



# St. Elizabeth Parish Refugee Sponsorship Project Working Group Meeting Notes

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## Meeting #3 - November 25, 2015

The meeting was held in the parish hall and commenced at 6:46pm.

### Attendance:

- Anne McNeill
- Bilal Alnajjar
- Cecilia Bowie
- David Darwin
- Diane O’Gorman
- Ed Bolton
- Ingrid Berger
- Jan Golanowski
- Joyce Lundrigan
- Linda Darwin
- Lindsay Moore-Chung
- Lourdes Villena
- Maisie Sirois
- Marlene Pignat
- Mary Dicks
- Nancy Kennedy
- Susan Boyce
- Susan Taylor

### Regrets:

- Fr. Daryold Winkler
- Joanne Spanton
- Melinda Bowie

Lindsay opened the meeting with a prayer for refugees.

### Presentation:

Aisha, a student from All Saints High School, spoke about the experiences of her aunt and cousins who were living in Syria at the time the hostilities broke out. She outlined their condition upon returning to Canada after two years and the effects of the trauma they experienced. Some of the emotions and implications she mentioned were:

- When communicating by phone with her aunt they could not say much about the war as the conversations were being monitored.
- One of her cousins fell behind in his schooling and is now taking summer courses in order to catch up.
- Another cousin with special needs was very traumatized and now, at age 12, still cannot read.
- There was depression and a sense of helplessness.
- The family had to start over, they lost everything.

The presentation was followed by a question and answer period. Aisha was accompanied by her father, so they both provided additional insights:

- Canada is a wonderful, generous country, where you can be yourself and not need to put on pretensions in order to be safe or fit in.
- The health care system provides support and comfort.
- New arrivals experience a fear of the unknown and need time before they can

- relax and settle.
- The fact that electricity is available all the time is a surprise.
- Syria was a country split between city folk and country folk. As refugees, that distinction is less prevalent.
- Youth are very “up” on electronics, especially video games.

Aisha and her dad were given a very warm round of applause before departing.

### **Meeting notes:**

The notes of the October 28, 2015 meeting were approved for distribution.

### **Team reports:**

**Shelter:** Marlene reported on the visit to 1312 Leaside apartment. David showed some pictures he had taken during the tour. There was much dialogue about leasing the apartment for December; including:

- The apartment is large and well located within the community.
- The landlord is offering a reduced rent, speaks Arabic and is willing to be flexible.
- The family would not need interim accommodations - thus saving money.
- Household goods could be delivered directly without the need for costly interim storage.
- There is huge demand for accommodation with the sudden influx of refugees to Ottawa that stock is being snapped up quickly.
- The risk is that the family might be delayed in their arrival or, worse, denied approval to immigrate, meaning a different family would be sponsored.

All agreed with proceeding to rent the apartment as of December 1.

**Finance:** David reviewed the estimated expenses for the project and indicated there were no financial challenges at this point. He also presented a draft family budget indicating the family should be able to manage with the parish’s support and other non-employment income.

**Communications:** The website for the project is nearing completion. The first newsletter seems to have been well received. Preparations for the second newsletter will begin.

**Household goods:** Ideas were shared about how and where to obtain needed items, especially the large ones which would have to be purchased. The challenge is trying to coordinate needs, donations and purchases to avoid duplication and unnecessary purchases. The possible allocation of bedrooms within the apartment will depend upon the family’s desires, so flexibility in sleeping arrangements was needed. Marlene has solicited assistance so as to have coordinators for the main rooms: living area, kitchen, dining, bathroom, bedrooms. Lists of needs and donations will be maintained by these coordinators and decisions on what to purchased based on them.

**Clothing:** Without the clothing and footwear sizes of the family members, little can be done at this point.

**Education and language training:** Lindsay reported on her findings on how the French Catholic board handles settlement of new Canadians. It is essentially the same as the

English Catholic board with the addition of a religion test. If one of the children is deemed to be behind in any subjects, they would most likely be sent to St. Pius High School where specialized programs exist. Transportation would be paid by the OCSB.

Employment: No report.

Health: Susan B. checked on the needed health access points and forms. Not much else can be done until the family is here.

Arrival and reception: No report.

Orientation: David highlighted a couple of points from the newspaper article distributed earlier. Contact has been made with the Multicultural Liaison Officer at Notre Dame who has offered assistance with settlement.

Community resources: Joyce reported on her attendance at the Alliance to End Homelessness conference earlier in the week where Refugee613 outlined their game plan. Task forces on housing, physical health, mental health, volunteer management and donation management have been established. Their focus may be limited to government sponsored refugees however.

Transportation: No report.

**Next meeting:**

There was no desire to meet before January. The necessity and value of meeting then will have to be assessed.

**Meeting evaluation:**

There was general agreement that the presentation and discussions were valuable.

The meeting concluded at approximately 8:35pm with a prayer.

Approved for distribution March 2, 2016.