 percent), Toronto (20 percent), Ottawa-Gatineau (7 percent), and London (3 percent). Similarly, the majority of Syrian refugees resettled to Canada reside in

Quebec and Ontario, particularly in Montreal and Toronto. These communities could be important sources of emotional support for newly arrived refugees.

Demographic Characteristics

This section provides an overview of general characteristics and demographics of Syrians in their country of origin. In addition, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has provided demographic information on Syrian refugees who have resettled to Canada.

Age

As shown in Figure 2, 33 percent of people in Syria are under 15 years old, 20 percent are between 15 and 24 and 43 percent are between 25 and 64 years old. See Figure 2 for the age proportions in Syria. Comparatively, refugees who have resettled to Canada had similar numbers. Of the Syrian refugees resettled to Canada in 2014, 34 percent were under 15 years old, 15 percent were between 15 and 24 years old, and 48 percent were between 25 and 64 years old. See Figure 3 for the ages of resettled Syrian refugees.

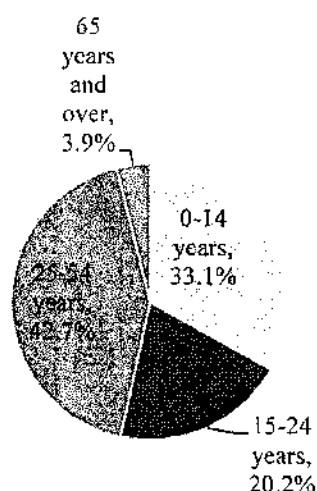


Figure 2: Age distribution in Syria. Source: CIA, 2014.

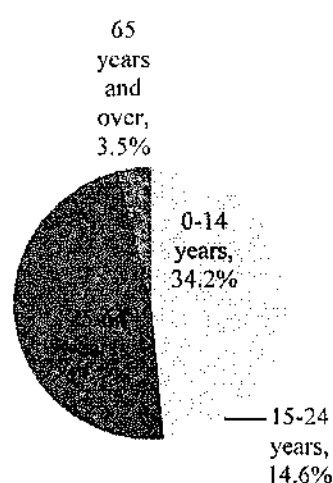


Figure 3: Age distribution of Syrian refugees resettled to Canada in 2014.

Languages

Languages spoken in Syria include Arabic (official language), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, and Circassian (widely understood). French and English are somewhat understood. According to the Cultural Orientation Resource Center, an organization that has provided cultural backgrounders to the U.S. government, Arabic is the native language of 90 percent of the population.

Of the Syrian refugees resettled to Canada in 2014, approximately 46 percent spoke at least one of Canada's official languages.

Literacy

Universal literacy was a major goal of the Syrian government before the conflict. As a result, 84 percent of the population is literate (90 percent of men and 77 percent of women).

Ethnic Groups

Prior to the conflict, Syria's ethnic groups consisted of Arabs (90 percent) and Kurds, Armenians and others (10 percent).

Urbanization

Approximately 56 percent of Syria's population resided in urban areas prior to the conflict, particularly in Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, and Homs, which are the country's four largest cities. Drought and demographic shifts resulting from a rural exodus have been identified as key reasons behind the start of protests and the onset of the crisis.

Religion

The majority religion in Syria is Islam, which makes up 87 percent of the population, including 74 percent who are Sunni Muslim, and 13 percent who are Alawi, Ismaili and Shia Muslim. Approximately 10 percent practice Christianity, with individuals identifying as Orthodox, Uniate and Nestorian Christians. The remaining 3 percent are Druze. The conflict has taken on sectarian dimensions as political opinion has become ascribed based on religious affiliation. For example, individuals who are Alawi are assumed to be pro-Assad, which further exacerbates tensions between opposing groups.

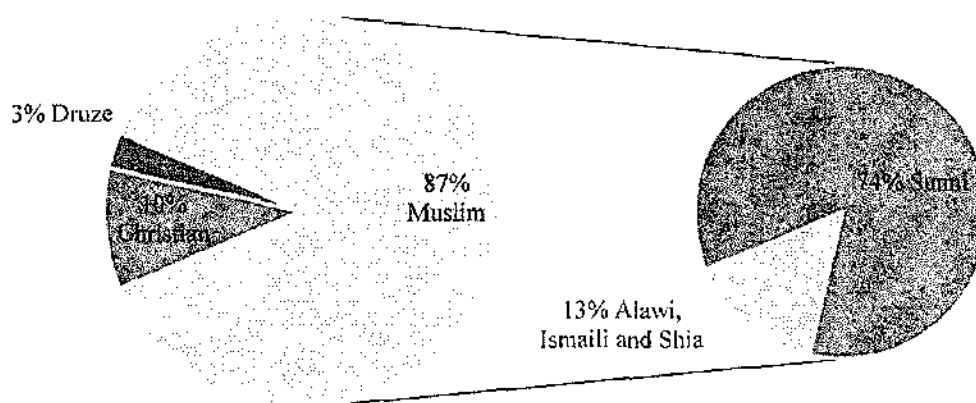


Figure 4: Religions in Syria. Source: CIA, 2014.

Access to Education

In pre-conflict Syria, high rates of primary school attendance were achieved due to free public education. However, rates of primary school attendance in rural areas were significantly lower than the national average, and there were high dropout rates at the secondary school level, especially among girls. Furthermore, the Ba'ath party used Syria's education system as a tool to indoctrinate children with party ideologies, and teachers were generally not permitted to express ideas that opposed government policy.

According to the Cultural Orientation Resource Center, 72 percent of Syrians of secondary school age were enrolled in school before the uprising. The current conflict situation has taken a severe toll on the education system, with school attendance rates down to 6 percent in some areas due to general insecurity, damaged buildings and a lack of teachers.

Prior to the conflict, a combination of public and private universities existed to provide higher education access to men and women in Syria. However, as with primary and secondary school, restrictions on academic and political freedom were largely present. According to the World Bank, post-secondary school enrollment steadily increased over the years prior to the conflict and in 2010, 26 percent of the population in the five-year age group following secondary school had enrolled in post-secondary education. It is highly likely that enrollment has dropped by a large percentage since then.

Countries of Asylum

Size and Demographics of the Refugee Population

In 2015, the number of registered Syrian refugees reached 4 million. The majority of refugees reside in the neighbouring countries of Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt. The number of refugees in neighbouring asylum countries is illustrated in Figure 5. These countries are most affected by the influx of Syrian refugees across their borders and are struggling to meet the needs of refugees in addition to those of their own populations.

Figure 6 shows the percentage breakdown by age and gender of

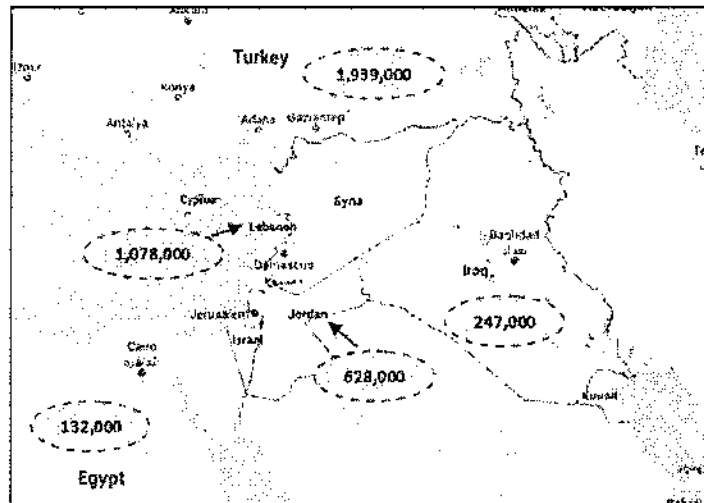


Figure 5: Size of refugee population as of August 2015

Syrian refugees based on data from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). This chart shows that 52 percent of Syrian refugees are under the age of 18 and are therefore especially vulnerable.

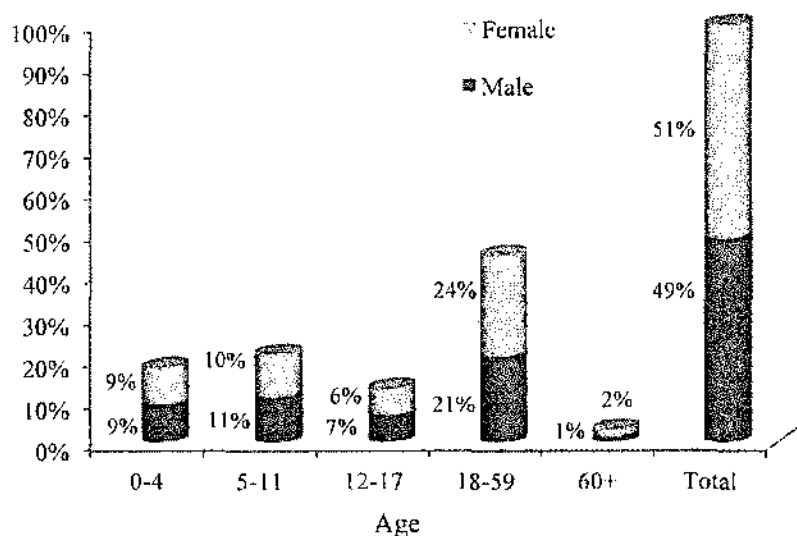


Figure 6: Age and gender breakdown of Syrian refugees. Source: UNHCR

Conditions in Asylum Countries

Living conditions in asylum countries vary greatly but overall are poor, particularly in Lebanon. For example, inadequate shelter during the winter of 2015 resulted in some refugees and their children freezing to death in camps. Iraq, Jordan and Turkey are the only three countries that have formal refugee camps; however, the majority of Syrian refugees (85 percent) live in non-camp environments such as urban centers or makeshift dwellings.

Syrian refugees often lack access to adequate shelter, clean water, health care, schools and income-generating activities. As the conflict continues and refugees deplete their own financial resources, their situation becomes increasingly precarious and tensions with refugee-hosting communities are rising. Access to education is a major challenge and the majority of Syrian children living outside of Syria continue to miss critical educational milestones. About 89 percent of children living in refugee camps are attending school; however, given that the majority of Syrian refugees do not live in camps, overall 68 percent of children living outside of Syria are not attending school.

Lebanon

With a population of almost 6 million people and over 1 million Syrian refugees, Lebanon has the most refugees per capita in the world. Lebanon maintains a no-camp policy, so Syrians are dispersed among 1,700 localities in apartments or houses, abandoned buildings and informal

tented settlements. Adequate shelter, access to health care, and water and sanitation are the greatest challenges in the humanitarian response.

