

**MAYOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SYRIAN NEWCOMERS
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS**

May 2017

1. Employment, Language and Skills Development Working Group

Increase available funding for language classes and childcare: Gathered information on waitlists for classes, issues with childcare (especially for infants), space for classes and compiled this information in a report.

Advocate to the HSR for student transit rates for ESL/LINC students: Survey shared with LINC students to make to ensure up-to-date evidence is available.

Regular updates on all issues related to the arrival of Syrian newcomers to Hamilton: Service providers shared information and challenges in meeting the needs of Syrian newcomers in their language and training classes. Regular reports were provided by Wesley Urban Ministries and also through the Language Assessment Centre. Ideas for solutions were shared. Service providers were prepared to meet the demand for services. Gaps/capacity issues were also identified. Short- and long-term solutions were shared by the service provider representatives and a joint community plan developed.

Organize and host Global Experience Ontario (GEO) workshop to ensure a common understanding of services available in support of newcomers: A workshop delivered by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship & Immigration on November 2016 provided up-to-the-minute information on supporting internationally trained individuals. The workshop was fully subscribed with 35 individuals from employment and training service providers attending.

Organize and host Together We are Better II event for front line employment and training service providers: In April 2017, the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council, Workforce Planning Hamilton and members of the Working Group hosted a half day event for front line workers from the employment and training services sector. The event kicked off with a panel presentation on lessons learned over the past year through the experience of welcoming the Syrian newcomers to Hamilton. Panelists included representatives from Wesley Urban Ministries, YMCA, Immigrant Working Centre, Mohawk College and Ontario Works. There were displays from over 20 service organizations that support newcomers and a discussion of case studies in mixed groups of language and employment service providers. A special presentation from CRA over lunch highlighted the importance of submitting income tax for newcomers. Over 80 service providers attended.

Engage employers, raise awareness of immigrant talents and motivate employers to consider hiring immigrants and newcomers through the Employers Embracing Diversity Forum: The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council and Workforce Planning Hamilton hosted the “Employers Embracing Diversity Forum” on October 2016. We took advantage of this opportunity to also showcase the skills and talents of the Syrian newcomers along with other newcomers. Resources for employers highlighted best practice in hiring newcomers and service organizations that assist employers to locate skilled newcomer talent. The key note speaker was Lionel Laroche and Leo Johnson made remarks. The event had over 100 attendees.

Distribute employment and training resources available in Arabic: Immigrants Working Centre shared information on resources like health and safety information that would assist Syrian newcomers in securing resources.

Translate ABEA’s Essential Skills videos into Arabic to assist Syrian newcomers understand skills required in certain industries: Four Essential Skills videos have been translated into Arabic. These videos highlight skills necessary for Construction Craft Worker, Baker, Early Childhood Educator and Cleaner. The project was supported by a Mohawk College student, ABEA and Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council. The videos will be available for use by service providers.

2. Education Working Group

- HWDSB has approximately 775 Syrian newcomers registered from Kindergarten to Grade 12 at this time.
- Work is occurring to coordinate and align services provided by community based organizations to meet the well-being and settlement needs of all newcomers but the focus, due to numbers, are on the Syrian Newcomers.
- The Committee will continue to meet approximately three times a year to:
 - provide a networking opportunity for both school boards and community partners;
 - identify service gaps; and,
 - coordinate and align service.
- Summer ESL programming is being offered from Grades 7 to 12 at HWDSB: <http://www.hwdsb.on.ca/cce/youth-programs/summer-programs-and-camps-non-credit/esl-literacy-summer-program/>.

3. Housing Working Group

The Housing Working Group has integrated a lot of the work into the broader working sectors, including within the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, and the work has now made its way into sub-groups from that exercise.

4. Health Working Group

- A letter was sent requesting the Mayor, through City Council, to advocate for:
 - broader IFHP dental service coverage for resettled refugees; and,
 - increased provincial support for health language interpretation.
- The following resources were created by the working group:
 - Oral Health Services Available to Newcomers to Hamilton
 - Cultural Competence Resource Report
 - Mental Health System Navigation Report
 - Health System Navigation Report
- The Mental Health Subcommittee is placing priority on ensuring access to services and identifying challenges. There is a waitlist of people looking to access trauma services.

5. Community Supports/Networks Working Group

- Monthly meetings are a good platform for service provider organizations to share updates on programs to volunteers working with Syrian newcomers.
- A program overview on Ontario Works was provided to community members so that they have the information needed to help privately sponsored Syrian families transition smoothly.
- YMCA partnered with Wesley Urban Ministries for a new program targeting refugee youth.
- Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion (HCCI), in collaboration with Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC) and Wesley Urban Ministries, offered a Cultural Competency Workshop on December 2016 to individuals and groups that are involved in welcoming and settling Syrian refugees in Hamilton.
- A meeting was held at the Ibrahim Jame Mosque to identify Syrian newcomer needs and explore possible collaboration with the mosque.
- On November 29, 2016 over 200 people including community partners, Hamilton volunteers and Syrian refugee newcomer families gathered at City Hall to

celebrate the anniversary of Hamilton's community efforts to prepare for and welcome Syrian newcomers to the community.

Marcel Ward, a young Syrian pianist performed as part of the celebrations (on keyboard generously provided by An Instrument for Every Child).

"Thank You" remarks were offered by Maria Tassi MP, Mayor Fred Eisenberger, Javid Mirza – President of the Muslim Association of Hamilton, Dr. Mohamed Hamed, Co-Chair Mayor's Advisory Committee on Syrian Newcomers, Bishop Miehm – Diocese of Hamilton and Bishop Bird – Anglican Diocese of Niagara.

The MC for the event was Jim Vanderveken - Chair of the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC) and Dean at Mohawk College.

A short video showcasing Hamilton's response to the Syrian refugee crisis as a welcoming city was screened: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nffyjZfod9M>