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<b>TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON FEBRUARY 17, 2016</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO SYRIAN NEWCOMERS</b>

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, the following report on Supporting the Community Response to Syrian Newcomers, **BE RECEIVED** for information.

<b>PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER</b>
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None.

<b>BACKGROUND</b>
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On December 8, 2015 City Council resolved that the following actions be taken with respect to refugee resettlement:

- a) the Civic Administration **BE REQUESTED** to update City Council on their current plans for the refugee families arriving in London, and any additional measures the City of London can take to better support newcomers;
- b) the Mayor **BE REQUESTED** to send letters of support to the Provincial and Federal Governments, demonstrating a collective commitment to resettling refugees (attached as appendix A and appendix B); and
- c) the Members of City Council who sit on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Board of Directors and Standing Committees (Deputy Mayor M. Cassidy, Councillor H.L. Usher and Councillor J. Zaifman) **BE REQUESTED** to further pursue these national conversations and opportunities to co-ordinate efforts.

The war in Syria, which began in 2011, has caused widespread internal and external displacement of civilians with 8 million people displaced internally, and over 4 million people fleeing to the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. In October, 2015, the Canadian government pledged to accept at least 25,000 Syrian Government-Assisted Refugees by December 31, 2015. This target date was later revised to March 1st, 2016 with the goal of receiving the first 10,000 Syrians by December 31, 2015.

Since November 4, 2015 and as of January 28, 2016, 14,784 Syrians have arrived in Canada as permanent residents and are being resettled in communities across the country. Of these, 8,567 are Government-Assisted Refugees, 5240 are Privately Sponsored Refugees, and 977 are Blended Visa Office-Referral Program.

Government-Assisted Refugees are Convention Class refugees who are selected and supported by the Government of Canada or the Government of Quebec. This support, which can last for up to one year from the date of arrival in Canada or until the refugee is able to support himself or



herself, is delivered by federally supported non-governmental agencies. It consists of accommodation, clothing, food, help in finding employment, and intensive orientation delivered through the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP). Privately Sponsored Refugees, on the other hand, are assisted by Sponsorship Agreement Holders which have signed agreements with the federal government to assist refugees, Groups of Five (five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents), or Community Sponsors. All sponsors must agree to provide for the emotional and financial support for the full sponsorship period – generally one year. The sponsored individuals or families are eligible to receive free support from all of the settlement agencies within Canada with the exception of the RAP program which is administered by select settlement agencies under a contractual relationship with the federal government. Through the Blended Visa Office-Referral Program, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) identifies refugees eligible for resettlement and matches them with private sponsors in Canada. The Government of Canada provides six months of support, while the private sponsors also provide six months of support for the newcomers.

All orders of government are involved in preparing for the arrival and settlement of Syrians. Under Immigration Minister, John McCallum, the federal government has committed over \$969 million to these efforts. The significance of this undertaking was signalled by the convening of a roundtable in December by the Governor General attended by Mayor Brown and Dr. Valerian Marochko, Executive Director of the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre.

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) continues to work with Resettlement and Settlement Service Providing Organizations to identify challenges and opportunities to support the Syrian Refugee Initiative. It recently announced the Syrian Family Links initiative to help connect Syrian refugees abroad with private Canadian sponsors through the help of the refugee's family in Canada. Additional information is available at <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1029729>.

Ontario Premier Wynne has agreed to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees and has committed \$ 10.5 million over two years for immediate and future support to refugees and support for groups that are privately sponsoring them, as well as \$330,000 for Lifeline Syria, to help recruit, and train private sponsors.

#### Local efforts

In September, 2015, Mayor Matt Brown reached out to faith groups and to Libro Financial to begin the process of raising funds for the private sponsorship of Syrian refugees. Through Libro Financial, approximately \$400,000 has been raised and distributed to sponsoring groups.

The role of Civic Administration has been help coordinate community efforts, to communicate information on the availability of services offered free of charge by the settlement agencies, and other health, education, and employment organizations. Civic Administration is participating in various provincial, federal and local committees as well as the FCM Task Force on Syrian Refugee Resettlement.

