

Minister McCallum congratulates those working on the ground to support the national project to resettle Syrian refugees in Canada

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Statement

Ottawa, January 29, 2016 – The Hon. John McCallum, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, today issued the following statement:

“I am proud to report to Canadians that our national project to resettle Syrian refugees in Canada is going well. In fact, by this evening, we will have welcomed more than 15,000 Syrian refugees as part of this initiative.

“Our resettlement service provider organizations across the country have been doing tremendous front-line work, day and night over many weeks, to provide immediate supports to refugees once they arrive in Canada.

“From the beginning of this project, we have always been transparent with Canadians regarding both our accomplishments and the challenges that have arisen. We have taken note in recent days of the suggestion that we match private sponsors, who are waiting for their sponsored refugees to arrive in Canada, with government-assisted refugees who are currently in temporary accommodations awaiting permanent housing.

“We have looked into this suggestion, and while we understand that it makes sense on the surface, we have concluded that it is not in the best long-term interests of the refugees.

“The Federal Government has a duty of care toward every individual we have committed to bring in as a Government-Assisted Refugee, and we cannot simply pass that responsibility and commitment on to private sponsors.

“Furthermore, we want to limit the number of times a refugee family needs to be uprooted, and to ensure resettlement agencies do not need to divert energies from their important work providing essential services and orientation to the newcomers to deal with an additional program.

“I notice that some of the leading voices on refugee resettlement, including Janet Dench of the Canadian Council for Refugees and Ratna Omidvar, Chair of Lifeline Syria, have come to similar conclusions.

“I am also encouraged to see that private sponsorship groups and other volunteers are stepping up to provide support and friendship to the refugees as they transition to their new life in Canada.

“As Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, I continue to be proud of what we are all achieving. I note that former UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres described our refugee resettlement program as one of the two best in the world. When I met with Mr. Guterres today, I thanked him for his praise on behalf of all Canadians, and assured him that we will continue with the good work that has earned us this reputation.”

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