

**Province of British Columbia
December 2015**

Ministry of Education Syrian Refugee Information Kit

**Version:1.0
Last Updated: 12/16/2015**

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Purpose

This document provides an overview of the process for welcoming up to 3,500 Syrian into BC as part of the Government of Canada's commitment to settle 25,000 Syrian refugees by February 29, 2016. The information kit is intended to provide our sector partners with timely information and links to resources to support in the Syrian refugee settlement process.

This document will be updated frequently as information is received.

Ministry of Education Refugee Readiness and Response

The Ministry of Education is committed to establishing a positive experience for refugee learners as they settle into the BC education system. To this end, the Ministry is proactively working in collaboration with our key stakeholders to compile an inventory of support services available in the school districts in those communities with historical refugee settlement patterns.

Led and coordinated by the Ministry, a cross-divisional Syrian Refugee Response and Readiness Working Group has also been launched to proactively share information and work with Ministry staff and external stakeholders like the Metro Vancouver Superintendents and Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC). The goal is to collaboratively respond to the education and related settlement needs of Syrian refugees.

Ministry of Education Actions to Date

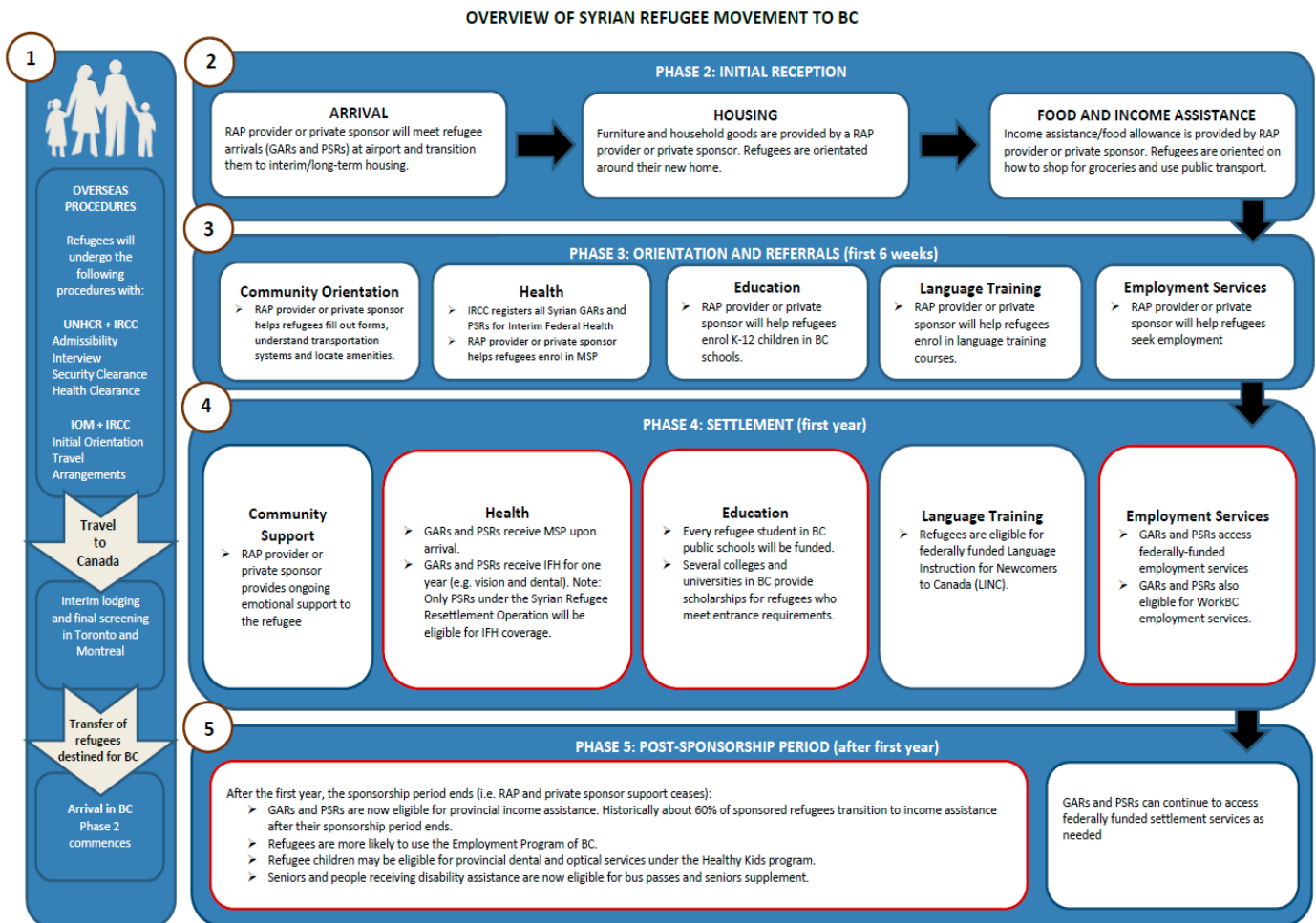
In collaboration with the education sector, the Ministry of Education has been actively working to prepare for the registration, integration, and settlement of school-age children into the BC school system.

