



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the Arts Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee

From: Becky Rogers, Manager, Arts, Culture and Heritage Division

Meeting Date: November 10, 2016

Subject: Report ACHAC16-050
Peterborough Support of Syrian Refugees

Purpose

A report to inform that the New Canadians Center will attend the November 10, 2016 Arts Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee meeting to make a presentation on Peterborough and area support for Syrian Refugees.

Recommendation

That the Arts Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee approve the recommendation outlined in Report ACHAC16-050 dated November 10, 2016, by the Manager, Arts Culture & Heritage Division as follows:

That a presentation on Peterborough and area support for Syrian Refugees be received for information.

Budget and Financial Implications

There is no budget or financial implication resulting from the approval of the recommendation of this report.

Background

The New Canadians Centre Peterborough (NCC) is the only local agency responsible for the delivery of settlement services to immigrants and refugees. In September, 2015 when they became aware of the community's desire to support and sponsor refugees the staff and the Board decided that they were best suited to take on a coordinating role for all of Peterborough. Since then, they have been providing support for sponsor organizations, their Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) and Government Assisted Refugees (GAR).

Peterborough began receiving privately sponsored refugees in December 2015. The New Canadians Center (NCC) became a new Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) centre in March 2016 and began receiving Government Assisted Refugees shortly thereafter.

The NCC's current RAP contract calls for them to receive approximately three (3) government-assisted families per month for a total of 180 GARs between April 1, 2016 and March 31, 2017. There have been some months with no arrivals and other months with as many as ten (10) families arriving.

Beginning in August the government instituted a fall push to meet their 2016/2017 targets and the NCC expects the majority of the remaining families to arrive by December, 2016. However, as the situation in the Middle East remains volatile and countries often hold back exit visas at the last minute, there is no way for the NCC to accurately predict how many refugees will arrive in any given week or month.

Total Numbers (actual arrivals and scheduled arrivals from the end of October, 2016)

Peterborough	# Adults	# Children	Total
Privately Sponsored Refugees	46	42	88
Government Assisted Refugees	66	68	134
Peterborough Total	112	110	222
Durham Region	4	3	7
Kawartha Lakes	6	4	10
Northumberland County	18	11	29
Trenton	2	1	3
Total			271

The totals from Durham, Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland and Trenton do not include the full count for the regions, but the NCC does serve some of their clients. An additional eleven (11) GARs arrived in Peterborough, but requested to be relocated to other cities with larger Arabic speaking populations (one to Ottawa, one to Windsor), and one individual was transferred to Toronto by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). One Joint Assistance Sponsorship Family from Trenton received

orientation services through the Peterborough RAP program, but then moved on to Trenton as IRCC intended.

Such relocation is common among GARs as they seek to join family and friends or to find a location that better meets their needs and interests. One GAR family initially decided to relocate to Ottawa, but after visiting there, they changed their minds and decided to remain in Peterborough.

Both the privately sponsored and government-assisted refugee families who have arrived, are settled and doing well. All families have been able to access needed community services and many are participating in NCC and other community activities and events.

Settlement Services Support

PSRs receive financial, emotional and social supports from their private sponsors for one (1) year. GARs receive basic financial support for one (1) year from the Federal Government which gives them immediate and essential supports for their most basic needs. GARs also receive non-financial support/resettlement services from the New Canadians Center through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP).

Sponsor responsibilities for PSRs:

Sponsors pay for all of the basic expenses for the refugees when they arrive for 12 months or until the refugees become self-sufficient, whichever comes first. They are responsible for providing support to the refugees for one year, including:

- Providing the cost of food, rent, household utilities and day-to-day living expenses;
- Providing clothing, furniture and other household goods;
- Locating interpreters; selecting a family physician and dentist;
- Assisting with applying for provincial health-care coverage; enrolling children in school and adults in language training;
- Assisting with search for permanent housing;
- Introducing newcomers to people with similar personal interests;
- Providing emotional and social support;
- Providing orientation with regard to banking services, transportation, etc.; and,
- Helping in the search for employment.

Private sponsors have greater flexibility on the types of services and the amount of financial support they provide to their family. PSRs also have access to government settlement programs including information and orientation services, help finding and keeping a job, language training, and support to build connections in communities.

Settlement Agency (NCC) responsibilities for GARs:

- Airport / hotel pickup;
- Providing temporary housing;
- Help with registering for mandatory federal and provincial programs, (e.g. OHIP);
- Orientation to the community:
 - Providing contacts for safety and emergency services;
 - Introducing the family to the city;
 - Explaining public transportation,
 - Canada's education and health care systems,
 - Canadian laws and customs, and,
 - The local climate;
- Personal finance help in areas such as:
 - budgeting;
 - setting up a bank account, and,
 - using debit and credit cards;
- Assisting with permanent housing search; and,

GAR financial support includes monthly income support payments and a one-time household start-up allowance. The level of monthly financial support is based on the prevailing provincial social assistance rates in the province where the refugees settle. Income support is given so that the refugees can concentrate on language training and other training programs that are deemed important for successful settlement. Peterborough's New Canadians Center is then responsible for the remaining essential settlement supports listed above.

