



## DISCUSSION

Since the Federal Government's November 2015 announcement of their plans to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada, the City of Surrey has been actively engaged in:

- supporting the successful settlement of refugees by participating in national, regional and local planning processes;
- taking actions that will help to make the Syrian refugees that settle in Surrey feel welcome; and
- continuing to work on the development of a Surrey Refugee Integration Strategy.

### **Arrival of Syrian Refugees**

There are three categories of Syrian refugees arriving in Canada. All hold Permanent Resident (PR) status upon arrival.

- *Government Assisted Refugees (GARs)* are identified by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and selected by the Government of Canada on the basis of being most in need of protection. They receive financial and other support from the Government of Canada for up to one year.
- *Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs)* are Convention refugees selected from abroad by a private sponsor (often a family member) who agrees to provide financial and other support for one year.
- *Blended Visa Office Referred Refugees (BVORs)* are identified by the UNHCR and matched with a private sponsor. The Government of Canada provides up to six months of income support while the private sponsor provides up to six months of income support and up to one year of social and emotional support.

The majority of Syrian refugees arriving in BC are GARs.

### ***Government Assisted Refugees' Arrival to BC & Surrey***

From November 4, 2015, to March 18, 2016, 1,804 GARs, representing 414 family units, have arrived in BC. Sixty percent are children.

The majority of refugees are being settled in Metro Vancouver, however refugees were also sent to 7 communities outside of Metro Vancouver. Finding permanent housing in Metro Vancouver has been a challenge resulting in refugees being accommodated in hotels until permanent housing is found. As of April 12, 2016, of the 1,815 Syrian GARs that have arrived in BC:

- 266 GARs were in temporary accommodation; and
- 1,379 GARs have moved into permanent accommodation (excluding Victoria).

Of the GARs that have been moved into permanent accommodation, 670 individuals (155 families) have been settled in Surrey which represents approximately 49% of all BC GARs in permanent housing so far. The high number of Syrians being settled in Surrey is due to the fact that rental rates in Surrey are more affordable relative to rents in many other areas of the region. (For their first year in Canada, if they are not employed, GARs are provided income support that is equivalent to the provincial income assistance rates.)

More information can be found on the ISSofBC Refugee Response Hub at:  
<http://refugeehub.issbc.org>

### ***Privately Sponsored Refugees & Blended Visa Office Referred Refugees Arrival to Surrey***

In terms of PSRs and BVORs, from November 4, 2015, to April 11, 2016, the numbers are as follows:

- 49 PSRs were admitted;
- 33 PSRs are in the inventory; and
- 6 BVORs were admitted.

Information is available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>

### ***Services in Surrey***

The Syrian refugees are housed in apartments and secondary suites throughout Surrey. They are not concentrated in any single neighbourhood. This has meant that the children are attending a number of schools, rather than all being enrolled in a single school or couple of schools.

Surrey's settlement agencies are experienced in supporting refugees and already had Arabic speaking workers. Additional funding has been provided by the federal government to agencies serving the Syrian newcomers. However, responding to the increased demand for their services continues to be a challenge. The Surrey Food Bank has reported a large number of Syrian refugees already showing up at the Food Bank.

The Fraser Valley Refugee Response Team, described later in this report, provides a venue for continued monitoring of the capacity of agencies in Surrey to support the Syrian refugees.

### **Supporting the Settlement of Syrian Refugees**

Municipalities do not have responsibility for refugee policies and programs. This is primarily the responsibility of the federal government and the agencies that they contract to deliver settlement services. As well, provincial services, such as health, education and employment, are involved in refugee settlement. However newcomers settle in communities, and the successful integration of refugees into the social and economic life of the community benefits all.

Over the past five months, the City of Surrey has worked with representatives from the Federal and Provincial Governments, local settlement agencies and other key stakeholders to plan for the settlement of Syrian refugees.

- ***Appeal for Public Support:*** On November 10, 2015, ISSofBC organized a Call to Action media event calling for the public's assistance in providing housing and other supports for the Syrian refugees. Councillor Villeneuve represented the City of Surrey at the event.

- **Federal Government Planning:** In late November, the City's Senior Social Planner was invited by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to participate in a national planning session attended by staff from the federal government, province/territories, municipal governments, and settlement agencies. The City of Surrey was the only municipality in B.C. invited to attend.

On December 2, 2015, Mayor Hepner hosted a roundtable meeting with Minister McCallum at Surrey City Hall. Minister Bond from the Province, along with several local mayors, philanthropists and non-profit executive directors were in attendance.

