

Recommendations from the Meeting with Members of the Syrian Community



January 18, 2018

Content

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Housing**
- 3. Social Development**
- 4. Education**
- 5. Finance**
- 6. Employment**
- 7. Health**

1. Introduction

On January 18, 2018, David Coon, MLA of Fredericton South, met with members of the Syrian community in his riding, along with some of their First Friends. Also in attendance were members of David Coon's staff, and representatives from Social Development. The following are a list of some of the problems identified by the Syrians, and recommendations. Indicated in red are which government or agency would be responsible. David Coon and his staff at the Constituency Office and his Legislative Office will follow up by delivering these recommendations to the respective bodies responsible. The Constituency Office will open files on individual cases and advocate on their behalf with GNB, specifically Social Development. David also met with Matt DeCoursey, MP, the day after the meeting and spoke with him about some of the issues brought up at the meeting.

GNB: Government of New Brunswick

FEDERAL: Federal Government of Canada

MCAF: Multicultural Association of Fredericton

2. Housing (GNB and Federal)

1. **GNB / FEDERAL:** In the short term, there are not many housing options that can accommodate large families such as many of the Syrians have. **In the long term, there is a need to build housing for larger families.**
2. **GNB:** Poor communication with NB Housing. Ex.: Family needs to move because their daughter has allergies but NB Housing offered them a basement apartment, which was not appropriate because of their daughter's allergies. **Need better communication. Files need to be read more carefully when housing options are considered.**
3. **GNB:** Some Syrians in subsidized housing have no case manager, this makes it hard to get answers. **Need better communication. There should be someone available at Social Development or NB Housing with whom Syrians who do not have a case manager can communicate.**
4. **GNB:** Distribution of NB Housing subsidies is uneven and unclear. **Need a more even distribution of subsidized housing. Need more subsidized housing overall. Need clearer guidelines for prioritizing subsidized housing recipients so that Syrians understand why some people get these and others don't.**

3. Social Development (GNB)

1. Very hard to reach people or get a call back from Social Development. Cannot get answers to questions because no one calls back or replies to emails. **Need a case manager who will respond more quickly to calls, and who will reach out regularly to check on how the Syrian clients are doing.**
2. New case manager does not respond well, is difficult to get a hold of. Never reaches out to them to check on how they are doing (as the former case manager had done). Only checks to see what their current income level is. **Recommendation is the same as above.**
3. **Social Development should not claw back job earnings. It is a disincentive to work.**
4. Social Development did not top up someone's EI earnings, which was below income assistance level. - **Will check this with Social Development as it should not have happened.**
5. Social Development takes a percentage of people's earnings, but doesn't take account of any up front costs for small businesses (like food catering or food booth), so the overall benefit/profit is very small or none. **Social Development should not claw back job earnings. Barring this, Social Development should at least take into account when someone is paying upfront costs when earning money.**

4. Education

1. **GNB:** Some of the younger Syrian children are beginning to lose their Arabic language, speaking only English. **Need a centre or school for teaching Arabic language so that Syrian kids don't lose their Arabic. Alternatively, Arabic could be taught in the schools.**
2. Daycare is too expensive (this could be resolved soon with free daycare for low income families).
3. **MCAF:** English Language training: **Would like increased English training at MCAF. More hours, especially for the lower levels.**
4. Drivers Training Instructors: **Syrian women need female instructors. And need female driving testers.**
5. **GNB:** Tutoring help: **older students at high school level need more tutoring available, especially for math.**
6. **GNB:** **High school courses should be available to adults so they can get into university or college that require specific high school courses.**

7. **GNB:** High school age limit is challenging for refugees, some have not had high school education but are over 21. This limit should be more flexible for refugees.

5. Finance

1. Can't get a mortgage to buy a house with only seven months of working. **Banks should have some kind of accommodation for seasonal workers or refugees with less steady work.**
2. **FEDERAL:** Many Syrian families are sending money to families overseas who are still refugees or in Syria. They want to bring these families to Canada, but the process is stalled. They are unable to save money because they are still supporting families left behind. **Need to re-implement and fast-track family reunification for refugees.**
3. **FEDERAL:** Should extend federal support for more than a year. Takes longer than one year to get settled and independent.

6. Employment

1. **GNB / MCAF:** Should have a program that offers training in companies in order to acculturate Syrians to Canadian work culture and standards.
2. **MCAF:** There is a good program through MCAF called Skills Launch for work placement, but it's only available for those 30 years and under. **Should widen this age limit b/c many Syrians looking for work are heads of families and older than 30.**
3. **GNB:** Should have one spot listing all provincial funds and programs for employment (such as incentives for employers to hire newcomers or refugees).
4. **GNB / FEDERAL::** Should have an incentive fund for employers to hire or train refugees.

7. Health

1. **GNB:** Lack of dental care coverage is a big problem. **Dental care needs to be part of medicare coverage or Social Development Health Card.**
2. **GNB:** No family doctor. **Need more family doctors.**
3. **GNB:** Long wait, slow service. **Need better health care access.**