

PRIVATE REFUGEE SPONSOR Ontario NETWORK

Connect
Learn
Share

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

By connecting, learning and sharing, we work toward achieving best practice in newcomer resettlement leading to faster and more efficient integration into Canadian life.

1 Marchmount Road, Toronto, Ontario M6G 2A8
647.999.7301 • infor@refugeesonsornet.ca • www.refugeesponsornet.ca

Connect.



Learn.



Share.



Private Refugee Sponsor Network (Ontario)

The Private Refugee Sponsor Network (Ontario), also known as PRSN, is an incorporated, non-profit organization that serves private refugee sponsor groups – whether faith-based, community-based, or a group of five. We help sponsors connect, learn and share around post-arrival issues. Our goal is to promote and ensure the successful settlement of newcomers by private sponsors in partnership with many organizations in the refugee settlement sector.

We are focused on information-sharing, on empowering sponsors to be better anchors to help newcomers with their post-arrival settlement issues. We partner with other stakeholders in the settlement sector in Ontario to work toward successful outcomes for privately sponsored newcomers to Canada.

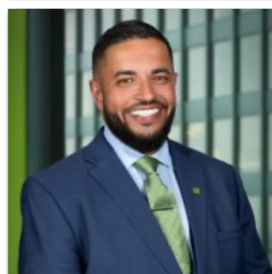
We are governed by a board of nine that reflects private refugee sponsors, as well as representatives of the settlement and business sectors.



William Croson
Chair
Toronto



Darrell Pinto
Vice Chair
Hamilton



Farrukh Hussain
Secretary-Treasurer
Oshawa



Dima Amad
Toronto



Carolina Bendaña
Toronto



Teresa Costa
Toronto



Jennifer Kett
Toronto



Christie MacDonald
Toronto



Alizee Zapparol-Manzoni-Bodson

Private Refugee Sponsor Network (Ontario)

This past year has seen some significant events and changes across the world, in Canada and for the Private Refugee Sponsor Network (Ontario). We have been witnessing conflicts and economic uncertainty spread and intensify, putting many more lives at risk at home and abroad. We have experienced major social and political changes take place here at home and in other countries. We are aware that events over the past few years have also strained sponsors' interest and ability to respond to the need. And the Network itself has been undergoing a substantial transformation, most notably at the board level.

What does all of this mean for PRSN?

As crises unfold on the world stage, there is little that we can do as a volunteer network to effect change on an international level. With more people at risk, this underscores the need for programs like Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees program to provide pathways to safety for people in danger.

Canada has new leadership dealing with a number of challenging issues: economic pressures from the United States, realignment of Canada's role and partnerships internationally, addressing pressing issues at home, like housing. Two of the more significant changes that have affected sponsors over the past year have been the reduction in the immigration limits announced in the fall of 2024, which has also impacted the numbers of refugees that Canada is allowing to enter the country, and the suspension of G5 sponsorship announced in November 2024 that is to continue until 2026.

Within the Network itself, the board has undergone a change of about half its membership. We also have a new Executive Committee. In addition, we have transitioned from having a full-time volunteer administrator with the retirement of Barbara Sheffield. Barbara remains active on the Skills Development and Partnership Committees. Her work as administrator has been distributed among board and committee members. This transition is ongoing.

In addition to the Lunch&Learn events and Workshops that PRSN provides, three of the more significant achievements this past year:

- the board engaged the services of a law firm to assist the Network with the preparation of an **application for charitable status**. The application was successfully submitted in December 2024. We are confident that we will receive positive news from the Charities Directorate of Canada in the second half of 2025;
- the preparation and release of a second **report looking at the relationships between sponsors and Sponsorship Agreement Holder Organizations (SAHs)** to complement our previous report on the relationships between sponsors and Settlement Organizations. Both reports are available for download from our website;

- the **creation of an Advisory Panel**, including some high-powered names associated with the sponsorship space: *Bayan Khatib*, Impact Director at the Northpine Foundation; *Kareem El-Assal*, Executive Director of the Canadian Immigration Lawyers Association; and *Patrick O’Leary*, Director at the law firm Fragomen and a former director with PRSN.

