

# United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees #WithRefugees Campaign

## Additional Information

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### Recommendation

That Community and Public Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, sign the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees #WithRefugees campaign Statement of Solidarity, as set out in Attachment 1 of the January 29, 2020, Citizen Services report CR\_7721.

### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the October 16, 2019, Community and Public Services Committee, the following motion was passed:

4. That Administration work with community organizations, agencies and stakeholders and provide a report outlining the implications and impacts of the City becoming a signatory of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees #WithRefugees campaign, how existing municipal programs or services might be enhanced or aligned to assist with issues and concerns of refugees, and what role the provincial and federal governments must play.

### Executive Summary

Administration works with community groups and partners to provide municipal services that support and are accessed by refugees. Community organizations, agencies, and stakeholders have requested that the City become a signatory to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees #WithRefugees campaign. If the City of Edmonton becomes a signatory to the #WithRefugees campaign, this would publicly signal support for the successful settlement and integration of refugees into the Edmonton community. There would be no additional programming or reporting requirements. There are no financial or resource impacts to becoming a signatory, as there are already numerous City programs and initiatives that work to support refugees.

## Report

The City of Edmonton provides services that support and are accessed by refugees. Administration works closely with many community groups and organizations that help ease the process of settlement and integration for refugees.

The community organizations, agencies, and stakeholders that Administration works with on refugee settlement and integration have requested that the City become a signatory to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees #WithRefugees campaign. The statement of solidarity promotes inclusion, openness, and solidarity with refugees. It also demonstrates our commitment to community connectedness. Other Canadian signatories include the cities of Gatineau, Rimouski, Saint-Hyacinthe (Quebec); Drummondville, Guelph, Toronto (Ontario); Prince Albert, Saskatoon (Saskatchewan); Port Moody, Summerland, Surrey, Vancouver, and Victoria (British Columbia). Globally, more than 230 cities have signed onto the #WithRefugees campaign. Edmonton would be the first city in Alberta to sign onto this campaign, and would join the many other cities across the world that make up this global movement.

### Impacts and Implications

By signing on to the #WithRefugees campaign (Attachment 1), the City of Edmonton would publicly signal its support for the successful settlement and integration of refugees into the Edmonton community.

After becoming a signatory to the #WithRefugees campaign, there are no additional programming or reporting requirements from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Signatories are encouraged to promote public awareness about the campaign and share any initiatives or success stories with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to be profiled on #WithRefugees social media.

### Municipal Programs and Services

Becoming a signatory to the #WithRefugees campaign aligns with several City initiatives and policies that support refugee and immigrant communities. These include:

- City Policy C606 - Access to Municipal Services Without Fear
- City Policy C538 - Diversity and Inclusion
- City Policy C529 - Immigration and Settlement
- Multiculturalism Council Initiative

The City of Edmonton and its partners also provide support for refugees through many programs and services (Attachment 2).

Stakeholders have noted that access to housing, health care, and employment are the biggest barriers that refugees face in successful integration. Administration is currently engaging with stakeholders to identify land suitable for newcomer and refugee housing. Administration is also working with the Refugee Health Coalition to identify strategies to better support access to health care.

Administration works closely with the Refugee Serving Agencies Collaborative, which comprises over 20 community and public organizations, including:

- Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies
- ASSIST Community Services
- Catholic Social Services
- Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations
- Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
- Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
- Islamic Family and Social Services Association
- Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative

The Collaborative, which has played a primary role in the successful resettlement of refugees, has expressed their support for the City of Edmonton becoming a signatory to the #WithRefugees campaign. The Collaborative has stated that joining the campaign would affirm an overarching commitment to existing initiatives related to resettlement of refugees and a broader commitment to diversity and inclusion in Edmonton

#### Provincial and Federal Roles

During its last term, the Government of Canada increased the number of refugees admitted into Canada and provided additional legal-aid funding for refugee claimants, refugees and immigrants. The recent mandate letter for the Minister of Immigration (as of December 2019), Refugees and Citizenship Canada prioritized reforms to increase efficiency within the asylum system. It also introduces the creation of a dedicated refugee stream to provide safe haven for human rights advocates, journalists and humanitarian workers at risk.

The Government of Alberta does not have jurisdiction over refugee resettlement directly, but has assisted with other aspects of integration including improved access and enhanced support for employment, health care, and housing. Changes in funding or service in these sectors could directly or indirectly affect refugee communities.

#### **Financial / Budget Implications**

There are no financial or resource impacts to becoming a signatory, as there are already numerous City programs and initiatives that work to support refugees.

## Public Engagement

Public Engagement was not conducted for this report, as Administration assessed that there are no direct service impacts/implications at this time.

## Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

<b>Corporate Outcome(s):</b> Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play.			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Edmontonians are connected to the city in which they live, work and play	Percent of Perception survey respondents who report feeling connected to their community	2017: 47 percent	2018: 45 percent

## Risk Assessment

Risk Element	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score (with current mitigations)	Current Mitigations	Potential Future Mitigations
<b>If recommendation is approved</b>						
Public Perception	The general public is not in favour of the City supporting the campaign.	3 - Possible	2 - Moderate	6 - Low	Administration will continue to educate the public on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, and the contribution refugees make to our city.	N/A
<b>If recommendation is not approved</b>						
Public Perception	Stakeholders and the general public view the City as not being supportive of refugee resettlement in Edmonton.	3 - Possible	2 - Moderate	6 - Low	Administration will continue to work with stakeholders to demonstrate the role the city is currently playing to support refugees and identify how the City can continue to provide support.	N/A

## Attachments

1. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees #WithRefugees Campaign - Statement of Solidarity
2. City of Edmonton Programs and Services Supporting Refugees

**Others Reviewing this Report**

- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- K. Armstrong, Deputy City Manager, Employee Services
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor