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PRIVATE
REFUGEE
SPONSOR
NETWORK
Ontario

STRIVING TOWARD BEST PRACTICE

The Current Context for Refugee Sponsorship

There has been a significant increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons globally, yet fewer refugees are being admitted into Canada. The Canadian government is more focused on economic immigration than humanitarian. There is less public support for refugees. The Federal budget resulted in significant cuts to IRCC and settlement agency staffing and to newcomer services and programs. The backlog of permanent resident applications (96,000 as of Nov. 2025) resulted in significant reductions in refugee allocations and a pause in Group of 5 and Community Sponsorships Dec. 2024-Dec. 2026; the EMPP program is paused; Quebec sponsorships are suspended until 2030; processing times for applications is 3-5 years.

Impacts:

Refugees trapped in dangerous and precarious situations face long waits to get to safety in Canada. This results in deteriorating mental health and financial strain while waiting for application processing, and poorer integration and increased health care costs after arrival. Family members suffer emotional distress. Sponsorship volunteers feel a sense of powerlessness and burnout, adversely affecting recruitment and retention. There is increased demand for settlement and employment counselling services but fewer resources, which is challenging for newcomers and staff. The new five-year limit on accessing newcomer services impacts women, caregivers and trauma survivors the most. Federal funding of LINC programs is restricted to Levels 1-4. Loss of funding for Level 5-12 ESL/FSL impacts newcomers' employability, training and post-secondary opportunities.

Available pathways for private sponsorship of refugees in 2026:

- Partner with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), [IRCC SAH List](#)
- Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) program, <https://www.rstp.ca/en/bvor/>

- Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership, <https://rainbowrefugee.ca/sponsorship-program/>
- Joint Assistance Sponsorships, [IRCC Joint Assistance Sponsorships](#)

Additional Information:

- The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) offers regular webinars and e-training courses for sponsors and settlement workers. Info available at <https://www.rstp.ca/en/events>
- RSTP Helpline 1-877-290-1701 M-F 9-7 EST
- RSTP local trainers <https://www.rstp.ca/en/contact-us/>
- Jewish Immigrant Aid Services is a SAH and offers settlement and language services to all newcomers www.jiastoronto.org
- Serena Richardson etraining@rstp.ca
- Lia Kissel liak@jiastoronto.org