Jordan

Jordan is a country of 8 million people and is host to 628,000 Syrian refugees. Jordan has three official Syrian refugee camps in the northern areas (near the border with Syria): Za'atari Refugee Camp, Azraq Camp and Emirates Jordanian Camp. Within Jordan, 16 percent of refugees live in camps and 84 percent live outside of camps. Health care is available in clinics and hospitals in the largest camps. Outside of camps, it is reported that 38 percent of refugees live in sub-standard shelter. Adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities have been particularly challenging in Jordan especially in the congested Za'atari camp.

Turkey

Turkey is a country of 82 million people and is host to 1.9 million Syrians, in addition to other asylum populations such as Iraqis and Afghans (as of August 2015). There are 23 camps across the south of Turkey that are home to approximately 260,000 refugees, while the remaining refugees live outside of camps in housing units such as rented houses or apartments. About 56 percent of the refugees in the camps often live four to six people per housing unit (e.g., a tent or container). Close to 30 percent of refugees in the Turkish camps live with seven people or more in a housing unit. Many refugees are living in insecure dwellings, and 75 percent of families are struggling to meet their basic food needs.

Iraq

Iraq has a population of over 32 million people and is also host to 247,000 Syrian refugees. The majority of refugees live outside of camps (62 percent), mostly in urban centres with little access to assistance, while 38 percent live in camps. Refugees in Iraq receive free medical and educational services, but the country's infrastructure is overwhelmed by the needs of Syrians and Iraqis alike. Much like the other asylum countries, there is low school attendance for Syrian refugee children in Iraq.

Egypt

There are 132,000 Syrian refugees residing in Egypt, while the population is close to 87 million people. Like Lebanon, Egypt does not have refugee camps. Syrians live in urban neighborhoods, renting and sharing accommodation. In general, refugees have access to Egyptian public health and education but face discrimination in accessing these services.

Health Characteristics

The following section includes information from open-source reports on the prevalence of diseases, as well as other health issues impacting resettlement and integration (e.g. immunizations, mental health issues, injuries and disabilities, and sexual violence) among Syrian refugees mostly those living in Lebanon and Jordan. Following this general health section,

aggregate data on health conditions amongst Syrian refugees resettled to Canada is provided. This information is taken from the Department's immigration medical exam (IME).

General Health Conditions among Syrian Refugees

Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases

In 2013, the UNHCR conducted health care consultations in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq and produced a report outlining some of the most prevalent diseases among Syrian refugees. While the majority of diseases in this report are consistent with CIC's data on resettled refugees, some of the conditions mentioned are not identified in CIC's data but are worth noting. Medical conditions mentioned in the UNHCR research include respiratory tract infections, chronic respiratory diseases, diarrhea, skin infections, urinary tract infections and eye or ear infections.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Vaccine-preventable diseases are particularly difficult to assess, as the majority of refugees will not have their personal documents, such as immunization and medical records. Mass vaccination campaigns for polio and measles were undertaken in Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan in 2013; however, an exact estimate of how many Syrian refugees received these vaccines is not available. Therefore, health-care providers should be prepared to provide vaccinations to some refugees.

Trauma and Mental Illness

Mental health and psychosocial support services will be essential for many Syrians after arriving in Canada. Mental health is one of the most prevalent health concerns, as much of the Syrian refugee population has experienced some form of trauma, including losing family members, being subject to or witnessing violent acts, or suffering from conflict-induced physical disabilities due to the use of barrel bombs and torture. According to the UNHCR, 43 percent of Syrian refugees referred for resettlement were submitted under the Survivor of Violence and/or Torture category in 2013 and 2014.

The UNHCR reports a high prevalence of mental health conditions particularly among children and adolescents. The UNHCR (2013) found that mental health is the most prevalent health concern for people ages 5 to 17 in both Lebanon and Jordan. Mercy Corps conducted focus group discussions with adolescents in Jordan and Lebanon and found that trauma is causing high physical and social isolation of refugees, particularly amongst adolescent girls. As a result, 20 percent of the children and adolescents interviewed left their home once a week or less. Boys mentioned broken social networks and a growing sense of hopelessness. They also described their humiliation due to tension between Syrian refugees and the host community.

Syrian attitudes toward mental health have shifted a great deal according to the Cultural Orientation Resource Center. Prior to the crisis, receiving treatment for mental illness had a negative stigma, making people more reluctant to seek treatment or discuss issues. However, as

large numbers of Syrian men, women and children are in psychological distress, they are more open to receiving mental health support. The need for treatment is difficult to predict, as symptoms can arise several months after arrival in the country of resettlement. Therefore, follow-up on mental health issues is crucial.

Injuries and Disabilities

UNHCR research also shows a large number of Syrian refugees with injuries. In 2013, 5 percent of health care consultations in Jordan and 1 percent in Lebanon were for injuries. In Jordan, 11 percent of those injuries were war-related. Some injuries may have caused a physical disability, which will need increased attention upon arrival in a resettlement country. With regard to disabilities, the UNHCR noted that one in 10 refugee households in Jordan have at least one family member who has a disability and that 41 percent of those with a disability are children.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence and the threat of sexual violence was a concern for many women and girls in Syria before fleeing, if not one of the reasons for fleeing. Rape and other forms of violence affect women and girls as well as men and boys. It is often committed in detention facilities, in the context of household searches or military raids and checkpoints. Sexual violence is also a concern in asylum countries. According to the Cultural Orientation Resource Center, the fear of sexual violence in asylum countries from other refugees or host country nationals causes refugee women and girls to stay home, venturing outside only when accompanied by other family members. Delayed reporting and underreporting are common and, therefore, the magnitude and severity of the situation is unknown. While support, such as counselling, may be required, talking about the subject is often socially unacceptable, and women are unlikely to discuss the matter in front of male family members.

Health Conditions Identified During the Immigration Medical Exam (IME) among Syrian Refugees Resettled to Canada

The IME is conducted prior to resettlement to Canada to screen and detect a limited set of medical conditions applicable to medical requirements. The purpose of the IME is to determine admissibility on the basis of public health/safety and demand on social/health services. It is a single health assessment at a specific point in time, and the data cannot be used to draw conclusions on the health status of a group of individuals nor be generalized to other refugees. Most conditions are not systematically assessed and data relies heavily on self-report. Many individuals may not have received treatment for – or even be aware of – a health condition. In addition, CIC might not be aware of conditions a refugee may have developed between the time of their medical assessment and their arrival in Canada. As well, certain conditions like mental health issues can arise several months after arrival in Canada.



Syrian refugees receive the same medical assessment as all other immigrant categories, which consists of a medical history, physical examination, age-specific laboratory tests and age-specific chest x-ray. Mandatory age-specific laboratory and radiologic tests include:

1. Urinalysis for clients over five years of age
2. Chest x-ray (posterior-anterior view) for clients over 11 years of age
3. Syphilis test for clients over 15 years of age
4. HIV test for clients over 15 years of age

The tables provided below describe aggregate health-related data on a specific group of Syrian refugees who underwent the IME prior to being resettled in Canada. CIC makes every effort to safeguard personal information while also complying with privacy legislation.

Of the Syrian refugees assessed overseas (total=1,439), a little over 16 percent had at least one health condition detected during the IME (see Table 1). Among them, 55 percent were male. The highest proportion of health conditions is found in those 65 years and older – 80 percent of people in that age group had at least one health condition.

Table 1: Syrian refugees with at least one health condition at the time of IME

Age Group (years)	Had at least one condition listed*			Total Individuals		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
Less than 15	12	12	24 (5%)	255	193	448
15 to under 25	8	3	11 (5%)	126	112	238
25 to under 45	31	24	55 (12%)	227	219	446
45 to under 65	65	41	106 (41%)	151	109	260
65 and older	14	24	38 (80%)	17	30	47
Total	130	104	234 (16%)	776	663	1439

* Although someone may have no condition identified at the time of the IME, it is not a guarantee that the individual does not have some type of health condition, or will not by the time of their arrival in Canada.

The most prevalent health conditions detected during the IME were hypertension, diabetes, visual or hearing impairments and cardiovascular disease (see Table 2). Hypertension had the highest frequency and mostly affected Syrians between 25 and 65 years of age. In addition, the majority of those with a cardiovascular disease were aged 65 years and over. Other chronic health conditions detected among Syrians 45 years and over included diabetes, osteoarthritis and cancer.

Three main communicable diseases are screened during the IME: tuberculosis (TB), syphilis and HIV, with lower proportions of communicable diseases reported than non communicable diseases (or chronic health conditions) (see Table 2).

Although information on the severity of a disease is not systematically collected at the time of the IME, each of the health conditions presented here requires various levels of clinical management and follow-up care. However, certain health issues are worth noting due to their

impact on integration and settlement, either because they require access to specialized care or because they can affect daily living if not managed in a timely manner. These include those with mental health illnesses/mood disorders, vision and hearing impairments, dental conditions and intellectual deficiencies categories. Ten percent of the overall group were represented in this category.

Table 2: Proportion of health conditions among resettled Syrian refugees

Health Condition*	Proportion of Syrian refugee group (%) (n=1,439)
Hypertension	7.6%
Non-specific abnormal findings**	5.0%
Diabetes	2.2%
Visual or hearing impairment	1.5%
Cardiovascular disease	0.9%
Cognitive/behaviour/nervous system disorder	0.8%
Mental illness/mood disorder	0.8%
Cancer	0.6%
Other	0.5%
Communicable disease	0.4%
Osteoarthritis	0.3%
Renal disorder	0.3%

* A more detailed table providing frequencies of health conditions as well as a table describing the specific conditions have been included in the Annex.

** Non-specific abnormal findings relate to medical findings during the medical assessment that were inconclusive or not related to any specific health condition.

Cultural Considerations

Food and Dietary Restrictions

Syrian food consists of a wide range of grains, meat and fruits and vegetables. Common dishes include pita and hummus (chickpea dip), baba ganoush (eggplant spread), mahshe (stuffed grape leaves, zucchini and bell peppers), shawarma (gyro), and salads such as tabouleh and fattoush. Lunch is usually the largest meal of the day, often eaten at 2:00 pm. Syrian Muslims have dietary restrictions that do not allow them to eat pork; additionally, some will not consume alcohol or eat shellfish.

