



City of
Peterborough

To: **Members of the Budget Committee**

From: **Ken Doherty, Director, Community Services**

Meeting Date: **November 23, 2015**

Subject: **Report CSACH15-006**
Relocation of Syrian Refugees

Purpose

A report to provide information on the process used to relocate refugees and how the City can assist groups in the community involved in the process.

Recommendation

That Council approve the recommendation outlined in Report CSACH15-006 dated November 23, 2015, of the Director of Community Services, as follows:

That the report on potential City support for the relocation of Syrian refugees to Peterborough be received for information.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no immediate budgetary or financial implications at this time.

Background

At the September 21, 2015 Committee of the Whole meeting, a motion was made to request:

That Staff prepare a report for Budget Committee on the process used to relocate refugees and how the City could assist groups in the community involved in the process.

While the Corporation of the City of Peterborough and Council cannot directly legally sponsor Syrian refugees, they may be authorized to:

- Meet or exceed AMO's \$100 challenge;
- Provide financial assistance to local groups sponsoring refugees for settlement within Peterborough;
- Provide in-kind support through press release(s) identifying the City's support of local organizations as a public partnership and providing links from the City website to organizations seeking donations in support of refugees;
- Encourage other municipalities across the province to support AMO's challenge;
- Explore what additional measures the municipality may take within the municipal mandate.

Civil War and Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

Syria has become the world's top source of refugees due to the ongoing conflict in the region. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), more than half of Syria's population has been forced to flee their homes since the start of the conflict in March 2011. This is more than 12 million people, with more than half of them being children. Out of the total number, close to eight million are displaced within Syria, and more than four million have been registered by UNHCR as refugees in neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

The vast majority of them are living in overcrowded camps in neighbouring countries. Camps are crowded and undersupplied and people are subjected to heat and/or cold, hunger and disease. With no prospect of returning home in the near future, and limited opportunity to rebuild their lives in their current conditions, tens of thousands of Syrian and other refugees have recently continued with their flight in attempt to reach the safety and stability of Western Europe. In doing so, they often put themselves in life-threatening situations, while overwhelming the refugee-reception capacity of receiving countries and other countries along the way. With the winter approaching, world leaders are struggling to find solutions to this growing humanitarian crisis.

Canada's Response

As part of its Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, and in response to UNHCR's appeal to the international community, in 2013 Canada committed to resettling 1,300 refugees from Syria by the end of 2014. In January of this year, this commitment increased by 10,000 additional Syrian refugees to be resettled by the end of 2017, with the majority to be privately sponsored. A total of 2,406 Syrian refugees have been resettled as of early September 2015. The New Liberal Government has pledged to accommodate 25,000 by year end.

To facilitate provision of relief to Syrian refugees, the Government of Canada has created the Syria Emergency Relief Fund. Full information on this fund is available in Appendix A. The Government will match every eligible dollar donated by individual Canadians to registered Canadian charities in response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, up to \$100 million until December 31, 2015.

Municipal Responses to the Syrian Crisis

The plight of Syrian refugees is inspiring municipalities and community organizations across the country to offer support. There is no single unified process within the province or at the local level on how best to respond to this situation as municipal leaders cannot bring refugees to their cities and towns. Consequently municipalities are using a myriad of methods to mobilize public support, and to encourage citizens to help and donate to local organizations providing assistance and humanitarian help. In general, municipal actions to support Syrian refugees can be classified as:

- Organizing or participating in fundraising campaigns to support local immigrant settlement agencies or international relief organizations;
- Convening public meetings with immigrant and refugee organizations to discuss how best to coordinate a local response; and,
- Issuing statements calling for urgent federal action and local mobilization.

Appendix B contains examples of the types of support that are being offered by other municipalities and Mayors at this time.

Association of Municipalities of Ontario and Federation of Canadian Municipalities Initiatives

In September, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Canadian Federation of Municipalities began campaigns and passed resolutions to support the plight of Syrian refugees.

AMO challenged all 444 of its member municipalities to donate at least \$100 to aid in the international effort to resettle the Syrian refugees in safe countries. AMO hopes to raise at least \$40,000. By September 24, 2015, AMO had reached one quarter of the

targeted amount. This goal will help save two families and if AMO can raise a greater amount, more families can be saved. (See Appendix C for the AMO Call to Action).

AMO will donate all of the proceeds to *Lifeline Syria*. This organization is seeking to resettle and integrate 1,000 Syrian refugees in Ontario over the next two years. *Lifeline Syria* is a community-based initiative that will do this by helping to recruit, train, and match private refugee sponsors in Ontario with Syrian refugees approved for resettlement by the federal government. Sponsors will include organizations, individuals, or groups of individuals such as faith-based groups. In April 2015, the Ontario government provided \$30,000 in seed funding to *Lifeline Syria* to support its work, but it is reliant on public donations to fulfill its mandate. Since then Ontario has been working closely with *Lifeline Syria*'s steering committee to further develop its initiative. In September the province provided an additional \$300,000 to allow the organization to continue its important work.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)

After passing an Emergency Recommendation to coordinate the efforts of cities and communities across the country, the Board of Directors of FCM established a Task Force on Refugee Resettlement to coordinate an effective response from the local government perspective. The Task Force is headed by Halifax Mayor Mike Savage and Raymond Louie of Vancouver, the federation's president. Smaller communities, including St. Albert, Alta., and Aurora, Ont., are represented on the task force. The Task Force will allow municipalities to share information and best practices as a means of coordinating with their provincial, territorial and federal counterparts to meet resettlement targets. (See Appendix D for the Press Release issued by the FCM.)

Applicable Legislation - *Municipal Act, 2001*, S.O. 2001, c. 25

Despite the desire for a municipal government to assist Syrian refugees, the question is what actions is the City permitted to take in light of the powers conferred to a municipality under the *Municipal Act, 2001* (the "Act"). Municipalities are governments that can act with respect to "matters within their jurisdiction" for the purpose of providing "good government". The Act provides for broad and general powers, including financial assistance, however the courts have held that these powers are not limitless and must relate to what are actually local issues. The Supreme Court of Canada has held: "It is not enough that a particular issue has become a pressing concern in the opinion of the local community. This concern must relate to problems that engage the community as a local entity, not a member of the broader policy. It must be closely related to the immediate interests of the community within the territorial limits defined by the legislature in a matter where local governments may usefully intervene."

Can the City directly sponsor a Syrian refugee?

Under the Private Sponsorship Refugee program, a refugee must not already be in Canada. The act of sponsorship would bring a refugee who is outside of the country into the City. Absent the City's participation in the program there would be no pre-existing connection between the refugee and the City and it is unlikely that the City

would be able to rely upon a sense of humanitarian obligation to justify an action that has no tangible connection to the City.

Can the City spend public money and resources to help an external group sponsor a Syrian refugee?

