

NORTH OKANAGAN REFUGEE COMMITTEE

Press Release

Housing Leads Needed for Refugee Families

February 18, 2016

The North Okanagan Refugee Committee is currently supporting local sponsorship groups to find leads on temporary accommodation and long term housing for potential incoming Refugee Families.

The Committee was originally formed out of concern for the Syrian Crisis; however, the group will gladly work with people and families from around the world. The goal of the Committee is to welcome, support and empower refugees to rebuild their lives in our region.

Already mobilizing to bring refugee families to the North Okanagan are: the Armstrong Community Group; Trinity United Church; the All Saints Anglican Church, Saint James/Our Lady Catholic Church and the East Hill Community Church. To date, the Committee knows of at least nine groups in various stages of the application process.

One of the biggest hurdles for sponsoring groups is the search for long term accommodation for families moving to our region. Some of the sponsoring groups already have a housing plan in place and have used their own private networks to secure accommodation. Other groups are still in the process of securing housing.

There is also the possibility that Government Assisted Refugees will be arriving in the area very shortly. Vernon and District Immigrant Services are looking for leads with motels and hotels to provide temporary accommodation, with kitchenettes, for up to two weeks.

“Affordable housing is definitely a challenge in our community” says Annette Sharkey from the Social Planning Council. “The Committee is hopeful that there may be leads for housing that are not currently listed in the private rental market. Maybe a resident has

a secondary suite that is currently not being used or a second home they would be willing to rent.”

Vernon and District Immigrant Services will be taking calls from the public regarding housing leads, both temporary and long term. Ideally, the accommodation would be close to downtown, schools, and local amenities or with a bus stop nearby.

“There have been some great suggestions already and we welcome more tips and ideas from local residents” says Carol Wutzke from Vernon and District Immigrant Services. People are encouraged to call 250-542-4177 or email vdiss@shaw.ca.

For more information, please check out the North Okanagan Refugee Committee website:

www.norc.ca

For further comments, please call:

Carol Wutzke, Vernon Immigrant Services, 250-542-4177

Annette Sharkey, Social Planning Council, 250-540-8572