- Participation by the Ministry of Education in a cross-ministry Assistant Deputy Minister Committee on Refugee Readiness and Response group led by the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training (JTST)
- Participation in an ISSofBC-led Metro Vancouver federal, provincial and partners planning meeting
- Launch of cross-divisional Ministry of Education Working Group
- Working with the Metro Vancouver School Districts and the federally contracted Resettlement Assistance Provider (RAP) – the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC) to increase the seamless flow of information
- Distributed initial information about refugee settlement in the Superintendents' weekly newsletter; commitment to distribute information to the sector on a regular basis as known
- Scheduled bi-weekly conference calls with Ministry of Education Assistant Deputy Ministers, all superintendents and executive members from:
 - ✓ BC School Superintendents Association
 - ✓ BC Principals and Vice Principals Association
 - ✓ BC Schools Trustees Association
 - ✓ BC Association of School Business Officials
 - ✓ Federation of Independent School Associations
 - ✓ ISSofBC

- Review and revise the *Students from Refugee Backgrounds: A Guide for Teachers & Schools* with an addendum on Syrian refugee crisis
- Creation of a *Ministry of Education Fact Sheet for New Immigrants* for distribution at the airport by [S.U.C.C.E.S.S'](#) Community Airport Newcomers Network (C.A.N.N) and in the ISSofBC Welcome Centre

Map of Five Refugee Settlement Phases

Below you will find a visual summary of the five phases of the refugee settlement process as they move from their overseas locations to British Columbia.



Source: Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training

Legend

- UNHCR** - The United Nations Refugee Agency
- IRCC** - Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada
- IOM** - International Organization for Migration
- RAP** – Settlement Assistance Provider
- MSP** – Medical Services Plan
- IFH** - Interim Federal Health Program

Backgrounder – The Role of the Federal Government

According to the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada website, the federal government has committed to bringing in 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by February 29, 2016 and will invest up to \$678 million over six years toward expediting the settlement and ensuring integration support for these Syrian refugees.

The federal government is endeavouring to identify 25,000 refugees by December 31, 2015 and it is anticipated that 10,000 of these refugees will arrive in Canada by that date. The remaining 15,000 will arrive by February 29, 2016. Of the first 10,000, 80 per cent are expected to be individuals in the Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) category. The remainder, and most of the subsequent 15,000, will be individuals in the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) category.

The federal government has primary responsibility for the entire refugee settlement process. Through the Government Operations Centre, multiple federal departments (led by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada) are planning all logistical aspects of the selection, transportation, screening, immigration, and settlement process.

The federal government is also responsible for ensuring appropriate settlement funding and supports are available. There are currently 36 refugee reception centres or entry points into Canada including Quebec. Although entry points may be in a specific city, final destinations can vary significantly due in significant part to the location of the permanent rental accommodation. The federal government is also responsible for a year of income support for all government assisted refugees based on provincial income support rates. Resettlement Assistance Providers (RAP) also ensure that appropriate arrangements are made in advance of refugee arrivals, including providing transitional housing, first language case workers and basic household goods, furniture and clothing. In BC, the RAP provider is the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC), an organization based in Vancouver.

The federal government has responsibility for the following five phases of settlement:

Phase 1: Identification and Selection

Newcomers in the Privately Sponsored Refugee category are selected by the sponsorship agreement holders. Privately sponsored newcomers are primarily named individuals in family reunification cases.

