



February 15, 2016

MEMO TO : Park Board Commissioners

FROM : Malcolm Bromley
General Manager, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT : **Refugee Support & Responding to the Syrian Refugee Crisis Motions - Update**

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this memo is to report back on the two December 2015 Board motions that related to supporting refugees. In the motion titled “Refugee Support”, staff were directed to work with community partners to welcome and support refugees living in Vancouver and to report back on measures taken. The motion titled “Responding to the Syrian Refugee Crisis” was referred to staff to examine the possibilities of using vacant caretaker suites as temporary housing for Syrian refugees. Following is an update on the initiatives and actions taken to date.

Refugee Resettlement Plan

The Government of Canada announced its Syrian refugee resettlement plan with the goal of relocating 25,000 Syrian refugees who are currently living in Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan. As of January 22, 2016, the resettlement goal of 10,000 Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) relocated to Canada by January 1st and another 15,000 settled by March 1st, has been extended. Vancouver immigrant and refugee service agencies require additional time to find permanent homes and have requested a pause of 5 days in accepting new refugees. Overall, it is expected that 2500-3000 GARs (10%-12%) will settle in British Columbia: 300 in Vancouver, 900 in Surrey, 600 in Coquitlam, and 120 in New Westminister.

Additionally, an estimated 5,700 Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) are expected within the same time frame. As noted on the Government of Canada [website](#), “in an effort to minimize security risks and provide a new home for vulnerable refugees, Canada has asked the UNHCR to prioritize vulnerable refugees who are a low security risk, such as women at risk and complete families”.

Syrian Refugee Strategic Planning Group Participation

Since November 2015, Park Board staff have been working with City staff and other key community partners to review and coordinate response efforts. This Syrian Refugee Strategic Planning Group, includes representatives from:

- BC Housing
- BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training & Responsible for Labour
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- City of Vancouver
- Immigrant Services Society of BC
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Vancouver Park Board
- Vancouver School Board



The Park Board is represented by Darren Peterson, Acting Manager of Recreation City-wide Services and Paul Czene, Recreation Coordinator, Access and Volunteer Services (see Appendix A for a full list of members.)

ISS of BC provided members with an overview of the settlement process and a flowchart of the “Key Phases for Syrian Refugee Movement to Metro Vancouver” (see Appendix B). This flowchart indicates the timeline from initial reception to settlement and the various steps and needs along the process.

Leisure Access Program Changes

The Park Board’s Leisure Access Program (LAP) reduces accessibility barriers for immigrants, refugees, and the undocumented. In recognition of the importance of connecting refugees to their new communities, the LAP has created an expedited 3rd Party Referral process in coordination with immigrant and refugee serving agencies. This process provides same day service at the closest Vancouver recreational facility (see Appendix C for application details.)

Community Youth Workers Involvement

It is projected that 36% of the Syrian refugees will be under the age of 19. As such, Park Board Community Youth Workers have been provided special briefings in preparation for the expected high need for youth support and services for the refugees settling in Vancouver.

Park Board Caretaker Suites

On December 14, 2015, the Board motion “Responding to the Syrian Refugee Crisis” was referred to staff. This motion proposed that staff “examine all currently unoccupied and uncommitted former caretaker suites” to determine whether any could be used “as temporary accommodation for government sponsored refugees from Syria”.

Staff have reviewed the park fieldhouse inventory and identified eight vacant caretaker suites that have not yet been committed to other uses - all of which are completely unfurnished. When considering whether any of the available suites would be appropriate accommodations for vulnerable refugee populations, staff noted the following concerns:

- **Limited Space** - caretaker suites are very small, suitable for 1-2 people; the understanding is that most of the current refugees are arriving as families;
- **Social Isolation** - fieldhouses are stand-alone buildings without close neighbors; parks are closed to the public after hours; locations do not offer convenient access to amenities and services;
- **Public Pressure** - residents would be perceived to be park caretakers or staff; the public will approach with questions and concerns regarding the park, maintenance of public washrooms, facility access, and other issues;
- **Safety & Security** - fieldhouse residents are exposed to user conflicts, substance misuse in and around the facilities, vandalism, after-hours loitering, homeless populations, and other situations that could create discomfort and impact feelings of safety and security.



While there are two locations that may offer less isolation (closer to amenities), the other factors listed above would still apply. As well, it is important to note that the Fieldhouse Activation Program is gearing-up to put out a Request for Expression of Interest (RFEOI) to local community sport, art & culture, food, and environmental groups in exchange for community programming. The current plan is to advertise and promote all eight vacant caretaker suites as opportunities for residencies and community activations. Staff were expecting to post the RFEOI in March and have community groups move-in to the caretaker suites by May 1, 2016.

Staff are continuing to work with City and key partners to welcome Syrian refugees to Vancouver and to provide the ongoing community support and connections they require. The processes developed through this collaborative response effort will help inform the Park Board's practices for providing refugee support moving forward.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm Bromley".

