



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY & EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 2, 2015
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Resettlement of Syrian Refugees in Hamilton (CES15063) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community & Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) That the City of Hamilton work formally with Wesley Urban Ministries, which is the settlement agency designated by Citizenship & Immigration Canada to lead the Syrian refugees resettlement efforts in Hamilton; and,
- (b) That staff be directed to provide regular updates to Council regarding the Syrian refugee resettlement efforts in Hamilton.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 4.3 million Syrians have fled the country since civil war began in 2011. Canada has committed to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees by the end of December 2015, and 15,000 more by February 2016. The federal government will lead the security and medical clearances of the total 25,000 refugees abroad before they arrive in Canada. Provincial, territorial and municipal governments are expected to play pivotal roles in the resettlement of refugees into various communities.

Hamilton is one of the cities in Ontario that Syrian refugees will call home. However, the number of refugees coming to Hamilton is currently unknown. Nonetheless, the refugees coming to Hamilton are expected to include both Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) and Privately-Sponsored Refugees (PSRs).

Wesley Urban Ministries is the agency funded by the federal government to provide lead resettlement services for the Syrian refugees coming to Hamilton. The resettlement effort will also require a proactive and collaborative community approach, touching upon many City Divisions and community partners. The City of Hamilton will work closely with Wesley Urban Ministries and other community partners to ensure the resettlement effort

is smooth, efficient and safe. Staff have been meeting with Wesley Urban Ministries and other key community stakeholders to understand critical issues and actions required to mobilize community resources and support.

The outcome of these meetings underscores the need to create working groups and a steering committee that align with the short-term and long-term resettlement needs. The proposed governance structure is detailed below (attached as Appendix A to Report CES15063).

Syrian Refugee Resettlement Working Groups (SRRWGs)

Four Working Groups have been identified that touch on short and long term aspects of the resettlement process. Community organizations and responsible City Divisions will serve on the Working Groups. The Working Groups will meet as required by the members. The proposed four Working Groups include:

- Housing
- Health
- Settlement
- Communications & Welcoming Community

The Housing Working Group will be facilitated by the City of Hamilton Housing Services Division to support the effort of Wesley Urban Ministries to mobilize City and community partners in order to meet the temporary and permanent housing needs of Syrian refugees moving to Hamilton. The Group has begun engaging with key community partners such as the Housing Help Centre, City Housing Hamilton, community housing providers, large private housing corporations, ethno-cultural groups, religious institutions, key community organizations and private citizens.

The Health Working Group will be facilitated by Wesley Urban Ministries and the City of Hamilton Public Health Services. The Group will mobilize City and community partners on all aspects of health needs for Syrian refugees to support their physical, mental, emotional and psychological needs. Specifically, the Health Working Group will work under Primary Health and Health Sector tables. The Group is currently engaging broadly with key community partners such as the Hamilton-Niagara-Haldimand-Brant Local Health Integration Network, St. Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton Health Sciences, McMaster Family Medicine, the Refugee Health Clinic, community health centres, disability health supports and other related health services.

The Settlement/Education Working Group will be facilitated by Wesley Urban Ministries. The Board of Education is also playing a lead role facilitating the Education table. A key focus for the Working Group is the education of children and youth, and language and educational services for adults. The Group is mobilizing City and community partners on all other aspects of settlement services. Some of the community partners involved in the work include the Hamilton boards of education, YMCA, YWCA, Immigrant Workers

Centre, Circle of Friends, and other members of the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC).

The Communications & Welcoming Community Working Group will be facilitated by the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC), Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion (HCCI) and Wesley Urban Ministries. The Working Group will ensure information dissemination relating to the Syrian refugees resettlement in Hamilton is consistent and balanced. The Group will also collaborate on strategic messaging to debunk stereotypes, allay public misinformation and support anti-discrimination strategies. The Working Group will further ensure that effective community engagement approaches are in place to engage ethno-cultural groups, the Muslim community, religious organizations, schools, LGBTQ community and other interest groups.

The City of Hamilton Corporate Communications Division will also be providing support to the resettlement process. Staff will manage a dedicated webpage on the City portal (www.hamilton.ca) and provide relevant information to the general public. The webpage will provide situational information on the crisis so that Hamilton residents can be better informed. The website will also contain efforts that are currently ongoing in Hamilton supporting the resettlement process, including sharing information on how residents and partners can get involved and provide a list of relevant community resources and organizations.

Syrian Refugee Resettlement Steering Committee (SRRSC)

The Steering Committee will be facilitated by the Community & Emergency Services Department (Manager, Community Initiatives) and Wesley Urban Ministries (Executive Director). The Steering Committee will be comprised of representatives from each of the four Working Groups, as well as other City of Hamilton staff and community partners. The Steering Committee will receive regular updates from the four Working Groups and determine key issues that need to be addressed at a strategic level, which will involve other senior levels of government if required. The Steering Committee will further provide ongoing leadership oversight to ensure that the resettlement process yields the desired outcome and experience, both for the refugees themselves and for the community services that support them.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: The current understanding of staff is that the federal government will be financially responsible for all costs associated with resettling Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) in Canada in the first year. Wesley Urban Ministries is specifically funded to this effect. For Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), organizations and individuals who sponsor their applications coming to Canada are expected to provide guaranteed financial support for housing, food and living expenses. Organizations such as Wesley

Urban Ministries, the Immigrants Working Centre and other community organizations also conduct regular sponsorship campaigns to support PSRs.

