



The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association

16 November 2018

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa ON K1A 1L1

Dear Minister Hussen,

Greetings from the Council of the Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) Association. As you know we represent more than 100 SAHs from across the country. In the context of Remembrance Day – *Lest we Forget* and *To Remember is to Work for Peace* – and in the wake of the recent apology from the Prime Minister to the passengers of the MS St. Louis, their families, and Jewish communities in Canada and around the world, we stand with you and the Government in remembering that we must do our part as a country and as individuals to respond to the global refugee crisis. Through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSRs) and the Blended Visa Office-Referral programs, thousands of Canadians and permanent residents are welcoming the persecuted and those fleeing war to safety in Canada.

We want to express appreciation for another 3-year Immigration Levels Plan which is important for planning and managing well the different phases of resettlement, particularly settlement. We support the overall increase in immigration numbers from 310,000 in the current year to 330,800 in 2019. In particular, the SAH Council welcomes the rise in the target for PSRs from 18,000 in 2018 to 19,000 in 2019. We are concerned, though, that this may not be enough to achieve the commitment you have made to reduce processing times for PSRs to 12 months by 2020. We hear from our members the related concerns of long processing times and the limited number of applications they can submit each year. We are very open to consultation on strategies for eliminating the backlog, especially strategies beyond the cap policy that SAHs have been cooperating with since 2012 without noticeable effect.

Canada's humanitarian traditions inspire its resettlement programs and humanitarianism describes the motive of the many people in Canada who are involved in resettling refugees. However, private sponsors also take seriously the opportunity and responsibility to assist those they have resettled become contributing members of society. They know first-hand that these newcomers and their children will join with economic immigrants to offset the effects of an aging population in Canada, will fill labour needs, and will become active in the political, artistic, and cultural life of Canada. As such, private sponsors are important allies in efforts to address rising anti-immigration sentiments. The Council is spearheading a project in 2018-2019 to foster a more welcoming society and working with its members to support other similar campaigns including the Government's *Immigration Matters* initiative. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the opportunities to partner on a coordinated approach that would have a positive multiplier effect on public opinion in favour of immigration.

As always, we thank you for your time in this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Brian Dyck, Chair (on behalf of the SAH Council)
Debra Simpson (on behalf of the SAH Secretariat)

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