In addition, I would like to say that we had also engaged the late **Honourable John McCallum**, P.C. and former IRCC Minister to join the Advisory Panel. Not only did John agree to join, but he gave his strong endorsement for the work of PRSN, encouraging the Network to continue to move forward in support of private sponsors. Sadly, John passed away shortly after the group’s first meeting. I would also like to acknowledge John’s considerable contributions to Canada’s welcoming stance to refugees. His knowledge, experience, support and presence will be greatly missed.

As we look forward, we are re-energized by words from our new Advisory Panel members who have strongly encouraged us to continue our work. Now is not the time to stop.



William Croson
Chair of the Board



Our Governance

We are governed by a board of nine representatives of private sponsors, settlement agencies and the business sector and have established seven committees to conduct our work. Directors are elected at an annual general meeting with committee chairs appointed by the Board of Directors.

2024-2025

Board of Directors

OFFICERS

William Croson

Chair,
G5 Sponsor
Principal, HealthStats Inc.
Toronto

Darrell Pinto

Vice Chair,
G5 Sponsor
Director of Employment,
Jumpstart Refugee Talent
Hamilton

Farrukh Hussain

Secretary-Treasurer,
Vice President and Chief Financial Officer,
TD Insurance
Oshawa

DIRECTORS

Dima Amad

Executive Director, Arab Community Centre
Toronto

Carolina Bendaña

Director, Media and Data Services,
Stephen Thomas Ltd
Toronto

Teresa Costa

General Manager, Immigrant Services,
YMCA, Greater Toronto

Jennifer Kett

Principal,
Navigator Ltd
Toronto

Christie MacDonald

Director, Regulatory Transformation,
BMO Capital Markets
Toronto

Alizee Zapparol-Manzoni-Bodson

Manager, Strategic Communication,
World University Service Canada
Toronto

2024-2025

Committees

Skills Development

Gail Brown and Carol Smiley, Co-chairs
Dima Amad, Board Liaison
David Curtis
Anne Jorna
Anneli André-Barrett

Marketing & Communications

Jennifer Kett, Chair
Cora Dusk
Michael J. Thiel
Izabella Fini
Andrea May

Partnership

Teresa Costa, Chair
Rasha Salman
Hasina Aimaq
Mahin Ghasemiyani
Tarek Elmaghraby
Julie Scott
Elizabeth Stark
Kim Taylor
Reg Harford
Marin Lehmann Bender
Sunbal Mohammad
May Amouri

Knowledge Exchange

William Croson, Chair
Dr. Usha George
Dr. Michaela Hynie
Dr. Audrey Macklin
Dr. Biftu Yousuf
Aicha Benayoune
Jess Howsam
Layal Ajaj
Andrew Fitzgerald
Sarah Chudleigh

Services

Darrell Pinto, Chair
Elaine Hick
Joanne McPherson
Jasper Miller

Revenue Generation

Carolina Bendaña, Chair
David Curtis
Christie MacDonald
Darrell Pinto

Nominations

David Curtis, Chair
Darrell Pinto
Barbara Sheffield

Mission

- *To provide collective resources and support to private refugee sponsors in transforming the lives of those they sponsor through effective and efficient settlement in Canada.*

Vision

- *To create a national network of private refugee sponsors to connect, learn and share “Best Practices” around post-arrival issues.*

2024-2025 Achievements

Renewal & Growth

This past year has been a time of significant change for PRSN. There was substantial changeover in the board’s composition. About half the members are new to PRSN and the Executive Committee changed completely. Board members have accepted the responsibility to take a more hands-on approach with the retirement of our full-time volunteer administrator.