- **Regional & Local Planning:** Social Planning staff has been participating in regional and local planning processes. This included the City convening two meetings in late 2015 that brought local settlement agencies and other relevant agencies together to be briefed by federal government and ISSofBC representatives on the arrival of the refugees and discuss organizations' capacity to support additional refugees.

The Province has contracted DIVERSEcity Community Services to lead a Fraser Valley Refugee Response Team (FVRRT) for a one-year period. The FVRRT's action plan outlines six main issues for action including: data collection and public education; employment; healthcare; housing; and language training. Social Planning staff is representing the City on the FVRRT.

### **Welcoming the Syrian Refugees in Surrey**

Canadians across the country have welcomed the Syrian refugees with open hearts. The City of Surrey is no exception. Below are activities that have been undertaken by the City of Surrey, in partnership with the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), to ensure the Syrian refugees feel welcomed.

- **Community Forum on Syrian Refugees Settlement in Surrey** was held on January 20, 2016. Hosted by Mayor Hepner in partnership with the Surrey LIP, the forum was attended by over 200 residents who were interested in hearing about the arrival of the Syrian refugees and how the public could assist.
- **How You Can Help Refugees pamphlet and City's webpage** was created in January 2016 to provide information to the general public about the ways residents can get involved and help Syrian refugees. The pamphlet is attached to this report as Appendix "I". It is available online at: <http://www.surrey.ca/files/RefugeeSettelmentBrochure.pdf>.
- **Welcome to Surrey pamphlet** was developed in January 2016 for the Syrians settling in Surrey. It includes greetings from Mayor and Council, along with some very basic information about Surrey, its facilities and local settlement services. The brochure includes both English and Arabic text. The pamphlet is attached to this report as Appendix "II". It is available online at: <http://www.surreylip.ca/sites/default/files/SurreyLIP-Pamphlet-WebFinal.pdf>.

- ***Guildford Library and Recreation Centre*** supported the refugees who were temporarily housed in local hotels. Facility tours, along with temporary library cards and recreation passes, provided the refugees with access to recreation, as well as books and computers at the library.
- ***Cultural Awareness Information Sessions for City Staff*** were held on March 30 and March 31, 2016. The sessions enabled City staff to learn about refugees and Middle East culture, as well as hear stories from Surrey staff and a young Syrian refugee. Follow-up is being planned to facilitate staffs' interest in volunteering and fund-raising.
- ***Surrey LIP Newsletter on Syrian Refugees*** was released in March 2016. It provides updates on refugee settlement in Surrey, as well as highlights the challenges and successes of local agencies in responding to the arrival of Syrians. The newsletter is attached to this report as Appendix "III". It is available online at: [http://www.surreylip.ca/sites/default/files/Newletters/LIPnewsletter-o8-Syrians\\_Surrey.pdf](http://www.surreylip.ca/sites/default/files/Newletters/LIPnewsletter-o8-Syrians_Surrey.pdf).
- ***Information Session for Arabic-speaking Refugees*** was organized by the Surrey LIP Immigrant Advisory Roundtable on April 9, 2016 at the Guildford Recreation Centre. The goal of the session was to welcome the newcomers and provide information on "what you should know about settlement in Canada but nobody ever tells you". The session was offered in English and Arabic and attended by 30 refugees.
- ***April 20 – 28, 2016 - Surrey Museum Exhibit: Surrey - A Place of Refuge*** will be displayed at City Hall. The exhibit was developed as a part of the 2013-2014 Surrey Welcoming Communities Project and tells the stories of seven refugees.
- ***Summer of 2016 – Welcoming Event for Refugees*** will be organized by the City of Surrey. It is anticipated that the family-friendly celebratory event will be hosted by Mayor and Council in Surrey City Hall later in the spring.

### **Developing a Surrey Refugee Integration Strategy**

The City of Surrey is the lead agency for the Surrey LIP, a federally funded initiative aimed at engaging local communities in immigrant and refugee integration. The LIP identified the development of a Surrey Refugee Integration Strategy as one of its initiatives for 2014-2017.

In the spring of 2015, SFU Surrey was contracted by the Surrey LIP to conduct research and consultations on refugees in Surrey. The "Our Community Our Voice" project is being conducted by SFU and Kwantlen researchers, as well as a team of research assistants who are all young people who arrived in Canada as refugees. The final report will be available in April 2016.

The Surrey LIP will be using the SFU research, along with learnings from the recent settlement of the Syrian refugees, to develop a Surrey Refugee Integration Strategy.

