

March 31, 2016

Dear Lloyd,

You probably remember us from the Muslim Banquet in late December when Paul and I sat with you and Barb. As we were leaving, having had a great evening, you said, "Please get in touch if I can do anything for you." I think we need you now!

Paul and I are very happy that our Canadian government has met its goal of bringing in 25,000 Syrian refugees and hope that some of the problems associated with their living situations (e.g. in Toronto) have been solved. We also hope that their arrival has not prevented the bringing in of BVOR families.

As you are very aware, Guelph has really supported the Refugee Movement, which has been helped greatly by Jim Estill's efforts for the cause. We are representing a group of about 50 people plus from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (the lead organizer of 3 Guelph churches), First Baptist and Knox. . We have also had monetary donations from Duff's Presbyterian Church in Aberfoyle. Our SAH is the Presbyterian Church Headquarters in Toronto.

We are extremely disappointed to hear and read recently that the Canadian government has left the registration centres in both Lebanon and Jordan. We are hoping that you and the Liberal government will find a solution for the backlog so that Syrians can continue to settle in Canada and so that all of the groups who have been working to help them settle can get a family. Our group wants to use the BVOR Syrian refugee programme.

In the early fall of 2015, our churches started getting ready to bring in a family. We decided we could bring in a larger family because in the end we had collected so much money. In anticipation of our family coming, many people spent many hours getting ready and learning about bringing in refugees.

We....

- have raised about \$50 000 in the 3 churches and now the contributors do not know when their money will be used.

- fund raised through various activities like a special Sunday afternoon presentation at Knox, a pancake supper at First Baptist, an upcoming presentation at Holy Rosary where the profits will be split 3 ways.
- organized groups to look after the various needs of the refugee family
- had police checks
- have filled 3 warehouses with furniture, clothing and other things a family needs to begin to settle.
- have checked out the various services in Guelph available to the refugee family
- have met with the Muslim Society and other groups in Guelph
- have attended meetings at the Guelph Refugee Forum, led by Jaya James, at First Baptist and have heard very good speakers, learned lots from others who have had experience with refugees
- have had regular contact with our SAH, PWSD (the Presbyterian World Service and Development) at the National Office in Toronto.
- have an up-to-date bulletin board in our churches with information about refugees, dates of meetings, etc.
- have kept an up-to-date refugee website on the St. Andrews church website.
- have some people who are learning basic Arabic.
- have arranged translators through the Muslim Society who will help us with the language.
- have kept up-to-date with the Guelph Refugee Forum website

As you will know, this preparation has taken the time of many, many volunteers. We have enjoyed meeting and working together with new people, learning new things, and sharing the excitement of getting ready for our refugee family. Because of the amount of money we have raised, our SAH knows we will welcome and support a larger family if one is available. We are looking forward to all that Guelph has planned for its refugee families as time goes on.

- You can imagine why we are so disappointed because of the evident slowdown of Syrian refugee applications.
- Is the extended wait period likely to continue for the foreseeable future?

- If the BVOR system is not working, why can't the government work with us to expedite refugee applicants?
- Could the government return its personnel and reopen the government refugee offices in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan?
- Are Syrian refugees now going to be included in the refugee cap for the year?

We have an appointment booked to meet with you this coming week but wanted you to read this before we met so you would know why we want to talk with you. We look forward to seeing you again.

Sincerely,
Paul and Joanne Harrison

We are also sending a copy of this to Marco Mendicino, MP for Eglinton-Lawrence in Toronto. Marco and his wife are family friends and we would just like him to read this as well.