



## The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association

15 December 2015

Dear Minister McCallum,

The SAH Council, the representative body of the Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association, wishes to express its appreciation to you for meeting with us on November 25th when we were in Ottawa to meet with staff of the Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada department. We thank you for acknowledging and expressing gratitude for the important role private sponsors play in refugee resettlement to Canada, and for their exceptional effort to welcome Syrian refugees. We were also encouraged by the frank and open dialogue and hope that this will continue with you, as well as the department, going forward.

We talked about a variety of things during the meeting. We want to take the opportunity to emphasize the following:

- Appreciation for the change in name of the department to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada that signals a higher concern and priority for the plight of refugees in your Ministry. As we advocated in our meeting with you, refugees and other humanitarian immigration need to be a larger proportion of the overall immigration plan for Canada.
- Expansion of the Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) program to include a much larger and wider variety of cases. The demand from Sponsorship Agreement Holders and from members of the general public is far greater than the supply of BVOR cases. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of welcoming the participation of the general public in refugee resettlement through this program. We urge you to give this your immediate attention or risk alienating a significant portion of the population and eroding the tremendous goodwill that now exists.
- Restoration of full IFH for all refugees. You have said, and it was said again by Minister of Health Jane Philpott yesterday, that all refugees will have access to full IFH coverage. We urge you to implement this promise as soon as possible.
- The elimination of travel loans for Syrian refugees. While we applaud this decision, we appeal to you to implement this for all refugees and avoid the development of a two-tier situation that is dependent on nationality. We understand that you will be considering recommendations emerging out of an evaluation of the travel loan program. We encourage you to make a decision that is fair to all refugees and is mindful of the need to reduce obstacles, like travel loans can be, to successful integration.

1 of 2

- The need for greater, more timely and clearer communication to the private sponsoring community regarding all matters that pertain to private sponsors. Inherent in this is the need for more consultation and collaboration with the SAH Council. Better communication and consultation is key to restoring confidence and trust in the Government.
- A balanced and fair refugee program that is sufficiently resourced to ensure refugees are brought to safety quickly and expeditiously as the Syrian experience illustrates is possible.

We look forward to a productive partnership with you and your department and stand ready to discuss these and other matters with you at any time.

Sincerely,

Brian Dyck

Aslam Daud

Tom Denton

Ellen Erickson

Paulette Johnson

Scott McLeod

Susan Nye-Brothers

Rebecca Walker