In contrast, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and visa officers from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) will identify and select individuals and families in the Government Assisted Refugee category, based on an assessment of vulnerability. The vulnerability assessment will focus, for example, on single parent families, women at risk, and members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community.

Phase 2: Overseas Assessment

Individuals and families will first be assessed overseas. This includes a full medical examination and security screening (interviews, biometrics collection, and checks against international security databases). Individuals who pass the screening will be issued a permanent resident visa and arrangements will be made for transportation to Canada.

Phase 3: Transportation to Canada

Transportation to Canada will primarily be provided by private chartered aircraft, supplemented with military aircraft as required. Visual health checks will be completed during the transportation process. The initial point of entry in Canada will be either Toronto or Montreal.

Phase 4: Welcoming to Canada

Upon arrival in Canada, individuals will be processed through normal Canadian Border Service Agency procedures. This includes final verification of identity and screening for signs of illness per the *Quarantine Act*. Those who are being privately sponsored will continue directly on to their final destination. Those who will be government assisted will be destined to one of 36 refugee reception centres as per Federal-Provincial and will continue directly to those communities or, as a last resort, be provided temporary accommodation (likely on a military base) until transportation to their final destination is arranged.

Phase 5: Settlement and Integration

Newcomers will be welcomed in their host communities by their private sponsors or by RAP personnel. RAP personnel and private sponsors are responsible for greeting families at the airport, arranging housing, and providing income support for the newcomers for up to one year.

Related Federal Links

Refugee Welcome Site

Information on how refugees from Syria are being settled in Canada
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/latest.asp>

Refugee Key Facts and Milestones

Latest milestones and key figures for the Syrian settlement program
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>

Map of Destination Communities for Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs)

Map of the destination communities for the Syrian PSRs
http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp?_ga=1.80214039.1812590618.1429900247

Population Profile: Syrian Refugees

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) document on the demographics, culture, education and health characteristics of Syrian refugees
<http://lifelinesyria.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EN-Syrian-Population-Profile.pdf>

Backgrounder – The Role of the Provincial Government

The provincial government's role is to ensure that newcomers settling in BC have access to all the provincially-funded services and supports that are available. This includes education, health care, and other social services (except income assistance in the first year).

In addition, the provincial government, led by the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Skills Training (JTST) is providing planning and coordination support to the federal government and service providers for the settlement process. This includes embedding a staff person in the federal Government Operations Centre and working collaboratively with the federal government and settlement providers to determine the appropriate volume and flow of newcomer arrivals in BC.

Provincial Actions to Date

- Announced a \$1 million Refugee Readiness Fund and initiated policy and procurement design;
- Established a toll-free number to field questions on existing settlement support and the Fund (See Frequently Asked Question 9 in Appendix A for details);
- Engaged with key stakeholders to receive input on the Fund and BC's settlement capacity (in-person workshop and broad teleconference with 87 stakeholders);
- Attended the Union of BC Municipalities to discuss the Fund;
- Convened cross-ministry Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) committee, led by JTST, to coordinate inter-ministry impacts and actions
- Coordinate regular updates with provincial mayors

Provincial Refugee Readiness Fund

On September 8, the province of BC announced one-time funding of \$1 million to support the province's readiness for receiving refugees from Syria. Click here for the [news release](#). The Fund will be used to supplement, but not duplicate, existing federal and provincial services and supports for refugees.

A further Province of BC [news release](#) on December 2, 2015 outlined that half of the \$1M Refugee Readiness Fund will go toward five Refugee Response Teams in the province to proactively plan for the settlement of refugees in their communities across BC. The teams will have representatives from the immigrant serving agencies and will be located in the communities where refugees will likely settle.

The other half of the \$1M will be provided to the ISSofBC. Activities will include:

- Development of an online hub to connect private sponsors, settlement workers, counsellors, and other service providers across the province to the information they need to support refugees.
- Track volunteer offers, in-kind donations and housing and employment leads.
- Set up a range of supports for clinicians caring for traumatized refugees, including a new telephone consultation line and a trauma needs assessment tool.
- Provide workshops and support to the Refugee Response Teams.