Malcolm Bromley
General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation

Attachments (3)

/pc/clc

Copy to: PB Senior Management Team
PB Communications



APPENDIX A

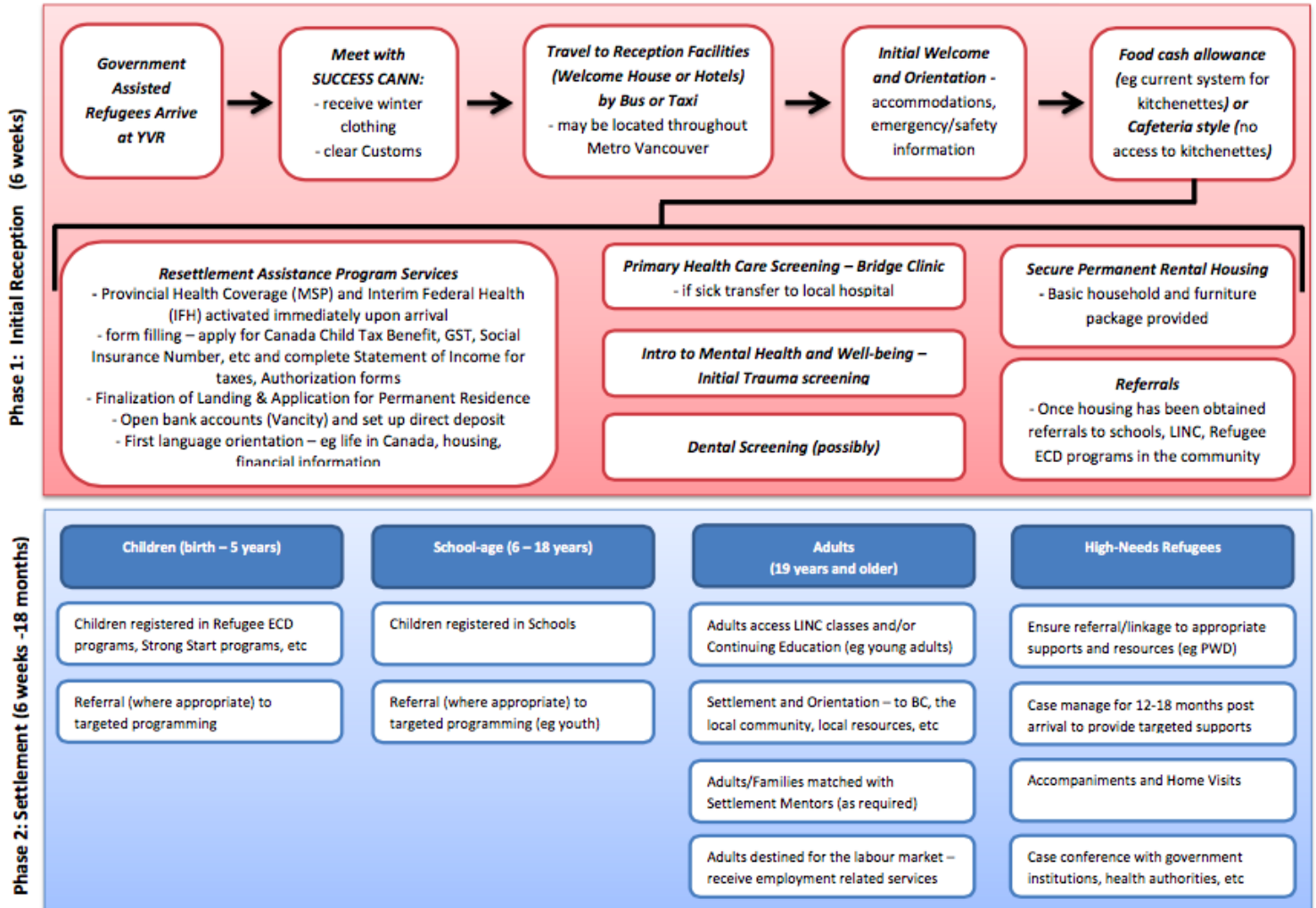
Syrian Refugee Strategic Planning Group

BC Housing	Virginia Holden	Associate Director of Housing, Housing Policy Branch
BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training & Responsible for Labour	Robyn Uhl	Senior Policy Analyst
Citizenship & Immigration Canada	Lucy Swib Kathryn Vermeer	Acting Director, Integration BC - Yukon Supervisor
City of Vancouver	Abi Bond Nadia Carvalho Sarah Ellis Naveen Girn Teresa Hartman Baldwin Wong Carol Ann Young Mary Clare Zak	Planner, Social Policy & Projects Planner, Social Policy & Projects Planning Assistant, Housing Policy & Projects Community Relations, Office of the Mayor Acting General Manager, Community Services Planner, Social Policy & Projects Senior Planner, Social Policy & Projects Managing Director, Social Policy & Projects
Immigrant Services Society of BC	Caroline Daily Chris Friesen	Manager, Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) Director, Settlement Services
Vancouver Coastal Health	Juan Solorzano Mei-ling Weidmeyer	Executive Director, Population Health Medical Coordinator - Bridge Program
Vancouver Park Board	Paul Czene Darren Peterson	Recreation Coordinator, Access and Volunteer Svcs Acting Manager of Recreation Citywide Services
Vancouver School Board	Nancy Brennan Scott Robinson	Association Superintendent Superintendent of Schools

APPENDIX B

Key Phases for Syrian Refugee Movement to Metro Vancouver

Key Phases for Syrian Refugee Movement to Metro Vancouver





APPENDIX C

Leisure Access Program - 3rd Party Referral Process

Leisure Access Program - [3rd Party Referral Application](#)

The application is completed online, printed out by the referring group and then brought to a recreation facility by the applicant to register for Leisure Access. Option is available on ActiveNet under Leisure Access.

Government sponsored refugees

If refugee remains in Vancouver after two weeks, a recognized immigrant and refugee serving agency (Immigrant Services Society, MOSAIC, SUCCESS, etc.) will complete the 3rd Party Referral.

- Application completed by the immigrant and refugee serving agency;
- Address of agency serves as address of refugee;
- Proof of Address: Resettlement Assistance Program Worker business card;
- Refugee identification: Permanent Resident Card (photo id) or Immigration forms.

Privately sponsored refugees

If refugee is privately sponsored, the private sponsor will complete the 3rd Party Referral.

- Application completed by private sponsor;
- Address of private sponsor serves as refugee's address;
- Proof of Address: Sponsor's bill, bank statement, photo id;
- Refugee identification: Permanent Resident Card (photo id) or Immigration forms.