An update on the progress of the Surrey LIP will be provided to Council in May 2016.

## CONCLUSION

The arrival of Syrian refugees has been a historic event in Canada. While there are many challenges in settling such a large number of vulnerable refugees in a short period of time, Canadians' interest and out-pouring of generosity has been heart-warming and inspiring.

The City of Surrey has been actively engaged in this national effort. Over the past five months, the City has shown strong leadership by supporting settlement planning processes, as well as taking action to ensure that Surrey is a welcoming new home for the Syrian families who settle in our community.

*Original signed by*  
Jean Lamontagne  
General Manager,  
Planning and Development

AM:ss

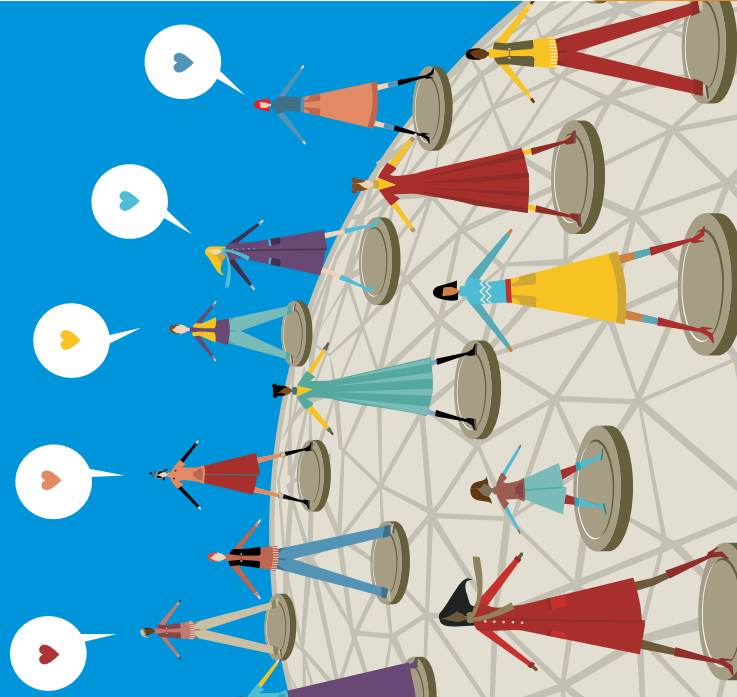
Appendix "I" – Refugee Settlement in Surrey: Local Resources & How to Help  
Appendix "II" – Welcome to Surrey  
Appendix "III" – Surrey LIP Newsletter: Engaged & Inclusive, Issue No. 8

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## SURREY WORKING TOGETHER

The humanitarian crisis in Syria has prompted the Government of Canada to expand its intake of refugees from Syria by 25,000 over the coming months. In addition to other provinces across the country, refugees are expected to arrive throughout British Columbia, including in the City of Surrey. To plan for and respond to the expected increase in newcomer volumes, a wide range of individual, community and inter-agency support is needed.

The City of Surrey, the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), and a variety of local agencies are working together to strengthen Surrey's integration of these newcomers. Members of the community and local business can help Syrian and other immigrant families with their difficult transition and to build a brighter future in our City.



## FEDERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

### ABOUT THE REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) is funded by the Government of Canada through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC, formerly known as CIC). In BC, it is delivered through Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC). It includes providing initial (two weeks) settlement support to Government Assisted Refugees (GARs). Services include finding housing, initial orientation and other supports.

### ABOUT SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Settlement services are funded by the Government of Canada Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada. They are delivered by settlement agencies and include language training, needs assessment and referrals, employment-related services, community connections for newcomers and other supports.

For more information, visit [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca).

**For more information on the refugee settlement program in Surrey, please contact:**

**OLGA SHCHERBYNA**  
SURREY LOCAL IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP COORDINATOR

604-592-7059  
[oshcherbyna@surrey.ca](mailto:oshcherbyna@surrey.ca)  
[www.surreylip.ca](http://www.surreylip.ca)

# REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN SURREY

## LOCAL RESOURCES & HOW TO HELP



# HOW TO HELP

## WELCOME ACTIVITIES, SUPPORT & EDUCATION

Visit [www.SurreyLIP.ca](http://www.SurreyLIP.ca) to:

- Learn about refugee selection and the settlement process in Canada
- Stay up to date on newcomer settlement and welcoming activities
- Get details on sponsoring Syrian Refugees in Canada
- Download the How You Can Support Refugees in Surrey online form where you can register to volunteer, provide employment leads, offer housing support and more.