Yes, if the external group proposes to sponsor refugees who will reside within the City of Peterborough. If the external group sponsors refugees who will reside elsewhere, the argument that the City may support the external group is less clear. In its appeal for donations AMO points to the way in which municipal governments can help one another and their neighbours. The City could submit that the purpose of supporting the external group, Lifeline Syria, is to assist other municipalities to resettle refugees and may be considered a valid municipal purpose, although the connection is much less direct.

Refugee Sponsorship Process

The Government of Canada defines refugees as “people who have fled their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution, and who are therefore unable to return home.” Refugees differ from immigrants in that they are fleeing their homeland rather than choosing to resettle permanently in another country. (The Refugee System in Canada, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/canada.asp>)

Local organizations in Peterborough are using the Privately Sponsored Refugee program managed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Throughout September the Federal Government took a number of steps to make it easier to sponsor refugees from Syria and Iraq. The changes range from temporarily reducing the documentation required for the sponsorship process to passing temporary public policy to facilitate the sponsorship of Syrian and Iraqi refugees through Groups of Five, Community Sponsors and Blended Visa Office-Referred Programs. (See Appendix E for more information on the different sponsorship programs.)

All local groups sponsoring refugees through the Private Sponsorship Refugee (PSR) program must work through a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). These are groups that have signed agreements with the Government of Canada to sponsor refugees. They are generally large, well-established organizations that are trusted resettlement partners. They can sponsor refugees themselves or work with other Constituent Groups in the community to sponsor refugees. Within Peterborough, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Peterborough is the only Sponsorship Agreement Holder. There are Constituent Groups in the Peterborough community authorized to sponsor refugees through the existing SAH agreement.

In the Private Sponsorship Refugee program, a group of at least five people – individuals aren’t allowed to do it on their own – apply to resettle specific refugees in Canada, and the sponsors pay for all of the basic expenses for the refugees when they arrive for 12 to 36 months or until the refugees become self-sufficient, whichever comes first. Sponsors are responsible for providing settlement 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;
- introducing newcomers to people with similar personal interests
- providing orientation with regard to banking services, transportation, etc.; and
- helping in the search for employment.

The cost for sponsoring a family is around \$27,000. All of the funds and considerations have to be secured before the family arrives. The sponsors may establish a trust fund for the sponsorship but may not accept or require payment of funds from a refugee for submitting a sponsorship. ([CIC Guide to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program – 2. Private sponsorship of refugees program, http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/ref-sponsor/section-2.asp](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/ref-sponsor/section-2.asp))

Local Information

On September 10, 2015, the New Canadians Centre held a workshop to help local people and organizations wanting to sponsor refugees from Syria. As of September 15, 2015 there are eleven (11) organizations within the City, and two (2) outside the City sponsoring refugees. Appendix F includes status and contact information for all the groups as well as print news coverage of several of the initiatives.

The New Canadians Centre can also assist with:

- Providing information and assistance with sponsorship process
- Connecting to other sponsorship groups
- Providing information on community and government services
- ESL and Community Connection programs for refugees
- SWIS program to assist youth and help with school registration
- Refugee Health Partnership to connect with family doctor
- Connecting to local interpreters and cultural groups
- Settlement Services, including help with permanent resident card renewal, citizenship, travel documents, OHIP, driver's license.

Summary

Although the assistance Peterborough can provide to AMO and the local organizations supporting Syrian refugees is limited, our own history in Peterborough has shown that newcomers arriving as refugees and/or immigrants have made significant positive contributions to the community. Given this, an investment in refugee sponsorship through a local organization could be reasonably expected to be in the best interest of the municipality.

Submitted by,

Ken Doherty
Director, Community Services Department

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Attachments:

Appendix A - Syria Emergency Relief Fund
Appendix B – Examples of Municipal Support for Syrian Refugees
Appendix C – AMO Call to Action
Appendix D – FCM Emergency recommendation on Syrian refugee crisis passed at FCM Board Meeting (12/09/2015)
Appendix E – Types of Sponsorship Programs
Appendix F – Peterborough Sponsor Status and Contact Information as of September 15, 2015, along with print news coverage.

Appendix A - Syria Emergency Relief Fund

Canada Announces Matching Fund in Response to the Conflict in Syria

September 12, 2015 – Ottawa, Ontario – Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada¹

September 12, 2015 – Ottawa, Ontario – Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada

The Government of Canada announced today the creation of the Syria Emergency Relief Fund.

The Government will match every eligible dollar donated by individual Canadians to registered Canadian charities in response to the impact of the conflict in Syria, up to \$100 million, effective immediately and until December 31, 2015.

The Fund will help meet the basic needs of conflict-affected people in the region, as well as in official development assistance-eligible transit countries for refugees. The Government's contribution to this fund will provide assistance through international and Canadian humanitarian organizations and will meet humanitarian needs such as shelter, food, health and water, as well as protection and emergency education.

To be counted for the purposes of the Syria Emergency Relief Fund, donations from individual Canadians may not exceed \$100,000 per individual and must be:

- Monetary in nature;
- Made to a registered Canadian charity that is receiving donations in response to the Syria crisis;
- Specifically earmarked for response to the Syria crisis;
- Made between September 12 and December 31, 2015;
- Used by the registered charity receiving the donation in support of the humanitarian response to the impact of the Syria crisis; and
- Declared by the registered charity receiving the donation to DFATD.

Since January 2012, Canada has committed \$503.5 million in international humanitarian assistance funding in response to the Syria crisis.

¹ [Online link](http://www.international.gc.ca/media/dev/news-communiques/2015/09/12a.aspx?lang=eng) <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/dev/news-communiques/2015/09/12a.aspx?lang=eng>

Syria Emergency Relief Fund



The ongoing conflict in Syria has triggered the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today. According to the United Nations, 12.2 million people inside Syria need urgent help, including 7.6 million who are internally displaced. It is estimated that well over 250,000 people have died in the conflict, with hundreds of thousands more wounded. More than 4 million Syrians have sought refuge in the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey.

On September 12, 2015, the Government of Canada launched the Syria Emergency Relief Fund to support humanitarian relief efforts in response to the impact of the conflict in Syria.

How the fund works

For every eligible dollar donated by individual Canadians to registered Canadian charities between September 12 and December 31 in response to the conflict in Syria, the government will set aside one dollar in the Syria Emergency Relief Fund. The government will use the fund to support experienced international and Canadian humanitarian organizations using established Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD) channels and procedures. The total value of the Fund will be capped at \$100 million.

The Syria Emergency Relief Fund is separate from the funds raised by charities and is administered separately by the Government of Canada. This means that a charity **does not receive a matching dollar from the Government of Canada**.

Donation criteria for individual Canadians

To be counted toward the Syria Emergency Relief Fund, donations must be made by individual Canadians, not exceed \$100,000 per individual, and must be:

- monetary in nature;
- made to a registered Canadian charity that is receiving donations in response to the Syria crisis*;
- specifically earmarked for response to the Syria crisis;
- made between September 12 and December 31, 2015.

*Please note, donations cannot be made directly to the Syria Emergency Relief Fund or to DFATD.