Both PSRs and GARs are covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) and are eligible for the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP). They may also be eligible for many other benefits including:

- Canada Child Tax Benefit
- National Child Benefit Supplement
- Ontario Child Benefit
- Universal Child Care Benefit
- Child Disability Benefit
- HST credit

PSRs and GARs are not eligible for Ontario Works benefits or subsidized housing during the period of sponsorship and/or government funded support.

There are privileges and challenges for both types of assistance. The main difference is the personal engagement and support provided by the sponsors to the PSRs. The outcomes for privately sponsored refugees are different from those for GARs, as PSRs tend to have an enthusiastic network of Canadians who have invested their time and money to make sure that the newcomers become friends and neighbours. PSRs tend to become self-supporting far more quickly than GARs.

To compensate for the different levels of support provided to PSRs and GARs, the New Canadians Center has created a “Made in Peterborough” solution. They have formed 24 GAR Support Groups. Each of the 24 GAR Groups consists of 10 to 20 volunteer community members. The volunteer support groups have no financial responsibilities, but they provide:

- Welcome reception
- Social connections and activities
- Orientation to the community
- Assistance with childminding and transportation to appointments
- Informal ESL support
- Employment support through personal connections
- Assistance with permanent housing search

As the GAR families arrive, they are matched to a support group. This support has made a huge difference to the families who have arrived so far, and influences their decision whether to remain in Peterborough.

Challenges for 2017

Month 13

Regardless of whether they are privately sponsored or government-assisted, the refugees receive only one year of financial support through their sponsors or through the Federal Government. The expectation is that after one year, they will become self-sufficient, or apply for social assistance. Provincial and local systems become their social safety net. Since this transition takes place in the 13th month after refugees arrive to Canada, it is often referred to as “Month 13”.

The GARs will receive letters prior to month 13 recommending that they work with the NCC to begin preparing for the transition. This transition will place heavy demands on the NCC who will have to continue to provide on-going intensive settlement supports to all the refugees as they go through the changes imposed by month 13. Private sponsors should also be informing their refugee families about the changes they will have to face, and working with the NCC for a smooth transition.

The Refugee Resettlement Task Force, the New Canadians Centre and Social Services are preparing for December 2016 when the first families will stop receiving support from their sponsors. The NCC is coordinating all local activities to make sure the tools are available for the transition. They are also working closely with the Province and RAP funders lobbying for more resources and continued RAP funding. The refugee reality is such that they continue to need support as it can take time for families to navigate through the settlement process, integrate into the community, participate in society, and develop the skills necessary to find and keep a job.

End of Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) Funding

As of the date of this report, the Federal Government has not started funding negotiations with settlement agencies and RAP centres. This means there is no confirmed support for any NCC program or position after the end of the Federal fiscal year on March 31, 2017 when the NCC's current contract ends. If the RAP funding does not continue (this is impossible to predict at this time) it is likely that at least 6 of the 8 positions hired to deliver RAP programs will be eliminated. The NCC will have a continuing obligation to provide mandated resettlement services to refugee families who have just arrived although they have no Arabic speaking case workers.

Anticipated On-going Pressure Points

In the last five years the New Canadians Centre has experienced significant client growth. In 2017 they are anticipating a 30% increase in client numbers as they serve:

- clients who come through the regular channels
- new Syrian refugees who arrive in 2017; and,
- refugees from 2015/2016 transitioning through month 13.

The NCC has identified a number of on-going challenges. They are increased demands for:

- settlement & related services over the next two (2) years;
- pre-employment and employment supports including assessing skills, training to enter the job market, connecting refugees with opportunities and on the job training, and help retaining jobs;
- ESL classes & child care support for those taking the classes;
- continued mental health support and counselling for victims of trauma and/or torture;
- developmental, emotional and social supports for children and youth;
- increased staff support for families as they move from government/sponsorship support to other income (Month 13)
- finding and maintaining affordable housing stocks, especially for individuals and smaller families¹; and
- interpretation services and support for the refugees and many community organizations, especially those in the health sector.

¹ The hardest financial challenges will be faced by individuals, couples without children and families with one child as they need to spend a higher proportion of income on rent (larger families have sufficient additional money from the child tax benefit)

NCC Budget Request

In 2017 the NCC is requesting an additional \$50,000 to the approved \$25,000 for a total of \$75,000. The funding would be used to ensure the NCC will have Arabic speaking staff and adequate settlement support staff to deliver a full 12 months of increased resettlement support for all refugee families who arrive in 2017. It would also ensure that all 180-200 refugees receive adequate longer term settlement and employment support as they transition through their first full year without sponsor or government support. This funding will also provide interpretation support for the NCC and their clients and for other partner organizations in emergency situations.

The NCC will need to continue to work with the Refugee Resettlement Task Force to improve service collaboration among sector agencies and with institutional partners in healthcare, mental health and education, with employers and with the City of Peterborough. They will also need to continue coordinating the generous donations the community continues to provide.

The NCC will continue to seek federal, provincial and other funding to assist in the settlement and support of refugees.

Submitted by,

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