This was a year to re-establish PRSN around the new strategic plan established by the previous board last year. The plan provided a critical roadmap to plot a path forward into the next phase of the Network, an opportunity to retrench and prepare for the future. The strategic plan helped to set and work towards specific priorities.

Building on the previous year’s work, we are investing in the next stage of our growth and ability to provide connection, learning and sharing to hundreds of private refugee sponsors. With the assistance of *Emerge Law*, we were able to complete the process to apply to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for charitable status. With the hope of getting approval in the fall of 2025, we will be able to receive donations and issue tax receipts to donors. With that in mind, we have re-oriented the former Sustainability Committee, which had a boarder mandate, into the Revenue Generation Committee, to focus on finding opportunities for financial support to assist with our operations.

We continue to maintain a focus on our core functions of bringing sponsors and experts together through our Lunch&Learn events and our Workshops. And we are maintaining our presence in the refugee sponsorship space in Canada through our relationships with settlement agencies, sponsorship agreement holders and the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP).

We have also created an Advisory Panel, including some high-powered names associated with the sponsorship space: Bayan Khatib, Impact Director at the Northpine Foundation; Kareem El-Assal, Executive Director of the Canadian Immigration Lawyers Association; Patrick O’Leary, Director at the law firm Fragomen and a former director with PRSN. We also engaged the late Honourable John McCallum, P.C. and former IRCC Minister to join the panel. His knowledge, experience and presence will be greatly missed.



Communication Tools

We are continually reassessing our outreach through social media and providing the latest PRSN news and information through our *Connections Blog* on our website.

As always, our messaging to private sponsors is grounded in our mission and vision to provide information around efficient and effective settlement.

Workshops

We continue to offer Workshops to meet sponsor need in training and information-sharing. In the past year, we offered four, two-hour, Saturday morning, on-line Workshops on topics identified by sponsors for sponsors attracting close to 40 attendees with all materials shared with participants post event:

- ***Educational Issues and Challenges*** (September 2024) – Supporting special needs children, low literacy adults, and adults seeking a high school diploma.
- ***Government Supports for Newcomers*** (November 2024) – Navigating federal and provincial programs, Ontario Works, and settlement agency services.
- ***Creating Meaningful Employment Relationships*** (February 2025) – In partnership with Jumpstart Refugee Talent and YMCA Toronto, focusing on job readiness, mentorship, and pathways to meaningful work.
- ***Housing*** (May 2025) – Exploring practical strategies for securing affordable accommodation for newcomer families.

Lunch&Learns

To respond to the immediate need of sponsors, we organized and offered four one-hour online lunchtime events with subject matter experts combined with information-sharing breakout opportunities, to discuss what attendees heard from experts. These sessions are capped at 40 participants and are managed by a professional moderator.

- ***Dealing with Conflict: Open Communication*** (October 2024) – How to identify why conflict happens and how to implement problem-solving strategies.
- ***Engaging Women in Community*** (January 2025) – Looking for effective ways to engage the women you are sponsoring in their settlement journey.
- ***Understanding Empowerment*** (March 2025) – Understanding how cultural differences and power imbalances between sponsor groups and newcomers can create challenges during the settlement process and learning how to address the unique needs of each newcomer.
- ***Technology Hurdles + Opportunities*** (June 2025) – A fireside chat with a private sponsor and a refugee newcomer, discovering how they navigated their first-year settlement journey in Canada using technology.

Online Learning

We continue to respond to sponsor interest in online learning through the development of information-sharing tools accessible from our re-developed website. We record Workshops and Lunch&Learns and offer on-demand access. We created a regional service provider directory by sponsors for sponsors as an information-sharing tool that is a work in progress. Sponsors can also access sixteen (16) Striving Toward Best Practice guidelines to help in addressing issues and settlement ideas based on Workshop and Lunch&Learn presentations demonstrating lived experience. More will be developed in the months ahead:

- Managing Expectations
- Financial Literacy
- Identifying Appropriate Housing and Negotiating a Lease, Avoiding Scams, Sponsor Responsibility
- Being Aware of Mental Health Behaviours
- Engaging in Community
- Creating an Employment Strategy
- Empowering Newcomers: What Does it Take?
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Building Trust
- Settling LGBTQIA+ Newcomers
- Addressing Educational Needs & Challenges
- Dealing with Conflict: Open Communication
- Government Support for Newcomers
- Engaging Women in Community
- Creating Meaningful Employment Relationships
- Addressing Housing Challenges

Partnerships & Relationship Building

Partnerships and relationship building are keys to success in any work such as refugee settlement. They lead to increasing recognition, value and trust among stakeholders, to knowing more about needs and identify potential opportunities for collaboration, communications, and co-sponsorship of initiatives.

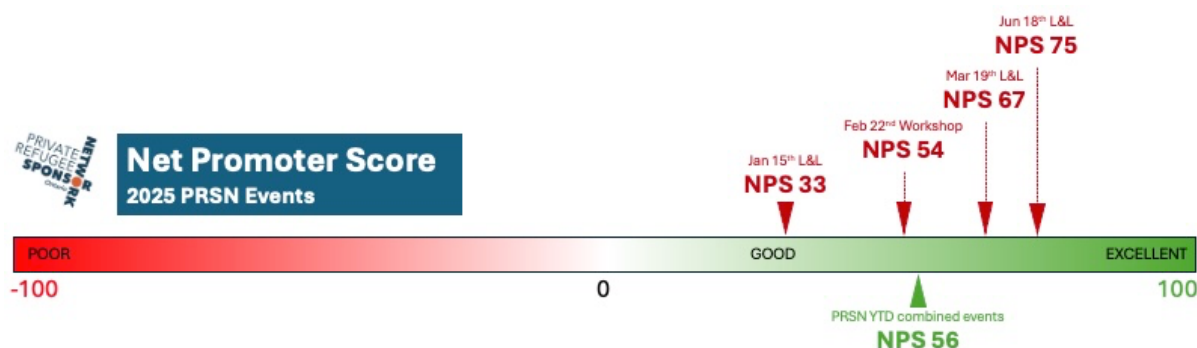
During the past year, we completed our report on a second sector survey focussed on ***Building Better Relationships between Sponsors and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)***. The survey focused on issues that PRSN could address in the interests of sector improvements. This was companion study to a previous survey we completed on ***Building Better Relationships between Sponsors and Settlement Agencies***. Both reports provide valuable insights about the relationships sponsors have with two key constituencies in the refugee sponsorship space. The goal is to build better working relationships with each of these constituencies to strengthen and improve the settlement experience of newcomers. Both reports are posted to our website and are available to a wider audience on the IRCC research at a glance platform and the Re-Settlement Plus platform, operated by the University of Toronto and University of Ottawa.



Our Impact

Sponsors value offerings and the opportunity to connect, learn and share. They appreciate the quick response to their questions and acknowledgement of their needs. They recognize they need to speak for themselves rather than have others in the sector speak for them. They articulate what they need and want to achieve in more effective and efficient settlement of newcomers and appreciate the role that PRSN is playing.

One of the ways PRSN is working to gauge the impact of our efforts is to incorporate our net promoter score (NPS) for each event. We were thrilled to see a steady increase in attendee satisfaction, reflected in the NPS, as illustrated here:



And we are grateful for these words of encouragement from members of our newly formed Advisory Panel.

“I have so much gratitude for Canadians who have already sponsored refugees...I saw the most incredible human beings open up their homes, raise money, and support refugees when they arrived here in Canada.”

~ Bayan Khatib, Impact Director, Northpine Foundation

“I want to support efforts to defend as well as to preserve the private sponsorship of refugee program moving forward so that Canada can continue to have a positive impact on many lives.”

~ Kareem El-Assal, Executive Director, Canadian Immigration Lawyers Association

“Engage in conversation with newcomers and refugees. They are your neighbours, your friends, they may be people working with you. Listening to their stories is what has and continues to make Canada a rich and a kind country that is values-driven.”