Families

As mentioned, the majority of resettled Syrian refugees who have arrived in Canada are family units consisting of a couple with three or more children. Families are quite extended in Syria; they include not only parents and children but also grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. It is



not uncommon for extended and immediate family members to live together in a single dwelling. In general, Syrian society is patriarchal, with the family under the authority of the oldest man.

Religion

In Syria, devout Muslims pray five times a day, in private and at scheduled times. Syrian Muslims may fast during the lunar month of Ramadan, during which eating, drinking and smoking is prohibited from sunrise to sunset. At the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate Eid by feasting with family. Devout Christians wear crosses around their necks and attend church regularly. All Muslim and Christian holidays are official holidays in Syria.

Health Care

Health care providers should consider religious and cultural beliefs when providing services. This includes practices such as providing long hospital gowns that cover the lower legs and same-sex health-care providers. This is especially important for women's reproductive health, as it would be more culturally appropriate for female gynecologists and nurses to provide care for Syrian refugee women.

Employment

The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) recently conducted a labour market analysis on Syrian refugees in Lebanon. ACTED's research provides other resettlement countries with a general idea of job opportunities and challenges for Syrian refugees.

This ACTED study determined that the majority of Syrians worked in the construction and agriculture sectors in Syria. The study found that 70 percent of the Syrian refugees interviewed were working in construction before leaving Syria and were able to find construction jobs in Lebanon. Research conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2013 found that the occupational distribution among Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon included domestic/personal services such as driving or housekeeping (27 percent), agricultural activities (24 percent), and construction (12 percent). In addition, Syrians with previous jobs that require higher qualifications such as engineering, finance or education were either not employed or had found jobs in other sectors while living in Lebanon.

ACTED asked interviewees why they could not find employment. The responses varied but included a disability/injury or the reluctance of employers to hire Syrians. When asked which skills would help them find a job, or a better job, improved communication skills (including language, communication and computer skills) were mentioned the most.

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Annex

Table 3: Frequency and rates of health conditions among refugees

Health condition*	Total frequency	Proportion of individuals with at Least One condition (n=234)	Proportion of entire Syrian Refugee Group (%) (n=1439)
Hypertension	110	47.0%	7.6%
Non-specific abnormal findings	72	30.8%	5.0%
Diabetes	32	13.7%	2.2%
Visual or hearing impairment	21	9.0%	1.5%
Cardiovascular disease	13	5.6%	0.9%
Cognitive/ behavioural/ nervous system disorder	11	4.7%	0.8%
Mental illness or mood disorder	11	4.7%	0.8%
Cancer	9	3.8%	0.6%
Other	7	3%	0.5%
Communicable disease	6	2.6%	0.4%
Osteoarthritis	5	2.1%	0.3%
Renal disorders	5	2.1%	0.3%

*If someone had two diagnoses that went into the same group, they were only counted once in the frequency. Cell counts of less than 5 (including 0) have been suppressed as per data protocol for privacy and confidentiality. Non-specific abnormal findings relate to medical findings during the medical assessment that were inconclusive or not related to any specific health condition.

Table 4: Health groupings and categories

Cancer	Cardiovascular disease	Cognitive, behavioural and nervous system disorders	Communicable diseases
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endocrine Gland - Malignant Neoplasm • Female Breast - Malignant Neoplasm • Genitourinary Organs- Malignant Neoplasm • Lymphoid and Histiocytic Tissue - Malignant Neoplasm • Melanoma - Malignant Neoplasm • Nervous System - Malignant Neoplasm • Neoplasm of Unspecified Nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aortic Valve Disease • Cardiomegaly • Cardiomyopathy • Cerebrovascular Disease • Heart - Congenital Anomaly • Heart Failure • Ischemic Heart Disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour Disorder • Infantile Autism • Mental Retardation • Nervous System Disorder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hepatitis B • Pulmonary Tuberculosis Infection • Early Syphilis
Vision and hearing impairments	Mental illness and mood disorders	Non-specific abnormal Findings	Other Health Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impaired Hearing or Deafness • Impaired Vision or Blindness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bipolar Disorder • Depression • Schizophrenia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-specific Abnormal Findings • Non-specific Abnormal Results of Function Studies • Non-specific Abnormal Findings on Radiological and Other Examination of Body Structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Delay • Congenital Anomaly • Connective Tissue Disorder • Blood, and Blood-Forming Organ, Disease



MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY, SPORT AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER'S OFFICE		
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REPLY DIRECT <input type="checkbox"/>	FNA <input type="checkbox"/>	

December 10, 2015

The Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Community, Sport, Cultural Development & Minister Responsible for Translink
PO Box 9045 Stn. Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Dear Minister Fassbender,

On behalf of Big Brothers Big Sisters, we would like to extend our support for the Government of British Columbia to safely transition Syrian refugees into British Columbia.

Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies provide effective and safe youth mentoring programs in over 1,100 communities from coast to coast. As such, we are in a great position to offer our partnership and mentoring experience to assist with the transition and settlement of Syrian refugees in our communities. Given the host of challenges and barriers refugee children and youth face upon arrival, including academic and interpersonal difficulties, our school based mentoring programs have been identified as the optimal setting for effective interventions. Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies deliver programs within local schools through partnerships with elementary, junior high and high schools across the province. As a result, we believe we could play an integral role in fostering strong mentoring connections with Syrian children and youth, now and in the future.

Our local Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies have also developed strong partnerships with many community agencies, including settlement agencies, and government. Partner representatives and our Agencies also comprise our National Diversity Council which ensures the unique needs of newcomer/ethno-cultural youth are understood, and that our mentoring services are responsive to their needs. As such we are eager to support the Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development and the lead settlement agencies in the province, to ensure that meaningful, holistic interventions are in place for the thousands of Syrian children and youth settling in British Columbia. Their success is a success for the entire nation.

On behalf of mentored children and youth, I thank you for your commitment to building a stronger British Columbia, and look forward to working with you and the Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development to determine how we move forward on this matter.

Sincerely,

Mary Reeves
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Langley

Maureen Berlin
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the
Fraser Valley

Brenda Gershkovitch
Executive Director
Big Sisters of BC Lower
Mainland

Denise Robinson
Executive Director
Big Brothers & Big Sisters of
Central Vancouver Island

Erin Generous
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Cowichan Valley

Bev Middlebrook
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Cranbrook

Danielle Armstrong
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Fort
St. John

Valerie Lambert
Executive Director
Big Brothers of Greater
Vancouver

Ian Gerbrandt
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Kamloops

Helen Brownrigg
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the
Okanagan

Tim Bennett
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Prince
George

Michelle Riley
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Quesnel

Marilyn Lissimore
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Terrace

Rhonda Brown
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Victoria

Melissa Newberry
Executive Director
Big Brothers Big Sisters of
Williams Lake

165915

Holland, Jodie CSCD:EX

From: Minister, JTST JTST:EX
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2016 11:03 AM
To: Minister, CSCD CSCD:EX
Subject: Letter from the Honourable Shirley Bond
Attachments: 111690 signed.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: FYI/File

Sent to MPF as FYI on Jan. 21 – RW.

Please find attached your copy of a letter from the Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour to Mr. Al Richmond.

Thank you,

Office of the Minister
Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
and Minister Responsible for Labour.

CORRESPONDENCE SERVICES
Received: JAN 28 2016
Sent: JAN 28 2016
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xref 165403



JAN 19 2016

Ref: 111690

Mr. Al Richmond, President
Union of British Columbia Municipalities
525 Government Street
Victoria, BC V8V 0A8

Dear Mr. Richmond:

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding the ongoing arrivals of Syrian refugees into British Columbia (BC) communities. I am delighted to see the outpouring of British Columbians' support for arriving refugees—in just the past few weeks we have seen hundreds of new arrivals welcomed into communities across the province from Victoria to Fernie to Prince George.

Refugee arrival numbers are continually evolving. As I mentioned in my previous letter, the federal government has created a website to provide up-to-date information on refugee volumes and settlement locations, available at: www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp. For your convenience, I have attached the most current data as an appendix.

From November 4, 2015, to January 17, 2016, between 923 to 944 Syrian refugees have arrived in BC. So far, 783 have arrived in Vancouver, and the remainder are divided between 18 other communities. Another six communities can expect arrivals in the near future. According to the data the Province has collected so far, over 60 percent of arrivals have been children and youth, and the average family size has been quite large at 4.8 people. Among privately sponsored refugees who settle outside of Vancouver, families are on average much smaller (2.4 people) and are more likely to be working age.

You may have heard that the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC), the organization that provides initial reception and support for government assisted refugees, asked the federal government for a temporary pause on the arrival of refugees from January 19 to 22. This is consistent with the strategic approach to the federal government's refugee resettlement plan, and several other cities across Canada have also requested a pause to allow service providers to catch up on transitioning refugees into permanent housing. During the brief pause of government-assisted refugee arrivals, privately sponsored refugees will continue to arrive in communities across BC.

.../2

Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and
Skills Training and Minister
Responsible for Labour

Office of the Minister

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9071 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2
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Fax: 250 356-3000

Location:
Room 138
Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC

www.gov.bc.ca/jst

Mr. Al Richmond, President

Page 2

The provincial government continues to take a cross-ministry coordination approach to address issues arising from this influx of new British Columbians. Currently, our most pressing focus is to support the federal government in securing permanent housing that can accommodate large families. We continue to work closely with the federal government, who have full jurisdiction over the refugee resettlement program, to coordinate our efforts as much as possible.

As I have indicated in previous correspondence, ISSofBC has created an online registry for private offers of support for Syrian refugees, including housing, employment and volunteer offers. ISSBC also publishes weekly newsletters about the progress of refugee settlement in BC. I encourage you to share this link with your members and their communities:
www.issbc.org/refugee-readiness-hub.

Please feel free to share this letter with your members as appropriate. Thank you again for your time and ongoing commitment to the refugee settlement process in BC. I look forward to our continued engagement on this matter.

Sincerely,



Shirley Bond
Minister

Enclosure

pc: Honourable Peter Fassbender
Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development
and Minister Responsible for TransLink

165939

Holland, Jodie CSCD:EX

From: Bozovic, Olivia JTST:EX on behalf of Mingay, Rob JTST:EX
Sent: Tuesday, January 12, 2016 10:58 AM
To: Minister, JAG JAG:EX; Minister, JTST JTST:EX; Minister, CSCD CSCD:EX; Transportation, Minister TRAN:EX; Minister, MIT MIT:EX
Subject: 111557 Response from Workforce Development and Immigration Division, JTSTL
Attachments: 111557 ADM response to Big Brothers and Big Sisters.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: FYI/File

Good morning,

Please see attached for a copy of a letter written to Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

Sincerely,

Rob Mingay
Assistant Deputy Minister
Workforce Development and Immigration Division

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Received:
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xref 165571



Ref: 111557

January 12, 2016

Big Brothers and Big Sisters
#201 - 20538 Fraser Highway
Langley BC V3A 4G2

Dear Big Brothers and Big Sisters of BC:

Thank you for your letters of December 10, 2015, addressed to Ministers Bond, Fassbender, Stone, Wat, and Anton regarding your offer of support for Syrian refugees in British Columbia. As the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Workforce Development and Immigration Division at the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Responsible for Labour, I am pleased to respond on Minister Bond's behalf.

