



The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association

5 October 2017

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
365 Laurier Ave. W.
Ottawa ON K1A 1L1

Dear Minister Hussen,

As you may recall, the SAH Council is scheduled to meet with officials from your department when the SAH Council is in Ottawa October 24-26, 2017. The purpose of these meetings is to work together through the NGO-Government Committee on improvements to Canada's resettlement programs, including the Private Sponsorship of Refugees and the Blended Visa Office-Referred Programs. We are still hoping that we can meet with you during our time in Ottawa. Will this be possible?

As you and your department prepare to bring forward the 2018 Immigration Levels Plan, we, as trusted partners, would like to draw your attention to the position we put forward during the immigration consultations this past summer. It is our view that as a party to the NY Declaration and co-host of the 2016 Leaders' Summit, Canada has positioned itself as a leader on refugee resettlement. As such, with the need for global resettlement rising and the number of available resettlement spaces decreasing, Canada needs to show global leadership by showing how its commitment will increase.

As we have reminded IRCC, apart from the exceptional time frame of November 2015 – December 2016, when Canada committed to and achieved resettling up to 25,000 Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) and up to 18,000 Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR), Canada's commitment to resettle GARs has not changed significantly even though global displacement has been on the rise and has recently hit a historic high. Between 1995 and 2015, Canada resettled about 7,500 GARs annually (with numbers even lower from 2012 to 2014), in spite of the fact that global resettlement needs grew exponentially during that time period. In 1995, the UNHCR estimated global resettlement needs to be 58,860¹ and the total refugee population was 14,896,087². By 2015, global resettlement needs had risen to 958,429 persons³, an increase of about 3,000%, even though the global refugee population had actually slightly decreased to just under 20 million by the end of 2014⁴. This shows the severe decline in durable solutions outside of resettlement over the intervening years; yet, Canada kept resettling the same number of GARs year after year.

¹ (<http://www.refworld.org/docid/3c90b2801.html>)

² (http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#_ga=1.1490737.1410439585.1452783218)

³ (<http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/543408c4fda/unhcr-projected-global-resettlement-needs-2015.html>)

⁴ (<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/country/556725e69/unhcr-global-trends-2014.html>)

c/o SAH Secretariat, 154 Main St. West, Grimsby ON, L3M 1S3
Debra Simpson: 905-468-8914 dsimpson@sahsecretariat.com
Ellen Woolaver: 416-648-1579 ewoolaver@sahsecretariat.com
Elizabeth Walton: ewalton@sahsecretariat.com

We suggest that it would be difficult for Canada to return to resettlement of similar numbers without losing its credibility as a global leader on refugee resettlement.

It is suggested, too, that if Canada continues to resettle higher numbers of PSRs without a commensurate commitment to GARs, it could be interpreted as an off-loading of Canada's resettlement commitment and set an unfortunate precedent for other countries seeking to reduce their responsibilities. It is difficult to imagine that Canada would want to encourage such action on behalf of other countries but this could be the unintended result. Canada has also demonstrated in 2016 that it has the capacity to do resettlement on a much higher scale than in the past without creating a trade-off between GAR and PSR resettlement.

We therefore propose 20,000 GARs as a comparable, yet slightly lower number than 2016, which will establish Canada's ongoing leadership on refugees internationally, while still allowing for PSR resettlement on a scale that will keep IRCC on track for PSR backlog reduction by the stated target date of 2019 and allow for increased refugee sponsorships by Canadians.

We are aware of the priority that this Government places on integration and settlement. As Canada demonstrated in 2016, it has the capacity to do resettlement on this scale. Further, the Department should feel encouraged by its own findings, as published in IRCC's Evaluation of Resettlement Programs (July 2016). The data show that the settlement and labour market integration trajectories of PSRs and GARs rapidly converge after the second year. In a more detailed document that is attached with this letter, we have used some European examples to show that accepting high numbers of refugees and achieving positive integration outcomes are not contradictory indicators, but can be mutually reinforcing. We hope you will have the time to look more closely at this document that we have prepared. We feel it could be of assistance in the process that is pending around the debate and approval of the 2018 Levels Plan.

We are available to meet you, at your convenience, as indicated above and if you would like any additional information or clarification in relation to the information we have presented in, and attached to, this letter we would be pleased to assist.

Sincerely,

Brian Dyck

Aslam Daud

Paulette Johnson

Sabine Lehr

Serena Richardson

Rob Shropshire

Donald Smith

Azaria Wolday