

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON APRIL 25, 2017
FROM:	SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME
SUBJECT:	SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO SYRIAN NEWCOMERS – UPDATE ON POTENTIAL SURVEY QUESTIONS OR OTHER MEANS OF GATHERING INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATION

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 – Update on Potential Survey Questions or Other Means of Gathering Information, **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

- Supporting the Community Response to Syrian Newcomers – Update, (CPSC, February 22, 2017)
- Supporting the Community Response to Syrian Newcomers – Update, (CPSC, May 25, 2016)
- Supporting the Community Response to Syrian Newcomers (CPSC, February 17, 2016)

BACKGROUND

On February 22, 2017, City Council received an information report from the Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home with respect to an update on supporting the community response to the Syrian newcomers.

At its meeting held on March 2, 2017, related to the February 22, 2017 staff report, Council resolved:

“That, the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back on potential survey questions or other means of gathering information, related to various matters impacting settlement in the community, including (but not limited to) mental health, social services and supports; it being noted that this information may provide data related to potential financial impacts that these may have in the community.”

This report provides an update on the current research projects that are taking place in the community related to various matters impacting the settlement, health (mental, emotional, and physical) and integration of newcomers, notably the Syrian refugees, into the community. These projects are being done through the collaboration of local stakeholders, federally and provincially funded settlement services providers, and community agencies. The following is a high-level, but not exhaustive overview of ongoing research work on the settlement and integration of refugees to Canada at the federal, provincial and local levels.

Syrian Refugee Integration – Federal Update

The federal government continues to work closely with the Resettlement Assistance Program service provider organizations, as well as organizations that work with private sponsors, to ensure that refugees who may require ongoing financial support have completed or will complete the required provincial or territorial paperwork. Eligible refugee families continue to receive the Canada child benefit credit beyond the 12-month mark. This federal benefit, combined with the federal goods and services tax rebate and provincial tax rebate, will provide ongoing support to families with children of eligible age. In Ontario, this could equate to an annual maximum of \$6,400 for each child under six and \$5,400 for each child between six and 17.

The precise number of Syrian refugees who are employed is not yet available, but studies are being conducted to evaluate how Syrians, who arrived in Canada by March 1, 2016, are

integrating. Statistics over the past decade show that 50 percent of Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) and 10 percent of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) had employment income in their first year. Based on recent evaluations, both adult GARs and PSRs need to improve their language skills to overcome potential barriers to employment. Information will be released once all annual Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Program performance reports are received at the end of May 2017.

Provincial Syrian Refugee Resettlement Reports and Measures

Syrian Refugee Resettlement Measurement Framework

The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration has recognized that there is a need for an evidence-based approach to resettlement measurement to enable government to make the most informed decisions; lead change in critical services; and select, fund, and operate resettlement programs more strategically. Currently, evaluation and measurement frameworks show only a limited snapshot of the resettlement outcomes for the Syrian newcomers' first year and show no evidence of the long term paths to resettlement. The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is developing a new resettlement measurement framework which will use qualitative evidence from services providers and refugees, as well as quantitative evidence to provide insight into future resettlement practices.

Local Strategic Initiatives and Current Research Projects

- **RBC Centre for At-Risk Children and Families- Pilot Project**

The Transcultural Mental Health Consultation Service through the RBC Centre offers services for clients living in the London/Middlesex catchment area and who identify as immigrant or refugee. These clients, who range from children to adults, are experiencing moderate to severe mental health concerns which are influenced by a cultural component. The multidisciplinary team is trained to provide family-centred mental health services in a manner that is comprehensive, integrated, and where cultural factors influence the client's or family's presentation and service needs. The pilot project includes an initial assessment, potential short-term culturally-informed interventions with community collaboration and consultation for best client support and understanding. Formal partners include the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Cross Cultural Learner Centre, Family Centre Hubs, the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration, the South London Neighborhood Resource Centre and Western University. There is also a Community Advisory Committee composed of a variety of community partners.

There is ongoing research built into this pilot project which collects data on: referrals of all clients, by family and child/individuals, age, referral sources, and treatment recommendations. Other information being collected includes pressing and emerging issues, types of interventions, language needs, and length of time on services. The information captured will be available at a later date once it has been reviewed and compiled.

- **Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords**

London's Community Health Collaborative is advancing a study to evaluate the impact of tenant and landlord education on health, housing stability, and social inclusion of Syrian refugees in London. Research has concluded that two of the most frequently cited recommendations for improving the housing conditions for newcomers are: 1) providing housing-related education to refugees, and, 2) providing cultural sensitivity and needs-based training to landlords. In 2016, the Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC), the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre (SLNRC), and LUSO Community Services received funding from the United Way London & Middlesex to develop and implement three slightly different educational programs targeted to this population. This study will assess the collective impact of these three landlord and tenant education initiatives using a quasi-experimental research design. This mixed-methods project includes primarily routinely-collected survey data which will be evaluated and will be enhanced by in-depth interviews with participants to elicit richer data. This project is being reviewed before the Ethics Review Board of Western University and there may be minor revisions to the proposed process before the project can proceed. This is a public study and therefore, results will be shared publicly at a later date once the project has been completed.

- **The Provision of Information to Facilitate the Settlement and Integration of Refugees in Canada**

Western University's Centre for Research on Migration and Ethnic Relations, and the Pathways to Prosperity research team is currently working on a research project focusing on the information needs of recently arrived Syrian refugees to London and Calgary. This project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. It will evaluate not only the settlement information given and sought by

refugees pre-arrival, immediately upon arrival, and long term, but the barriers in obtaining information. Useful strategies will also be identified through this report to improve access to information for refugees.

For London, the project partners include the Cross Cultural Learner Centre and the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre. To date, interviews have taken place with 12 key informants working with Syrian refugees in London, and focus groups with Syrian refugees will commence shortly. Other research methods for the project include a resource mapping and probe of current services and programs pre, post, and during the settlement and integration process. A summary of the findings is expected to be ready by early June. As a separate project, focus groups with Syrian refugees in collaboration with North Park Community Church, which is a sponsorship agreement holder, will be held to collect feedback regarding lived experiences of Syrian refugees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The work done to date by Civic Administration on this initiative has been managed within existing resources. In light of the many concurrent activities and the desire to avoid duplication of existing surveys, research projects and initiatives, there is no need for additional resources at this time.

CONCLUSION

Given the significant work being conducted by community organizations and professional researchers, and the desire to avoid duplication, Civic Administration will report the findings of the aforementioned research to Council. Civic Administration will continue to support the community through the London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, and other broader support services by providing coordination and communication assistance where required.

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