As a province, we are proud of the generosity shown by British Columbians in response to the federal government's commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada. We support every effort to welcome these refugees and will work with the federal government, communities across the province, our service providers, and other private and non-profit organizations to ensure that refugees have the best possible opportunity for a prosperous life in B.C.

In addition to engaging with more than 85 stakeholders across the province, B.C. has recently launched a new \$1 million Refugee Readiness Fund to support refugees. As part of the Fund, \$500,000 will be provided to five Refugee Response Teams to proactively plan for the settlement of refugees in communities across B.C. Teams are anticipated in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Okanagan and Cariboo; however, locations are contingent on where refugees ultimately settle.

The remaining \$500,000 is being provided to the Immigrant Services Society of B.C. (ISSofBC) to develop and maintain an online hub to connect private sponsors and service providers; track volunteer offers, in-kind donations, housing and employment leads; and share resources. They will also be providing supports for clinicians caring for traumatized refugees and providing workshops and support to the Refugee Response Teams. We encourage your members to visit the ISSofBC website at: <http://www.issbc.org/prim-corp-nav/our-work-with-refugees/refugee-crisis/how-can-i-help-refugees>.

As I am sure you are aware, the federal government has launched a new website and social media campaign with the hashtag, #WelcomeRefugees, to support Canadians to donate, volunteer, and sponsor refugees.

...2/

Ministry of Jobs, Tourism
and Skills Training and
Minister Responsible for
Labour

Assistant Deputy Minister
Workforce Development and
Immigration Division

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9824 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9T2
Phone: 250 356-9635
Fax: 250 356-2842

Location:
5th Floor, 800 Johnson Street
Victoria, BC
www.gov.bc.ca/jtsi

The website also includes an interactive map for tracking where privately sponsored Syrian refugees will be arriving. You can find these resources online at:
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/index.asp>.

In the last few weeks, B.C. has already welcomed over 500 refugees, 60% of whom have been children and youth. We expect the majority of these arrivals to settle in Vancouver and the Lower Mainland, with smaller numbers in communities throughout B.C. Many of the refugee youth will face significant challenges in overcoming trauma and adapting to life in Canada. We therefore enthusiastically welcome the support of Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and we encourage your constituent organizations to coordinate with ISSofBC and other service providers in their area as the best and most effective means to support incoming refugees.

I appreciate your interest and concern for the welfare of Syrian refugees and their at-risk youth. Your support in welcoming those most in need is to be commended as we work towards the goal of resettling refugees and rebuilding lives.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,



Rob Mingay
Assistant Deputy Minister

pc: Honourable Suzanne Anton
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
and Minister Responsible for Labour

Honourable Peter Fassbender
Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development
and Minister Responsible for TransLink

Honourable Todd Stone
Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure

Honourable Teresa Wat
Minister of International Trade
and Minister Responsible for the Asia Pacific
Strategy and Multiculturalism

From: Mark Prest <Mark.Prest@raymondjames.ca> on behalf of Willow Wealth
<willowwealth@raymondjames.ca>
Sent: Friday, February 5, 2016 11:04 AM
Subject: Financial Support for Syrian Family

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: FYI/File

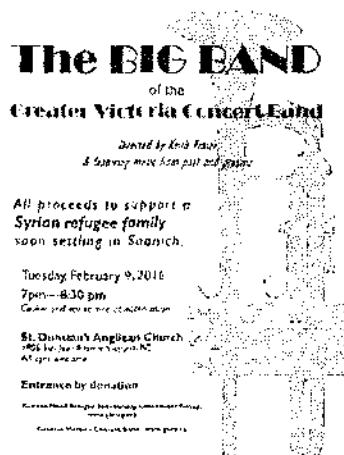
Giving a hand up

We have all witnessed the human tragedy that continues to unfold from Syria. It is hard to imagine the pain and suffering that has affected so many families.

In hearing their heart-wrenching stories, our team in the Raymond James Victoria branch has decided to step forward and try to make a difference. Recently, we were introduced to the Gordon Head Refugee Sponsorship Group who is doing a wonderful job preparing for the sponsorship of a Syrian family who will soon settle in Saanich, B.C. In order to make their sponsorship a reality, they need help.

This family of six people, including four kids under the age of 11, are looking for a safer and more promising future as part of the Saanich community. So far a home, furnishings, translation services and some initial funding have been secured. But there is a need for additional funds to support the family during their first year of transition to Canada.

Our branch is very pleased to support this cause and have agreed to match donations, up to \$10,000 for next week's musical extravaganza, "The Big Band" performed by the Greater Victoria Concert Band. Please have a look at the details below and hopefully you can join us at St. Dunstan's Anglican Church on Tuesday, February 9th.



Thank you in advance for whatever gift you can make to help this family in need. If you can't make it to the evening, you can also make donations online.

Hopefully, we can all pull together once again to make a difference in the lives of others. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sybil Verch and Kirsty Jackson

Raymond James Ltd., Private Client Group
Suite 1000 | 1175 Douglas St | Victoria, BC | V8W 2E1
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From: Minister, JTST JTST:EX
Sent: Friday, February 26, 2016 10:47 AM
To: Minister, CSCD CSCD:EX
Subject: Letter from the Honourable Shirley Bond
Attachments: 112204 Signed.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: FYI/File

Please find attached your copy of a letter from the Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour.

Thank you,

Office of the Minister
Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
and Minister Responsible for Labour

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Ref: 112204

FEB 26 2016

Mr. Al Richmond
President
Union of British Columbia Municipalities
525 Government Street
Victoria, BC V8V 0A8

Dear Mr. Richmond: *AL*

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding the ongoing arrivals of Syrian refugees into communities across British Columbia (BC).

At last count, just over 21,000 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada since November 2015. The federal government indicates it is confident that it will resettle 25,000 refugees to Canada by the end of the month. Approximately 1,700 refugees have arrived or will soon be arriving in 31 communities across BC, including about 300 awaiting onward travel arrangements from Toronto or Montreal. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) informs me that 800 additional arrivals will be destined to BC before early March. In order to meet its commitments, IRCC is looking for additional capacity to resettle large numbers of Syrian refugees as soon as possible.

IRCC recently issued an open call for proposals for currently-funded Settlement Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) across Canada to apply for additional funding under the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP), to establish new centres to receive Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs). I am pleased to inform you that, as of last week, the Inter-Cultural Association (ICA) of Greater Victoria was the first successful applicant under this call for proposals. As a result, Victoria will join Vancouver in welcoming Syrian GARs to BC in the very near future, and these GARs may settle in communities throughout southern Vancouver Island. I have encouraged SPOs in Kelowna and Prince George to apply to become additional RAP centres in order to facilitate the resettlement of GARs across the province.

.../2

Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and
Skills Training and Minister
Responsible for Labour

Office of the Minister

Mailing Address:
PO Box 9071 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC V8W 9E2
Phone: 250 356-2771
Fax: 250 356-3000

Location:
Room 138
Parliament Buildings
Victoria BC
www.gov.bc.ca/jst

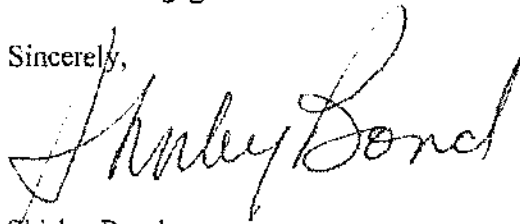
Mr. Al Richmond
Page 2

Vancouver's RAP provider, the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC), has been working closely with SPOs in several BC communities including Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Kelowna, Kamloops, and Prince George to develop a sub-contract arrangement. This approach would enable these communities to receive GARs without becoming a stand-alone RAP centre. ISSofBC staff are travelling to these communities to provide training to the settlement SPOs, and discussions are underway about the possible number and flow of refugees that each community can receive.

In addition, IRCC has developed a new process for municipalities that are outside of the traditional network of refugee resettlement to receive and support Syrian refugees. My federal colleagues have encouraged municipalities to identify themselves to IRCC and develop a Community Partnership Settlement Plan as soon as possible. The federal government criteria for municipalities who wish to submit a Community Partnership Settlement Plan are listed here: <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1031849>. BC supports the resettlement of refugees outside of Vancouver as much as possible when supports are in place to successfully integrate refugees into the community and the workforce.

Please feel free to share this letter with your members as appropriate. Thank you again for your time and ongoing commitment to the refugee settlement process in BC. I look forward to our continued engagement on this matter.

