

**City Council****Notice of Motion**

MM24.10	ACTION			Ward:All
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**Encouraging sponsorship of Syrian refugees - by Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Councillor Joe Mihevc**

*\* Notice of this Motion has been given.*

*\* This Motion is subject to referral to the Community Development and Recreation Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

**Recommendations**

Councillor Joe Cressy, seconded by Councillor Joe Mihevc, recommends that:

1. City Council request the Federal Government to take all necessary steps to ensure that Syrian refugee families, and families from other countries, are processed, and travel arrangement made, so that sponsorship groups ready to host families can welcome them within three months.
2. City Council forward this request to the office of the Prime Minister, as well of the office of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.
3. City Council request City officials and the Mayor to raise this issue in future conversations with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to stress the need to act on this matter.

**Summary**

Over the last number of years, events in Syria and around the world have brought refugee issues to the forefront of the Canadian consciousness. As this international humanitarian crisis escalated, Canadians came together, as we had in the past, to offer support and assistance.

The City of Toronto took critical steps in this effort, and created the Toronto Refugee Resettlement program in fall 2015. The City created the program in support of Syrian refugee resettlement, and staff have been working hard on its implementation since October 2015. The Program included efforts to address local xenophobia and provide financial and organizational support to refugee agencies such as Lifeline Syria, COSTI, and Catholic Crosscultural Services, mobilizing existing supports, facilitating enhancements, and focusing on strategies that created the most impact. Staff worked to coordinate, enhance, and integrate services in partnership with organizations on the ground working to sponsor refugees, and preparing and providing supports as they arrive.

Countless residents across Toronto came forward as private refugee sponsors, and worked together to raise funds and awareness to bring Syrian families to Canada – demonstrating the best of who we are. The private sponsorship program was incredibly successful – and, since the efforts to resettle refugees began, it has been shown that one of the best ways to integrate refugees into Canada is with a group of residents hosting them.

However, as the crisis has continued to escalate over the last 12 months, many Syrian families continue to await refugee status. And, many sponsorship groups are still awaiting families to be processed and approved for travel. We have seen the situation in Aleppo and countless other Syrian cities continue to deteriorate, with disastrous and unprecedented levels of human suffering. It is paramount that we continue working quickly, as we did in 2015, to do whatever we can to alleviate the suffering of countless of Syrian families.

As such, we must call on the Federal Government to ensure that the necessary resources are put in place and steps are taken to provide this critical support to refugee families, and sponsorship is a critical piece in this work.

### **Background Information (City Council)**

Member Motion MM24.10