

# SPECIAL BULLETIN: RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES TO BRITISH COLUMBIA

Issue 4: December 8, 2015

AMSSA has created the following special bulletin series, **Resettlement of Syrian Refugees to British Columbia**, to provide our members, partners and stakeholders with the latest information and facts about the Government of Canada's response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis, and to assist organizations in preparing for the resettlement of Syrian refugees to British Columbia.

## GOVERNMENT UPDATES

### Federal

- The federal government launched a new webpage called [#WelcomeRefugees: Milestones and Key Figures](#). Information is being updated on a regular basis.
- The federal government published a backgrounder article on how Syrian refugees will be processed. Canada is working with the UNHCR and foreign states to identify registered Syrian refugees who are interested in resettlement to Canada. Canada has asked the UNHCR to prioritize vulnerable refugees such as complete families, women at risk, and persons identified as vulnerable due to membership in the LGBTI community. For more information, click [here](#).
- On December 1, the Governor General hosted a forum on Welcoming Syrian Refugees to Canada with 100+ representatives from government, community organizations and the private sector. Through panel presentations and discussions, the event highlighted Canada's diversity, inclusion and volunteerism efforts to prepare for the arrival of the Syrian refugees.
- On December 1, Federal/Provincial/Territorial ministers responsible for immigration met to reaffirm their commitment to welcoming Syrian refugees to Canada. They discussed issues related to where in Canada Syrian refugees would be resettled and the types of support that communities should have in place to be prepared to accept them. Deborah Tunis, Syrian Refugee Special Coordinator, and Chris Friesen, Co-Chair of CISSA-ACSEI, also provided an overview of the outcomes from the two-day working forum in Toronto.
- The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and other federal officials will hold weekly briefings on the resettlement project.
- On December 9, Minister McCallum announced that Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) service providers will receive a 25 percent increase to this year's funding, \$3.6 million, to ensure they have supports in place as soon as refugees arrive. Over the next four years, a total of \$335 million will be used for settlement and resettlement services, both in Canada and abroad, in stages as Syrian refugees needs arise. Approximately \$94.5 million of that money will be used to provide income support to refugees.
- On December 9, Minister McCallum announced that the existing Call for Proposals (CFP) process will be put on hold until 2016/17 and that current Contribution Agreement (CA) holders will be notified regarding negotiating extension of existing contracts.

### Provincial

- The Government of BC announced how the Refugee Readiness Fund will be used to prepare for the arrival, resettlement and integration of Syrian refugees in BC. It will fund five Refugee Response Teams with representatives from immigrant and refugee service organizations, private sponsors, churches, educators, health care providers and employers. It is anticipated that teams will be set up in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Okanagan and Cariboo, though locations are contingent of where refugees

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ultimately settle. The Province will also fund Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC) to develop an online hub to connect private sponsors, settlement workers, counsellors and other service providers; track volunteer offers, in-kind donations, and housing and employment leads; set up a range of supports for clinicians caring for traumatized refugees; and provide workshops and support to the Refugee Response Teams. For more information, click [here](#).

- The Government of BC also announced the following supports for refugees and/or other newcomers:
  - \$1.5 million will be available through the Canada-BC Job Grant to support skills training to assist refugees and new Canadians to gain employment. The first stream of \$1.0 million will focus specifically on refugees. The second stream of \$500,000 will be open to refugees, protected persons entitled to work in Canada, and new immigrants who have arrived within the last five years. Funding will focus on three key areas: job readiness training, job match services, and job-specific training.
  - \$2.6 million in project-based language training for refugees and other immigrants throughout BC. Further details and specific locations will be outlined in the coming weeks.
  - Wait periods and premiums for Medical Services Plan (MSP) coverage will be waived for all refugees.
  - Each refugee student in public school in BC will be funded through the pupil funding formula.
  - All refugees will have access to the Employment Program of BC.
  - Refugees will be eligible to receive the following: Child Care Subsidy, BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit (up to \$55 per month per child under the age of six), BC Basic Family Bonus (up to \$111 per child per month when combined with the National Child Benefit Supplement), and Student Aid.
  - The Provincial Health Services Authority is hiring and training 30 additional interpreters who are dedicated to languages spoken by refugee populations.

For more information, click [here](#).

## SECTOR UPDATES

- AMSSA joined with other umbrella organizations, including CISSA-ACSEI and the Canadian Council for Refugees, to issue a news release entitled “Newcomer serving organizations welcome plans to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees”, as well as media talking points / suggestions for member organizations. For more information, click [here](#).
- On December 7, AMSSA hosted a provincial meeting with immigrant and refugee service providers. Objectives included creating a provincial map of the capacity, services available and gaps in services faced by different communities and sharing information about different communities’ capacity to resettle Syrian refugees in the short and longer term. Key areas of focus included trauma services, housing, language services, information and orientation, employment, education and health.

## STAKEHOLDER UPDATES

- Vancity released a report called [From Crisis to Community: Syrian Refugees and the BC Economy](#). According to this report, it is anticipated that the incoming influx of Syrian refugees will boost BC’s economy by \$563 million over the next 20 years.
- Other key highlights from the report:
  - Immigrants tend to strengthen economies, specifically of their local communities, since their consumption of goods and services are often purchased within their community networks.

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- Immigrants have a history of helping to grow the local economy in Canada. For example, the Lebanese community in Halifax is estimated to have created approximately 3.6 local jobs for each immigrant.
- Significant immigration does not necessarily decrease wages or increase unemployment, and when it does the effects are small.
- Refugees tend to take great advantage of settlement services, as well as the possibility to delay their entry into the job market. As a result, their level of labour-market participation and earnings tends to be more favourable than might be expected.
- The long-term fiscal impact of accepting refugees is typically positive.
- Vancity has created a refugee travel loan to help newcomers cover the cost of their journey to Canada, which will be interest-free and allow refugees to buy out the federal government loan. Vancity will also offer interest-free, seven-year loans of up to \$50,000 for BC residents who want to rent a suite or room to a refugee in order to upgrade or create rental accommodations. For more information, click [here](#).

## KEY FIGURES (AS OF DEC 6, 2015)

Source: [#WelcomeRefugees: Milestones and Key Figures](#)

Welcoming in Canada		
Refugee Category	Definition	Arrivals in Canada since Nov 4
Government Assisted Refugees (GAR)	A person who is outside Canada and has been determined to be a Convention refugee and who receives financial and other support from the Government of Canada or Province of Quebec for up to one year after their arrival in Canada. GARs are selected from applicants referred by the UNHCR and other referral organizations.	53
Blended Visa-Office Referred Refugees (BVOR)	Launched in 2013, the BVOR Program matches refugees identified for resettlement by the 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 UNHCR will identify the refugees, 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.	11
Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR)	A person outside Canada who has been determined to be a Convention refugee or member of the Country of Asylum class and who receives financial and other support from a private sponsor for one year after their arrival in Canada. Private sponsors are Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), Groups of Five or Community Sponsors.	282
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>346</b>

Screening and Processing	
Activity	Data (as of Dec 6, 2015)
Refugee resettlement applications in progress	10,796
PR visas to come to Canada have been issued but refugee has not yet arrived	1,385
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,181</b>

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