

MEDIA SPEAKING POINTS

RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES TO BRITISH COLUMBIA

Many Settlement Provider Organization (SPOs) have received requests to speak on the topic of the resettlement of Syrian refugees to BC. The following are suggested media speaking notes that AMSSA has curated for this purpose.

Worst humanitarian crisis of our time

Syria's civil war is the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. Since 2011, approximately 12 million, or 50% of the pre-war population, have been killed or forced to flee their homes. Over 4.2 million Syrians have registered as refugees, most of them women and children. The Government of Canada's commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees represents 0.006% of Syrians currently registered as refugees. It's our responsibility and moral obligation to offer protection to those in need.

Refugees pose very little risk to Canada's security

Refugees and others seeking protection in Canada are not threats to security – they are seeking security and protection from threats to their own lives. It is far more difficult to enter Canada as a refugee than as a visitor, because the refugee determination process involves security checks by CSIS and the RCMP, fingerprinting and interviews. Terrorists rarely use refugee systems to enter a country because that path leaves a big track. It is not likely that a person intending to commit a violent act would expose themselves to such detailed examinations.

Most vulnerable cases referred to Canada

Syrian refugees destined for Canada have been referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They are among the most vulnerable cases – families with children, single mothers and persecuted minorities who are in desperate situations and urgent need of protection and safety by countries like Canada.

Refugees receive limited, if any, government social assistance

Syrian refugees destined for Canada will arrive as privately-sponsored refugees (PSRs) or government-assisted refugees (GARs). PSRs are not entitled to government assistance, including provincial assistance, during the period of their sponsorship (usually one year after arrival in Canada). Income support must be provided by their sponsors. GARs have access to financial support from the federal government through the Resettlement Assistance

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia

205 – 2929 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC Canada V5N 4C8
Toll Free 1 888 355-5560 or T 604 718-2780 • F 604 298-0747
amssa@amssa.org • www.amssa.org

Program (RAP). This financial assistance is generally for a maximum of one year and is received only if they do not have their own financial resources or income.

Refugees have to pay for their transportation to Canada

Both PSRs and GARs are expected to repay the Canadian government for their transportation to Canada, as well as the cost of their medical examination before coming to Canada. Interest is charged on this loan at a rate set by the Department of Finance each year. According to the Government of Canada, 91% of current refugees have repaid their loans in full, the highest repayment of all government loans.

Communities across BC are preparing to welcome Syrian refugees

Immigrant service agencies have been in existence for over 40 years, and have been working in and with communities to settle and integrate immigrants and refugees from countries around the world. We have been meeting with government agencies, school boards, health authorities, etc., to develop a coordinated plan to ensure all the supports are in place.

Resources:

- ISSofBC: [Refugee Crisis](#)
- Canadian Council for Refugees: [Did you know? Facts about Refugees and Refugee Claimants in Canada](#)
- Humans of New York: [Refugee Stories](#)

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