

## **Refugee Sponsorship FAQ**

### **Who is a Refugee?**

In the words of a refugee, “To be a refugee means you are an exile. It is a very different experience from being a migrant. Many migrants have come here to get a better standard of living. We have come here because our lives are in danger!” The UN Convention on Refugees offers this definition: “Someone who has suffered or fears persecution in their home country because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion and who flees to another country seeking protection, is a refugee.”

### **What is the Private Sponsorship Program?**

The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program is a program of Citizenship and Immigration Canada that is a public-private partnership. Sponsored refugees whose cases are successful come to Canada as Permanent Residents, having been duly processed by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and sponsored by sponsorship groups, most often faith-based communities. From the Canadian Council for Refugees: “Private sponsors provide financial support and settlement assistance for the refugees they sponsor, usually for one year after arrival.”

### **Do we sponsor specific types of refugees?**

Refugees come from all places – rich, poor, religious, atheist, every faith and ethnicity, culture, sub-culture, orientation, liberal, conservative; war, violence and persecution do not discriminate. If you are a refugee, you are a refugee, and in need of protection. Are some in need of more protection, or more urgent protection than others – yes. Organizations such as the UNHCR and the Government of Canada do assessments and try to respond appropriately. The Anglican Diocese of Niagara resettles refugees from any situation (meeting the criteria of the Geneva Convention), regardless of faith, orientation or any other identifier. We do not focus especially on one group or another. We understand it as a Gospel imperative to minister to all who are in need. We are not seeking to proselytize, or to convert newcomers (refugees), this is actually strictly forbidden when it comes to working with refugees. All refugees are in need, and it is on a case by case basis that urgent protection needs are determined by immigration authorities.

### **How much does refugee sponsorship cost?**

Refugee Sponsorship means caring and providing for the well-being of newcomers for their first year in Canada. The Government provides a cost table to help estimate, but exact figures can be challenging to pinpoint because of variables such as the availability and cost of affordable housing. The estimated cost for a family of 4 is \$27,000 for a year (5 - \$29,700; 6 - \$32,500). Again, variables will likely affect those amounts, but those are good numbers to start with. This covers monthly living costs – food and housing, clothing, transportation, incidentals.

### **Is it safe to bring refugees here?**

All Sponsored Refugees are screened and must clear security checks before they can be granted Permanent Resident status. If they do not clear the checks, they are not accepted for resettlement in Canada. The checks are carried out by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CSIS, RCMP, and other security and intelligence agencies around the globe. All people immigrating to Canada are subject to this kind of screening. To the best of our knowledge, no refugee coming to Canada (over 200,000 privately sponsored) has ever been the subject of an investigation related to national security or terrorism since the inception of the Private Sponsorship Program.

### **What kind of health care do refugees receive?**

When Privately Sponsored Refugees arrive in Canada they are permanent residents, and are eligible for provincial health care coverage. The Interim Federal Health program currently affords minimal benefits to ensure coverage in emergencies (Basic Coverage: Basic services are covered only until the beneficiary qualifies for provincial or territorial health insurance. Public Health or Public Safety (PHPS) Prescription Drug Coverage: which includes prescription medications and related products, only if required to prevent or treat a disease posing a risk to public health or to treat a condition of public safety concern). The incoming Canadian government has committed to reversing previous cuts made to the IFH program, restoring coverage for prescriptions, mobility devices and trauma-related therapy. Coverage last for 1 calendar year from the date of arrival.

### **Who pays for the travel costs?**

When sponsored refugees come to Canada through either the Government Assisted stream or the Private Sponsorship stream, the government works with its own offices abroad, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN refugee agency) and the International Organization for Migration to organize the necessary medical testing and travel arrangements. The government pays for these up-front, but considers the costs to be a loan that the newcomers are expected to repay after arriving in Canada.

### **Are refugees able to work? Do sponsors need to find them employments?**

It is the responsibility of the sponsor to make sure that newcomers have access to all necessary resources to find employment. As soon as is reasonably expected, a newcomer will be encouraged to look for work to become self-sufficient. As a permanent resident, resettled refugees are fully entitled to work. They will need to have adequate language skills for this to happen. In the event that the newcomers are not self-sufficient by the end of the year of sponsorship, they would be eligible for social security benefits (welfare) as long as they meet the eligibility requirements.

### **Additional Resources**

- 140th Anniversary Refugee Sponsorship Initiative: <http://niagaraanglican.ca/140refugee/>
- Refugee Sponsorship Basics: <http://niagaraanglican.ca/140refugee/docs/the-basics-refugee-sponsorship-initiative.pdf>
- Expression of Interest Form: <http://niagaraanglican.ca/140refugee/docs/refugee-sponsorship-expression-of-interest-fillable-form.pdf>
- The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program: <http://www.rstp.ca/en/resources/information-sheets/>
- Sponsorship Costs: [http://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Fact\\_Sheet\\_7\\_3\\_Sponsorship\\_Cost\\_Table\\_Sept2014.pdf](http://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Fact_Sheet_7_3_Sponsorship_Cost_Table_Sept2014.pdf)