Staff have not identified any immediate financial impacts on the City of Hamilton. If the City eventually incurs any expenses relating to staffing, additional rental allowances or operational costs etc., staff will bring the information back to Council and get approval to request reimbursement from the federal government.

Staffing: Similar to financial impact, the full impact on staff is currently undetermined. However, the immediate staff effort required to support the Syrian refugee resettlement work can be accommodated through reprioritization of existing staff resources.

Legal: Not Applicable

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A report from United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) indicated that about 59.5 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced in 2014. Among these, 19.5 million people were refugees recognized under the mandate of UNHCR and 1.8 million others were classified as asylum seekers.

Since the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011, over 4.3 million Syrians have fled the country. Neighbouring countries to Syria such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have received millions of these refugees and continue to struggle with the influx. With the end of the Syrian civil war nowhere in sight, thousands of Syrian refugees continue their flight into Europe and frequently travel under life-threatening conditions. When combined with other refugees fleeing conflicts and poverty from countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo, over 750,000 refugees have arrived in Europe so far in 2015. As European countries continue to struggle with the overwhelming number of refugees arriving at their shores, world leaders are increasingly coming together to discuss solutions and offer assistance.

Canada is among a few countries that have offered to resettle Syrian refugees. The new federal government made a commitment to resettle a total of 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada by the end of February 2015, with 10,000 of these refugees arriving by the end of December 2015.

The federal government has promised to invest up to \$678 million over six years towards resettlement and integration support. In addition, the Ontario government has indicated that it will provide \$10.5 million over two years to promote refugee sponsorship and deliver immediate and future support for refugees. Although the destination communities for refugees have not yet been confirmed, the Ontario

government is looking to communities like Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo, London and Windsor to play a key settlement role as host communities.

Within the first few weeks of arrival in their host communities, refugees need critical services such as temporary housing, primary health, transportation, language services, information and other immediate needs. After a few weeks, needs include schools, day cares, employment services, referrals to other programs, case conferences with various government institutions and other intensive case management services.

The number of refugees that will eventually call Hamilton home is currently unknown. Wesley Urban Ministries is the agency funded by the federal government to provide lead settlement services for the Syrian refugees coming to Hamilton. The City of Hamilton will work collaboratively with Wesley Urban Ministries and other community partners to support the resettlement effort. This City/community collaboration will have a Steering Committee and four Working Groups that align with all aspects of the resettlement process to ensure the resettlement yields all desired outcomes.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

There are no policy implications or legislated requirements related to the recommendations.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Internal Stakeholders

Preliminary meetings have taken place within the Corporation to discuss potential approaches, strategies and what is required of City divisions in the Syrian refugees' resettlement process. Among others, some of the divisions that have already facilitated various discussion tables include:

- Mayor's Office, City of Hamilton
- Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division
- Housing Services Division
- Public Health Services Department
- Emergency Management Office
- Children & Home Management Division
- Communications & Intergovernmental Affairs Division
- Employment & Income Support Division

External Stakeholders

Preliminary meetings have also taken place with settlement and community organizations to discuss various ways to support the Syrian refugee resettlement work in Hamilton. Among others, some of these organizations include:

- Wesley Urban Ministries
- Housing Help Centre
- Hamilton Health Sciences
- Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council
- YMCA
- YWCA
- Workforce Planning Hamilton
- Immigrant Women Centre
- Mohawk College
- McMaster University
- Social Planning Research Council
- Hamilton Spectator
- Hamilton boards of education (public and catholic)

Both internal and external consultation will continue to take shape as the full plan of the federal government to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees becomes clearer.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONAL FOR RECOMMENDATION

As the Syrian refugee crisis deepens, the humanitarian side of many nations has been tested, including Canada. In addition to the federal government making a commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees into Canada by the end of February 2016, various private citizens and community organizations are also helping. Many have come forward to donate money, resources, time and effort, including those who have sponsored or still plan to sponsor refugees.

Hamilton is a diverse city that welcomes refugees from all over the world. The City of Hamilton plays a key leadership role in creating a welcoming community and supportive environment for refugees fleeing wars and armed conflicts. The municipal services provided by the City of Hamilton are also needed to support any meaningful resettlement effort for refugees and their families.

Wesley Urban Ministry is the organization funded by Citizenship & Immigration Canada to lead the resettlement of Syrian Refugees in Hamilton. However, the City of Hamilton must be seen as playing a visibly active role due to the high profile nature and public interest which the resettlement of Syrian refugees work has garnered. In addition, the City has a role to play by supporting Wesley Urban Ministries and other community partners that are keen on helping. The City of Hamilton must also be able to provide consistent, relevant, timely and accurate information to the general public as a matter of public service.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2012 – 2015 STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority #1

A Prosperous & Healthy Community

WE enhance our image, economy and well-being by demonstrating that Hamilton is a great place to live, work, play and learn.

Strategic Objective

- 1.5 Support the development and implementation of neighbourhood and City wide strategies that will improve the health and well-being of residents.

Strategic Priority #3

Leadership & Governance

WE work together to ensure we are a government that is respectful towards each other and that the community has confidence and trust in.

Strategic Objective

- 3.1 Engage in a range of inter-governmental relations (IGR) work that will advance partnerships and projects that benefit the City of Hamilton.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES15063: Governance Structure for the Resettlement of Syrian Refugees into Hamilton