Related Provincial Links

Students from Refugee Backgrounds: A Guide for Teachers & Schools

Teacher's resource guide for teachers working with students with refugee backgrounds can be found in the attachment and in the link below:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/diverse-student-needs/refugee-students>

Note: this is currently being updated to include a fact sheet on Syria

BC Newcomers Guide

A Welcome BC website geared to help ensure new British Columbians are able to get settled, gain employment, become active members of their communities, and contribute fully to the social and economic prosperity of BC:

http://www.welcomebc.ca/newcomers_guide/newcomerguide.aspx

Province of BC News Release

Information on the December 2 news release by the Premier on the new provincial fund to help Syrian refugee settlement:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2015JTST0182-002011>

Backgrounder – Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)

Arrival Projections

According to historic settlement patterns documented by ISSofBC, BC typically receives up to 10-12 per cent of the total number of refugee arrivals in the Government Assisted Refugee category and on average, 800-900 government assisted refugees and 400-600 privately sponsored refugees annually.

As stated on the December 16 Teleconference, ISSofBC expects BC to welcome up to 3,500 Syrian government assisted refugees and upwards of 280 privately sponsored refugees as part of the Government of Canada's commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by February 29, 2016. By December 31, 2016, ISSofBC estimates that BC will receive 33,000 Syrian refugees. It is also estimated that 32 per cent of Syrians could be 16 years of age or younger or an estimated 1,120 school-age children (See *Population Profile: Syrian Refugees*, an IRCC published guide).

According to ISSofBC, between November 4 and December 10, a total of 13 Syrian GAR newcomers have arrived with another 227 expected to arrive before December 31. Between January 1 to February 28, it is projected that BC will receive 1,800 Syrian GAR newcomers. Between March and December 2016, it is estimated that BC will receive 1,460 Syrian in the GAR category.

RAP Arrival Process

As the newcomers arrive in BC, they will be greeted at the airport by S.U.C.C.E.S.S and the Community Airport Newcomers Network (C.A.N.N). Funded by the federal government through the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), C.A.N.N. facilitates the pre-settlement of all immigrants arriving in Canada at the Vancouver International Airport. C.A.N.N. offers individualized reception, orientation, information, and referrals. The one-time service helps newcomers gain a better understanding about the first steps to take as they settle in Canada, and provides them with information about the province as well as referrals to other organizations.

Following the welcome at the airport, Government Assisted newcomers arrive at ISSofBC Welcome House in downtown Vancouver (or other temporary accommodations if their Welcome House is full) for a maximum two week stay. ISSofBC is responsible for helping families locate permanent housing in the Metro Vancouver area. In some cases, it may be necessary for a family to stay in temporary housing, such as a hotel, until permanent housing can be secured. ISSofBC helps arrange for the settlement of the family into their furnished new home.

Through Welcome House staff, each government assisted refugee newcomer goes through a two week orientation program in their home language. This includes:

- educational workshops on money management, community resources and the transit system
- mental well-being and primary health care assessments
- opening of a bank account and completion of various government applications including Social Insurance Number, PR card, Health Care Card, Child Tax Benefits (if applicable) and a Recreation Centre/Leisure Access Card
- Crisis intervention is also provided in case of medically compromised clients. Through this process refugee clients complete an informed consent form that facilitates ISSofBC ability

to share client contact information through key referral protocols including the BC school system.

Once permanent rental housing has been secured, ISSofBC staff informs the local school district about the new family's arrival in the community by email. The School Principal's Letter, which is emailed to a school district contact, includes the names and ages of the school age children, a high level assessment of their length of time in a refugee camp, any primary health care concerns, and education experience. ISSofBC also provides the school district with the name of the ISSofBC RAP Counsellor who can provide more information about the family if required. IRCC provides a school start-up allowance.

Note: the private sponsor helps their sponsored family fill out forms, learn about the community, register for programs, and enrol any school age children in school. Privately sponsored newcomers who arrive as refugees can also access the same settlement supports available to all immigrants, including language classes and employment services.

Refugee Settlement Tracking

Since 1987 all government assisted refugees have been processed by ISSofBC and settled within Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley region. All arrivals in the Government Assisted refugee category are tracked through ISSofBC's case management database system.