In December, Civic Administration, under the direction of Sandra Datars Bere, convened a Task Force of local service agencies to exchange information and to facilitate the coordination of efforts. This group has met three times and will continue to meet as needed. Participating in the Task Force are the settlement agencies: the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, LUSO, South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, ACFO London-Sarnia, and Collège Boréal; the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, the London and District Catholic School Board, the Thames Valley District School Board, the Middlesex London Health Unit, WIL Employment Connections, United Way London Middlesex, Across Languages, the London Mosque, London Community Foundation, and officials of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

On December 11, 2016, United Way London & Middlesex in partnership with Mayor Matt Brown and London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, launched London United for Refugees. The fund will support a variety of programs and services such as front-line mental health supports, employment services, and community inclusion programs designed to help families settle in London successfully. More information can be found at <http://www.londonunitedforrefugees.ca/>.



On December 16, Civic Administration convened a community meeting to prepare for the Syrian newcomers. This community meeting which brought together approximately 150 people including Mayor Brown and several Councillors, local MPs and MPPs along with representatives from settlement services, school boards, private sponsors, faith groups, the London-Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, Middlesex County, and service agencies involved in health care, employment, and social services provided the opportunity to exchange information and ideas on coordinating and preparing for the Syrian newcomers.

On January 29, 2016, the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership (LMLIP) convened a follow-up information meeting of about 150 people at the London Muslim Mosque to provide private sponsors with information on support services available in the community and to build the networks and relationships between the various sponsoring groups and service providers. The London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, which is co-chaired by the City is continuing in its role to provide information about service system and supports.

To facilitate communication and to make Londoners aware of how to assist Syrian newcomers, a section has been set up on the London and Middlesex Immigration Portal at [www.immigration.london.ca/LondonWelcomesSyrianNewcomers](http://www.immigration.london.ca/LondonWelcomesSyrianNewcomers).

#### Settlement

The Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC) is contracted by the federal government to provide the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) to the Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs). CCLC, along with LUSO, South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, ACFO London-Sarnia, and Collège Boréal provide a full range of settlement and integration supports for all newcomers, which includes both the Government-Assisted Refugees and the privately sponsored refugees. Between December 20, 2015 and February 1, 2016, the CCLC welcomed 452 Syrian GARs (85 families), 66 percent of whom are children under the age of 18. Through the RAP, the newcomers receive intensive orientation and settlement assistance for two to three weeks, while they stay at the CCLC's reception centre for refugees or local hotels before being moved to longer-term homes. Of the 85 families, 34 have moved out to private accommodation. CCLC is providing free cultural sensitivity workshops for everyone interested in assisting the Syrian newcomers, and is working closely with other settlement agencies and services to make referrals.

The CCLC is anticipating the arrival of another 350 Syrian Government-Assisted Refugees by the end of February, followed by 500 more throughout the course of 2016.

Approximately 56 privately-sponsored Syrian refugees have arrived in London and another 117 are being processed. They are sponsored by a variety of Sponsorship Agreement Holders, Community Sponsors (in particular faith groups), and Groups of Five.

While the CCLC serves both the Government-Assisted Refugees and the Privately Sponsored Refugees, the other local settlement agencies are providing orientation to Privately-Sponsored Syrian Refugees and their sponsors. The South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre for instance, has welcomed nearly 50 individuals while ACFO London-Sarnia (which serves both French and English speaking newcomers) has welcomed four Syrian families (17 individuals) who are receiving information and orientation sessions, and employment information. Both service agencies have Arabic-speaking staff. LUSO, a settlement agency in northeast London, is supporting seven Syrian families through its Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program. Collège Boréal is assisting two Syrian families with information and orientation services and can provide English language training and employment supports at the appropriate time.

#### Health

The Middlesex London Health Unit has been working with the Syrian newcomers to offer health supports, particularly immunization clinics. Approximately 200 people were immunized between January 25 and 29 and immunization clinics will continue to provide protection against a number of diseases. The London InterCommunity Health Centre is seeing Syrian patients at its clinics and is referring them to primary health care providers.