## VOLUNTEERING & DONATIONS

There are a number of government-funded settlement agencies and other community organizations providing services to refugees and immigrants in Surrey. The following are in immediate need of volunteers, cash donations and other means of support to assist with the resettlement process.



### **Baobab Inclusive Empowerment Society**

Providing social and recreational programs for children from low income families.

101A 14914 104 Ave, Surrey, B.C. V3R 1M7 | 604-585-6775  
[www.baobabinclusive.ca](http://www.baobabinclusive.ca)

### **DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society**

Offering settlement and integration services to newcomers, including language training, employment services and programs for children and youth.

13455 76 Ave, Surrey, BC V3W 2W3 | 604-597-0205  
[www.dcrs.ca](http://www.dcrs.ca)

### **Muslim Food Bank**

Supporting primarily refugees and new immigrant families through culturally appropriate food hampers and community support programs.

101-13085 115 Ave, Surrey, BC V3R 7S2 | 1-866-824-2525  
[www.muslimfoodbank.com](http://www.muslimfoodbank.com)

### **Options Community Services Society**

Providing social, housing and newcomer settlement and integration services in Surrey and neighbouring communities.

13520 78 Ave, Surrey, BC V3W 8J6 | 604-596-4321  
[www.options.bc.ca](http://www.options.bc.ca)

### **Pacific Community Resources Society**

Providing a number of social services including a Newcomer Program for Youth.

114 13479 76 Ave, Surrey, BC V3W 2W3 | 604-592-6213  
[www.pcrs.ca](http://www.pcrs.ca)

### **Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society**

Providing support programs, including settlement, employment, language, social and housing services.

12725 80 Ave, Surrey, BC V3W 3A6 | 604-596-7722  
[www.pics.bc.ca](http://www.pics.bc.ca)

### **S.U.C.C.E.S.S.**

Providing a wide range of newcomer settlement and integration services in over 20 locations in Greater Vancouver.

206 10090 152 St, Surrey, BC V3R 8X8 | 604-588-6869  
[www.success.bc.ca](http://www.success.bc.ca)

### **Surrey Food Bank**

Supporting low income families in Surrey, including the distribution of about 2,000 food hampers each week.

10732 City Parkway Surrey, BC, V3T 4C7 | 604-581-5443  
[www.surreyfoodbank.org](http://www.surreyfoodbank.org)

### **Umoja Operation Compassion Society**

Supporting low income immigrants and refugees living in Surrey. Programs include after school home club, literacy programs, drop-in sewing and early childhood education.

10025 Whalley Blvd, Surrey, BC V3T 4G1 | 604-581-5574  
[umojawordpress.apps-1and1.com](http://umojawordpress.apps-1and1.com)





## رسالة من العمدة ومجلس البلدية Message from Mayor & Council

On behalf of Surrey City Council, I wish to extend a warm welcome to you and your family. You have come a long way and endured much hardship on your journey from Syria to Canada. As you begin your new life in Surrey, I want you to know that support systems have been put in place to help you settle in your new home. Our goal is to ensure you have a good start to a safer and better future for you and your family.

The City of Surrey has a lot to offer, from beautiful parks, recreation programs, and libraries to cultural facilities and festivals. We encourage you to not only explore all that the City has to offer, but to get involved. Participating in the community is a good way to connect with your new neighbours, get to know your new home and develop a sense of belonging.

We wish you and your family all the best in the days ahead.

Mayor Linda Hepner

نابذة عن مجلس بلدية مدينة سري، أود أن أرحب بك أنت وعائلتك. لقد قطعت شوطاً طويلاً وتحملت الكثير من الصعاب في رحلتك من سوريا إلى كندا. عندما تبدأ حياتك الجديدة في سري، أريد أن تعلم أنه يوجد مؤسسات توفر خدمات الدعم والتوطين لمساعدتك على الاستقرار في بلدك الجديد. هدفنا هو أن نضمن لك خيارات لتبدأ بداية جيدة لمستقبل أفضل وأكثر أمناً لك ولعائلتك.

مدينة سري لديها الكثير لتقديمه من الحدائق الجميلة، والبرامج الترفيهية، والمكتبات، والمرافق الثقافية والمهرجانات الموسمية. نحن نشجعك ليس فقط على استكشاف كل ما تقدمه البلدية من خدمات مختلفة، بل نتمنى منك المشاركة في المجتمع لأنها وسيلة جيدة للتواصل مع جيرانك الجدد، وتسهيل التعرف على بلدك الجديد وتتمية الشعور بالانتماء.

