

Ministry of Education

Minister

Mowat Block
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2**Ministère de l'Éducation**

Ministre

Édifice Mowat
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Memorandum To: School Board Chairs

From: Minister
Liz Sandals

Date: December 4, 2015

Subject: Syrian Refugee Settlement in Ontario

Ontario is home to one of the most diverse populations in the world, where generations have come to build new lives. With thousands of Syrian refugees expected to come to Ontario, this is a great opportunity to show we are a welcoming and inclusive society.

We are working with the federal government to ensure seamless, co-ordinated and responsive support for refugees arriving in Ontario. The revised federal government plan says they will identify 25,000 Syrian refugees (a mix of privately-sponsored and government-assisted) by December 31, with a target of 10,000 arriving by December 31, and the remainder by the end of February.

Ontario regularly receives and settles 12,000 refugees a year, and we will continue to work with the federal government and their partners over the coming weeks to finalize our emergency response and settlement plans. With added resources from both ourselves and the federal government, we know we can settle the Syrian refugees we receive, and help integrate them into our communities. While we are still working with the federal government on various details, we will provide regular, up-to-date information as we continue to finalize plans.

As you know, we have been working with school boards during the past month to gather information, identify resources already in place, and determine what resources will be required. The ministry, in partnership with the federal government, will ensure that school boards have the resources and support required to successfully integrate Syrian refugees into our education system, including language and mental health supports. While this is the first in ongoing communications on this topic, I am attaching a memo from my deputy minister to directors of education with further details on our plans.

Our track record in helping newcomers adjust to Canada and succeed in school is exceptional. As the OECD report *Ontario, Canada: Reform to Support High Achievement in a Diverse Context* pointed out: “Not only do its students perform well, they perform well despite their socio-economic status, first language or whether they are native Canadians or recent immigrants.” In fact, the gap in student achievement for many of our new students learning English or French has dropped dramatically since 2003.

We are confident that the strategies and programs that have helped deliver those results will do the same for new students from Syria. I look forward to working with you, your boards and staff, and sharing more information as it becomes available.

I also know that many of your colleagues and community members are asking how they can volunteer to help. The following links provide information that can be helpful in understanding how Ontarians can welcome our newcomers, and how we can help:

- <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/index.asp>
- <http://www.ontario.ca/page/syrian-refugees-how-you-can-help>

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz Sandals". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Liz" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Sandals".

Liz Sandals
Minister