Sincerely,



Shirley Bond
Minister

Enclosure

pc: Honourable Peter Fassbender
Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development
and Minister Responsible for TransLink

APPENDIX 1: Syrian Refugee Arrivals by BC Destination

(Source: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp>)

City	Admitted GARs	Admitted BYORs	Admitted PSRs	PSRs in Inventory	Total
Abbotsford	0	1 to 4	0	8	9 to 12
Burnaby	0	14	44	30	88
Campbell River	0	0	0	16	16
Charlie Lake	0	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4
Chilliwack	0	8	0	0	8
Clearwater	0	1 to 4	0	0	1 to 4
Coquitlam	0	0	1 to 4	5	6 to 9
Cowichan Bay	0	0	1 to 4	7	8 to 11
Dawson Creek	0	1 to 4	0	0	1 to 4
Duncan	0	7	0	0	7
Fernie	0	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Fruitvale	0	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4
Gabriola	0	6	0	0	6
Gibsons	0	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4
Kamloops	0	12	0	1 to 4	13 to 16
Kelowna	0	23	9	15	47
Ladysmith	0	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Langley	0	5	5	0	10
Maple Ridge	0	0	0	9	9
Nanaimo	0	18	0	0	18
New Westminster	0	0	11	9	20
North Vancouver	0	5	5	7	17
Oliver	0	5	0	0	5
Osoyoos	0	1 to 4	0	0	1 to 4
Pender Island	0	6	0	0	6
Port Coquitlam	0	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4
Port Moody	0	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4
Prince George	0	6	5	5	16
Richmond	0	6	7	8	21
Salmon Arm	0	6	0	0	6
Salt Spring Island	0	0	0	5	5
Smithers	0	5	5	0	10
Squamish	0	0	0	9	9
Sunnenland	0	5	0	0	5
Surrey	0	6	23	30	59
Vancouver	1411	20	41	41	1513
Vernon	0	0	0	1 to 4	0
Victoria	0	28	11	25	64
West Vancouver	0	0	5	0	5
White Rock	0	0	1 to 4	0	0
TOTAL	1411	195 to 207	175 to 187	236 to 257	2016 to 2062

Page 62 to/à Page 63

Withheld pursuant to/removed as

s.22

Holland, Jodie CSCD:EX

From: Fassbender.MLA, Peter <Peter.Fassbender.MLA@leg.bc.ca>
Sent: Friday, May 20, 2016 1:50 PM
To: Minister, CSCD CSCD:EX
Subject: FW: disability transit pass

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: FYI/File

From: s.22

Sent: May 20, 2016 11:41 AM

To: premier@gov.bc.ca; SDSI SDSI:EX Minister <sd.minister@gov.bc.ca>

Cc: susananton.mla@leg.bc.ca; Ashton.MLA, Dan <Dan.Ashton.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Austin.MLA, Robin <Robin.Austin.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Bains.MLA, Harry <Harry.Bains.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Barnett.MLA, Donna <Donna.Barnett.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Bennett.MLA, Bill <Bill.Bennett.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Bernier.MLA, Mike <Mike.Bernier.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Bing.MLA, Doug <Doug.Bing.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Bond.MLA, Shirley <Shirley.Bond.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Cadieux.MLA, Stephanie <Stephanie.Cadieux.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Chandra Herbert, Spencer <s.chandraherbert@leg.bc.ca>; Chouhan.MLA, Raj <Raj.Chouhan.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Coleman.MLA, Rich <Rich.Coleman.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Conroy.MLA, Katrine <Katrine.Conroy.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Corrigan.MLA, Kathy <Kathy.Corrigan.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Dalton.MLA, Marc <Marc.Dalton.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Darcy.MLA, Judy <Judy.Darcy.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; deJong.MLA, Mike <Mike.deJong.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Dix.MLA, Adrian <Adrian.Dix.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Donaldson.MLA, Doug <Doug.Donaldson.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Eby.MLA, David <David.Eby.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Elmore.MLA, Mable <Mable.Elmore.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Farnworth.MLA, Mike <Mike.Farnworth.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Fassbender.MLA, Peter <Peter.Fassbender.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Fleming.MLA, Rob <Rob.Fleming.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Foster.MLA, Eric <Eric.Foster.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Fraser.MLA, Scott <Scott.Fraser.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Gibson.MLA, Simon <Simon.Gibson.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Hamilton.MLA, Scott <Scott.Hamilton.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Hammell.MLA, Sue <Sue.Hammell.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Heyman.MLA, George <George.Heyman.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Hogg.MLA, Gordon <Gordon.Hogg.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Holman.MLA, Gary <Gary.Holman.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Horgan.MLA, John <John.Horgan.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Hunt.MLA, Marvin <Marvin.Hunt.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Huntington.MLA, Vicki <Vicki.Huntington.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; James.MLA, Carole <Carole.James.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Karagianis.MLA, Maurine <Maurine.Karagianis.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Krog.MLA, Leonard Eugene <Leonard.Krog.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Kylo.MLA, Greg <Greg.Kylo.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Lake.MLA, Terry <Terry.Lake.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Larson.MLA, Linda <Linda.Larson.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Lee.MLA, Richard <Richard.Lee.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Letnick.MLA, Norm <Norm.Letnick.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Macdonald.MLA, Norm <Norm.Macdonald.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Mark.MLA, Melanie <Melanie.Mark.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Martin.MLA, John <John.Martin.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; McRae.MLA, Don <Don.McRae.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Morris.MLA, Mike <Mike.Morris.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Mungall.MLA, Michelle <Michelle.Mungall.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Pimm.MLA, Pat <Pat.Pimm.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; coralea.oakes.mla@leg.bc.ca; Plecas.MLA, Darryl <Darryl.Plecas.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Polak.MLA, Mary <Mary.Polak.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Popham.MLA, Lana <Lana.Popham.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Ralston.MLA, Bruce <Bruce.Ralston.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Reid.MLA, Linda <Linda.Reid.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Reimer.MLA, Linda <Linda.Reimer.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Rice.MLA, Jennifer <Jennifer.Rice.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Robinson.MLA, Selina <Selina.Robinson.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Routley.MLA, Bill <Bill.Routley.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; doug.routley.mla@leg.bc.ca; Rustad.MLA, John <John.Rustad.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Shin.MLA, Jane Jae Kyung <Jane.Shin.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Simons.MLA, Nicholas <Nicholas.Simons.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Simpson.MLA, Shane <Shane.Simpson.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Stilwell.MLA, Moira <Moira.Stilwell.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Stone.MLA, Todd <Todd.Stone.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Sturdy.MLA, Jordan

<Jordan.Sturdy.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Sullivan.MLA, Sam <Sam.Sullivan.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Sultan.MLA, Ralph <Ralph.Sultan.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Tegart.MLA, Jackie <Jackie.Tegart.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Thomson.MLA, Steve <Steve.Thomson.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; jane.thornwaite.mla@leg.bc.ca; Throness.MLA, Laurie <Laurie.Throness.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; claire.trevina.mla@leg.bc.ca; Virk.MLA, Amrik <Amrik.Virk.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Wat.MLA, Teresa <Teresa.Wat.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Weaver.MLA, Andrew <Andrew.Weaver.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Wickens.MLA, Jodie <Jodie.Wickens.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Wilkinson.MLA, Andrew <Andrew.Wilkinson.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Yamamoto.MLA, Naomi <Naomi.Yamamoto.MLA@leg.bc.ca>; Yap.MLA, John <John.Yap.MLA@leg.bc.ca>
Subject: disability transit pass

dear premier clark and minister stilwell,

i am still waiting for your reply as to why the bc government can afford to give \$1M to syrian refugees, why they can afford to give \$15M for music enhancement but they can't afford to extend a bc disability transit pass to those of us on cpp disability. do you somehow have it in for us?

why are those on income assistance somehow better or more deserving than me who am on cpp disability. i worked very hard all my life to qualify for cpp disability. why am i now being penalized?

you have it in your capacity to change the regulations so that those of us on cpp disability can be extended a bc disability transit pass. the question is why won't you? is it that you need my \$91 per month to fund your extravagant giveaways?

would the province of bc go bankrupt were i to be extended a bc disability transit pass? would the world come to an end? why is everyone so inflexible?

s.22

i expect to be reimbursed for this outlay as this issue has dragged on for way too long and for no good reason, at least i have yet to hear one.

i would like to meet with either but preferably both of you in person. that way i can explain face to face why i believe i should be extended a bc disability transit pass. you will be free to explain to my why you believe i should not.

please, let's talk!

s.22

167802

CORRESPONDENCE SERVICES
DATE MAY 26 2016 MAY 26 2016
ASSIGNED TO CS
<input type="checkbox"/> MINISTER'S RESPONSE
<input type="checkbox"/> DM RESPONSE
<input type="checkbox"/> DIRECT REPLY
<input type="checkbox"/> NECESSARY ACTION
<input type="checkbox"/> COMMENTS/ADVICE
<input type="checkbox"/> PREMIER'S RESPONSE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INFO/FILE

From: Minister, JTST JTST:EX
Sent: Thursday, June 9, 2016 3:20 PM
To: Minister, CSCD CSCD:EX
Subject: Letter from the Honourable Shirley Bond
Attachments: 113278 Signed.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Categories: FYI/File

Please find attached your copy of a letter from the Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training and Minister Responsible for Labour to Mr. Al Richmond, President, UBCM.

Thank you,

Office of the Minister
Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
and Minister Responsible for Labour

CORRESPONDENCE SERVICES
Received:
JUN 10 2016
Sent: JUN 13 2016
ASSIGN TO:
CS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MINISTER'S RESPONSE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DM RESPONSE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DIRECT REPLY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NECESSARY ACTION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMENTS/ADVICE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREMIER'S RESPONSE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INFO/FILE

X Ref 166445



Ref: 113278

JUN 09 2016

Mr. Al Richmond
President
Union of British Columbia Municipalities
525 Government Street
Victoria, BC V8V 0A8

Dear Mr. Richmond:

I am writing to follow-up on my letter of February 26, 2016, to provide you with a further update on the arrival of Syrian refugees to our province.

I am proud to say that British Columbia (BC) has now welcomed more than 2,300 Syrian refugees to over 45 communities across the province. Nearly all Syrian refugees who have arrived are in permanent housing and are rebuilding their lives as new British Columbians. I am very grateful to our municipalities for the important role they have played in welcoming and supporting Syrian refugees, and would like to express my thanks for their efforts. I have had the great pleasure of meeting with newly resettled refugees and local service providers in Prince George and was humbled by the resiliency and community spirit they possess.

As of March 18, 2016, the regional breakdown for Syrian refugee arrivals to BC was: 52 individuals to the North (2%); 125 to Thompson-Okanagan (5%); 277 to Vancouver Island (12%); 824 to Surrey and the Fraser Valley (35%) and, 1,050 to Metro Vancouver (45%). These figures are updated on a bi-weekly basis and disseminated online through the province's Refugee Readiness Hub (<http://refugeehub.issbc.org/newsletters>). The province-wide hub also contains information on existing services, community-based refugee readiness teams, training materials, and other resources that may be of interest to municipalities.

.../2

Although the federal government has not yet finalized refugee arrivals to BC for the remainder of 2016, the national target for refugees in 2016 is 55,800 – over double the 2015 target. Based on this number, we know that BC can expect a higher number of refugees to arrive over the remainder of the year compared to previous years. It is anticipated that the majority of the remaining 2016 arrivals will happen in the fall. I will be sure to share more up-to-date information with you as it becomes available. In the meantime, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is currently in discussions with local settlement service providers to assess their capacity and obtain further information to influence final destining decisions. IRCC has communicated that they will continue to promote a regional approach for destining refugees, whereby government-assisted refugees will benefit from resettlement assistance outside of the lower mainland in communities such as Nanaimo, Abbotsford, Prince George, and Kelowna. This approach will continue to support newcomers in finding available housing and employment opportunities across the province.

People arriving to BC as refugees may have travelled with few belongings, but they bring important knowledge, skills, and experience to their new communities. Recognizing that good jobs help create better futures for newcomers and their families, the province has allocated up to \$1M through the Canada-BC Job Grant Refugee Fund to support job readiness and job-specific skills training for refugees. I strongly encourage municipalities to promote this fund among local industry and employer associations, as well as foster connections between employers and the WorkBC Employer Services Centres serving refugees in their communities. More information is available at: www.workbc.ca/Employer-Resources/Canada-BC-Job-Grant.aspx and www.workbc.ca/Employment-Services/WorkBC-Centres.aspx.

As a part of the overall \$1M Refugee Readiness Fund investment, the province has provided \$500,000 to five Refugee Readiness Teams that are now actively working across BC to identify and prioritize community needs to support a coordinated approach to helping refugees. These teams are an excellent resource for municipalities as they have all completed two-day training workshops on refugee readiness, developed community-based action plans, and are in the process of coordinating local supports. More information on the teams is available on the Hub at: <http://refugeehub.issbc.org/readiness-teams/>.

I also wanted to inform you that, in honour of Canada's humanitarian traditions, BC has recently proclaimed June 20th as "World Refugee Day". This day will mark a key moment to celebrate the efforts of BC communities in welcoming refugees and to raise awareness of the importance of continuing to help refugees resettle and rebuild their lives in our province.

Mr. Al Richmond
Page 3

I want to thank you again for your dedicated support of refugee settlement across the province. Please feel free to share this letter with your members as appropriate. I look forward to our ongoing engagement on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shirley Bond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shirley" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bond".

Shirley Bond
Minister

Enclosure

pc: Honourable Peter Fassbender
Ministry of Community, Sport, and Cultural Development
and Minister Responsible for TransLink

APPENDIX 1: Syrian Refugee Arrivals by BC Destination – as of May 17, 2016

Source: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp>

Please note: the data below reflects the initial community that refugees were destined for, based on federal government data. It does not reflect secondary movement or the sub-contract arrangements between the Immigrant Services Society of BC in Vancouver and other communities that enabled government assisted refugees to be settled in Nanaimo, Abbotsford, Prince George, Kamloops, and Kelowna.

City	Admitted GARS	Admitted BYORs	Admitted PSRs	Total Admitted	PSRs in Inventory	Total Admitted plus Inventory
Abbotsford	0	7	1 to 4	8 to 11	1 to 4	9 to 15
Aldergrove	0	5	0	5	0	5
Burnaby	0	20	53	73	55	128
Campbell River	0	0	0	0	10	10
Cawston	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Charlie Lake	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Chilliwack	0	12	0	12	5	17
Clearwater	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Coquitlam	0	0	11	11	6	17
Cowichan Bay	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4	7	8 to 11
Cranbrook	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Dawson Creek	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Delta	0	0	0	0	1 to 4	0
Duncan	0	7	0	7	0	7
Fernie	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Fruitvale	0	0	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4
Gabriola	0	6	0	6	0	6
Gibsons	0	0	0	0	7	7
Kamloops	0	17	0	17	1 to 4	18 to 21
Kelowna	0	27	13	40	21	61
Ladysmith	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Langley	0	5	5	10	11	21
Maple Ridge	0	0	5	5	1 to 4	6 to 9
Nanaimo	0	18	0	18	0	18
New Westminster	0	0	16	16	13	29
North Vancouver	0	5	11	16	8	24
Oliver	0	7	0	7	0	7

City	Admitted GARs	Admitted BY ORs	Admitted PSRs	Total Admitted	PSRs in Inventory	Total Admitted plus Inventory
Osoyoos	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Pender Island	0	6	0	6	0	6
Penticton	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Port Coquitlam	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
Port Moody	0	0	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4
Powell River	0	0	0	0	13	13
Prince George	0	6	10	16	0	16
Richmond	0	6	15	21	1 to 4	22 to 25
Salmon Arm	0	11	0	11	6	17
Salt Spring Island	0	0	0	0	6	6
Smithers	0	5	5	10	0	10
Squamish	0	0	0	0	8	8
Summerland	0	5	0	5	0	5
Surrey	0	6	49	55	48	103
Terrace	0	0	0	0	5	5
Vancouver	1579	30	57	1666	76	1742
Vernon	0	0	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4
Victoria	244	28	16	288	78	366
West Vancouver	0	0	5	5	1 to 4	6 to 9
Whistler	0	0	0	0	5	5
White Rock	0	0	1 to 4	1 to 4	0	1 to 4
TOTAL	1823	245 to 263	278 to 299	2346 to 2385	397 to 424	2743 to 2809

Youth Project Enable Program Description

The Enable Program continues to play a vital role in the provision of services to newcomer children, youth, and young adults between the ages of 6 – 25 years. The goal of the program is to support and empower young individuals in their academic, social, and emotional settlement needs. A holistic approach is used to meet young people where they are at in their life, and provide them with opportunities to increase their sense of identity, belonging and community within their new environment. VIRCS acknowledges that this target population is a diverse group, with similarities in their adjustment to life in Canada as well as differences in such areas as interests, circumstances, and self-perceptions. As such, VIRCS looks to innovative art-based programs that allow youth to express their individuality, lived experiences, and multiple identities through artistic, cultural, indirect, engaging, and creative means. The Enable Program includes: Drop-in Homework Club, Youth Activity Night, SPARKS Program, Adjustment Support Group, Youth Strides Summer Camp, the Backpack Project, and Theatre Project which are described below.

Youth Enable Programming

Drop-In Homework Club

Homework Club is a weekly drop-in program that academically supports newcomer children and youth between the ages of 6 to 25 years. This program provides individuals with personalized one-on-one tutoring, by a team of experienced tutors from a variety of disciplines. This drop-in program is a safe and welcoming space to learn, meet other students, build self-confidence, and increases academic performance.



Youth Activity Night

Youth Activity Nights is a weekly drop-in program for newcomer youth between the ages of thirteen to nineteen years, at Pearkes Community Centre. This space provides a safe, supportive, creative and fun place for youth to meet socially, make new friends and connect with and learn from youth of culturally diverse backgrounds, and participate in artistic and creative workshops with guest speakers. Guest speakers range from local

artists, such as spoken word artists, virtual reality projects, and cultural presentations from ethno-cultural and community-based organizations.



SPARKS Program

This regular programming uses various creative art programming to support newcomer elementary school children, between the ages of six to twelve, in improving their English, building stronger social-emotional skills, and providing them with adjustment and adaptability skills as they adjust to their new communities and Canadian school system. SPARKS programming takes place twice a year in different elementary schools. The program uses games, group exercises, arts, stories, music, sports and other non-language based-activities to help newcomer children make new friends, practice their English and learn about Canadian culture and global cultures.



Adjustment Support Group

Using Arts Therapy as the artistic medium and platform to support newcomer elementary school children, between the ages of six to twelve, who have lived through extreme adversity (war, repression, refugee camp life, etc.) and/or experienced significant life change (bereavement and other loss, culture shock). This program occurs for 10 weeks in different elementary schools. This program is facilitated by a professional Arts Therapist

who provides newcomer children with a safe and welcoming environment to express and process feelings about their migration experience. The program increases children's self-esteem, confidence, and helps build supportive relationships with peers. The Arts Therapist is supported by a school youth counsellor at each school.



Youth Strides Summer Camp

Youth Strides Summer Camp is an annual week-long summer camp for newcomer youth between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. Youth meet other youth and learn from each other through cultural exchanges, participation in creative arts based workshops with guest speakers, and experiences of a cross-cultural outdoor camping experience. They explore important issues such as racism, religion, media, cultural differences, human rights, conflict transformation, and gender identity through various activities including the arts, leadership and outdoor recreation. The camp provides youth with the ability to establish and/or enhance leadership skills and essential skills.



Backpack Project

The Enable Program received funding from the GVSCU Foundation to provide backpacks and school supplies to 150 Private and Government Sponsored Syrian refugee children between the ages of 6 to twelve years old on Vancouver Island. Backpacks were filled with school supplies by the Enable Program team and a number of volunteers. This program alleviated the stress of purchasing school-related supplies, allowing children to embark on their first day of school in Canada no different than any other child in the classroom.

Enable Theatre Project

A highly successful program which ran for 3 years, making VIRCS one of the few experts in Canada on theatre-based programs for newcomer youth. The projects exceeded their target numbers and positive outcomes each time. It was established with the aim of providing an opportunity for newcomer youth to explore issues of transition, diversity, and immigration in a supportive and safe environment. Theatre was used as a way for newcomer youth to connect with the arts and explore difficult topics in a creative, artistic and non-language bound way. The Enable Program is seeking funding from B.C. Arts Council to revitalize this program in 2017.

Program Support

The Enable Program is supported by a Youth Program Coordinator, Youth Worker, and contracted Facilitators. Programming is supported by practicum students from the Uvic's Child and Youth Care Program, and by numerous volunteers from the local community who contribute a wide and diverse range of experiences and knowledge to the program.

Homework Club 2015 – 2016: 50 volunteers, and 4 practicum students, 2 hours a week with 4-6-month commitment

Youth Night 2015 – 2016: 20 volunteers, and 4 practicum students, 2.5 hours a week 4 to 6 month commitment

Sparks 2015 -2016: 6 volunteers, 3 hours a week, 10-week commitment.

Arts Therapy 2015 -2016: 2 volunteers, 1 hour a week, 10-week commitment.

Youth Strides: 8 volunteers, 7-day commitment, over night.

Healthy Women, Healthy Communities Description

Healthy Women, Healthy Communities is a VIRCS initiative provided in collaboration with community partners to educate and inform newcomer (immigrant and refugee) women in Victoria. For newcomer women, health and wellbeing is an important topic. The process of migration brings a myriad of transitions often resulting in stress, anxiety, helplessness, and disappointment, which can create daily uncertainty. This program focuses on women's health issues, wellbeing, and safety as it relates to understanding what defines a healthy, non-abusive (violence free) relationship.

Provision of Accessible Information Related to Health

Healthy Women, Healthy Communities is dedicated to providing accessible information regarding prevention and screening of women's health issues, taking charge of personal health, and general education of the Canadian Healthcare system. This initiative will continue the current engagement activities by VIRCS within newcomer and multicultural communities of Victoria. VIRCS was provided a small grant by the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation to engage newcomer men and women in a multicultural campaign related to breast cancer education and awareness. With the provision of additional funding, VIRCS would have the capacity to build on this topic by collaborating with community agencies to deliver workshops to the newcomer community about types of cancer, sexual health, cancer prevention, and other related issues.

