



**PCC Refugee Sponsorship - Update**  
**June 14, 2017**  
**Presbyterian World Service & Development (PWS&D)**  
**The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)**

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Dear friends,

Spring has flown by and we wanted to send you some quick updates.

**1. Refugee Sponsorship Letter Writing – Please and thanks!**

Two of the recommendations that went before last week's General Assembly concerned refugee sponsorship. Please consider taking them back to your congregation for support and action. They are:

- That congregations and presbyteries consider committing themselves to an ongoing refugee sponsorship ministry, building on the experience gained in 2016 supporting large numbers of refugees from Burma (Myanmar), Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela, recognizing that refugee sponsorship requires patience and a sustained commitment due to complex and changing policies governing the application and approval processes.
- and
- That congregations consider contacting their Members of Parliament and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, to strongly urge that quotas for refugees be increased to respond to the support being offered by qualified sponsoring groups.

For 2017, the Presbyterian Church in Canada has received spots to sponsor 77 people, double our initial number for 2016 but, due to lack of spots, we still had to say no to 99 people that Presbyterians were ready to sponsor.

The government tells us they are limiting numbers to bring down the large backlog of pending cases overseas and to reduce processing times to 12 months from application to arrival by 2019. This is a good thing since, in recent years, some sponsored refugees have had to wait four to six years or more to come to Canada. But in the meantime, many others are waiting for the chance to be sponsored because of the restrictive quotas, a situation that will only change if people let decision-makers know that they feel refugee sponsorship is important.

If you are moved to respond, you will find a template letter, with instructions, on our website at:

<http://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/download/9128/>.

**2. World Refugee Day – 2017**

This year World Refugee Day will be marked on June 20<sup>th</sup> in cities and towns around the world. To see what events are planned near you, you can Google “World Refugee Day 2017” (and the name of your city/town). You can share news and pictures of events on our PCC Refugee Sponsorship Facebook Group.

### **3. Named Private Sponsorship Cases – 2017**

Most sponsoring groups whose cases were selected by our Case Selection Task Group to proceed in 2017 have now sent their draft forms to us. A few have already been submitted to the government and we are getting to the others as quickly as we can. If you are still waiting to hear back from us, you will soon - your patience is appreciated!

### **4. Blended Visa Office Referred Refugee Cases - 2017-06-14**

We have had more success than we anticipated in matching Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) refugee cases with sponsoring groups in the first half of the year. Since January, ten sponsoring groups have been matched: one in January (a Syrian family of 6); two in February (a Syrian family of 5; a Syrian family of 8); one in March (a Syrian family of 7); two in April (a Syrian family of 5; a Syrian family of 4) and four in May (a Sudanese family of 10; a Syrian family of 4, a Syrian family of 6 and an Ethiopian family of 6). Processing these BVOR applications has been a priority because there is a three to four week deadline to submit forms once a sponsoring group agrees.

The May matches included two sponsoring groups who have been waiting more than a year to be matched, one waiting since February and one only waiting since April. With these matches, we have nearly cleared our backlog of Presbyterian groups waiting for BVOR cases. (There remains one group waiting since November 2016 for a Karen-Burmese case, but none have been posted since that time.) Only a few additional requests are anticipated in 2017.

BVOR lists are longer and more diverse than they were in the beginning of the year, and many are going unsponsored. There are numerous cases of single men, and some women—especially from Eritrea but also elsewhere—who have been approved to come to Canada and are hoping for the friendship a sponsoring group can provide. If you are interested in a BVOR case, or if you have other questions regarding sponsorship, please contact us at [sponsorship@presbyterian.ca](mailto:sponsorship@presbyterian.ca).

As always, your support for refugees through sponsorship is appreciated.

### **5. We Respond Overseas**

While helping refugees who are more vulnerable to resettle in Canada is vitally important, there are others who remain overseas in need of assistance. Please visit [WeRespond.ca](http://WeRespond.ca) to see how you can respond to Syrian refugees in the Middle East, to the famine and conflict in South Sudan and to other parts of PWS&D's program.

Thank you!

Rob, Michelle and Biniam