

**Syria-Antigonish Families Embrace
Steering Committee Meeting**

October 26, 2021
7:00-8:30 pm
Online

Present: Mark Ballard, Mary Ballard, Jack Beaton, Bronwen Cooke, Harry Daemen, Marla Gaudet, Lucille Harper, Othman Soufan, Peter Wade
Regrets: Sheila Sears

Minutes

Agenda Item: Sponsorship Request Criteria

Discussion:

At this time SAFE has 11 spaces available for 2021 that have yet to be filled.

A request has come from a group in Truro and a request has come from Yogesh Ghore to sponsor a family from Afghanistan.

Agenda Item: Expressions of Interest to Sponsor Refugee Families

Discussion:

At this time we have a limit of 10 applications to be submitted at one time. As one family arrives we submit an application for a new family. In addition, requests will come in for 2022 for those wishing to be put on the waiting list. These requests will need to be assigned an order of which family is applied for next.

A suggestion was made that we decrease the limit of submitted applications to 5. The concern is that as families start to arrive again, we could have a large number of families arrive in one year, exceeding our capacity to house and support these families. We must consider the workload of SAFE and the capacity of Antigonish (housing, family doctors, English classes). In addition, we must consider other unexpected events, eg. Another sponsorship group folds and SAFE as SAH must take responsibility for their family; SAFE must take on more responsibility than expected for a family that has been co-sponsored.

Can we create a separate track—co-sponsored families in which Antigonish families take on full responsibility.

Frustration is felt with IRCC as no updates are given and there is no communication about timelines given after the confirmation from SAFE has been submitted. Predictability and communication are lacking so it becomes impossible to plan.

A big issue is related to our capacity as volunteers. We need to re-energise people to help settle people in Antigonish and we need to recruit more people to help settle people.

Actions:

We will continue to evaluate the limit of no more than 10 as we see how quickly families arrive and as we make more decisions about families to come.

A discussion will be had with Sean Fraser about the uncertainty of timing, the need for more communication and predictability around the arrival of families.

Lucille will make necessary changes to the Expressions of Interest to Sponsor Refugee Families and will send to the Steering Committee for approval.

Agenda Item: Sponsorship Selection Criteria—SAFE as Sponsorship Group

Discussion:

Selection Criteria is outlined in the preamble of the Request Form.

Before an application is submitted, we need to be clear with co-sponsoring families and with arriving families the expectations of settlement.

A proposed process:

- family submits request
 - SAFE reviews, accepts request provisionally
 - conversation with family in Antigonish about what co-sponsorship is, what the expectations of SAFE are
 - submit application to IRCC
 - application accepted by IRCC
 - following the embassy interview, SAFE has a conversation with the family overseas about expectations for settlement—their expectations, our expectations of what co-sponsorship means
 - receive confirmation of arrival
 - before submitting confirmation of arrival, SAFE meets with the co-sponsoring family again
 - meet with co-sponsorship family at months 3, 6, 9 and 12
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Agenda Item: Sponsorship Selection Criteria—SAFE as a SAH

Discussion:

Working as a SAH extends our ability to bring more families without the work of settlement

Actions:

We will discuss this at a later date.

Agenda Item: Pre-Arrival Sponsorship Responsibilities: Securing Housing and Covering Rent Until Family Arrival

Discussion:

SAFE has been covering rent of reserved apartments/houses until the family arrival. There is concern that we have limited funds of donated money. We need to consider carefully how we use these funds.

Should the Constituent group be responsible for covering extra costs or the co-sponsoring family? The danger is that co-sponsoring families may refuse to rent an apartment if they know they will have to pay for it.

Actions:

A discussion will be had with Sean Fraser about getting more clarity from IRCC on the timing of arrivals.

Bronwen will create a draft policy describing the process of adding a contingency of \$2,000-\$3,000 to each sponsorship cost to cover extra expenses, such as apartment rental before arrival, dental work, a pregnancy.

Agenda Item: Sulaiman Brothers

Actions:

Lucille will ask Sheila about money available for the 1 year window, sponsorship of wife and children.

Agenda Item: Almasri Family

Discussion:

Details are falling into place.

Agenda Item: Yogesh Ghore's Request to Sponsor a Family from Afghanistan

Discussion:

Yogesh has made a request for SAFE to sponsor a family currently in Afghanistan.

Actions:

Bronwen will draft a response to Yogesh, indicating that SAFE is willing to support a committee of volunteers that Yogesh gathers, if money can be raised by Yogesh's colleague, Linda Jones.

Agenda Item: Next Meeting

November 9—Harry will confirm an inperson meeting at St. Andrews Community Centre.
