



Private Sponsorship of Refugees In Nova Scotia

December 2011

Introduction

Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) is a grassroots, volunteer-based program. It allows Canadians to come together and collectively raise the necessary support with which to sponsor a refugee. This process helps to reunite families torn apart by war and conflict. In turn, Canadians broaden their understanding of world cultures and conflicts. In response, PSR groups offer home-grown international humanitarian assistance by helping to improve the retention and integration of refugees to our province.

Canada is the only country in the world that has a system for Private Refugee Sponsorship. We should be proud of this fact, and work to ensure that we develop and improve this system for the reunification of families who have been divided by war and conflict.

Who is a refugee?

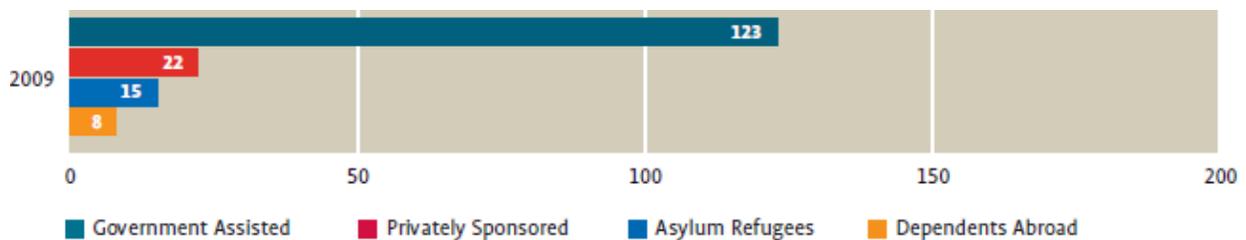
No one is a refugee by choice. Refugees can be anyone; rich or poor; male or female; doctor or farmer. A refugee is someone who has a well founded fear of persecution based on their **race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion**, is outside of their country of origin and due to that fear is unable or unwilling to return.

At the end of 2009, there were 43.3 million forcibly displaced people including **15.2 million refugees** throughout the world.

All refugees in the world have one thing in common; they cannot live peacefully, in safety and dignity in their home-country.

How do refugees come to Canada?

Refugees in Nova Scotia, 2009



Source: CIC Data Cube

In Canada, there were 5,204 landed refugees in 2009 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010).

Inland processing

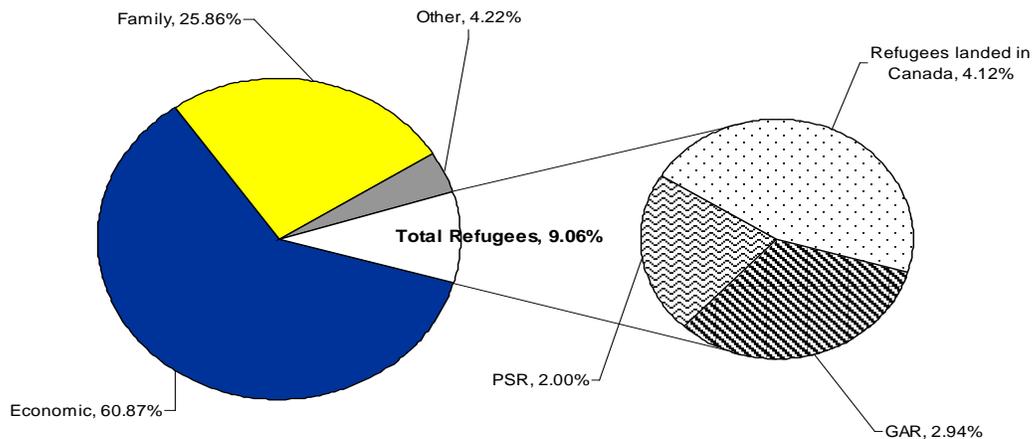
A person who has arrived in Canada and seeks the protection of the Canadian government is called a refugee claimant.

Overseas processing

A person who is outside of Canada and is determined to be a refugee according to the criteria established by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) will be processed overseas. For example, they will have their interviews, medical, security and criminality checks conducted before coming to Canada. These refugees come to Canada in 3 different ways:

- **Government Assisted Refugees (GAR)** – referred to Canada through the UNHCR. They receive income support from the Canadian government for one year after arrival. The government contracts Settlement Agencies such as Immigrant Settlement & Integration Services (ISIS) to provide orientation and settlement support to the refugees.
- **Private Refugee Sponsorship (PSR)** – a group of individuals agrees to sponsor and support persons, determined to be refugees within international and Canadian criteria. Sponsors provide financial support, as well as orientation, settlement and emotional support to the refugees for one year after arrival. During this time, almost all government-financed settlement services are available to the refugees; however privately sponsored refugees may not access social assistance because of their sponsor’s commitments.
- **Joint Assisted Sponsorship (JAS)** - is a program partnership between CIC and sponsorship groups to resettle refugees who are identified as having special needs. Under the JAS program, government provides financial support while groups provide settlement assistance for up to 24 months.

Permanent Residents to Canada by Category, 2009 (CIC)



ISIS supports the belief that:

- All of us are enriched when we welcome refugees
- Uprooted refugees are entitled to a safe place to settle
- *Families torn apart by conflict are entitled to be reunited*

What Are The Benefits Of Private Refugee Sponsorship?

