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World Refugee Day

Mr. Forbes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring attention to World Refugee Day. This day is recognized by the United Nations on June 20th, and this year I was delighted to attend the occasion at the Saskatoon Open Door office.

Mr. Speaker, the Secretary-General of the UN [United Nations] states, and I quote:

Refugees are people like anyone else. Like you and me, they led ordinary lives before becoming displaced, and their biggest dream is to be able to live normally again. Let us recall our common humanity, celebrate tolerance and diversity, and open our hearts to refugees everywhere.

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees estimate that more than 4 million people have fled conflicts in Syria, and already in 2015 more than 300,000 people have made the treacherous crossing of the Mediterranean. These numbers continue to increase as more people seek refuge after fleeing their homeland to escape violence and unrest.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has set a target to bring more than 11,000 Syrian refugees, but so far only 2,000 have been successfully processed. Mr. Speaker, many Saskatchewan residents are calling on the provincial and federal governments to urgently welcome refugees. In September, rallies were held in both Regina and Saskatoon.

I want to thank the efforts of those in our province advocating for refugees. I also want to thank the Regina and Saskatoon Open Door Societies, the Saskatchewan Intercultural Association, and the Saskatoon Refugee Coalition for their tireless work. Mr. Speaker, we must continue to offer compassion and assistance to refugees in their time of need. Thank you very much.