For more information about making an individual donation eligible for the Syria Emergency Relief Fund, visit the [How to make a donation](#) page.

Donation criteria for individuals fundraising on behalf of organizations

Donations from a fundraising event undertaken to raise money from individuals in response to the Syria crisis are eligible to be matched. This fundraising may be undertaken by schools, faith-based organizations, clubs, social groups, businesses, incorporated entities or charitable organizations.

Any donations made by corporations, governments, businesses, partnerships, schools, incorporated or non-incorporated entities, and unions from their existing resources that were not raised from individuals specifically in response to the Syria crisis are not eligible to be matched. In addition, donations to augment the amount originally raised from individuals through a fundraising activity or event are not eligible to be matched.

For more information about making a donation eligible for the Syria Emergency Relief Fund on behalf of corporations, organizations and groups, visit the [How to make a donation](#) page.

Donation criteria for registered charities

Registered charities declaring eligible donations must complete the [Syria Emergency Relief Fund Declaration Form](#) (PDF; 191 KB)^{[Footnote*](#)}, which must be received by DFATD on or before January 15, 2016, for its donations to be counted toward the relief fund.

To ensure that donations are eligible for the matching program, registered charities must ensure that:

- donations comply with the conditions outlined above;
- donations will be used in support of the humanitarian response to the Syria crisis; and
- donations will be declared to DFATD.

It is up to the registered Canadian charity to certify that the donations declared are eligible. Registered Canadian charities are under no obligation to declare donations to DFATD if they are not satisfied that they meet the eligibility requirements.

The Syria Emergency Relief Fund is separate from the funds raised by charities and is administered separately by the Government of Canada. This means that a charity declaring the amount of eligible donations raised **does not receive a matching dollar from the Government of Canada**. For every eligible dollar donated by individual Canadians to registered Canadian charities, the government set aside one dollar for the Relief Fund. The government will use the fund to support experienced Canadian and international humanitarian organizations to meet needs resulting from the crisis in Syria.

Allocation of funds

Charitable organizations fundraising for relief efforts in Syria will not have privileged access to financing from the relief fund. The fund will help meet the basic needs of conflict-affected people in the region, as well as in official development assistance-eligible transit countries for refugees. The Government's contribution to this fund will provide assistance through international and Canadian humanitarian organizations and will meet humanitarian needs such as shelter, food, health, and water, as well as protection and emergency education.

http://www.international.gc.ca/development-developpement/humanitarian_response-situations_crises/fund_syria-syrie_fonds.aspx?lang=eng&_ga=1.70198160.1868433887.1445266491

Appendix B – Examples of Municipal Support for Syrian Refugees

- In Peterborough the New Canadian Centre hosted a workshop/information session on how to sponsor refugees.
- Oxford County municipalities are choosing to support the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's (AMO) call to action to support Syrian refugees
- In Stratford the Mayor and City Council have partnered with the Stratford Festival to help raise the money to help several Syrian families settle in the community.
- The Town of Perry Sound is contributing \$1,000 to the AMO campaign and passed a motion challenging all other Ontario municipalities to donate more than \$100.
- The City of Halifax (NS) has adopted a motion² assuring Canada's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that the city will provide a welcoming environment for refugees.
- The City of Kitchener (ON) issued a public statement to mobilize citizens and community groups.
- Bracebridge donated \$400 to the AMO challenge.
- The Association of Yukon Communities issued a statement pledging to help its member communities resettle Syrian refugees.
- Timmins pledged to match any donations from local citizens and businesses up to \$15,000.
- North Bay Mayor Al McDonald started a Facebook campaign to fundraise the approximately \$30,000 necessary to sponsor a family for a year and in its first couple of days he had \$10,000 in commitments.
- Warden Rick Phillips of Hastings County is urging councillors, staff and municipalities “to answer AMO's recent call for international action”, and to donate personally.
- The City of Vancouver (BC) held a public forum to discuss actions the public can take to help address the crisis and assist those in need.
- The Town of Ajax and Essex County pledged to donate \$5,000 to AMO.
- The Town of Aurora contributed \$500 to AMO through *Lifeline Syria*
- The Region of Durham's Diversity and Immigration Program hosted an information session on private refugee sponsorship, in partnership with the Town of Ajax, Catholic Cross-cultural Services and *Lifeline Syria*.

² Whereas the humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Mediterranean has captured the attention of people across Canada and around the world, Regional Council request:

1) The Mayor to write a letter to the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, assuring that Halifax will provide a welcoming environment for refugees, and calling on the Government of Canada to act urgently in response to the unfolding Syrian refugee crisis;

2) The Mayor to write a letter to the Nova Scotia Minister of Immigration, supporting the provincial government's call to take in more refugees, and assuring that Halifax will provide a welcoming environment for refugees; and

3) A staff report outlining what additional measures the municipality may take, within the municipal mandate, which would further assist in the resettlement process, including assistance to community partners involved in refugee settlement, should Halifax receive a sudden and significant number of refugees.

- Toronto Mayor John Tory has promised to personally co-sponsor a refugee family.
- In Edmonton, a local Muslim group has teamed up with the local office of the Mennonite Central Committee to reconnect 32 Syrian refugees since March with family relations in Alberta. By the autumn that number is expected to exceed 150, according to Sarah Hanafi, member of the Islamic Family and Social Services Association.
- Mayor Crombie of Mississauga assembled 75 of the most successful individuals, religious groups and community associations in the City to address the Syrian refugee crisis. *Lifeline Syria* will create a *Mississauga Fund* with the dual goals of attracting \$5 million in donations from across Mississauga. The Mayor and Council will actively encourage other groups, associations, and businesses to come together to donate to the *Mississauga Fund*.
- Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi has directed two of his staff to approach faith-based and non-profit organizations to learn about ongoing resettlement efforts and to encourage Calgarians to sponsor Syrian refugees.
- In Sudbury Mayor Brian Bigger moved a motion Tuesday at city council to create a Newcomer, Refugee and Immigration Advisory Panel to co-ordinate local efforts should some of the refugees decide to come to Greater Sudbury.
- In Toronto City Council approved:
 - \$1.2 million to support Syrian resettlement initiatives;
 - the creation of an inter-division team to coordinate City resettlement programs;
 - an inter-agency task force that can help coordinate resettlement efforts by non-profit organizations, such as the Red Cross of Canada and *Lifeline Syria*; and,
 - a request that Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) provide the funding required to support the successful resettlement of Syrian refugees in Toronto.
- The City of Montreal (QC) adopted a declaration recognizing the urgency of the situation and its intent to work with all levels of government on refugee resettlement.
- The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) endorsed an emergency resolution passed by Whistler Council and supported by the District of Squamish, the Village of Pemberton and the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District. The resolution urges the Government of Canada to act immediately to accelerate the resettlement process and increase federal commitments to receive Syrian refugees in Canada.