- PSR automatically establishes a network of community support
- People who participate in sponsoring refugees gain practical experience and awareness about issues facing refugees
- Members from the wider community are committed to the well-being and integration of newly arrived people
- Refugees that come through private sponsorship have a strong rate of retention to the province thanks to the direct connections with the people and organizations involved in their settlement

Sponsor Testimonials from PSR Groups

"The family members we sponsored are resilient, charming, and driven. Our group, Friends For Refugees, learned as much from them as we did from the process of sponsorship."

*-Liz McBeth
Member of Friends for Refugees*

"It was a lot more work than I thought it would be, but looking back on the refugee sponsorship experience, I am happy that I did it. It's amazing to think that some effort on my part led one family to re-unite with their loved ones. I was able to be part of an effort that allowed one family to wake up each morning and not have to worry about their safety. It makes me feel a little better about myself."

*-Jen Powley
Member of Friends for Refugees*

What Are Family-Linked Sponsorships?

- **Family-linked Sponsorships are a type of Private Refugee Sponsorship** that allow people to name a friend or family member who is a refugee for private sponsorship
- Family-linked sponsorships are a valuable mechanism to reunite families separated by conflict or persecution
- In Family-linked sponsorship the network of support includes family members based in Canada, who have already gone through a process of resettlement
- With an increase in the family-linked sponsorships, we will see refugees become settled more quickly in our community.

There is a growing need to assist families in being re-united with loved ones who are refugees overseas. Family-linked sponsorships are increasing in demand in Nova Scotia which has led ISIS to work with community partners in developing new ways to secure the protection of more refugees and to help them to settle in Nova Scotia.

How Is ISIS Involved In Supporting Private Refugee Sponsorship?

In September 2011, ISIS became a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) in the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. This Federal Program allows SAH's to work with groups to undertake the direct sponsorship of refugees still abroad. ISIS provides information and support to groups looking to undertake the commitment to privately sponsor refugees. It is a concrete way to engage the community in the humanitarian and compassionate work of assisting refugees in Nova Scotia to be reunited with their families and loved ones. Becoming a SAH is an exciting new chapter in ISIS' history.

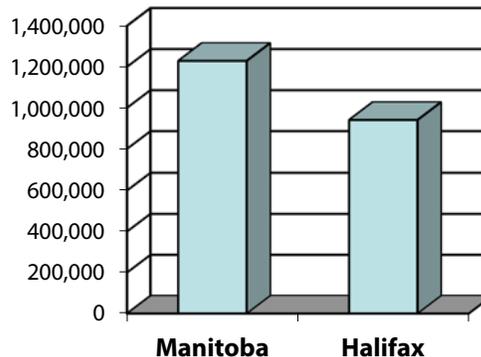
“Through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program over **180,000** refugees, who would not have otherwise been able to come to Canada, were resettled between 1979 and 2002.”
(Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, 2011)



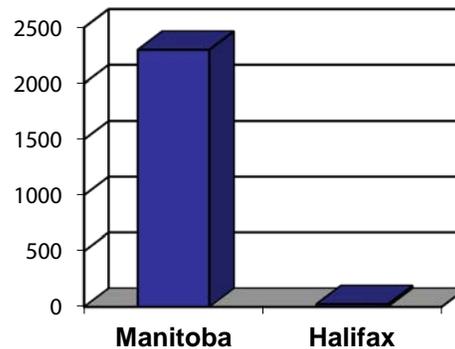
A family arrives at Halifax Stanfield International Airport, greeted by members of their private sponsorship group, Friends for Refugees.

Comparing Manitoba and Nova Scotia

Population (2009)



PSR Cases Submitted (2008)



What Is The Current Overseas Situation For

Refugees Waiting To Come To Canada?

Refugees overseas face unacceptably long processing delays. Each year, the government of Canada finalizes fewer private sponsorship applications than are submitted, leading to an ever growing backlog of cases. Many immigration offices around the world are under-resourced to serve the large amount of applications they receive.

- Currently there is a backlog of 25,000 PSR applications globally
- The Nairobi visa office serves 18 countries and nearly 7 million km²; they process a large number of applications and currently have a backlog of 9,000 applications, resulting in a 6 year wait for an application to be processed.

The Canadian government's response to the backlog:

- A newly imposed 'cap' on the number of applications that can be submitted globally, as well as caps on specific visa posts (for example: there will be restrictions on the numbers of PSR applications that can be submitted to Nairobi, Cairo, and other visa posts) starting in 2012.

How Can You Be Involved?

- If you are a member of a community group, union, ethno-cultural association, faith group, or neighbourhood you can sponsor refugees; for more information contact ISIS.
- If you know someone in Nova Scotia trying to sponsor their refugee family overseas and you want to help, contact ISIS for ideas.
- Learn more about sponsoring refugees at www.rstp.ca.

Involved community members are not only more aware of issues affecting refugees, but also contribute to the creation of a community which values the inclusion and protection of refugees. Private Refugee Sponsorship can be a **life-changing** experience.

"The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program is a vital expression of Canadian values—we do it because we care," said Minister Kenney. "Through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, Canadians play an active part in sponsoring refugees and helping them find protection and build a new life here in Canada." – Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism (Mar 18, 2011 CIC Press Release)

Useful Links

www.rstp.ca

www.ccrweb.net

www.cic.gc.ca

www.unhcr.org

www.amnesty.org

Data Sources

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