~ Patrick O’Leary, Director, Fragomen and former PRSN board Vice-chair

Donor Thanks

As a volunteer-run organization, we value and thank those who have offered their time and energy to maintain and provide ongoing support for the operation of PRSN throughout the year. Nothing is more important than the commitment of time.

In addition, we are grateful to those who have provided us with financial contributions necessary to pay our ongoing expenses. Those who have contributed over this past year include:

Darrell Pinto
Barbara Sheffield
Michael Duschenes
Cora Dusk
Carol Smiley

We are also grateful to have received a grant from **Alectra Utilities** through **AlectraCARES**.



NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

David Curtis, Committee Chair

Director Slate 2025-26

The Board of Directors consists of up to 12 persons – who are private sponsors, representatives of the settlement community and/or from the business or corporate sector. Currently, it is operating with an expected total of 10 members. Members of the Board of Directors serve two three-year terms and are up for election after the end of a term. One director has completed a first term and is up for re-election. All other directors are completing their terms as indicated. There are two sponsor vacancies yet to be filled along with the election of a vice chair. Any resignations or retirements can be filled at the annual general meeting or by election of the Board of Directors at a regular meeting.

For Election to Board of Directors

William Croson, Toronto, Principal, Healthstats, to year one of second three-year term [sponsor]

Wendy Peebles, Retired Social Worker and Youth Counsellor, Toronto, to first year of a first three-year term [sponsor]

Raj Shaik, Toronto, *Shaik and Associates: Accountants & Consultants*, to first year of a first three-year term [business]

Directors continuing to Year-Two of a First Three-Year Term

Teresa Costa, Toronto, YMCA, to year two of a first three-year term [settlement]

Alizee Zapparol-Manzoni-Bodson, Toronto, World University Service Canada, to year two of a first three-year term, [settlement]

Jennifer Kett, Toronto, Navigator Limited, to year two of a first three-year term, [business]

Carolina Bendaña, Kingston, Stephen Thomas Ltd, to year two of a first three-year term [business]

Directors continuing to Year Two of a Second Three-Year Term

Dima Amad, Toronto, Arab Community Centre of Toronto, to second year of a second three-year term [settlement]

For Election as Officers

William Croson, Toronto, Principal, Healthstats, Chair of the PRSN Board, [sponsor]

Raj Shaik, Toronto, *Shaik and Associates: Accountants & Consultants*, Secretary-Treasurer [business]

OUR FINANCIAL STATUS

For the year ending 30 June 2025

UNAUDITED STATEMENTS

PRIVATE REFUGEE SPONSOR NETWORK

Statement of Financial Position

As of 30 June 2025

	30 Jun 25
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Chequing/Savings	
CIBC Chequing_6016	7,686.35
Total Chequing/Savings	7,686.35
Total Current Assets	7,686.35
TOTAL ASSETS	7,686.35
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
GST/HST Payable	-410.13
Total Other Current Liabilities	-410.13
Total Current Liabilities	-410.13
Total Liabilities	-410.13
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	12,452.76
Unrestricted Net Assets	-2,311.31
Net Income	-2,044.97
Total Equity	8,096.48
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	7,686.35

PRIVATE REFUGEE SPONSOR NETWORK

Statement of Operations

July 2024 through June 2025

	Jul '24 - Jun ...
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Regular Giving & Appeale	
Donation - Foundation/Churches	4,850.00
Individual	357.38
Total Regular Giving & Appeale	5,207.38
Total Income	5,207.38
Expense	
Administration	
Insurance	756.00
Marketing	560.00
Professional & Legal Fees	4,852.31
Total Administration	6,168.31
Programming	
Programming Related Expenses	1,084.04
Total Programming	1,084.04
Total Expense	7,252.35
Net Ordinary Income	-2,044.97
Net Income	-2,044.97