

SPONSORING REFUGEES

FACTS FOR CANADIAN GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Employment and Immigration Canada  
July 1979

Each year the Canadian government agrees to accept a certain number of the world's persecuted and displaced people for resettlement in this country.

Apart from those accepted under this annual refugee resettlement plan, there are always many others in need of our help who are equally capable of becoming self-supporting members of our society if they can be assured of the friendship and support of concerned Canadians.

Canadian groups and organizations who are prepared to act as sponsors, supplying the more personalized settlement services needed by displaced and persecuted people, will have a direct influence on the total number of refugees that can come to Canada. This is because refugees assisted in this way are admitted over and above those planned for in the government's annual refugee resettlement plan.

#### WHO CAN BE SPONSORED

The Refugee Sponsorship Program applies to two groups of people:

Convention Refugees - those having a well-founded fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and

Special Designated Classes - those displaced by emergency situations, and others for whom the Canadian public feels a special humanitarian concern.

The program includes only those refugees who are still abroad. The means by which refugees already in Canada may be assisted are discussed on page nine of this brochure.

## WHO CAN SPONSOR

Canadians can enter into sponsorship agreements with the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) in either of two different ways:

- Local groups of at least five Canadian citizens or permanent residents (landed immigrants), 18 years of age or older, and local legally incorporated organizations may sign individual agreements at Canada Immigration Centres in their own communities, or
- National organizations with a humanitarian tradition may sign a comprehensive agreement with the Minister covering all their member groups across the country.

## HOW SPONSORSHIP WORKS

Sponsoring groups or organizations offer to assist a refugee or refugee family for one year starting from the date of their arrival in the community.

Sponsors may specify the number of people and the ethnic groups they wish to help. It is also possible to name a particular family, but sponsoring groups should remember that locating specific refugees is sometimes difficult and may take longer.

Whether participating on their own or under a national agreement with their parent organization, sponsors agree to provide certain services, which the federal government will supplement, as follows:

## SPONSORING GROUP SERVICES

Material Assistance - furnished accommodation and household effects, food, clothing and incidental expenses for one year.

Housing may be in the residence of one of the sponsors or elsewhere, but it must be adequate to accommodate the number of people in the refugee family.

Usually refugees are able to support themselves before the end of their first year in Canada, in which case sponsoring groups will not have to provide as much material assistance as in the initial months. However, if refugees start to work and are laid off before the end of the first year, groups will resume their responsibilities for the remainder of the period.

Sponsoring refugees cannot claim welfare support during their first twelve months in Canada.

Health Care. Refugees are eligible for coverage under provincial hospital and medical insurance plans as soon as they arrive in Canada, but it is up to the sponsoring group to ensure that they register immediately and that the necessary premiums are paid during the first twelve months. In provinces where there is a waiting period for coverage, sponsors are required to arrange private insurance or pay health care costs until the provincial plan comes into effect.

General Orientation and Moral Support. The welcome for refugee families will start when sponsors meet them on arrival in the community and explain the role the group will be playing in helping them get established.

Sponsors will assist refugees to adjust to their new surroundings, advising them of the various community and government services available to them, helping the working family members find employment, introducing them to Canadian shopping habits, transportation and entertainment, as well as schools for their children.

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) will supplement the services provided by sponsors, in the following ways:

Transportation Loans - interest-free loans for transportation from overseas to final destination in Canada, to be repaid by refugees when they become self-supporting.

Temporary Medical Assistance - emergency hospital, medical and dental care in the interval between admission to Canada and arrival at final destination.

Employment Services - job counselling and placement services from the Canada Employment (CEC) in the community.

Language Training Courses - the CEC may also arrange full-time language courses for refugees entering the labour force, if their lack of English or French prevents placement in employment. Sponsors continue to provide material assistance for the duration of the course.

Occupational Training - refugees may be enrolled in full-time courses, if required and available, to upgrade job skills. Trainees are provided with living allowances to be supplemented by the sponsoring group.

## HOW SPONROS CAN PREPARE

Groups and organizations should plan to have on hand at least \$1200 for each refugee they sponsor. Refugees usually become self-supporting within four to six months of their arrival in Canada. However, it may take longer for some individuals, and sponsors should have the capacity for generating additional funds if necessary. Of course, sponsoring groups that can supply material assistance and support services from the resources of their own membership will reduce their financial outlay accordingly.

Members of the sponsoring group must be prepared to devote their time on a regular basis to help refugees learn about Canada and get settled in their new community. They have undergone a traumatic experience and will need time to adjust and learn a completely new way of life. Sponsors should locate interpreters who speak the refugees' language, find a family doctor and arrange other essential services. Also, resource groups in the community such as ethnic and immigrant service associations, as well as other local sponsors, can provide useful guidance in easing the cultural transition of refugees when they first arrive in Canada.

The Canada Employment and Immigration Commission will maintain its interest in the resettlement of sponsored refugees and will, from time to time, contact sponsor concerning their progress. In the meantime, if groups encounter difficulties, they can call upon the expertise of officers at the Canada Employment Centre of the Canada Immigration Centre in their community.

#### AGREEMENTS WITH LOCAL GROUPS

Local groups or organizations, not covered by a national agreement with a parent body, may enter into individual sponsorship agreements with the CEIC at their nearest Canada Immigration Centre (CIC).