Appendix C

AMO Support for Syrian Refugee Crisis - Call to Action

09/09/2015

Gary McNamara, President, AMO

Dear Colleagues,

Like you, I have been deeply affected by the disturbing images and stark realities of the Syrian refugee crisis. It is a situation that cries out for compassion and action.

AMO is challenging all of its member municipalities to donate at least \$100 to aid in the international effort to resettle the Syrian refugees in safe countries. We hope to raise at least \$40,000. This goal will help save two families and if we raise a greater amount, we can help save more families.

Donations can be made by cheque payable to Association of Municipalities of Ontario, with “Syrian Refugee Crisis” in the description field, and forwarded by Friday, October 2.

AMO will donate all of the proceeds to Lifeline Syria. This organization is seeking to resettle and integrate 1,000 Syrian refugees in Ontario over the next two years, reuniting them with their families. Lifeline Syria is a community-based initiative that will do this by helping to recruit, train, and match private refugee sponsors in Ontario with Syrian refugees approved for resettlement by the federal government. Sponsors will include organizations, individuals, or groups of individuals such as faith-based groups. The Ontario government has provided seed funding to Lifeline Syria to support its work but it is reliant on public donations to fulfill its mandate. More information about the organization and the initiative is found on the Lifeline Syria website.

I know how municipal governments in Ontario rally to help one another and their neighbours. I implore you to accept this challenge and donate to this worthy cause. It is one small way we can help ease the suffering of others through our financial contributions.

Sincerely



Gary McNamara
President, AMO

P.S. For other ways to help, see International Organizations Seeking to Assist Syrian Refugees:

- [Lifeline Syria](#) - This organization is seeking to resettle and integrate 1,000 Syrian refugees in Ontario over the next two years, reuniting them with their families.
- [The Canadian Red Cross](#) is accepting donations for their Syria Crisis Fund to provide assistance to Syrians living abroad in Syria and neighbouring countries.
- The [UNHCR](#), the UN Refugee Agency, is the world's leading organization aiding and protecting people forced to flee their homes due to violence, conflict and persecution. The UNHCR is directly aiding Syrian refugees.
- [Care Canada](#) is providing life-saving assistance to Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt.
- [Oxfam Canada](#) is providing aid and long-term support to hundreds of thousands of people affected by the crisis across Syria, Lebanon and Jordan.
- [World Vision](#) is supporting Syrians in Syria, as well as those who have fled to Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey and Jordan.

<https://www.amo.on.ca/AMO-Content/Policy-Updates/2015/AMO-Support-for-Syrian-Refugee-Crisis-Call-to-Acti.aspx>

Appendix D – Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Canada's municipalities establish unified response to Syrian Refugee Crisis (30/09/2015)

Ottawa - Municipal leaders across Canada are pressing forward with their unified response to the humanitarian crisis facing Syria. Today the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) released details on the membership of the Task Force on Syrian Refugee Resettlement.

Membership on the Task Force reflects the diversity of the municipal sector. Cities that are traditional immigration hubs such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montréal, Ottawa and Halifax will be represented. The Task Force will also include smaller municipalities, such as the City of St. Albert, AB, and the Town of Aurora, ON; both equally committed to assist in ways that are commensurate with their local realities.

FCM President Raymond Louie and Halifax Mayor Mike Savage will co-chair the Task Force. "The scale of the crisis in Syria compels us all to respond in a way that is generous and compassionate, but to have a real impact our efforts must also be effective. This Task Force will be critical to our success," said president Raymond Louie.

The Task Force was launched earlier this month at FCM's board meeting in Fredericton when board members unanimously passed an Emergency Recommendation to coordinate the efforts of cities and communities across the country to amplify the effectiveness of local initiatives already underway. The Task Force will lead a Canada-wide municipal response to the Syrian refugee crisis to complement federal and provincial efforts. The Task Force will allow municipalities to share information and best practices. It will also provide an efficient means of coordinating with provincial, territorial and federal counterparts to meet immediate and urgent resettlement targets.

Canada's cities and communities were quick to act on the obligation facing all orders of government to offer solutions to this crisis situation.

- The City of London is working with local groups to raise awareness and funds to sponsor families from Syria to settle in the city.
- The City of Vancouver held a public forum to discuss actions the public can take to address the emergency situation.
- The City of Halifax adopted a motion assuring Canada's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration that the city will provide a welcoming environment for refugees.
- The City of Montréal adopted a declaration recognizing the urgency of the situation and stating its intent to work with all stakeholders on refugee resettlement.

"Municipalities across Canada have always been crucial to the success of Canada's efforts to resettle refugees in our country. The Task Force is a signal to other orders of government that our communities are prepared to be part of the solution to this humanitarian disaster," says Halifax Mayor Mike Savage.

The Task Force will meet for the first time next week to begin the process of coordinating the local government response to this crisis.

FCM is the national voice of municipal government. In leading the municipal movement, FCM works to align federal and local priorities, recognizing that strong hometowns make for a strong Canada.

FCM's Task Force on Syrian Refugee Resettlement

Co-Chairs

Raymond Louie, FCM President

Mike Savage, Mayor, City of Halifax

City of Saskatoon, SK

City of London, ON

City of Montréal, QC

City of Hamilton, ON

City of Edmonton, AB

City of Vancouver, BC

City of St. Albert, AB

Town of Aurora, ON

City of Halifax, NS

City of Toronto, ON

City of Kitchener, ON

City of Nelson, BC

City of Ottawa, ON

<http://www.fcm.ca/home/media/news-releases/2015/canada%E2%80%99s-municipalities-establish-unified-response-to-syrian-refugee-crisis.htm>

Appendix E – Different Sponsorship Programs

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/>

Sponsorship Agreement Holders³

A number of groups across the country have signed agreements with the Government of Canada to help support refugees from abroad when they resettle in Canada. They are known as sponsorship agreement holders.

A number of organizations have signed sponsorship agreements with the Government of Canada to help support refugees from abroad when they resettle in Canada. These organizations are known as sponsorship agreement holders. They can sponsor refugees themselves or work with others in the community to sponsor refugees.

Most sponsorship agreement holders are religious, ethnic, community or service organizations.

Blended Visa Office-Referred Program⁴

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (VOR) Program matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with private sponsors in Canada.

Launched in 2013, the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) with private sponsors in Canada.

The goal is to engage in a three-way partnership among the Government of Canada, the UNHCR, and private sponsors.

The Government of Canada will provide up to six months of income support through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), while private sponsors will provide another six months of financial support and up to a year of social and emotional support. Refugees are also covered under the Interim Federal Health Program for the duration of the sponsorship (one year), in addition to provincial health coverage.

The goal is to match up to 1,000 refugees with sponsors each year through this program.

Groups of five⁵

A group of five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents over the age of 18 can sponsor one or more refugees to come to Canada and settle in their area.

A Group of five (G5) is five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents who have arranged to sponsor a refugee living abroad to come to Canada. All of the group members must be at least 18 years of age and live or have representatives in the area where the refugee will settle.

The group must agree to give emotional and financial support to the refugee(s) for the full sponsorship period-usually one year.