Responding to Domestic Violence among Newcomer Women

The provision of education and information regarding domestic abuse is another important topic. Newcomer women often stay, or return, to abusive relationships because they are unable to access services in their language, are unable to access service providers who understand their worldview, are not connected to culturally competent resources, and feel further oppressed or discriminated against by service providers. In consultation with numerous service agencies that provide services to women, VIRCS believes it is crucially important to provide monthly public education workshops to engage newcomer women and the general public about these issues.

Currently, VIRCS is engaging with women service providers including: Bridges for Women Society, Margaret Laurence House, Victoria Women's Transition House, the Cridge Centre for the Family, and the Victoria Sexual Abuse Centre to find ways to prevent and respond to domestic abuse among newcomer women. Collectively, we believe in the value of raising awareness among newcomer women, so they can understand how domestic violence impacts them differently in Canada compared to where they are originally from, the barriers that prevent them from reporting or leaving an abusive relationship, how legal status affects the provision of services, the role of family and community in preventing or perpetuating domestic violence, the role of migration and settlement, etc. in order to respond, empower, and address their safety when experiencing and/or escaping domestic violence.

In the next few months, Victoria will welcome 154 Government Assisted Refugees from Syria, and 214 Privately Sponsored. There are currently 436 Syrian refugees in the Greater Victoria Area. With the anticipated arrivals in 2017, there will be more than 800 newcomers in our community, half of them women, and many with small children. Current demographics show that 60% of the Syrian newcomers are under 18 years old, and 24% are under 6.

Outreach to Syrian refugees is very important to ensure understanding of Canadian laws regarding domestic abuse, children safety and family wellbeing. Additionally, emotional and mental health risks will be an important conversation topic for Syrian refugee women.

The proposed project outcomes are:

- to offer continuous engagement to newcomer women within Victoria with the information and awareness they need to be empowered about their health
- to increase the confidence they need to be determined to live healthy lives
- to listen to their preference of how they would want the information sessions be designed
- to deliver this project with a community participatory action approach
- to collaborate with other ethnic associations and communities to promote these workshops
- to collaborate with other community agencies that provide public education on women's health issues and anti-violence

The expected deliverables

- Monthly workshops that will alternate between women's health issues and anti-violence workshops
- Workshops will run through March to November 2017.
- Workshop evaluation activities to occur at the end of each workshop.
- Mid-term project evaluation to be done in June

ESL Program Description

Introduction:

The English as a Second Language Program at VIRCS is currently operating in its 27th year. We have been serving our clients quality ESL programs in order to enrich their lives and assist with their settlement in our community. In addition to the many wonderful programs at VIRCS, the ESL program has been instrumental in assisting newcomers to improve their language skills, thereby leading them to more productive lives in employment, social and academic pathways.

Structure of the VIRCS ESL program:

- Continuous intake: which means that a student may begin their program at any time as long as we have a seat available.
- Flexible attendance: students may attend as many or as few classes as they choose. We use a punch card system. This flexibility has been a hallmark of our program, as it allows students to attend when they want. Many of our students have other commitments such as employment, family and other academic pursuits.
- An Individualized Education Plan: Our program is flexible which requires a differentiated approach to learning. Our curriculum is based on individual needs because the classes are multilevel and multicultural.
- Volunteer support: Each class has several volunteers who act as learning support in the classroom. Our beginner class often has one to one support. Due to the popularity of our program, many people have expressed an interest in working in our ESL classes. In addition to helping students, volunteers are also helping themselves by gaining classroom experience. Our program has also supported teacher training programs.
- A two tiered payment schedule: We are able to offer a reduced tuition fee for our domestic students. Our International visitors pay a higher tuition fee, but it is still lower than other comparable programs.
- High quality programs: We offer both beginner and Intermediate/Advanced classes at VIRCS. We are fortunate to have a bright, airy comfortable classroom and an accessible location in the community.

The VIRCS ESL program is unique both in its accessibility and delivery. This quality fulfills a need in our community, as many other programs are structured, costly and often difficult to access because of reduced funding and long waitlists. At VIRCS, we believe in delivering quality programs in a timely and efficient manner. Our flexible, continuous intake programs offer students an opportunity to learn English immediately without compromising quality.

In January 2016, we began welcoming Syrian refugees into our centre. As the need arose for ESL seats for more students, we needed to expand our program. We created 2 new programs in order to meet the demands of our growing community.

First, in collaboration with the Greater Victoria Public Library, we offered a free conversation class at the Central Branch in Victoria. This program continued for 6 weeks and ran three times per year.

The second program was a summer literacy program for Syrian refugees and their children. The program lasted 9 weeks and occurred three times per week for 2 hours each class. Many refugees were on a waitlist for funded Linc classes and rather than wait to get into those classes, we created special classes for them. Parents were able to attend with their children and use the daycare facilities.

We expect that both programs will continue into 2017 as more refugees are arriving and will need to access our ESL programs.

Overview of Curriculum

Beginner class: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9am-11am

- Functions of English: topics such as meeting and greeting, asking and giving directions, asking for help, giving advice, banking, filling out forms, giving personal information, work place literacy, health care and healthy lifestyle, inquiries about culture and experiences.
- Speaking with confidence: conversation techniques,
- Grammar: verb tenses, adjectives, sentence structure
- Listening: authentic listening activities including conversations and news stories
- Reading: literacy, reading for specific purposes (bus schedules, school forms, parenting information)
- Writing: personal information, sentence structure
- Pronunciation: weekly pronunciation drills, with a listening component

Intermediate/Advanced class: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 11:10 am – 1:10 pm

- Functions of English: conversation techniques, interrupting, expressing feelings such as gratitude and condolences, giving advice, giving opinions, offering to help, asking for help, cultural awareness.
- Speaking: discussions on current affairs and Canadian culture, group activities in problem solving and culture sharing.
- Grammar: verb tenses, advanced sentence structure, modals, conditional sentences, idioms, phrasal verbs, prepositions.
- Listening: current news stories, podcasts on topics of interest, conversations, comprehension, guest speakers, songs.
- Reading: specific reading skills such as scanning and skimming, comprehension, news stories, current affairs.
- Writing: sentence structure, opinion writing,
- Pronunciation: weekly drills, in class practice and correction.

Community Benefits

1. Immigrants and Refugees who are improving their English in order to participate fully in our community.

ESL students at VIRCS are coming to class so that they may interact and be successful in our community. This success can be seen in both the evaluations of our students and in their increased ability to adapt to our culture. Many students are employed, have school aged children, and want to contribute to our community. Improved English skills and greater confidence in English enables these students to improve their lives and contribute to our community.

2. Increased Employability

By improving their English language skills, our students are increasing their potential for employment. Many of our students work and they report that ESL classes have assisted them in functioning in their work place. Our classes focus on authentic situations and employment vocabulary and listening. Our program acts as a jump start to meaningful employment for our students, by helping them adapt to Canadian work place culture and learning the language required for gainful employment in Victoria. Currently 70% of our students are employed or volunteering.

3. Immediate access to English training

Limited access to ESL programs has posed a problem in our community. With funding cuts and waitlists, many students have found it challenging to improve their English skills. At VIRCS, we have created an ESL program, which is accessible to all newcomers through our unique continuous intake policy. In addition to easy access to classes, we have also kept our tuition fees low. Our class times suit all schedules, as we have both daytime classes and an evening conversation class.

4. Positive multicultural exchanges

Our classes are comprised of both students and volunteers who represent many different cultures and first languages. Our classes are enriched through the sharing of information and cultural exchange. This allows all participants to gain a greater understanding and acceptance of other cultures while learning about Canadian culture and traditions. Class time includes the study of Canadian holidays and traditions as well famous Canadians.

5. Eligibility for Refugee Claimants and International Visitors

Refugee claimants and International visitors are welcome at our ESL programs. Many ESL programs in Victoria are for Canadian citizens and permanent residents, but VIRCS has been able to offer programs for students who do not yet have permanent status in Canada.

6. ESL teacher training and volunteer experience

Many of our volunteers at VIRCS ESL programs are interested in pursuing careers as ESL teachers, either here in Canada or abroad. Our unique classes give these volunteers opportunities to experience a positive learning environment and develop their skills at facilitating small groups and one to one tutoring. Our ESL program has fostered positive relationships with other ESL programs in the community such as University of Victoria, Global Village, The Greater Victoria Public Library, and the Read Society. Working together with community partners allows us to share information and develop programs to fulfill the needs of ESL students in our community.

Accessibility

VIRCS is easily accessible as we are located downtown with major bus routes nearby. In fact several of our students are travelling by bus from Langford, Sooke and Sidney. We are currently in our 25th year of serving ESL students and have maintained or ease of accessibility for all by opening our doors and welcoming all students from different cultures, ages and first languages. VIRCS is well known in the immigrant and refugee community and the popularity of our programs has led to many of our students coming to class after being referred by friends and relatives.

Sustainability

VIRCS started in response to critical need and the society will continue to operate as long as this need exists. The VIRCS ESL program has been filling in the service gaps for immigrants and refugees in need of language skills in our community. Our Board of Directors is comprised of professionals from different cultural backgrounds who ensure the sustainability of the organization through long term strategic planning. Our organization will continue to grow and respond to the needs of newcomers to Canada.

Long Term Community Benefits

Immigrants and refugees need to improve their English skills to function more effectively in Canadian society. ESL students at VIRCS gain real life language experience in our classes as they are supported by their teacher and volunteer classroom support.

Offering ESL classes to newcomers is beneficial to everyone. The students increase their confidence when interacting in Canadian society which enhances their social and employment network. It assists the newcomer in all aspects of their life including parenting, access to health care, financial management, housing transportation, education and employment. In addition to the benefits to the student, volunteers also gain valuable work experience and enjoy connecting with others in our community. Volunteers report that they feel they are significantly contributing to our community by assisting newcomers with their language learning. They feel satisfied knowing that they have contributed to the success of the student.

Community Support:

Our community support is primarily through our partnerships in the community such as the Greater Victoria Public Library, L'Ecole Brodeur, Read Society and our volunteer base which allows us to continue to offer our classes. The support of VIRCS staff is also important in the success of our program as they provide referrals and language support. Many staff at VIRCS speak other languages and are immigrants themselves which enables them to build a strong rapport with VIRCS ESL students.

