



Prince George Share Hope Refugee Support Society
C/O Roman Catholic Diocese of Prince George
6500 Southridge Avenue
Prince George, BC V2N 5P9

March 13, 2024

Mayor and Council
City of Prince George
1100 Patricia Blvd
Prince George, BC V2L 3V9

Dear Mayor Simon Yu and Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to summarise the work that has been done to date, and the next steps that can be taken.

As we noted in our presentation, the Prince George for Ukraine collaboration led by Share Hope has assisted 347 displaced Ukrainians within 136 families to settle across Northern BC since the latest invasion of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022. As of March 12, 2024, 268 recently displaced Ukrainians are making a home in our city with many more across our region. From those that originally arrived in Prince George 33 have since moved on to other opportunities within Canada, and 8 have returned to Ukraine.

Strong community support has characterised Prince George's response to displaced Ukrainians. Volunteers have helped Ukrainians to find and secure for them accommodations, furnish apartments, facilitate their new documentation needs, secure jobs, and journey with them as they adjust to new cultural norms. Generous local donations have allowed for financial assistance where required. There has been strong uptake of language training at CNC and IMSS. Limited funding and tools to assist in mental health counselling have been secured, and Ukrainians are being encouraged to use these options. The key to the success our community has achieved in welcoming these new residents has been the effective collaborations within our community and its service agencies in working together to ensure effective responses to needs.

The federal government has imposed a deadline of March 31, 2024 for entry into Canada by Ukrainians to be eligible for the various supports and exemptions under the special *Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel* (CUAET) measures. Entry to Canada after March 31, 2024, will require persons to meet and qualify through the general requirements of all applications into Canada and they will not be eligible for the supports and exemptions under the CUAET measures. Travel here may be possible as a visitor without a work permit. As a result, we anticipate a very dramatic drop-off of new arrivals to Canada after that date. Thus, those moving to Prince George or our region as a displaced Ukrainian will tend to be those who relocate from elsewhere in Canada.

Two years into our collective effort, it becomes clear that further help is still required to support our newest residents, especially in language training and finding employment.

- Recent and current arrivals are typically from eastern Ukraine or currently occupied territories in which very little English is spoken, and so their language skills are lower than the typical arrivals in 2022. Securing employment requires a level of basic English that most do not have, and so language training becomes essential.
- Employment services through our local office of WorkBC are very helpful and are frequently utilized. At the same time, guidance and introductions are important in helping someone from a different culture to secure employment. The unique challenges presented and higher volumes of arrivals exceed the capacity of agencies and our volunteers to respond effectively.

Prince George Share Hope is working in close collaboration with Oasis Settlement Services, Immigrant & Multicultural Services Society (IMSS), and WorkBC Centre Prince George to develop a broader **Help For Newcomers Program** which will be tailored to address the service gaps identified for these Ukrainians and other newcomers. It will be especially important for this program to be active over the summer months as a bridge, or supplement, to regularly offered programs which are often curtailed then.

On behalf of this working group Prince George Share Hope Refugee Support Society will be applying to funders to secure responses to both the language and employment training needs. A letter of support from the City of Prince George would be most appreciated, along with any guidance and assistance that you can provide.

Sincerely,

Eva Gillis – Chair

Dick Mynen – Donations and Finances

Prince George Share Hope

Cc: Charles Scott – Team Lead - Prince George for Ukraine

Rose Tohme – Ministry Team Lead - Oasis Settlement Services

Ravi Saxena – Executive Director – IMSS

Michael Pluzhnikov – Employment Consultant – WorkBC Center Prince George

Prince George For Ukraine is a volunteer group assisting those displaced by the war in Ukraine. Its members are representatives of all levels of government (both Members of Parliament, both Members of the Legislative Assembly, Prince George City Council, the Lheidli T'enneh Nation, the Regional District of Fraser Fort George) and community organizations (Yalanka Ukrainian Cultural Society, St. George's Ukrainian Catholic Church, Prince George Share Hope, Oasis Settlement Services, Prince George Community Foundation, Immigrant & Multicultural Services Society and the Prince George Chamber of Commerce).