

One year on: newcomer serving and private sponsorship organizations thank Canadians for welcoming Syrians

For release

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One year after Syrians began to arrive in Canada as part of a major resettlement movement, newcomer-serving and private sponsorship organizations take the opportunity to salute and thank the countless Canadians who individually and collectively contributed to sponsoring and welcoming refugees.

Canada's warm response to refugees depends on everyone doing their part: all levels of government, institutions, community organizations and individual citizens.

While sadly in many countries Syrians and others fleeing persecution are increasingly finding doors closed to them, Canadians are expressing gratitude to the Governments of Canada and Quebec, as well as to all provincial governments, for welcoming refugees to our country. In fact, many Canadians are disappointed that the government is not bringing more refugees more quickly, both from Syria and from elsewhere.

For those of us that work with refugees, the generosity of the public has been humbling. Whether it is high school students preparing welcome baskets, seniors knitting hats and scarves, individuals donating time and money to privately sponsor refugees, neighbours taking newly arrived children to hockey practice, or people, businesses, unions, faith and cultural communities, and social groups offering all manner of support, Canadians have shown once again that we are at our best when we reach out to welcome our future fellow citizens.

A highlight of the past year has been the close collaboration of governments at all levels, settlement sector, and voluntary and business sectors. We hope we can build on that collaboration for the future, so that we offer all newcomers the best possible chance of quick and full integration.

Three decades ago, in 1986, the people of Canada were awarded the Nansen Medal for our efforts to welcome Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees, including through private sponsorship. Now, another generation of Canadians, including former refugees, is embracing the opportunity to enrich their own lives and Canada's diversity by welcoming refugees, in communities big and small right across Canada.

As with earlier refugee populations, newly arrived Syrians have been mainly focused on learning English or French, which is key to economic and social integration. Children are integrating into local schools.

Refugees are selected for resettlement to Canada on the basis of a need for protection. Many have arrived with special needs, as did previous refugee populations. It is important to recognize that the settlement and integration process takes time and, for some, income support is necessary. These investments will pay off over time as the newcomers will make significant contributions to Canadian society, as did past generations of newcomers.

The signatories are umbrellas of organizations serving newcomers and private sponsorship organizations across Canada. The umbrellas have a combined membership of over 600 organizations with approximately 40 years' experience and expertise in welcoming newcomers, including both government assisted and privately sponsored refugees.

Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR)

Canadian Refugee Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association

Affiliation of Multicultural Societies & Service Agencies of British Columbia (AMSSA)

Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA)

Saskatchewan Association of Immigrant Settlement and Integration Agencies (SAISIA)

Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO)

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)

Table de Concertation des organismes au service des personnes Réfugiées et Immigrantes (TCRI)

Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA)

Multicultural Centre of the Yukon

Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance - Alliance canadienne du secteur de l'établissement des immigrants (CISSA-ACSEI)

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