Privately sponsored Syrian newcomers will be mapped and tracked by the federal government. Click [here](#) to access interactive map with the numbers of individuals settling in Canadian cities.

Map of Privately Sponsored Refugee Communities



The BC Refugee Settlement Destinations

According to the federal site, as of December 10, 2015, privately sponsored refugee newcomers will locate in the following BC communities:

- Vancouver (54)
- New Westminster (49)
- Burnaby (27)
- Coquitlam (20)
- Surrey (20)
- Victoria (10)
- Richmond (10)
- Kelowna (9)
- Delta (6)
- Prince George (5)
- Langley (less than 5)
- North Vancouver (less than 5)

RAP Links

S.U.C.C.E.S.S

A charitable organization that provides services in settlement, language training, employment, family and youth service, business Source: Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and community development

<http://www.successbc.ca/eng/services>

C.A.N.N.

Community Airport Newcomers Network (C.A.N.N) facilitates the pre-settlement of all immigrants arriving in Canada at the Vancouver International Airport

<http://www.cannyvr.ca/>

ISSofBC

Immigrant Services Society of BC's Syrian refugee crisis response as well as frequently asked questions.

<http://www.issbc.org/prim-corp-nav/our-work-with-refugees/refugee-crisis>

Appendix A: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Syrian Refugee settlement process?

The Government of Canada will welcome 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada through a five-phase national plan. All refugees arrive as permanent residents. It should be noted that none of the 25,000 Syrian refugees will be refugee claimants.

According to the federal website as of December 16:

- 946 Syrian refugees have arrived in Canada
- 1,570 refugee applications have been finalized
- 15,779 settlement applications in progress

Source: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/latest.asp>

2. How many Syrian refugees will BC receive?

- The Federal Government is still working out the number of Government-Assisted Refugees to be allocated to the provinces and have assured BC that it will share this information as soon as it becomes available.
- According to ISSofBC
 - BC typically accepts 10-12 per cent of all Canadian refugees and based on past data, most refugees settle in the Lower Mainland
 - It is estimated that BC will accept between 2,700 and 3,500 Syrians based on historical patterns. Note: Last year our province took in just over 1,500 refugees.
- According to the federal government, no unaccompanied minors will be entering Canada.

3. Where will these Syrian refugees be settled?

- Where the refugees will go once they arrive in BC is still being worked out.
- BC is exploring options across the province for settlement.
- According to ISSofBC, the majority of government assisted newcomers will settle in the Lower Mainland

4. What is the Syrian Refugee screening process?

Protecting the safety, security and health of Canadians and refugees is a key factor in guiding the Government of Canada's actions throughout this initiative.

According to the federal web site, each individual Syrian refugee that Canada welcomes will undergo a robust, multi-layered screening:

- Refugee identification before referral to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada
- Immigration and security interview by experienced visa officers
- Identity and document verification; biometric and biographic collection
- Health screening
- Identity confirmation prior to departure
- Identity verification upon arrival

5. What types of Syrian Refugees will enter Canada?

Government Assisted Refugees (GARs)

- Individuals with official refugee status provided by the Government of Canada who have the majority of their settlement costs covered by federal government under their Settlement Assistance Program. This includes immediate and essential financial, clothing and housing assistance.

Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs)

- Private sponsors include individuals, community groups, churches or mosques that provide financial and emotional support. This includes financial, clothing and housing assistance.

6. Who are the Settlement Assistant Program (RAP) providers in B.C?

- Immigration Services Society of BC (ISSofBC) is the primary RAP provider in our province while S.U.C.C.E.S.S (and the Community Airport Newcomers Network) provides airport reception services to refugees.

7. What is the current role of ISSOFBC?

ISSofBC is currently the only service provider in BC that provides the full suite of federally-funded Settlement Assistance Program services to government-assisted refugees.

