



The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association

February 26, 2016

The Honourable John McCallum
Minister, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
365 Laurier Ave. W.
Ottawa ON K1A 1L1

Dear Minister McCallum,

Re.: Invitation to meet with the SAH Council

The Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) Council congratulates you on your work to fulfill the government's promise to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by the end of February. This huge undertaking has demonstrated how deeply Canadians value their global humanitarian role. Both the Canadian government and the Canadian public have responded to this project with energy and determination, and the public is determined to do more. One SAH recently wrote:

My waiting list of groups wanting to do named cases, of many different nationalities, is double the length my list of churches wanting to do BVOR cases – and interest is up, I would say, by 1500% from pre-Aylan Kurdi. The Syria crisis has increased interest in sponsorship dramatically, frighteningly, remarkably, incredibly, wonderfully....

This is a lot of people to keep waiting – and I'm frightened that the new caps won't come close to meeting the demand. I keep asking them to hang on until I know; they keep writing to ask if I've heard anything...

As you know, SAHs are waiting for the new Canadian government to announce immigration targets for 2016, so that you can set a global cap and sub-caps on sponsorships within the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program, along with the "allocations" each SAH will receive. In 2015 SAHs submitted nearly 12,000 PSR and 1,879 BVOR applications, and public interest in refugee sponsorship has continued to grow into 2016. As of the beginning of February 2016 when IRCC placed a pause on Syrian BVORS, Syrian BVOR applications

for 2,169 refugees had been submitted and submissions of large numbers of Syrian PSR applications continue.

Since the 2015 global caps expired on December 31, 2015, the vast majority of SAHs have followed IRCC's request to voluntarily refrain from submitting sponsorships for any refugees other than Syrians. This is despite their ever-growing backlogs of applications, particularly for refugees from the African continent due to the extremely restrictive sub-caps in those visa posts. SAHs are hoping that their cooperation along with the new government's commitment to the PSR program will result in a dramatic increase in 2016 landings, a generous 2016 global cap and vastly increased sub-caps. A recent poll of the SAH community indicates an interest in sponsoring approximately 20,000 people this year, roughly evenly split between interest in sponsoring Syrians and others in the Middle East and South Asia and in sponsoring people from the African continent.

The SAH Council would very much like to speak with you about these issues and about government policies that will affect the PSR program going forward. We will be meeting with your department in Ottawa on March 10 and 11, 2016 and are writing now to invite you to meet with us during that time, as you so generously did during our last visit. If you are not available, would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Mr. Arif Virani M.P. be available? If the timing does not work for either of you, perhaps we could approach the Prime Minister to see if he could spare a few minutes to receive our congratulations on re-asserting important Canadian values and traditions.

We look forward to building on this government's very impressive start and commitment to refugee resettlement.

Yours truly,

The SAH Council

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