



CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	August 16, 2017
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers (CES16023(c)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Nicole Longstaff 905-546-2424 ext. 7565 John Ariyo 905-546-2424 ext. 1564
SUBMITTED BY:	Suzanne Brown Director, Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division Community & Emergency Services Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Syrian Newcomers' Evaluation Summary and Recommendations Report attached as Appendix A be received; and,
- (b) That staff be directed to report back to Emergency and Community Services Committee annually through the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC) on the implementation of the recommendations from the Syrian Newcomers' Evaluation Summary and Recommendations Report and the general wellbeing of all refugees, newcomers and their community support agencies in Hamilton.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since March 2016, the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers successfully brought together over 100 community partners, service agencies and key stakeholders to support the resettlement of over 1,700 Syrian newcomers in Hamilton. Five Working Groups were created to collaborate and advise on critical resettlement issues such as housing, education, health, employment, language, skills development and community supports. The list of members of the Committee and Working Groups are attached as Appendix B to Report CES16023(c).

Significant progress has been made since the establishment of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers. The Committee is a great example of cross-sectoral collaboration, inclusive community voice and strategic action. Over the course of a year, the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers accomplished key successes reflective of its goals and mandate.

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Key Achievements of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers:

- Successfully brought together six collaborative and inclusive tables comprising of over 100 service agencies, community networks and Syrian newcomers. Each table met consistently over a 12-month period to address critical needs.
- Supported the creation and operation of a Syrian refugees' information webpage on the City's website – hamilton.ca/syriannewcomers. The site provided pertinent information on the resettlement effort on a regular basis. The website recorded 10,123 new visitors and 49,832 page views between June 2016 and May 2017.
- Supported the establishment of a Syrian food catering business run by an all-woman group of Syrian newcomers – Karam Kitchen. The success story of the business was featured in both local and international media.
- Supported the “Employers Embracing Diversity” event in October 2016, attended by over 100 service providers and employers to promote the need for more employment of refugees and newcomers with the Hamilton community.
- Advocated to the federal and provincial governments for an increase in funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs, more childcare spaces for parents attending ESL and LINC, and the need to broaden the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) dental coverage for newcomers through Council approval of Report CES16023(b).
- Identified and supported community partners to address some key gaps and opportunities associated with the resettlement efforts, such as more Arabic translation, family reunification, mental health, employment readiness, cultural awareness, housing advocacy, community engagement and transition into “Month 13” (Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program).
- Supported HIPC in celebrating the one-year anniversary event of Syrian newcomers to Hamilton in November 2016 at City Hall. Over 200 community partners, service agencies, political leaders and Syrian newcomers attended the event.
- Evaluated the success of the Syrian newcomers' efforts in Hamilton. Committee members provided input through a series of interviews, focus groups and community engagement between December 2016 and May 2017.

A list of detailed accomplishments of the five Working Groups of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers is attached as Appendix C to Report CES16023(c).

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**SUBJECT: Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers (CES16023(c))
(City Wide) - Page 3 of 7**

The evaluation and recommendations report arising from the evaluation work described above is the final report of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers. The report lays out eight key recommendations that will support a long-term, inclusive and collaborative support for all refugees, newcomers and immigrant support agencies in Hamilton. The following are the highlights of the eight recommendations:

- Ensuring the lessons learned from the Syrian resettlement work are implemented through the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council.
- The need for Hamilton City Council to provide ongoing municipal and leadership support to the resettlement of all refugees and newcomers.
- The proactive need for a community-based and holistic strategy required to support the resettlement of refugees, particularly during a refugee influx.
- Providing more community support for private sponsorship to enhance a better family reunification experience for landed refugees.
- Educating and engaging refugees regularly so that they better understand their rights and privileges under Canadian laws, as new Canadians.
- Advocating more support for Hamilton's immigrant service agencies to better meet the increasing need of our changing society, demography and diversity.
- The need for better coordination and information sharing among governments, local agencies and community partners, especially during an influx.
- Lastly, the need to advocate for ongoing government and community support for refugees beyond their first 12 months, because a successful resettlement experience is a long journey.

HIPC is a federally-funded collaboration of over 85 immigrant partners in Hamilton, many of which were part of the Mayor's Advisory Committee. Since 2009, HIPC is administered by the City of Hamilton on behalf of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The scope and mandate of HIPC will allow for a strategic assessment of the recommendations of this report and foster opportunities to support immigrants and refugees in Hamilton – both in the short and long terms. HIPC will engage its partners and report back to City Council annually on how immigrants and refugees are being supported in Hamilton through an annual HIPC staff report targeted for May 2018.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

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FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: Recommendations of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers are expected to be implemented through the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC). Any potential financial need to implement the recommendations of this report will be made directly to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Should there be a financial impact to the City identified; a report to Council on the implications will be prepared.