نتمنى لك ولعائلتك كل خير في الأيام المقبلة.

العمدة ليندا هينر

## City of Surrey Programs & Services البرامج والخدمات في مدينة سري

All Surrey residents are welcome to participate in the services and programs offered by the City of Surrey.

جميع السكان في مدينة سري مدعوين للمشاركة في الخدمات والبرامج التي تقدمها المدينة



### Parks & Recreation

Every community in Surrey has recreation facilities that provide a range of sports and other leisure programs for people of all ages, incomes and abilities. Learn more: [www.surrey.ca/recreation](http://www.surrey.ca/recreation)

### الحدائق العامة والترفيهية

يوجد مرافق ترفيهيه وحدائق عامة في كل حي في مدينة سري. المرافق الترفيهيه تقدم مجموعة واسعة من برامج رياضية وترفيهية أخرى لجميع الفئات والاعمار. لمزيد من المعلومات: [www.surrey.ca/recreation](http://www.surrey.ca/recreation)



### Libraries

Surrey Libraries support learning, information and ideas. Library services are all provided free of charge and offer free access to internet. Learn more: [www.surreylibraries.ca](http://www.surreylibraries.ca)

### المكتبات

المكتبات في سري تدعم التعلم وتقدم خدمات مجانية عديدة كالاتصال بالإنترنت وغيرها. لمزيد من المعلومات: [www.surreylibraries.ca](http://www.surreylibraries.ca)



### Arts & Heritage

The City of Surrey has a number of arts and heritage facilities with many programs for adults and children. Learn more: [www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation](http://www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation)

### الفنون والتراث

مدينة سري لديها العديد من المرافق المختصة بالفنون والتراث والتي تقدم العديد من البرامج الترفيهية للبالغين والأطفال. لمزيد من المعلومات: [www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation](http://www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation)

## City of Surrey Facilities and Services مرافق وخدمات مدينة سري

### Quick Facts: Civic Facilities المرافق العامة في مدينة سري



### The City offers a number of free services specifically designed for newcomers:

- English Conversation Circles in libraries and community centres
- Civic Facilities Bus Tours for Newcomers\*
- City Hall Tours\*
- \*Arabic interpreters are available.

### توفر مدينة سري عددا من الخدمات المجانية التي صممت خصيصا للقادمين الجدد:

- صفوف المحادثة باللغة الإنجليزية في المكتبات و المراكز الاجتماعية
- رحلات بالحافلة للقادمين الجدد للمرافق الترفيهية والثقافية \*
- جولات تعريفية داخل مبنى البلدية.
- \*يوجد مترجمين بالعربية.

### The City organizes a number of free community events and festivals:

- Surrey Fusion (July 2016). Learn about different cultures in Surrey.
- Surrey Doors Open (June 2016). Free access to many sites in Surrey with free transportation that is included in each community.
- Community/family festivals in every town centre.

### تنظم البلدية عددا من الفعاليات الاجتماعية والمهرجانات المجانية، منها:

- مهرجان الانتماء -Surrey Fusion (يوليو ٢٠١٦) للتعرف على الثقافات المختلفة في سري
- مهرجان الابواب المفتوحة - Doors Open (يونيو ٢٠١٦) امكانية الدخول المجاني إلى العديد من المرافق المختلفة في سري من خلال النقل المجاني ضمن نطاق كل حي
- المهرجانات والانشطة المختلفة في مراكز الاحياء

## Settlement Services خدمات الإستقرار

The Government of Canada funds community agencies to provide services to help newcomers settle in Canada. Below is a list of agencies that are funded to deliver general settlement services in Surrey.

حكومة كندا تمول منظمات المجتمع المدني لتوفير الخدمات للقادمين الجدد. وفيما يلي قائمة الوكالات والمنظمات التي تقدم خدمات الإستقرار في مدينة سري

### DIVERSECITY Community Resources Society جمعية دايفرسيتي للموارد الإجتماعية

604-597-0205 / [www.dcrs.ca](http://www.dcrs.ca)  
13455 76 Avenue, Surrey, B.C. V3W 2W3  
Arabic Settlement Worker:  
موظف التوطين المتحدث بالعربية:  
604-507-6060

### Options Community Services منظمة اوبشن لخدمة المجتمع

604-572-4060 / [www.options.bc.ca](http://www.options.bc.ca)  
13520 78 Ave. Surrey, BC V3W 8J6  
Arabic Settlement Worker:  
خدمات باللغة العربية:  
604-572-4060

