



Welcoming Newcomers: Talking Points January 2016

For many of us, we struggle to house, feed and clothe our family. Good paying jobs that support our families are difficult to find. So when our government responds to the Syrian refugee crisis - which has left more than 4 million people desperately seeking safety – we want to respond in a compassionate and caring way.

However, some of us are questioning – just how can we add another mouth to the table? Will this overwhelm our support systems and mean less support at the table for our family? Will the Syrian refugees jump to the head of the line for services? How is this fair for people who are already waiting years for social housing or are part of the hundreds of people who rely on our local food banks?

The members of the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force work with the most marginalized and vulnerable in our communities. We do not believe that responding to the Syrian refugee crisis means an interruption of services to people suffering social and economic disadvantage in our communities. Studies have shown that sponsored refugees benefit from the networks of their sponsors, find work quickly and match or outperform other immigrant groups.

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force supports the integration of refugees into our local economies. While our primary concern for refugees is driven by our desire to welcome those in a distressed situation, the arrival of refugees presents both economic as well as policy opportunities.

We believe that this is an opportunity for us to engage with policy makers to solve poverty issues in our communities and advocate for 1) a National Housing Strategy to respond to an increase in demand for affordable housing, 2) income support programs that ensure families are living above the poverty line, and 3) a national food policy to ensure that no one goes hungry.

Canada is a compassionate, caring nation with a long tradition of embracing diversity, promoting inclusion and showing humanitarian leadership. We have a history of welcoming refugees who have contributed to our economy, started businesses and created new jobs. We must continue this tradition and demonstrate these values and principles in our approach to the Syrian refugee crisis and the development of a new anti-poverty plan.

Questions and Answers

Q: How long have the refugees been living in camps overseas?

A: Some of the Syrian refugees have been in camps overseas since 2011. Other non-Syrian refugees have lived in camps longer.

Q: How many refugees are coming to Grey Bruce? How many are staying here?

A: We don't know how many refugees will eventually settle long term in Grey Bruce. Ontario has agreed to accept approximately 10,000 Syrian refugees, but it is difficult for us to estimate how many of them will settle here.

Q: Why are we taking in so many refugees when we already have issues with homelessness and poverty?

A: Settlement of Syrian refugees is a national project and the refugees may settle in any part of the country. Grey Bruce is doing its part to help and we are anticipating no interruption to the programs and services we provide to residents as we welcome Syrian refugees.

Q: Will my access to community programs be impacted?

A: No. We do not anticipate any interruptions to our program or services as we welcome refugees.

Q: Will the Syrian refugees jump to the top of the line for social services in Grey Bruce?

A: No. The federal government will be supporting Syrian refugees for 12 months. After 12 months, the Syrian refugees will lose their federal financial support and may require supports including Ontario Works Assistance, and children's dental care. The services will be provided as necessary and Syrian refugees will apply to these programs using the usual process.

Q: Who is going to pay to support the refugees?

A: Support for Syrian refugees will come from private sponsors across Canada and the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada will invest up to \$678 million over six years to support the resettlement and ensuring integration support for these Syrian refugees. More information about the budget breakdown is available [here](#).

Q. How long will the federal government support each refugee? What happens once that money runs out?

A: The government has committed to supporting each refugee for 12 months after their arrival. After 12 months, Syrian refugees will lose their federal financial support and may require additional supports. At that point in time, they (just like any Grey Bruce residents needing assistance) can apply for financial assistance through Ontario Works Assistance or Ontario Disability Support Program.

Q: Canada has committed to bring 25,000 Syrians to Canada. Will we allow more refugees into the country after this first group has settled?

A: The government's commitment to bringing in Syrian refugees will continue in 2016. Given the current initiative includes privately sponsored refugees, this will include taking in more government-assisted refugees (GARs) to reach a total target of 25,000 GARs. We do not know how many more refugees the federal government will bring to Canada in future years.

Q: Will the refugees steal jobs from Canadians?

A: No. A growing Canadian economy depends on a growing population - who play crucial roles as workers, consumers, taxpayers and entrepreneurs. Immigration, including the arrival of refugees, could be a significant economic opportunity for Canada. Studies have shown that sponsored refugees benefit from the networks of their sponsors, find work quickly and match or outperform other immigrant groups. While our primary concern for refugees is driven by our desire to welcome those in a distressed situation, the arrival of refugees also presents an economic opportunity.

Q: I have concerns about security after the attacks on Paris. How can I be sure that my family and I, and our community, will be kept safe when the refugees arrive?

A: The federal government is working closely with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to identify registered Syrian refugees who can be resettled. Canada's focus will be on identifying vulnerable refugees who are a lower security risk. Robust health and security screening will be completed overseas - before refugees arrive in Canada. This will include the collection of biographic information and biometric screening of all refugees, verified against databases. No-one will get on a plane to Canada without going through this rigorous process.

For more information from the Government of Canada, visit Canada.ca/Refugees.
For more information on Grey Bruce sponsorship, visit [Owen Sound & Area Refugee Initiative](#)