Effective October 19, 2012, a G5 may only sponsor applicants who are recognized as refugees by either the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or a foreign state, unless you are applying to sponsor a Syrian or Iraqi refugee.

For Syrian and Iraqi refugees - As of September 19, 2015, the Government of Canada has temporarily exempted Syrians and Iraqis fleeing the current conflict from the requirement to provide proof of refugee status in order to be sponsored. This means that a Group of Five or Community Sponsor can submit an application without a document proving recognized refugee status.

The principal applicant **MUST already have refugee status**. Having refugee status means that an authorized body has determined that an individual meets its refugee definition. This authorized body can either be the UNHCR or the government of the country (i.e., foreign state) where the asylum seeker is currently living.

³ Government of Canada, Citizen and Immigration Canada, Sponsorship Agreement Holders – Sponsoring Refugees, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/sah.asp>

⁴ Government of Canada, Citizen and Immigration Canada, Blended Visa Office-Referred – Sponsoring Refugees, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/vor.asp>

⁵ Government of Canada, Citizen and Immigration Canada, Groups of Five – Sponsoring Refugees, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/groups.asp>

A document proving recognized refugee status that has been issued by the UNHCR or a foreign state must accompany the refugee sponsorship application submitted to the Centralized Processing Office in Winnipeg.

Principal applicants without refugee status recognized by the UNHCR or a foreign state can only be sponsored by a [Sponsorship Agreement Holder \(SAH\)](#).

Community sponsors⁶

Some community groups can sponsor refugees to come to Canada.

Some community organizations can sponsor refugees to come to Canada.

The organization must agree to give emotional and financial support to the refugees for the full sponsorship period - usually one year.

Effective October 19, 2012, community sponsors may only sponsor applicants who are recognized as refugees by either the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or a foreign state, unless you are applying to sponsor a Syrian or Iraqi refugee.

For Syrian and Iraqi refugees - As of September 19, 2015, the Government of Canada has [temporarily exempted](#) Syrians and Iraqis fleeing the current conflict from the requirement to provide proof of refugee status in order to be sponsored. This means that a Group of Five or Community Sponsor can submit an application without a document proving recognized refugee status.

The principal applicant **MUST already have refugee status**. Having refugee status means that an authorized body has determined that an individual meets its refugee definition. This authorized body can either be the UNHCR or the government of the country (i.e., foreign state) where the asylum seeker is currently living.

A document proving recognized refugee status that has been issued by the UNHCR or a foreign state must accompany the refugee sponsorship application submitted to the Centralized Processing Office in Winnipeg.

Principal applicants without refugee status recognized by the UNHCR or a foreign state can only be sponsored by a [Sponsorship Agreement Holder \(SAH\)](#).

Joint Assistance Program – Sponsoring refugees with special needs⁷

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) sometimes partners with organizations to resettle refugees with special needs. This program is called Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS).

Refugees with special needs may need more support than other refugees in order to settle in Canada. Special needs may arise due to:

- trauma from violence or torture,
- medical disabilities,
- the effects of systemic discrimination, or
- a large number of family members.

Under the JAS program, refugees receive support from the government and a private sponsor for up to 24 months, depending on the case. In a few cases, the private sponsor may provide support for up to 36 months.

These refugees get income support from the Government of Canada for food, shelter, clothing and basic household goods. They are also matched with a private sponsorship group. The sponsorship group helps refugees adjust to life in Canada by providing settlement help and emotional support.

⁶ Government of Canada, Citizen and Immigration Canada, Community Sponsors – Sponsoring Refugees, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/community.asp>

Government of Canada, Citizen and Immigration Canada, Joint Assistance Program – Sponsoring Refugees, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/jas.asp>

Appendix F – Peterborough Sponsor Status and Contact Information as of September 15, 2015, along with print news coverage

Sponsorship Group	Contact(s)	Status
1. Gilmour Memorial Baptist Church	Julaine Palmer kjpalmer@lakeheadu.ca	1 individual from Iraq has arrived; another individual and two teenagers will hopefully arrive soon
2. theParish	Kemi Akapo kemiakapo@gmail.com	Application submitted
3. Refugee Sponsorship Committee (Anglican and Lutheran churches in Peterborough)	Murray MacAdam murray.macadam@gmail.com Suzanna McMillan at suzannejcmillan@hotmail.com or Geoff Howson at eghandjma@gmail.com .	Application submitted - Family will be arriving Oct 7 (couple from Iraq)
4. Safe Haven for Refugees Peterborough	Chantilly McKinnon chantilly.mckinnon@gmail.com	Starting application to sponsor family of 6 from Lebanon
5. Abraham Festival Committee	Elizabeth Rahman elizabethr@cogeco.ca	Group is meeting
6. Unitarian Fellowship of Peterborough	Julie Stoneberg uurevjs@gmail.com	Group is meeting
7. Salaam Peterborough	SalaamPtbo@Outlook.com GoFundMe page has been setup for online donations	Application submitted in partnership with Casa Maria and its SAH for family of 4 from Syria
8. Peterborough Kawartha Rotary Club	Marg Hundt marghundert1@gmail.com	Proposal is going to vote on Tuesday; looking to invite other Rotary groups to join
9. Peterborough Rotary Club	Marie Press mariepress@hotmail.com	Group is meeting
10. Peterborough Hope for Homes	Jill Emery jill.emery@sympatico.ca	Group is meeting
11. Individuals (The Avenues)	Lainey Bates lainey_bates@kprdsb.ca	Group is meeting
12. Our Lady of Mercy (Port Hope)	Janet Ruderman (unofficial)	Unknown
13. Castleton-Grafton United Church	David Lander david@lander.ca	Looking at profiles for second sponsorship (first sponsorship of Syrian family completed in Aug 2015)

Support grows for group bringing a refugee family from Syria or Iraq to Peterborough

By [Joelle Kovach](#)

Tuesday, April 7, 2015 1:23:53 EDT AM



Peterborough Refugee Sponsor Committee co-chairs Murray MacAdam and Suzanne McMillan chat at All Saints Anglican Church on Monday. Jessica Nyznik/Peterborough Examiner/QMI Agency

Organizers of a local group dedicated to bringing a refugee family to Peterborough say citizens have been generous in their support so far - even though the family isn't here yet.

The Peterborough Refugee Sponsor Committee is planning to bring a displaced family - most likely from Syria or Iraq - to Peterborough in a few months.

Co-chairs Murray MacAdam and Suzanne McMillan say people have given about \$15,000 toward a goal of \$25,000 needed to help support the family financially while they get settled, learn English and look for work.

MacAdam said people have also offered to help when the family gets here. Both a doctor and a dentist have offered their services, for example, and others will drive the family around to appointments upon arrival in the city.

"People have shown so much support for this family even before they've arrived," MacAdam said. "It's like tapping a wellspring of compassion."

If you haven't heard of the local Refugee Sponsor Committee, it's because they're relatively new: they got together last fall.