Services include:

- Temporary accommodation
- Basic orientation to Canada – e.g. taking a bus, shopping for groceries
- Life skills training
- Financial orientation – e.g. setting up a bank account
- Assistance in finding permanent housing
- Referrals to other settlement programs
- Income support for one year, including food and shelter allowance (based on provincial welfare rates)
- Furniture, clothing
- Housing supplement allowance
- Basic household needs allowance to buy beds, dressers, tables etc.
- Help setting up utilities
- Support with school enrolment, and school start-up allowance
- Maternity-related and new-born allowance

8. How is the province helping refugees?

The provincial government helps all refugees once they are settled in BC. Provincial services for all refugees include:

- MSP coverage
- Enrolment in our schools
- Employment programs
- Childcare subsidies
- Student aid (post-secondary)

9. What will the Province's \$1M Refugee Readiness Fund cover?

According to the [provincial news release](#), on December 2, the province announced further information on the \$1M Refugee Readiness Fund. This includes expanding capacity for private sponsors, community and church groups that are directly helping refugees.

Half of the \$1M Refugee Readiness Fund will go toward five Refugee Response Teams in the province to proactively plan for the settlement of refugees in their communities across BC. The teams will have representatives from the refugee service provider community and will be located in the communities where refugees settle.

The Refugee Response Teams across BC will have representatives from the refugee service provider community as well as local employers. Teams are anticipated in the Lower Mainland, Fraser Valley, Vancouver Island, Okanagan and Cariboo – although locations are contingent on where refugees ultimately settle. For those interested in applying for funding through BC's new Refugee Readiness Fund, information is available on BC Bid at: www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca.

The other half of the \$1M will be provided to the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC). ISSofBC will:

- Develop an online hub to connect private sponsors, settlement workers, counsellors, and other service providers across the province to the information they need to support refugees.
- Track volunteer offers, in-kind donations and housing and employment leads.
- Set up a range of supports for clinicians caring for traumatized refugees, including a new telephone consultation line and a trauma needs assessment tool.
- And they will provide workshops and support to the Refugee Response Teams.
- Provide workshops and support to Refugee Response Teams to ensure that organizations serving refugees outside of the Lower Mainland have the knowledge and expertise in place in advance of the bulk of the refugees arriving in BC by February 2016; and
- Set up a range of supports for clinicians caring for traumatized refugees, including a new telephone consultation line and a trauma needs assessment tool.

To learn more, visit ISSOFBC at: <http://www.ISSofBC.org/prim-corp-nav/our-work-with-refugees/refugee-crisis/how-can-i-help-refugees>.

10. What other provincial supports will be available to refugees?

- Through the Canada-BC Job grant, up to \$1.5 million is being made available to help get refugees job training and match them with employers.
- Refugees will also have access to job-specific language training as part of \$2.6 million being provided to community organizations, professional associations and post-secondary institutions across the BC; this includes \$1.27M in the Lower Mainland.
- Provincial Health Services Authority is hiring and training 30 additional interpreters dedicated to languages spoken by refugee populations.

Provincial Supports (Continued)

- In addition:
 - Wait periods and premiums for Medical Service Plan coverage are waived for all refugees.
 - Each refugee student in public school in BC is funded from the Province's pupil funding formula.
 - All refugees are able to access the Employment Program of BC
 - All refugees are eligible to receive:
 - Child Care Subsidy
 - BC Early Childhood Tax Benefit - up to \$55 per month per child under age 6.
 - BC Basic Family Bonus - up to \$111 per child per month when combined with the National Child Benefit Supplement
 - Student Aid
 - All government-assisted refugees are eligible to apply for housing through the Housing Registry managed by BC Housing.

11. Who do I contact for more information on Syrian refugees?

- Contact the Government of British Columbia Call Centre at: 1-877-952-6914
- Immigrant Services Society of BC at 1-844-447-9742 or refugee.crisis@ISSofBC.org
- For anything related to media around Government Assisted Refugees contact Citizenship and Immigration at 613-952-1650 or cic-media-relations@cic.gc.ca

12. What other supports are in place to help School Districts with Syrian refugee enrolment?

1. The Ministry has a guide for teachers and schools to support students from refugee backgrounds, which is available at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/ell/refugees_teachers_guide.pdf.
2. BC schools have provided English Language Learning (ELL) services for many years. ELL services focus both on teaching English and providing an orientation to the societies and cultures of BC. The Ministry provides supplemental funding to Boards of Education for ELL services and Apprentissage de la langue anglaise services in the Conseil scolaire francophone.

Information about supports for English Language learners can be found at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/support/diverse-student-needs/english-language-learners>