### Pacific Community Resources Society Newcomer Youth Services جمعية المحيط الهادئ لموارد المجتمع

خدمات للشباب القادمين الجدد  
604-592-6213 / [www.pcrs.ca](http://www.pcrs.ca)  
1114-13479 76 Ave., Surrey, B.C. V3W 2W3  
Arabic Settlement Worker:  
خدمات باللغة العربية:  
604-587-8100

### Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS) جمعية بيكس الثقافية للخدمات

604-596-7722 / [www.pics.bc.ca](http://www.pics.bc.ca)  
12725 - 80th Avenue, Surrey V3W 3A6  
Arabic Settlement Worker:  
خدمات باللغة العربية:  
604-596-7722

### S.U.C.E.S.S. منظمة سكسساس للخدمات المجتمع

604-588-6869 / [www.success.bc.ca](http://www.success.bc.ca)  
206 10090 152 St. Surrey, B.C. V3R 8X8  
Arabic Settlement Worker:  
خدمات باللغة العربية:  
604-588-6869

### Surrey School District Welcome Centre \* مديرية التعليم في سري -مركز الاستقبال \*

604-543-3060 / [www.welcomecentre.sd36.bc.ca](http://www.welcomecentre.sd36.bc.ca)  
Unit # 120 - 7525 King George Boulevard,  
Surrey, B.C. V3W 5A8  
Arabic Settlement Worker:  
خدمات باللغة العربية:  
604-543-3060



**THIS ISSUE**  
Surrey and  
Syria

Checking In  
With The  
Refugee  
Research  
Project

Youth  
Consultations  
Complete

Newcomers  
Welcoming  
Newcomers

Steering  
Committee  
Member  
Organizations

LIP Updates

ISSUE NO.

08

MARCH 2016



SURREY LIP NEWSLETTER

# Engaged & Inclusive



Staff, volunteers and  
new arrivals at the  
Muslim Food Bank

## SURREY & SYRIA

**With more Syrian refugees arriving here than in any other B.C. municipality, Surrey has been asked to play a key role in an important national project. And that's exactly what it is doing.**

Imagine you're Mainu Ahmed. One day you're the director of the Muslim Food Bank, located in the Bridgeview area of North Surrey. The next, your organization has been tapped by ISSofBC to play a big part in Surrey's role in one of the greatest Canadian projects of this century—the resettlement of 25,000 Syrian refugees in less than four months. Your food bank is already a busy place, but boy, are things going to get busier. By the end of February there are 299 Government Assisted Refugees in Surrey, and every one of them will need all the help you can give them and more. >



*(Surrey and Syria: continued)*

➤ Similarly, imagine you're Tahzeem Kassam. You're already Chief Operating Officer at immigrant service provider DIVERSEcity, and now your organization has been tapped to lead one of five provincial regional refugee response teams, in your case a Fraser Valley region extending from North Delta to Chilliwack. With all of those people and organizations out there trying to help with the welcoming effort, somebody is going to have to coordinate and encourage communication, and that is going to be you.

And finally, imagine that you work for Fraser Valley Health, or Surrey Schools, or the City of Surrey, and that the scope of what you do has just been expanded by a factor of who-knows-how-much. Maybe you're someone like Aileen Murphy, Senior Social Planner for the City. From the very beginning, the City's Mayor and Councilors made it clear that Surrey expected to play a big role in the resettlement effort, and civic departments of various stripes, from recreation centres, through libraries, through the RCMP, have been intensely involved. Your job is to help coordinate inter-departmental efforts, organize forums, translate and disseminate crucial information, and generally try to ensure that the City is doing everything that it can.

That's a lot of people, putting in a lot of extra work and employing a lot of extra resources. And, they believe, the effort is paying off. "These refugees," Mainu Ahmed says, "are getting more support than previous ones."

And they need that support.

All of the recent immigrants from Syria are escaping a long-running war characterized by violence and deprivation, but the roughly one-third who are privately sponsored have the advantage, on average, of better education and smaller families, in addition to receiving individual support from their sponsors. Government-assisted



Mainu Ahmed

***ISSofBC asked Ahmed and the Food Bank to help lead the Surrey effort because the group was already an active supporter of refugees, and many of its staff and volunteers speak Arabic.***

refugees do receive government benefits equivalent to welfare payments for a period of one year, but beyond that, the help they get is dependent on what local settlement agencies and organizations can muster.