It started with a group of people from all four local Anglican churches, as well as the Lutheran church, who thought perhaps they'd like to help a refugee family.

MacAdam, who worships at St. John's Anglican Church in Peterborough, works for an anti-poverty organization based in Toronto (Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, or ISARC).

He says many people might feel they'd like to help Syrians caught in a civil war - they just don't know how.

The problem feels too vast to even comprehend, he said, never mind figuring out how to make a difference.

"But you can help one family," he said.

Meanwhile MacAdam said the local committee is working with AURA (Anglican United Refugee Alliance), a Toronto organization that helps with the sponsorship of refugees, to find a family who'd like to come to Peterborough.

AURA is expected to have news for the local committee later this spring about the family, its country of origin and when they can be expected to arrive.

MacAdam said the local committee has also been working on finding an apartment for the family.

McMillan, who is both a cardiac nurse and a deacon at All Saints Anglican Church, said parishioners there recently organized a "welcome shower" for the family where they brought new kitchen and bathroom items.

She said everything from new pots and pans to sheets and towels were offered up.

On Friday, All Saints' will show its generosity again: the church is hosting a gourmet dinner as a fundraiser. All 120 tickets are already sold.

But if you want to help in some way, MacAdam says you still can. He said they'll welcome volunteer time or gifts from anyone, regardless of background.

Both co-chairs also said the family's religion doesn't matter to them either. McMillan said they'll welcome the family with open arms, no matter who they are.

"Whoever the Lord sends us, we'll welcome and love and nurture."

REFUGEE FAMILY

What: The Peterborough Refugee Sponsor Committee

How to get in touch: Email co-chairman Murray MacAdam at murray.macadam@gmail.com

joelle.kovach@sunmedia.ca

If you want to sponsor Syrian refugees, the New Canadians Centre can help

Friday, September 4, 2015 2:02:46 EDT PM



A pair of rebel fighters walk through the ruins of Homs in Syria. Reuters/QMI Agency

As the world's attention turns to the plight of refugees from Syria, the New Canadians Centre is hosting a workshop aimed at helping local people who want to assist in the crisis.

The sponsorship workshop will be held Sept. 10 at 7 p.m at the New Canadians Centre, 221 Romaine St., with information and advice on how to help.

The federal government allows organizations and individuals (groups of five adults) to sponsor refugees. The sponsors must agree to provide all necessary assistance, including housing, food, clothing, etc for one the sponsored family for one year after they arrive in Canada.

The New Canadians Centre offers assistance in the process but it's the federal government that handles the sponsorship application.

Those interested in attending are asked to RSVP the Centre at 705-743-0882 or info@nccpeterborough.ca

Peterborough can offer refugees safe haven

Wednesday, September 9, 2015 8:11:02 EDT AM



Early this year, long before the Syrian refugee crisis became the biggest news story of the day, five local churches were well on their way to bringing a refugee family to Peterborough.

They are raising \$25,000 toward first-year costs. A doctor and dentist volunteered their services early on. People from across the community have stepped up to offer support.

However, the family that arrives will not likely be from among the estimated seven million Syrian refugees now living in camps in the Middle East or stuck stateless somewhere in Europe.

The church group is not concerned about where their family arrives from. With the United Nations putting the total number of refugees world-wide at 50 million there are far too many sources and far too few safe havens being offered.

Which is why Canada's meager role in alleviating what is now judged to be the worst refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War is so disappointing.

Murray MacAdam, one of the organizers of the effort by local Anglican and Lutheran churches, described the overwhelming positive response back in March as being "... like tapping a wellspring of compassion."

Peterborough has demonstrated a long history of such compassion. Several groups, including the Sisters of St. Joseph, have well-organized refugee sponsorship programs. The New Canadians Centre is a vigorous hub of support.

Such community spirit is hardly unique. If the federal government relaxes its restrictions Canadians would gladly step up to help thousands of refugee families recover their lives.

Recent polls show they are also ready to have a larger share of their tax dollars used to bring government-sponsored refugees here.

Anyone worried about a tide of refugees overwhelming our social services need only look back a generation, when Canada accepted 60,000 Vietnamese refugees still trapped in camps years after the end of the war in Vietnam.

Canada's population has grown by a third since then and we are a more prosperous country. Based on those numbers, 80,000 refugees could be brought here in the next 12 months and, like the Vietnamese "boat people," be a net long-term gain for the nation.

In that context, current campaign promises of even the NDP and Liberals are modest. Thomas Mulcair has said an NDP government would bring in 10,000 refugees by the end of the year; Justin Trudeau's Liberals are proposing 25,000.

Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party have so far stuck to their earlier campaign pledge of 10,000 more refugees over the next four years - a response that is as deaf to Canadians' compassion as it is miserly.

Throw open the door. Peterborough and other communities are ready to provide all the support that is necessary.

New Canadians Centre holds workshop to help local people who want to sponsor refugees from the Syria crisis

By [Joelle Kovach](#)

Friday, September 11, 2015 12:52:54 EDT AM



Rev. David Lander talks to the crowd about settlement process during a refugee sponsorship workshop attended by 70 people on Thursday September 10, 2015 at New Canadians Centre in Peterborough, Ont. Over the past several days, the New Canadians Centre has received many inquiries from members of the Peterborough community expressing concern at the ongoing crisis in Syria and wondering how they can help. Clifford Skarstedt/Peterborough Examiner/Postmedia Network

Two refugee families with young children are coming to Peterborough soon - one from Syria, the other from Iran.

The Syrians are coming thanks to members of The Parish, a south-end church. The Iranians are coming thanks to six local churches that have teamed up to bring them here.

But it's not an immediate response to the migrant crisis that caught the world's attention last week. These churchgoers have been working on this for a year.

The process of bringing refugees to Canada involves a lot of paperwork and fundraising, says Murray MacAdam.

His church, St. John's Anglican, is part of the team of six churches that is bringing a married Iranian couple with two small children to Peterborough.

MacAdam says it takes more time and effort than most people think to get a refugee family here.

First you need to apply to an agency that will find you a family and then work with the Canadian government to get funding.

Then, you have to help support this family for a year as they get settled. Most groups try to raise about \$27,000 toward that.

There are other considerations too, such as finding a home for the family. They'll also need a doctor, and possibly an interpreter if they don't speak English.

The group that brings a refugee family here is expected to have all these considerations looked after, even before the family arrives.

It's not easy, MacAdam says: "You have to have the patience of Job to do this."

Still, he says it's well worth it. About three million people have fled Syria in the last few years since a bloody civil war broke out, while millions more are escaping violence in other countries such as Iran.

The local churchgoers have been trying to do something to help for months - and then last week, local interest in the issue surged.

The recent news photo of the drowned three-year-old Syrian refugee boy, whose family had been trying to get to Canada, had a lot to do with it.

"It sort of woke the whole world up," said Jason Stabler, the interim executive director at the New Canadians Centre in Peterborough.

