

# Presbyterian World Service & Development



## Guidelines for the Prioritization of Requests to Sponsor “Named Refugees”

Approved: April 23, 2016 (first-time approval)

Date to be reviewed: April 2019

Body Responsible: The PWS&D Committee

### 1. Related Policies

- **PWS&D Mandate** (adopted Acts and Proceedings 2009, p.306): “PWS&D shall enable the church to respond generously and compassionately to human need around the world by: (inter alia) administering the Refugee Sponsorship Agreement with the Canadian government and assisting congregations in sponsoring refugees to Canada.

### 2. Purpose

To guide decisions on which “named refugee” cases<sup>1</sup> will be submitted to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) at any time, but particularly when requests from congregations/presbyteries to sponsor exceed the number of sponsorship spaces allocated to The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) by the government for a particular year.

### 3. Guidelines

#### 3.a Basic selection criteria

In determining which cases of “named refugees” to apply to sponsor using the PCC’s Sponsorship Agreement with the federal government, PWS&D will consider the following basic selection criteria:

- **Eligibility:** The refugees will be deemed eligible for sponsorship to Canada under Canadian law and it will be possible to sponsor them from the country where they currently reside. Canada will process their application from their current country of residence. Exit rules in their country of residence will not prevent them from coming to Canada.
- **Necessary support in Canada:** There is a sponsoring group in Canada that will be able to provide the needed support to the refugees over the sponsorship period after they arrive in Canada.
- **Alternative solutions:** There are no other solutions available that would allow the refugees to resume their lives in safety on a long-term basis.

#### 3.b Selection screens

Where these basic selection criteria have been met, the following screens will be used to guide decisions about which cases will move forward. These criteria will be considered in the order listed.

- i. **Need of protection:** There is an urgent and immediate threat to life or physical well-being. This may include threats due to gender (especially single women/single mothers), age (seniors or children/adolescents at risk), religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other identifying characteristic. It may also involve pressing legal and or physical protection needs, including risk of *refoulement* to their home country where there is a clear, urgent and immediate threat to well-being.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Named refugees” are refugees who have been identified by an interested sponsoring group because they are known to them. This is different from the sponsorship of Blended Visa Office Referred refugees who are identified by the government. See Definitions below.

- ii. Other vulnerabilities: There is a need for medical treatment that is unavailable in the current country of residence. The refugees are survivors of torture and/or violence for which treatment and support is not available.
- iii. Family reunification: Sponsorship will provide an opportunity for family reunification that will demonstrably improve the well-being of one or more family members.
- iv. Time of application/length of time in temporary asylum: Having reviewed requests in light of the above criteria, when the sponsorship request was received in the PWS&D office and when the refugees left their country of citizenship or habitual residence will be considered.
- v. Broadening Presbyterian participation in refugee sponsorship: Where a sponsoring group is already involved in a sponsorship and the number of named refugees surpasses the number of spaces available, priority will be given to sponsoring groups that do not already have a sponsorship in progress.

### 3.c Refugee sponsorship selection task group

PWS&D may strike a refugee sponsorship selection task group to make decisions regarding sponsorship requests applying these guidelines. The task group may include members of the PWS&D committee, volunteers from the constituency and the PWS&D sponsorship coordinator. The task group will be limited to three or four members to ensure efficiency. Membership on the task group will be approved by the PWS&D executive committee.

## 4. Background

Refugees are always in a position of vulnerability. In leaving their countries, they have lost their homes, their livelihoods, their places of worship and very often their families. Some face physical insecurity due to discrimination, xenophobia or intolerance. Some face forced return to the countries that they fled. The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program is one way that people in Canada can respond to refugees living in vulnerable circumstances.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada signed its first *Sponsorship Agreement* with the federal government in 1979. The agreement facilitates the sponsorship of refugees by congregations, presbyteries and other groups across the church. Responsibility for managing the agreement has been given to Presbyterian World Service & Development. The actual work of raising funds and providing support for the resettlement of refugees is done by sponsorship groups at the local level.

Since 2012, the sponsorship of "named refugees" has been subject to annual "caps" (quotas) established by the Canadian government. In 2015, with the Syria crisis propelling international awareness of refugees, there was a remarkable upswing in interest in sponsoring refugees in The Presbyterian Church in Canada and elsewhere in Canada. This begs a difficult question: how does PWS&D decide which cases will move forward under the annual caps when we cannot sponsor all the cases we have received?

On March 17, 2016, PWS&D submitted to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) the Presbyterian Church in Canada's "expression of interest" in sponsoring Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) in 2016. According to the government's recently released immigration levels, the target for PSRs for the year increased approximately 2.5 times; however the interest of Presbyterians wishing to sponsor has increased some 10 times or more when compared to the last few years.

As of March 17, 2016, there were almost 300 refugees on the sponsorship waiting list. It is clear that the requests received will surpass the 2016 "caps" (quotas) for sponsorship that we will receive. In light of this, guidelines are necessary to determine which cases will go forward.

The new Canadian government (elected in October 2015) announced the 2016 immigration levels (targets) on March 8, 2016. The overall target number for refugees has increased significantly over 2015, from 25,000 to 55,800, while the target for "named" Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) has increased from 6,500 to 17,800. Within the PSR figure, there is a smaller amount for the over 100 Sponsorship Agreement Holders like The Presbyterian Church in Canada, who will be allocated "caps" for the refugees we will be able to sponsor under our agreements: that number has been pegged at 10,500 people.

The above guidelines have been developed taking into account the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' [UNHCR Resettlement Submission Categories](#).

## 5. Definitions

- "Eligibility": Canadian law determines who can be considered a refugee for purposes of resettlement in Canada. There are three definitions that currently apply:
  1. The "Convention Refugee" class refers to people who are outside of their country of nationality or habitual residence and are unwilling or unable to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.
  2. The "Country of Asylum" class refers to people who are outside of their home country because they were personally and significantly affected by war or massive abuse of human rights.
  3. "Ministerial Priorities" refers to groups of people as may from time to time be identified by the Minister of Immigration as being in need of resettlement. Currently, the minister has identified Syrians who are outside of their country as *prima facie* refugees. This means that they may be considered eligible for resettlement in Canada by virtue of the fact that they are outside of Syria: they do not have to show that they fear persecution or were affected by the war or abuse of human rights.
- "Named refugees" refers to refugees who are known to a potential sponsoring group, having been brought to their attention by members of their congregation, people in their community or groups trying to find sponsors. In 2015 and until March 4, 2016, Syrian and Iraqi refugees were not included under the annual caps; it was possible to sponsor as many as desired.
- "Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR)": BVOR cases are identified by Canadian visa offices overseas and then are matched with interested sponsoring groups. BVOR refugee cases are different from "named refugee" cases. BVOR cases are not subject to caps. (The number of Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) refugees of all backgrounds has increased from 1,000 to 2,400 for 2016.)
- "Caps": Sponsorship of "named refugees" is subject to annual "caps" (quotas) set by the government.