

## What Canadians can do to support forced migrants and refugees<sup>1</sup>

### ***Did you know?***

Canada was the first country to privately sponsor refugees!

On July 20, 1978 under Operation Lifeline, the world's most successful Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program was formally enabled by the Canada Immigration Act, 1976.

Although small-scale programs exist in few other countries, none is a true model of this uniquely Canadian initiative that has seen hundreds of thousands of refugees privately resettled since its inception.

Here are some leading organizations in Canada that support forced migrants and refugees.

### The Canadian Council for Refugees

Website: <https://ccrweb.ca/en/about-ccr>

The Canadian Council for Refugees is a national non-profit umbrella organization committed to the rights and protection of refugees and other vulnerable migrants in Canada and around the world and to the settlement of refugees and immigrants in Canada. The membership is made up of organizations involved in the settlement, sponsorship and protection of refugees and immigrants. The Council serves the networking, information-exchange and advocacy needs of its membership.

The mandate of the Canadian Council for Refugees is rooted in the belief that:

- Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution; (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 14.1)
- Refugees, refugee claimants, displaced persons and immigrants have the right to a dignified life and the rights and protections laid out in national and international agreements and conventions concerning human rights;
- Canada and Canadians have responsibilities for the protection and resettlement of refugees from around the world;
- Settlement services to refugees and immigrants are fundamental to participation in Canadian life;

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Jessica Ball & Debra Torok, University of Victoria, based on publicly available information.

- National and international refugee and immigration policies must accord special consideration to the experience of refugee and immigrant women and children and to the effect of racism.

The Canadian Council for Refugees fulfils its mission by:

- Providing opportunities for networking and professional development through conferences, working groups, publications and meetings;
- Working in cooperation with other networks to strengthen the defence of refugee rights;
- Advancing policy analysis and information-exchange on refugee and related issues;
- Advocating for the rights of refugees and immigrants through media relations, government relations, research and public education.

## UNHCR

Website: <https://www.unhcr.ca/>

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, is the world's leading organization aiding and protecting people forced to flee their homes due to violence, conflict and persecution. We provide shelter, food, water, medical care and other life-saving assistance to refugees and displaced persons around the world.

The dream of most refugees is to return home. When possible, UNHCR helps refugees make this dream a reality. When refugees can't go back home, we work to find solutions for them to rebuild their lives in another country. Since its formation by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1950, UNHCR has helped millions of refugees and displaced persons and has twice received the Nobel Peace Prize.

## International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Website: <https://www.iom.int/countries/canada>

Canada was one of the founding members of IOM in 1951. Since then, IOM has worked in close collaboration with the Canadian Government, and Canadian organizations and institutions to analyze migration legislation and migration assistance in Canada.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Canada's interest surrounding issues of migration governance grew and IOM, in conjunction with the Government, worked to promote a comprehensive approach to migration. Between 1952 and 1989, IOM provided assistance to mobilize more than 460,000 people to Canada.

At the end of 2015, the Government of Canada requested IOM to support the Prime Minister's commitment to admit 25,000 Syrian refugees from the Middle East. IOM quickly deployed logistics and operational staff from around the globe to complete the humanitarian operation which spanned three-months from December 2015 through February 2016. IOM worked closely with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), other relevant government counterparts, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and various implementing partners to register, process and move refugees from Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. During the operation, IOM arranged for 97 charter flights bound for Canada, arriving at points of entry of Montreal and Toronto. In total, more than 26,000 Syrians travelled under IOM auspices. IOM has an office in Ottawa, Canada, with principal responsibilities relating to Canada's Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program.

## Foundation of Hope

Website: <https://foundationofhope.net/>

Many within the global LGBT+ community are asylum seekers in their home countries, escaping violence and death, even by their own families. They must flee to another country and become a refugee. Such persecution is based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression (SOGIE). They are SOGIE migrants.

Rainbow Foundation of Hope (RFOH) is a group of volunteers dedicated to offering a path to safety by funding the efforts of caring and compassionate Canadians within a national network of civil society groups.

## MOSAIC

Website: <https://www.mosaicbc.org/services/settlement/refugees/our-work-with-refugees/>

MOSAIC is one of the largest settlement non-profit organizations in Canada. We serve immigrant, refugee, migrant and mainstream communities in Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley as well as throughout the province of BC and overseas via online programs.

## Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

Website: <https://www.icavictoria.org/>

The purpose of the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) is to support the full integration of newcomer immigrants and refugees into the social, economic and civic life of the Capital Region of British Columbia.

## Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society

Website: <http://www.vircs.bc.ca/>

The Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS) is a non-profit organization that supports immigrants, refugees, new Canadian citizens, and visible minorities settle and adapt to new lives in Greater Victoria.

## Vancouver Island Counselling Centre for Immigrants and Refugees

Website: <https://www.viccir.org/>

VICCIR offers a variety of counselling programs for immigrants and refugees. They offer support to those seeking relief from trauma and interpreters so that services are inclusive.