Stabler says he received a flood of calls from local people interested in taking in a refugee family, last week.

There was so much interest that he organized a workshop on the topic on Thursday evening at the New Canadians Centre.

He said the idea is to tell people how much commitment is involved. You'll have to raise money, he said, but you may also need to offer emotional support to a family that has fled a war.

If that's not for you, he suggests donating money to the local church organizations or to the Red Cross.

"If what people are looking for is to have an immediate impact - that's a way to go," Stabler said.

Kemi Akapo works with Stabler at the New Canadians Centre, and also happens to be one of the members of The Parish that is organizing the refugee project.

She said she doesn't know yet exactly when the Syrian family is expected, but she does know it's a couple with three young children (four-year-old twins and a two-year-old.)

She said the response at her church has been "amazing", in terms of people donating money and time.

Rev. Aaron Holbrough of The Parish said the congregation is made up largely of families with young children. He said these parents don't want to stand by while the migrant crisis unfolds.

"We want to be able to tell our kids that we did something about this - that's why it's so important to us," he said. "To do nothing is apathy.... If you do nothing, you're part of the problem."

HOW TO HELP

To donate to the local church groups that are bringing refugee families to Peterborough:

- Visit The Parish at www.theparish.ca and click on Giving
- Write a cheque to All Saints Anglican Church (one of the six churches bringing the Iranians here). Write Refugee Project in the memo line, and mail to the church at 235 Rubidge St., Peterborough, K9J 3N9

joelle.kovach@sunmedia.ca

Trent University to sponsor two more refugee students in response to refugee crisis

By [Jessica Nyznik](#), The Peterborough Examiner

Wednesday, September 16, 2015 1:35:09 EDT AM



Trent University president Leo Groarke addresses reporters during a press conference urging support for Trent/World University Service of Canada Student Refugee Program (WUSC SRP) regarding the Syrian refugee crisis on Tuesday September 15, 2015 at Trent University in Peterborough, Ont. 100 percent of money raised will fund refugee students in 2016/17. Trent has been sponsoring one student per year through WUSC SRP since 1983. Clifford Skarstedt/Peterborough Examiner/Postmedia Network

Trent University aims to increase its sponsorship for refugee students for the next school year in light of the recent migrant crisis in Europe.

The university launched Trent U Helps Tuesday, to raise funds to bring at least one additional refugee student to Peterborough for the start of the 2016 school year.

With support from the World University Service of Canada Student Refugee Program (WUSC SFP), Trent has sponsored one student refugee each year since 1983.

But in the wake of the refugee crisis overseas, Peterborough's university wants to increase that number.

"We want to amplify that effort and set a goal of sponsoring four refugee students for 2016," said Mike Allcott, Trent International Program director.

Allcott is spearheading the initiative, along with support from the Trent Central Student Association (TCSA) and the Trent International Student Association (TISA).

Sponsorship currently costs about \$25,000 per student, with funding coming from a student levy of roughly \$6 per student per year.

To bring over another three students, it'll cost about \$75,000.

That's where the fundraising comes in.

The Trent U Helps pool is already off to a good start with Trent's senior administrators donating nearly \$7,000 in the last 24 hours.

And with \$10,000 left over from a previous university fundraiser, Allcott said they're well on their way to funding the second student.

"We're going to reach out to faculty and staff and our community to increase the amount of money we have in the fund," he said.

While Allcott said he's aware the fundraising goal is a lofty one, Trent will do it's best to hit the mark.

"It's a dream. It's an ambitious dream "I but we'll try."

Donations to the Trent and WUSC initiative can be made online at <https://mycommunity.trentu.ca/give-now> or by cheque made out to Trent University, with WUSC Refugee Trust Fund written in the memo section.

NOTE: Trent uses the hashtag #TrentUHelps on social media and encourages community members to promote the campaign using the hashtag.
jessica.nyznik@sunmedia.ca

Syrian refugee family glad to be in PeterboroughBy [Clifford Skarstedt](#), Peterborough Examiner

Friday, September 18, 2015 7:17:01 EDT PM



Syrian family Karam Alsamman, 14, Zeina Alsamman, 11, step father Amjad Alzaidi and mother Lilas Aidk visit St. Anne's Elementary School met by vice principal Jen Fisher, left, and teacher Aspa Bouzinelos also a volunteer with Casa Maria on Friday September 18, 2015 in Peterborough, Ont. Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board (PVNC) partnered with Casa Maria in Peterborough to help sponsor the Syrian family who have fled their war-torn country as refugees. The PVNC community held its first fundraiser, a Five Dollar Friday, at all 37 of their schools, with proceeds going to the sponsorship of this family in hopes of re-locating them to Toronto, where extended family have already settled after successful sponsorship. The family also visited St. Peter's Secondary School and St. Thomas Aquinas in Lindsay. Clifford Skarstedt/Peterborough Examiner/Postmedia Network

Syrian family Karam Alsamman, 14, Zeina Alsamman, 11, stepfather Amjad Alzaidi and mother Lilas Aidk visited Grade 7 students at St. Anne School in the city's north end on Friday.

The Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board partnered with Casa Maria in Peterborough to help sponsor the Syrian family who have fled their war-torn country as refugees.

The Catholic school board community held its first fundraiser, a Five Dollar Friday' at all 37 of its schools, with proceeds going to the sponsorship of this family in hopes of relocating them to Toronto, where extended family have already settled after successful sponsorship.

The family also visited St. Peter Secondary School and St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School in Lindsay.

clifford.skarstedt@sunmedia.ca

Sep 18, 2015

Syrian refugees now call Canada home, thanks to Casa Maria in Peterborough

Lilas Aidk and her family are now safe and plans are in place to bring her extended family to Canada



Syrian Refugees Speak To St. Anne Students

Lance Anderson/This Week

Syrian family Amjad Alzaidi, Zeina Alsamman, 11, Lilas Aidk, and Karam Alsamman, 14, spoke to students at St. Anne school in Peterborough on Friday (Sept. 18). Lance Anderson/This Week

Peterborough This Week

By [Lance Anderson](#)

PETERBOROUGH -- Lilas Aidk's life changed on June 30.

That's the day she and her family escaped war-torn Syria to find sanctuary on Canadian soil.

The family was saved thanks to Peterborough-based Casa Maria, a group founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph's which sponsors refugees. That same group is now trying to bring Ms Aidk's extended family to Canada -- a very costly endeavour filled with paperwork and red tape.

"In Peterborough, there are a lot of people who want to sponsor a family, but you need a lot of money," says Sister Ruth Hennessey, with Casa Maria.

On Friday (Sept. 18), the local Catholic school board pitched in to help. Schools across the region participated in \$5 Friday where students and staff donated money to participate in an activity at their schools. Board spokesperson Galen Eagle says some schools held dress-down day and other schools, like St. Anne Catholic School in Peterborough, held Crazy Hat Day.

Although Ms Aidk's family is living in Toronto, they came to Peterborough on Friday to visit with students at St. Anne school. They talked about their experience in Syria and how grateful they are to the people of Peterborough for helping them flee.