Staffing: There are no staffing implications associated with Report CES16023(c).

Legal: There are no staffing implications associated with Report CES16023(c).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Syrian civil war, which broke out in 2011, has reportedly displaced over 11 million Syrians who have fled their homes, with over 13.5 million more estimated as needing humanitarian assistance within the country.

The Government of Canada stepped up and joined other countries around the world to resettle Syrian refugees. Canada has resettled 44,920 Syrian newcomers in more than 350 communities across the country. 1,710 Syrian newcomers have called Hamilton home since December 21, 2015. Wesley Urban Ministries is the lead agency for government-assisted refugees in Hamilton. Various private sponsor groups, religious affiliates, community organizations and other private individuals are involved in private sponsorship efforts.

The table below provides national, provincial and local statistics of Syrian refugees from November 2016 to April 2017:

Refugee Category	Canada	CAN (%)	Ontario	ON (%)	Hamilton	HAM (%)
Government Assisted Refugee (GAR)	23,550	52.4%	10,235	51.4%	1,405	82.2%
Blended Visa Office-Referrred (BVOR)	4,140	9.2%	2,295	11.5%	105	6.1%
Privately Sponsored Refugee (PSR)	17,230	38.4%	7,385	37.1%	200	11.7%
Totals by region	44,920	100%	19,915	44.3%	1,710	3.8%

Source: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

In March 2016, City Council established the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers. The Committee was established primarily because of the unusual volume of refugees expected, the short resettlement timeline required, the number of agencies involved and the need to drive a collaborative resettlement effort involving the entire community. The Committee also established five working groups:

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- Housing Working Group
- Health Working Group
- Education Working Group
- Community Support/Networks Working Group
- Employment, Language and Skills Development Working Group

The Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers and its Working Groups met consistently over a one year period. More than 100 community partners, agencies and individuals were involved at various tables, and in various capacities. The tables fostered a high degree of collaboration, information sharing and strategic city building. The committee wrapped up its mandate in May 2017, with an evaluation and recommendations report.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

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

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Internal and external stakeholders informed the final report of Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers and the recommendations of this report. The stakeholders provided advice and feedback either at a specific table associated with the Mayor's Advisory Committee, or during the evaluation process. The stakeholders include:

Internal Stakeholders:

- Mayor's Office
- Committee Against Racism
- Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council
- CityHousing Hamilton
- Ontario Works Division, Community & Emergency Services Department
- Housing Services Division, Community & Emergency Services Department
- Neighbourhood & Community Initiatives Division, Community & Emergency Services Department
- Public Health Services

External Stakeholders:

- Adult Basic Education Association
- Hamilton Boards of Education (Public and Catholic)
- Hamilton Housing Help Centre
- Immigrant Working Centre
- McMaster Health Sciences, Department of Family Medicine

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- Mohawk College
- Muslim Association of Hamilton
- Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton
- Syrian newcomers and their families
- The Anglican Diocese of Niagara (Hamilton)
- Wesley Urban Ministries
- Workforce Planning Hamilton
- YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington and Brantford
- YWCA Hamilton

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The 2017 immigration target for Canada is 300,000, which includes 172,500 economic class, 84,000 family class, 40,000 refugees and 3,500 humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

Hamilton is one of Canada's top 10 immigrant-receiving Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs). The 2011 census data indicated 23.5% (or 232,195) of Hamiltonians are immigrants, an increase of 7.8% between 2001 and 2011. Between November 2015 and April 2017, Canada resettled 44,920 Syrian newcomers in more than 350 communities across the country. Hamilton received the 5th highest number of Syrian newcomers in Ontario, behind Toronto, Ottawa-Gatineau, London and Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge.

Immigrants and refugees will always make Hamilton home. It behoves the City of Hamilton, community partners and residents to foster a culture of acceptance, openness and support for newcomers. Through the Syrian newcomers' resettlement process, the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers recognized the efficacy of bringing together the community to ensure the overall wellbeing of all refugees and newcomers – whether they are already in Hamilton or will be coming to the city in the future.

The ultimate success of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers is ensuring the lessons learned through the Syrian resettlement effort are utilized and implemented. The Mayor's Advisory Committee has particularly identified important roles for Hamilton City Council and the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC) in implementing the recommendations of this report and those of the committee's final evaluation report.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement & Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

Economic Prosperity and Growth

Hamilton has a prosperous and diverse local economy where people have opportunities to grow and develop.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES16023(c): Resettlement of Syrian Newcomers in Hamilton:
Evaluation Summary and Recommendations

Appendix B to Report CES16023(c): Membership List: Mayor's Advisory Committee on
Syrian Newcomers and Working Groups

Appendix C to Report CES16023(c): Working Groups – Key Achievements