



The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association

14 January 2016

Dear Minister McCallum,

We wish to take this opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year and to share with you in the ongoing excitement and commitment to bringing many more refugees to safety in Canada in 2016.

We want to express our appreciation for the extraordinary efforts of the Canadian Government and public service departments, particularly Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), over the holidays to process and transport hundreds of Syrian refugees to Canada. As you know from your own experience, meeting families at the airport and helping them to settle into their new homes has been and continues to be a very moving and rewarding experience for private sponsors. Although private sponsors have been doing this for decades now, having the full support of the Canadian Government and civil society has been remarkable.

The excitement of these days around the Syrian movement must give way, though, to the reality of the challenges that exist within the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program. In this correspondence we want to highlight the deep concern of the private sponsoring community about the plight of refugees in other parts of the world. Many sponsors have submitted sponsorship applications that have been stuck for years in the quagmire of inventory backlogs in visa offices. Others have long lists of refugees in need of resettlement but for whom sponsorship applications cannot be submitted because of restrictive caps. The frustration of SAH Association members is compounded by the fact that caps and allocations have had no noticeable impact on processing times. Although private sponsors are delighted with the expeditious processing and arrivals of Syrian refugees, they are disturbed at how this situation stands in stark and disproportionate contrast to the situation of other refugee populations.

We have seen a Government of Canada spring into action to respond to the needs of Syrian refugees. And we are encouraged. We think Canadians are encouraged. We recognize that the Government, as a new government, needs more time to develop its 2016 immigration and refugee plans and Cabinet approval to move forward. In the spirit of cooperation, we have requested that SAH Association members refrain from submitting any sponsorship applications except for Syrians until the global targets are announced. We hope that they will comply. Our only tool is persuasion. That tool will be stronger if we are seen to have some influence over policy. We made this request of SAH Association members with the optimism that the new Government and IRCC will regard the private sponsoring community as true partners in Canada's resettlement programs and will reciprocate by:

- Consulting with the SAH Council, as the representative body of the SAH Association, in setting the 2016 targets and annual or multi-year plans thereafter; and
- Working with the SAH Council to develop a plan to deal with the long processing times and problematic missions, and to manage the inventory of PSR cases globally in an expeditious manner.

We would appreciate an opportunity to discuss this further with you, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Brian Dyck

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