## Education

The Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) created the GENTLE program to welcome newcomer children and their families and to assess their educational levels and needs. As of January 28, 2016, TVDSB had registered 213 new Syrian students since mid-December. The Board's Adult ESL/LINC (English as a Second Language/Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians) is beginning to see an increase in demand for language training and is preparing to respond to this.

Similarly, the London and District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) has created a Welcome Centre for New Families to Canada, located at Catholic Central High School. Families are being interviewed, and assessed and referrals are being made for the elementary and secondary levels as well as for English as a Second Language. The Centre for Lifelong Learning has developed a welcome video and other materials in English and Arabic. To date, two children have registered for elementary school with the LDCSB and five at the secondary level. The Centre for Lifelong Learning of the Catholic School Board has not yet received Syrian refugees for ESL language instruction.

The YMCA of Western Ontario has opened up an additional afternoon class for English classes at its location within the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre.

## Social Supports/Recreation

This rapid influx of influx of newcomers is putting extra demands on supports for the families as they are in congregated temporary housing and the children have not yet started to attend school. Staff from the City's Parks and Recreation Division and Neighbourhoods, Children and Fire Services have been working with CCLC and have developed a number of approaches to address this need. These approaches include arranging to accept proof of financial need from a sponsor or settlement organization for all newcomers rather than requiring proof of citizenship, of income, and of residency; providing space for CCLC to run programming at community centres; and exploring opportunities to introduce Syrian newcomer families to the range of recreation opportunities in the community.

The YMCA of Western Ontario is putting together a plan to address the recreational needs of all Government-Assisted Refugees and Privately Sponsored Refugees.

## Employment

The London and Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council (LMIEC) has reached out to local employers to provide them with information that they need to hire Syrian newcomers. Additional information is available at <http://www.lmiec.ca/news-events/london-welcomes-syrian-newcomers>. At the time of the writing of this report, the London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership and LMIEC were to have hosted a joint event on February 3<sup>rd</sup> for employers about hiring immigrants. A few Syrian newcomers have already found work within London.

## Engagement by Mayor and Councillors

In December, Mayor Brown wrote letters of support to Prime Minister Trudeau and to Premier Wynne offering London's support in resettling the Syrian newcomers.

Deputy Mayor Cassidy and Councillors Usher, and Zaifman will be attending the Federation of Canadian Municipalities board meeting in early March, and will be prepared to discuss London's involvement in resettling Syrian newcomers with their peers.

## Resources to Support Integration of Newcomers

The following resources provide additional information:

London and Middlesex Immigration Portal  
[www.immigration.london.ca](http://www.immigration.london.ca)

London and Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership

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 Project Coordinator  
 Tel: 519 663-0551 ext. 283  
[www.immigration.ca/LMLIP](http://www.immigration.ca/LMLIP)

London Middlesex Immigrant Employment Council  
 Email: [welcometalent@LMIEC.ca](mailto:welcometalent@LMIEC.ca)  
 Tel: 519-663-0774 x. 117  
[www.lmiec.ca/news-events/london-welcomes-syrian-newcomers](http://www.lmiec.ca/news-events/london-welcomes-syrian-newcomers)

Federal government resources  
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/index.asp>

Provincial government resources  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/syrian-refugees>

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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Civic Administration will continue to support the community response to Syrian newcomers through the London and Middlesex Local immigration Partnership, settlement services, and other broader support services by providing coordination and communication assistance where required.

This report was prepared with contributions from many individuals. Acknowledgement with appreciation is extended to the members of the City of London Task Force on Welcoming Syrian Newcomers.

<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	<b>REVIEWED BY:</b>
<b>JILL TANSLEY SPECIALIST, GOVERNMENT AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS</b>	<b>ELISABETH K. WHITE MANAGER, EMPLOYMENT AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED BY:</b>	
<b>SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME</b>	

Appendix A: Letter to Prime Minister Trudeau  
 Appendix B: Letter to Premier Wynne