

The partners of the Local Immigration Partnership of Renfrew & Lanark met on several occasions over the last year in order to discuss how the LIP project could support refugee sponsor groups in their efforts for the positive resettlement of refugees within the region. Several initiatives have taken place and several more have been planned for the future. Renfrew and Lanark Counties combined have **17 sponsor groups that are currently operating - with 7 of these groups having welcomed families to the communities, and many more to come.** The LIP project and the federal dollars that fund our project will continue to **work on your behalf for the next three years moving forward to 2020**, in order to provide the support you require, under the community collaboration model\* which makes our work possible.

It has been my pleasure to work directly with the vast majority of the groups, on varying levels of participation. I have grown to learn of your challenges and victories over the last year and **the project has responded to this collective needs analysis** with planning and action. **I strongly encourage all groups to provide information or to invite me to attend a coordinating meeting in order to capture your needs and support you in the best possible ways going forward.**

Here are some highlights of what has been going on in the region with respect to the resettlement of refugees.

#### Information

Need - Groups reported that they required a one-stop-shop for basic information about sponsorship locally

Response - LIP project staff created [www.immigrationpartnershiprenfrewlanark.com/refugees](http://www.immigrationpartnershiprenfrewlanark.com/refugees) to house critical documents, good news stories, group listings etc. This is a compliment to the pre-existing online resource guide developed in several languages in the past. In addition, an Arabic 101 pamphlet was produced, printed and mailed to each participating group in order to distribute locally. If you require more copies or missed the first shipment, please reply to this email with your request.

#### ESL Solutions

Need - Groups reported a clear lack of ESL service in smaller communities due to low enrollment numbers

Response - LIP partners who provide ESL services assembled to discuss a strategy for assistance, recognizing Ministry imposed minimum registrant parameters as a hard barrier to creating more classes. Firstly, an under-enrolled ESL class in Petawawa was moved to Eganville to support the first landings of refugees there. This class now has several attendees and is operating as planned. Secondly, marketing efforts, funded by LIP and supported by ESL service providers were undertaken in order to garner interest to attend ESL classes by other new Canadians who were eligible locally. **(It is critical that interested parties seek out a language assessment through their local provider - for more information please reply to this email. Without this request, the service provider cannot include these individuals on a waiting list in order to rationalize the creation of a Ministry-funded class)** This marketing effort only produced a small number of registrants and no single community as able to reach the minimum of eight registrants as a result. In order to move forward to our third attempt for support, the LIP assembled a grass-roots ESL sub-committee in order to flesh out another option. Subsequently, a funding application has been submitted since the model's development and we are within days of receiving notice if our proposal is accepted and funded. Once this initiative is funded, we will be seeking the direct input of ESL coordinators and volunteers representing the sponsor groups to identify exactly what kind of support is required, for best use of the funds going forward one year. Although this particular issue has been slow to move ahead, due to the re-attempts for support and the number of stakeholders involved, the LIP is committed to providing support in the area in the long-run.

## Liaison Support

Need - Support to leverage government for more speedy processing of files and resolution to critical application issues

Response - The LIP collected survey responses from the large majority of groups and assembled those responses and themes of frustration and celebration into a collective report. This report was submitted directly to the Minister's office and the Federal Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. It was carefully considered by both parties and your voices were heard by the utmost levels of government who are coordinating refugee intake in Canada. In response, IRCC has provided an internal contact who is specifically mandated to provide the LIP with refugee sector updates and act as a liaison going forward. IRCC also sent a refugee action and policy specialist to our celebration on June 16 to answer your inquiries directly. The representative who we are now in contact with is the former leader of Lifeline Syria and I have been able to receive considerable support for inquiries and updates from her already. IRCC reports these significant updates recently via our direct liaison;

1. Centralized Processing Office-Winnipeg, which is responsible for all PSR applications, will now be accepting email submission of cases for all refugees and has moved back to a global processing queue.

<http://www.rstp.ca/en/refugee-sponsorship/latest-policy-program-update/latest-update-from-ircc-changes-to-application-submissions-and-processing-at-cpo-w/>

2. IRCC has extended the exemption for Syrians and Iraqis to require a UNHCR or state refugee document for G5 and Community Sponsorship submissions: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/laws-policy/syria-iraq-2017.asp>

3. Communities can expect an increase in arrivals to begin in mid-September [2016]. Approximately 6,000 more government-supported Syrian refugees (which includes both government-assisted and blended visa office-referred refugees) will arrive by the end of December 2016 along with privately sponsored refugees whose cases have been finalized. [http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1120999&tp=1&\\_ga=1.202034264.872765255.1464353890](http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1120999&tp=1&_ga=1.202034264.872765255.1464353890) By April 2017, Canada is targeting to receive 60,000 refugees since the fall of 2015.

4. For any group who's SAH is outside of your community, the address of the refugee was recorded as per the SAH location, rather than the local community. If you know of any groups who are working with refugees who are now living at a different address than the one they gave on arrival or when they applied for the Permanent Residence card then it would be very helpful if they could update this information online:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/change-address.asp>

## Inter-Cultural Competency

Need - Many groups expressed interest in providing their members and the broader community with capacity-building training on how to effectively support refugees, understand their needs and also to communicate across cultures with respect.

Response - The LIP partners agreed to support the delivery of a series of presentations and workshops named "Welcoming Syrians". The project invested time and funds for me to travel to London ON in order to acquire world-class curriculum developed by academics at Western University and immigration service practitioners at the London Cross Cultural Learning Centre. I was trained to deliver these workshops and, to date, I have been

able to provide this presentation to over 25 different groups across the region since March 2016. For example, a grade 6 class in Deep River developed a Jr Ambassador program to support refugee students and I supported with context and learning, Arnprior District High School has welcomed me 5 times to deliver a workshop in Grade 10 civics, a health care support agency wanted to build capacity within their front-line staff through this program, several Women's groups scheduled me as their keynote to build awareness for their annual celebration meetings and so on. These sessions are completely free, available to be booked at any time and the marketing materials are all developed and provided to you by LIP. If you are interested in booking a session please reply to this email. I hope to continue this work and will provide this service to any interested parties. Here are a few coming up,

1. Perth Library, General Audience – Tuesday, November 29th @ 6:00 pm
2. Renfrew Public School, Grade 6 – Tuesday, November 22nd
3. Arnprior District High School, Grade 10 Civics – Tuesday, November 22nd
4. Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School, Grade 5/6 and 6/7 - January 10th

**Moving forward, we have also received a number of requests to help coordinate a regional sharing table of best practices and common challenges. I know some groups have already had the chance to share among each other, but perhaps the LIP can support in further distribution of this learning and facilitating meeting invitations, locations and administrative support in order to facilitate a regional impact of these efforts. With geographical barriers to consider, the LIP has time and funds to support a coordinated sharing of these worthwhile meetings and to support their ongoing delivery. Emails will soon be sent to the Chairs of all the groups to inquire about interest and participation.**

Your decision to become a participant in the LIP refugee resettlement support network is, of course, completely voluntary. We believe that in a region like ours, we can greatly benefit from a collaborative practice of settlement. I hope you will take part as you see fit and include me in order to support you with your work going forward. I am dedicated and passionate about newcomers, diversity and community - and especially to the volunteers like you who are making change locally. My sincere thanks go out to you all. In the five and a half years I have been supporting this thinking and action here in Renfrew & Lanark, I can honestly say that I am truly humbled to be a part of this movement at this time in our Nation's and region's history.

**"Be the change you want to see in the world." M. Gandhi**

Many thanks,



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Project Manager

Local Immigration Partnership of Renfrew & Lanark