When groups apply at the CIC they will be asked to supply information on the make-up, size and history of their group, its financial resources and the number of members available to provide counselling or other social assistance for refugees.

Sponsors should be prepared to show proof of citizenship or residence, and evidence of length of employment, salary and other resources available to the group. In addition, the group should have a plan outlining the members who will be responsible for meeting the refugees, helping them find work and housing, and so on.

To be approved as sponsors, groups must be able to demonstrate that they are able to arrange for the reception and settlement of refugees and that they have sufficient funds and expertise to provide the required lodging, care and maintenance. Adult members of the same family may act as sponsors by they must have proof of adequate resources and be able to carry out their sponsorship responsibilities; otherwise it may be advisable to increase the number of sponsors in the group.

#### AGREEMENTS WITH NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Any recognized national organization with a history of involvement in social assistance programs may sign a formal Letter of Agreement with the Minister of Employment and Immigration, assuming responsibility for refugee sponsorships undertaken by its constituent groups. Under such arrangements the legal responsibility lies with the parent body but the actual support and services are provided by its membership in local communities.

Such agreements make it possible for large national organizations to undertake multiple refugee sponsorships with a minimum of time and paperwork because evaluation procedures will not be required for each group.

#### Constituent Group Involvement

When a national organization signs a sponsorship agreement, copies will be sent to all Canada Immigration Centres across the country. Then, sponsoring groups of the national organization can approach their local CIC, present a letter of approval from the parent body, and sign the necessary sponsorship documents.

## SPONSORSHIP PROCEDURES

Eligible groups will be required to complete a form providing the basic information necessary for matching the group with a refugee family. When suitable refugees have been identified, information about the family will be provided to the sponsors throughout the CIC where they made their initial application. This information will include the number of people in the family, their ages, what languages they speak, and some basic facts about their educational and working backgrounds.

The sponsoring group will then decide whether they are willing to assist the refugee family. Although every effort will be made to select the requested refugees, this may not always be possible and sponsors should be prepared to be flexible when deciding if they will accept a particular family. When sponsors agree to accept certain refugees, their group representatives will sign a form naming the sponsored individuals and outlining the assistance to be provided.

When the sponsored refugees meet medical and background requirements abroad, the CIC will advise the group of their travel arrangements.

### Time Involved

The time needed to identify and transport sponsored refugees to Canada varies depending on the situation in the country where the refugees are and whether immigration officers must travel to remote camps to interview them.



From the time the sponsorship application is submitted it usually takes between one and three months for refugees to be processed and brought to Canada. For this reason, sponsors should not make final commitments for accommodation or employment until advised by the CIC that the refugee family is destined to their group. However, when they are so advised, sponsors should be prepared to act as soon as the family arrives in their community.

#### YOUR COMMITMENT TO SPONSOR

Refugees are people in trouble and making a commitment to help them is a serious responsibility that should not be taken lightly. Most refugees become self-reliant and financially independent within four to six months of their arrival in Canada. But long after this, even after your legal commitment has expired the refugees you have sponsored will continue to need your friendship and moral support to successfully adapt to new surroundings and a different culture. In fact, the amount and quality of your assistance can mean the difference between their success and failure in building a new life for themselves in Canada.

## QUESTIONS SPONSORS FREQUENTLY ASK

How can interested Canadians who are not part of a sponsoring group help refugees?

They can -

- get in touch with other interested individuals, community or church groups, and form a sponsoring group. More than one group may wish to join together for the purpose of sponsoring;
- contact the local immigrant aid organization, appropriate ethnic group, or Canada Employment Centre, and volunteer to help refugees who have just arrived in Canada; or
- contact the local Canada Immigration Centre regarding substantial offers of material assistance such as accommodation, job offers, furniture in good condition, so that they can benefit refugees soon to arrive in Canada.

What is the sponsoring group's legal responsibility for a sponsored refugee?

- The group undertakes to provide material assistance and moral support to the refugees they sponsor for a one year period. In the unlikely event that the refugee contracts excessive debts, or is sued or arrested, the group will not be held responsible.

## WHO TO CONTACT

For further information concerning the sponsorship of refugees contact your nearest Canada Immigration Centre. Persons who are not sure which office they should call can obtain this information by calling the appropriate number listed below.

|                                     |                         |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <u>British Columbia</u> - Vancouver | (604) 669-2722          |
| <u>Alberta</u> - Edmonton           | (403) 425-5959          |
| <u>Saskatchewan</u> - Regina        | (306) 569-6273          |
| <u>Manitoba</u> - Winnipeg          | (204) 949-3755          |
| <u>Ontario</u> - Toronto Central    | (416) 369-3546          |
| Toronto East                        | 966-8230                |
| Toronto West                        | 239-8491 - Extension 43 |
| Mississauga                         | 270-7400                |
| <u>Quebec</u> - Montreal            | (514) 283-5462          |
| <u>New Brunswick</u> - Fredericton  | (506) 452-3711          |
| <u>Nova Scotia</u> - Halifax        | (902) 426-6140          |
| <u>P.E.I.</u> - Charlottetown       | (902) 892-4219          |
| <u>Newfoundland</u> - St. John's    | (709) 737-4071          |

Cet exposé est aussi disponible en français sous le titre "Parrainage des réfugiés".