"All countries near Syria are closed. People there are crossing oceans and people are drowning," says Ms Aidk.

By her side were her husband Amjad Alzaidi and her children Zeina Alsamman, 11, and Karam Alsamman, 14. Ms Aidk says she and her family now feel safe.

"And I feel warm. My kids are happy and excited to be going to school again," she says.

Ms Aidk says she and her family fled Syria two years ago to find shelter in Jordan.

It was around that time Casa Maria officials became aware of the serious situation facing the people in Syria.

"We tried desperately to find names (of people we could help)," says Sister Hennessey. "Through a Toronto lawyer, we found the names of this family."

Once all the paperwork was done and approved, it took six months for Ms Aidk's family to get to Canada. Sister Hennessey says this was extremely fast considering that some people wait years before they are granted access.

"We have a young lad from Rwanda who came here last April. It took seven and a half years to get him here," says Sister Hennessey.

She hopes the sponsorship of Ms Aidk's extended family is expedited considering the crisis facing Syria. Thousands of families are trying to flee the country, and are getting turned away at neighbouring and European countries.

"It all depends on the embassy to get our extended family over here," says Mr. Alzaidi. "Hopefully it will only take a year."

His extended family is already living in Canada and he's looking forward to the day when his wife's family can call Canada home as well.

"There are no schools over there and little food. I don't know how they are able to survive," says Mr. Alzaidi.

Ms Aidk says she's in regular contact with her family who are very anxious to move to Canada. She says her bother is a fashion designer who had a factory in Syria. Her sister and husband have three children and her mother "is the greatest person in my life."

"We hope to start again by bringing them here," says Ms Aidk.

Mr. Eagle says the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board will continue to help bring refugees to Canada by holding future fundraising events for Casa Maria.

Follow Lance Anderson on Twitter @lancerlens

Oct 13, 2015

Peterborough group formed to help Syrian refugees

Salaam Peterborough needs financial help to save a single mom and her three children



Salaam Peterborough Group

Photo supplied to This Week

OPP Constable Dave McNab, his wife Dr. Kristy Hiltz and fellow Salaam Peterborough member Brad Steinberg discuss their plan to sponsor a Syrian refugee family.

SIDEBAR

PETERBOROUGH — The local Catholic school board is doing their part to help Syrian refugees.

On Tuesday (Oct. 13), board officials presented a \$27,500 cheque to Sister Ruth Hennessey of Peterborough's Casa Maria Refugee Homes.

The money was raised as part of ongoing fundraising efforts to sponsor the relocation of a Syrian refugee family to Canada.

In early September, the Catholic board community began working with Casa Maria and a family of seven were identified. They have fled Aleppo and are now in limbo in Saudi Arabia. Relatives of that family, themselves refugees who have recently relocated to Toronto, toured local Catholic

school in September to tell their story and put a face to the international refugee crisis.

“When we put the call out to our Catholic school communities and the staff at our board office to help support this family, the response was incredible,” says Barbara McMorrow, director of education with the local Catholic school board. “Sponsoring a family has offered our community a tangible way to make a difference in what is otherwise an overwhelming crisis.”

To raise money the “Five-Dollar-Friday” fundraiser was created in September. For a donation, high school students had a dress-down day and elementary students had a crazy-hat day. Board employees were allowed to wear their favourite sports jersey as well.

In addition, the local Ontario Catholic Teachers Association donated \$500, which was matched by the board’s senior staff.

The goal was to raise \$30,000, which is the average cost of sponsoring a single family. Money is still being tallied from some school fundraising efforts.

In the meantime, Casa Maria has filed the paperwork for the family of seven and the sponsorship process to bring the family to Peterborough.

Peterborough This Week
By [Lance Anderson](#)

PETERBOROUGH — In just more than a month, a group has been formed to help bring a single mom and her three children to Canada from war-torn Syria.

Dr. Kristy Hiltz, a veterinarian in Peterborough, along with her husband Dave McNab, a constable with Peterborough County OPP, decided to do what they could to help Syrians after seeing news footage about the refugee crisis.

“It’s horrifying what people have to deal with,” says Dr. Hiltz.

“And then we saw the images of that poor little boy (who drowned in Turkey) and I knew this comes down to people who will help people, not governments. I thought I had to do something.”

Dr. Hiltz attended a meeting hosted by the New Canadians' Centre and Sister Ruth Hennessey from Casa Maria, a group founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph's which sponsors refugees.

From there, Dr. Hiltz turned to Facebook, creating the Salaam Peterborough — Families Helping Families page and asked if anyone would be interested in helping sponsor a refugee family. The response, says Dr Hiltz, was wonderful.

“People were not only willing to co-sponsor (the family) but put a substantial amount of money behind the cause,” adds Dr. Hiltz.

Several people have joined the group, signing on to help. Casa Maria will sponsor the family. However, co-sponsors are needed;

Dr. Hiltz says sponsors are responsible for providing financial support to the refugee family for one year as well as emotional support, friendship and guidance.

For example, sponsors agree to help the family by driving them to appointments, helping them enrol their children in school and English language learning, helping them learn to shop and budget, inviting them for holiday dinners and helping them navigate life in Canada.

Dr. Hiltz says the new Salaam Peterborough group is not the only local group to sponsor a refugee family.

Lise Fines, a teacher with the local Catholic school board and member of Salaam Peterborough, is thrilled that other groups are getting involved.

“There are several local church congregations that are organizing to sponsor a refugee family. Casa Maria House and, in particular, Aspa Bouzinelos have been incredible supporters. It is our hope that Salaam Peterborough will inspire other people just like us who want to form their own sponsorship group of friends and family and neighbours and co-workers,” says Ms Fines.

“All it takes is desire and commitment, then suddenly you are the answer to someone’s prayers.”

Dr. Hiltz says Salaam Peterborough has already been matched with a Syrian family in Lebanon that has been registered and pre-screened by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. The family, a mother with three young children, has been designated as highly vulnerable.

Dr. Hiltz says it’s possible the family will arrive in Peterborough before Christmas, so preparations are underway to make sure co-sponsors and funds are in place. Each family in the Salaam Peterborough group has donated at least \$1,000. Dr. Hiltz says the Canadian government will give \$13,500 through the Blended Visa Office Referred program.

Dr. Hiltz says they are reaching out to the community to help raise a further \$10,000 to cover the remaining cost of flights and necessities for the Syrian family to begin a new life in Canada.

“Money raised will go towards housing, bedding, furniture and food. It’s assistance as they (the refugee family) gets on their feet,” says Dr. Hiltz.

To help with the fundraising, a [GoFundMe page has been setup for online donations](#). Salaam Peterborough has also established a bank account at BMO on Simcoe Street in Peterborough. The account is under Salaam Peterborough, account number 0017 8974-435.

For more information visit the [Salaam Peterborough Facebook page](#)

Follow Lance Anderson on Twitter [@lancerlens](#)