Conclusions:

The VIRCS ESL program registered 136 students in 2016. 80% of the students are employed or volunteer in the community. By improving their English, these students have been able to better integrate into Canadian society. Through the generosity of the Gaming Policy Branch, we have been able to continue to offer this vital service to newcomers in our community.

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Volunteer Program Description

The Community Gaming Grant will be used primarily to fund the Volunteer Coordinator wages and benefits. For a detailed breakdown of the Volunteer Program Budget, including allocations of Community Gaming funds, please see the Volunteer Program Budget (attached).

The Volunteer Coordinator position is responsible for the recruitment and management of over 250 volunteers annually providing approximately 12,000 hours of service. Volunteer services increase the Centre's capacity to deliver settlement and adjustment services (over 3,000 clients and their families) through contributions from skilled volunteers and professionals providing pro bono assistance.

Approximately 75% of the annual numbers of VIRCS volunteers are immigrants. A key objective of the Volunteer Program is to provide opportunities for immigrants to gain Canadian workplace experience and develop skills to find employment – a key responsibility of the Volunteer Coordinator to find or create assignments designed to help immigrant volunteers develop workplace competencies.

In 2016, the Volunteer Program experienced an increase demand for skilled and professional volunteers (40 additional volunteers recruited with specialized skills and professional certificates) to respond to settlement needs of Syrian refugees arriving in Victoria.

In 2017, a need for an additional 20 – 40 skilled and professional volunteers is anticipated to respond to the same needs of Syrian newcomers expected to arrive in early 2017.

The Volunteer Coordinator position is currently funded for 1,560 hours annually (30 hrs/week). Due to the increased need to recruit and manage additional volunteers described above, for 2016 and anticipated need in 2017, the hours required to carry out these activities and maintain volunteer levels for existing programs, exceeds VIRCS contribution of 624 hours (12 hours per week).

In 2016, the Community Gaming Grant funds accounted for 936 hours (18 hours per week) and the additional 624 hours (12 hours per week) were allocated to the Volunteer Program from other programs through a shared cost format.

The Community Gaming Grant would assist the Volunteer Program in achieving a portion of its service goals and anticipated outcomes for 2017.

The volunteer opportunities described above are realized through the recruitment, training and service development activities carried out or coordinated through the Volunteer Coordinator position. The projected budget for the Community Gaming Grant does not cover other support activities such as volunteer training development or professional development for the Volunteer Coordinator position.

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2016 VIRCS Annual General Meeting

Date: November 17, 2016

Venue: Quadra Village Community Centre, 901 Kings Road, Victoria

MC: Aaron Hall

Secretary: Ayodeji Kuponiyi

Board Attendance – Aaron Hall, Ayodeji Kuponiyi, Nancy Hum, Lisa Gunderson, Catherine Kamau

Regrets – *Parveen Nijjar, Miguel Espinosa, Marie Morrison, Rita Parikh, Monique Miller*

Agenda

- 6:00 pm – Welcome/Greetings: 2015/2016 BOD President (Aaron Hall)
- 6:40 – Call to Order/Acknowledgement of the territory of Lekwungen speaking peoples, Shonghees First Nation
- 6:45 – Approval of 2016 AGM Agenda
- Motion – Aaron Hall***
- Seconded – Lisa Gunderson (All in Favor)***
- Approval of 2015 Minutes
- Motion – Aaron Hall***
- Seconded – Carmel***
- 7:00 – Executive Director Report (attached): David Lau
- Introduction of Staff and Volunteers
- Excellence Service Award given to Ruth Mojeed in recognition of her contribution toward the Nelly Furtado show to raise fund for our refugee community
- 7:15 – President's Report (attached): Aaron Hall
- 7:25 – Treasurer's Report: by Hammuda
- Motion to accept financial reports and statement: Aaron Hall***
- Seconder: Lisa Gunderson (All in Favor)***
- Motion to appoint/retain auditors: Aaron Hall***
- Seconder: Nancy Hum (All in Favor)***
- 7:35 – Appointment of Directors
- Election of BOD 2016/17 Nominees (from the floor) – None*

BODs stepping down: Lisa Gunderson, Rita Parikh, Monique Miller

Returning BODs: Aaron Hall, Nancy Hum, Marie Morrison, Ayodeji Kuponiyi, Catherine Kamau, Parveen Nijjar, Miguel Espinosa.

*New BOD – Osaro Ezomo (motion to approve - **moved**: Aaron Hall, **seconded** by Carmel)*

7:40 – AOB

CIC Judge Pash highlighted the current state of the Canadian immigration guidelines, differentiated between requirements for applying for and maintaining the Canadian citizenship as well as the Canadian permanent residence. He also spotlighted common application filing errors and pitfalls.

7:45 – Adjournment of formal proceedings

Refreshments

President's Report

Aaron Hall

Hi Everyone,

This has been a busy year for VIRCS and I have been having a good time watching the agency achieve its goals and develop new ones along the way.

It has been a pleasure to see the agency continuously redesign its current programs to suit an ever changing landscape of funding scenarios and demands from clients. VIRCS has quickly adapted to make way for new people and new ways of doing business as our governments and our clients have changed.

I am lucky to have had the opportunity to be the President of our Board over the past year, and I have taken a great amount of pleasure in dealing with challenges and victories that have come. VIRCS is in a very good position at this time and it has been wonderful to see VIRCS find a working partnership with other local service agencies and levels of government via the RRT program.

Being ready for challenges seems to be what VIRCS does best and 2015/16 has had no shortage of paradigm shifts. This past year the Board partnered to undertake four medium-sized fundraising events that will help secure refugees next year. We are also looking forward to contributions of new members and are optimistic about making the dream of an innovation centre, a reality.

This coming year will be full of new and inspiring opportunities and challenges and we will be working behind the scenes to help turn those horizon events, to benefits for our organization and the wonderful clients served at VIRCS

Thanks,

Aaron Hall

Executive Director's Report

David Lau

Wow. I am exhausted. 2016 was an intense year- a year of changes.

The November 2015 election outcomes had a significant effect on the country and for the newcomer settlement sector. We experienced much more work without correlating budget increases from our funders. The work, however, was welcomed and was happy work.

In 2016 VIRCS staff, board, volunteers and community partners raised in excess of \$65,000 for the Emergency Refugee Fund. We had large, medium and small fundraisers. Our Syrian Pop-Up store was almost exclusively staffed by VIRCS volunteers – it did very well. Our good friends at Oddfellows Lodge 1 ran two musical fundraisers with great performances and much-appreciated donations. In July VIRCS welcomed Nelly Furtado, Neil Osborne, Alex Cuba

and the Victoria Symphony to the stage for a sparkling night of fundraising. VIRCS owes thanks to many corporate sponsors who enabled us and, a special thanks to Ms. Ruth Mojeed, a particularly talented networker and Royal Roads Masters student who helped with fundraising and production.

2016 brought amazing people to our doors who wanted to give and who wanted to help. I received some significant cheques that enabled us to sponsor a family (arriving soon) as well as the fundraising efforts of the entire community of Mayne Island - now our favourite Gulf Island. It has been because of these generous people that Jennifer Rawlinson (ESL Coordinator) was able to provide subsidized summer ESL and Shazia (Settlement Youth) was able to run ramp-up summer classes for Syrian youth, many who have not attended school in years.

2016 brought Victoria a new community. We now have a robust Syrian community who are finding new lives with the help of VIRCS programmes. Our Settlement Programs have been altered with services and staff who are helping these newcomers succeed locally. The BC government selected VIRCS to coordinate the Island resettlement planning via the Refugee Readiness Table (RRT) process. This is a tall task, bringing local leaders across the Island together to find best and transferable practices, bridging existing services and coordinating partnerships. This executive management role has a steep learning curve and we are seeing real gains across the Island. Much remains to be done and in 2017 our sector will need significantly larger budgets as refugees (and all other newcomers) are facing difficulties locating employment. The Harper decision to cut BC's only newcomer employment program was carried out by the current government and VIRCS led all service providers to discuss a sector-wide response. This was heard by BC and they stepped in to maintain "life-support" levels of funding. Because BC has western Canada's lowest newcomer employment outcomes, we anticipate increased budgets and opportunities for new proposals but BC first must work to renegotiate the Canada BC Labour Market Agreement, which still serves the previous government's narrow perspective. VIRCS was sorely disappointed that BC opted to extend the EPBC contracts to 2019, locking in the good, the bad and the ugly service providers, some of whom have little-to-no regard for newcomers seeking employment.

CIC is now IRCC. As IRCC leaves its crisis-level attention on Syrian populations, we have been told they will now negotiate the summer 2015 proposals that were written to harmonize with the severe and

austere dictates of a historical government. We are optimistic that IRCC will allow for wider, more humane interpretations as we negotiate.

Due to the dearth of provincial and federal funding, Karen Hira was retained as VIRCS' Development Manager and she has been key in the synthesis of several amazing projects that are engaging our programmes in new...

ways as well as collaborations with like-minded human service agencies. VIRCS continues to seek partner agencies and opportunities to create an innovation centre, a "forever home" where our staff can mix and combine programming in an environment that allows us to maximise on sharing common assets. Anticipate good things.

We lost some great staff and we gained some great staff. s.22 decided to move onwards in s.22 career and our Youth Program is adapting. As Skills Connect was defunded, s.22 and s.22 have also moved onwards. Our stalwart financial controller s.22 which meant that our dear friend, Hammuda Hammuda returned to Victoria and to VIRCS. We feel blessed to have his skill and expertise and we wish s.22 the best as s.22 s.22 We saw the return of Keri Greenidge, Amarjit Bhalla and Asuka Hira. We hired Samira Wanas, Alix Hotenspillier, Andrea Westfall, Fayrouz Mohammed, Shazia Suleman Rashid, Jasmindra Jawanda and Idalid Diaz Posada. Finally, s.22 came, did amazing work in the Syrian community, and left us in 2016. All this change reflects VIRCS ability to staff up quickly with remarkable and dedicated individuals who understand that client needs are basis of how we approach our work. It also reflects the strong leadership of senior settlement staff members like Haixia Liu, Alfred Okot Ochen, Alvaro Moreno who lead by example. I am especially indebted to the Administrative team who provide support and resources to everyone: Yiura, Junnian and Pam. Our Board has also transitioned. Aaron Hall has provided a new style of leadership inspiring us all to fundraise and party, for a cause.

VIRCS is still here. We remain because much work needs to be accomplished in providing the best services to each newcomer who walks through our door: and, we have the heart to do that work.

Harambee!