Chris Friesen, Director of Settlement for ISSofBC, notes that the 299 government-assisted refugees in Surrey represent 48% of the refugees that have been housed in Metro Vancouver so far. Of Metro Vancouver's total complement of 1,516 government assisted refugees 41% have been settled into housing, and 59% are still in temporary accommodation. These are contained within just 339 families, some of them with as many as 12 children. Sixty percent are under 19, and 34% are school-aged. He's been bowled over by the public response, and amazed that things are going as well as they are. "To put it into perspective, we've received double our annual refugee case load in a matter of weeks," he says. "It would have been nice to have more time, but that wasn't possible."

ISSofBC asked Ahmed and the Food Bank to help lead the Surrey effort because the group was already an active supporter of refugees, and many of its staff and volunteers speak Arabic. And Ahmed and the Food Bank have definitely risen to the occasion. "We have 13 separate programs on the go right now," he says. Most have nothing to do with the activities one would ordinarily associate with a food bank but rather span the entire sphere of newcomer integration.

To illustrate Ahmed gives a few examples of the circumstances faced by Surrey's 299 refugees, as well as the kind of support they are receiving. "ISS supplies a lot of the basics," he says. "We complement that with more individualized help."

Upon arrival each refugee group is greeted and assessed by a volunteer caseworker (there are now several dozen), with a staff social worker called in when needed. Each group receives a welcome package with toiletries, as well as a cell phone and a sim card. As of the beginning of March, more than half of Surrey's refugees still lacked accommodation and were staying in temporary quarters such as hotels, which complicates matters. "It's the little things," Ahmed says. "You don't read English. You don't have an address. How are you even going to activate a phone account?"

Depending on their needs, family groups may receive other packages as well. Baby supplies, in many cases, for example. These families have arrived with little more than the clothes on their back, points out Ahmed, so their needs are vast. Help is welcome from wherever it might arrive. The food bank, along with many other organizations, receives donations through its website.

Friesen notes that in Metro Vancouver, 110 residential units have been offered by citizens and companies, but the majority of Syrian refugees are still unhoused, and ISSofBC has 14 people scouting for more. Ahmed points out that families

need help enrolling children in school and accessing medical help. Many of the refugees would love to find work, and a few already have, Ahmed says. Meanwhile, there are long waiting list for ESL classes, so the Food Bank is currently rounding up both instructors and locations so that it can organize additional ones. "That's something we could use some help with," says Ahmed. This crop of newcomers is incredibly varied, he says. "Everyone from a doctor to people who can't read Arabic."

For now several hundred refugees are temporarily staying in two Guildford-area hotels. Fortunately, the City has both a recreation centre and a library nearby, and it has provided passes and cards for both. The library has gone to extensive lengths to make its services accessible, with tours by an Arabic-speaking staff member, and by ordering books written in both Arabic and English. "Those are a huge hit," says Aileen Murphy.

Several other service groups have kicked into gear, while the sudden arrival of so many people, with such dire needs, affects civic agencies and organizations of every stripe. Educational and health organizations have responded at every level, while the City of Surrey has launched numerous initiatives across many different departments. Early in the process the City organized two

stakeholder events attended by representatives from about 40 service providers. A brochure describing civic services, in English and Arabic, was made available at all civic facilities. Staff training sessions have helped ensure that people are aware of Middle Eastern culture and religion.

With so many Surrey residents expressing such a wide range of emotions, from enthusiasm to concern (and sometimes both at once), and with so many questions to be answered, the Mayor's Office in partnership with the Surrey LIP also organized a public forum, which was attended by about 200 people, including Mayor Linda Hepner, Councillor Judy Villeneuve, provincial cabinet ministers Peter Fassbender and Amrik Virk, and RCMP Assistant Commissioner Bill Fordy.

Fordy's presentation was particularly interesting, says Murphy, in that he stressed how important the welcoming effort would be in ensuring that the refugees become productive citizens and good neighbours. His closing words sparked murmurs of agreement from many. "As we embark on this new phase for Surrey, I encourage you to keep your minds and hearts open, to challenge stereotypes, and to remember that these newcomers deserve a fresh start. It is up to us to make our communities stronger and safer together."

## YOUTH CONSULTATIONS COMPLETE



In January the LIP conducted stakeholder consultations with 50 new immigrants and refugees, aged mid-teens to mid-20s in partnership with the Fresh Voices from Long Journeys Initiative of the Vancouver Foundation. The consultations elicited several dozen ideas and priorities relating to newcomer youth and the categories of education, employment, intercultural connections, family and access to services. The LIP has taken these recommendations into account and factored the results of the consultation into its Strategic Settlement Plan for Surrey, while Fresh Voices will also employ them in its ongoing engagement with local communities. For the Vancouver Foundation's Jorge Salazar, the really impressive aspect of the Surrey consultations was the turnout. "These are young people, at an all-day session, about policy," he points out. "They really appreciated the opportunity to have a say."

### Checking In With The Refugee Research Project

The Refugee Research Project, led by SFU Surrey, drew toward its completion in early March with the submission of an executive summary, to be followed by a full report. Among the research initiatives were 16 focus groups involving service providers, City of Surrey

planning leaders and young and old recent refugees in five different cultural groups. These included Arabic-speaking, Karen-speaking, Somali-speaking, Spanish-speaking and Swahili-speaking. "The added value is that we trained nine research assistants," says SFU

Surrey Executive Director Steve Dooley, most of these being recent refugees. "It's an example of building community capacity into the job." The complete report, as well as a fact sheet identifying key findings and recommendations will be available in late March.



# OUR IMMIGRANT ADVISORY ROUNDTABLE NEWCOMERS WELCOMING NEWCOMERS



Wafa Al-Jabiri

“Everybody is very motivated,” says IAR member Wafa Al-Jabiri. “It’s been a very good experience.” For more information about the following events, please consult [SurreyLIP.ca](http://SurreyLIP.ca).

**March 17** Members of the IAR have organized an information session on qualifying and applying for a Vancouver Foundation Neighbourhood Small Grant.

**March 30-31** As part of an information session for City of Surrey staff, Al-Jabiri will make a presentation to aid in expanding awareness of Syrian refugees.

**April 9** Members of the IAR will conduct a session to inform local Arabic-speaking refugees about life in Canada, including topics such as opportunities for youth and education, community engagement and entrepreneurship opportunities.

When the Surrey LIP’s Immigrant Advisory Roundtable (IAR) was initiated in early 2015, no-one could have guessed how far the group’s role would expand beyond being mere “advisors.” In fact, a little over one year into its existence, the IAR now conceives and organizes events on a regular basis, including three during March and April.

## LIP UPDATES

### Coming Soon: The Plan!

Following two years of work, and five major research initiatives involving 1,000 residents and stakeholders, the Surrey LIP is almost set to unveil The Surrey Newcomer Settlement & Integration Strategic Plan. Five top strategic priorities have been identified:

- 1 Accessible Services;
- 2 Engaged Community;
- 3 Meaningful Employment;
- 4 Thriving Youth;
- 5 Sustainable Leadership.

The full Strategic Plan will be made public in April 2016.

### True Colours of Surrey

The City of Surrey is one of the successful recipients of provincial Anti-Racism Program funding in 2016. The Surrey LIP team will be administering the True Colours of Surrey project, which will bring local stakeholders together to develop a community-driven model in addressing racism and discrimination in Surrey.

## Steering Committee Member Organizations

These are the organizations that provide leadership direction to the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership.

- 1 City of Surrey
- 2 The Surrey Board of Trade
- 3 Alexandra Neighbourhood House
- 4 Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC (ASTTBC)
- 5 City of Surrey, Human Resources
- 6 City of Surrey Social Planning (Contract Manager)
- 7 City of Surrey, Parks, Recreation & Culture
- 8 Surrey Libraries
- 9 DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society
- 10 Training Group at Douglas College
- 11 Human Resources Management Association (HRMA)
- 12 Fraser Health Authority: Population and Public Health
- 13 Fraser Health Authority: Primary Health Care
- 14 Immigrant Employment Council of BC
- 15 Immigrant Services Society of BC
- 16 Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- 17 Oak Avenue Neighbourhood Hub Society
- 18 Options Community Services Society
- 19 Pacific Community Resources Society
- 20 Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS)
- 21 Semiahmoo House Society
- 22 SFU Surrey
- 23 S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Surrey Delta Service Centre
- 24 Surrey School District #36
- 25 Surrey RCMP
- 26 Sources Community Resources Society
- 27 Surrey Interfaith Council
- 28 Umoja Operation Compassion Society
- 29 Vancity Credit Union
- 30 YMCA

## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

Let us answer with a word that sums up a lot of what we’re about: **Welcome!**

There are many ways to get involved with the Surrey Local Immigration Project, whether as an organization or as an individual. Surrey LIP will host city-wide community consultations and everyone is welcome to join. You can also request to be on our Surrey LIP stakeholder list and receive updates on a regular basis.

Please contact **Olga Shcherbyna**, Surrey LIP Coordinator, for more information.  
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Phone: 604-592-7059

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