



Refugees

Questions for Candidates

- **Will your party stop charging refugees the cost of travel to Canada?**
- **What will you do to standardize the processing time for all visa offices across the globe?**
- **Do you believe Canada is doing enough to resettle refugees?**
- **How will your government address the root causes of forced migration, such as mining?**

Why Ask These Questions?

Caring for one another is central to the teachings of Jesus. As followers of Jesus the church is called to provide compassion and to seek justice for all God's children on earth. We do this by cooperating with other churches, faith traditions, and people of goodwill to protect and welcome vulnerable persons.

To that end, since 1979 The United Church of Canada has had a sponsorship agreement with the Government of Canada, and Mission & Service provides financial support to partner organizations that provide relief to refugees around the globe.

Background Information

We live in a world where one person is forcibly displaced every two seconds. The UNHCR estimates that there are now 70.8 million forcibly displaced people. They include refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, and stateless people. Over half of these are children under the age of 18. Unfortunately, through mining activities, Canada is responsible for some of the root causes of forced displacement in many countries.

Forty years ago, Canadians responded to the plight of about 60,000 "boat people"—Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotian refugees—fleeing the Vietnam War. Faith groups, civic organizations, and individuals across Canada helped welcome 32,000 boat people. This was the start of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program that is now a vital component of Canada's humanitarian actions. The PSR program resettled a significant number of the Syrian refugees who arrived in Canada.

The Canadian government also implements refugee and immigration policies and practices that make it difficult for Canadians to welcome people displaced by conflict or persecution.

- Most refugees overseas wait a long time—up to 71 months—for their claims to be processed.
- The length of time Canadian embassies take to process refugee claims varies widely across the globe.
- Refugees resettled in Canada must pay for their medical exam and travel to Canada. This often means that refugee families start their new life with debts of up to \$10,000.

- The guidelines, process, and legislation around the refugee process are not only complicated but also constantly changing. With little or no access to computers and the Internet, many refugees cannot access the new forms, and internally displaced people cannot fill out the applications they need to be resettled into Canada.

Canada also has "interdiction" measures that make it difficult for asylum seekers to get here to make a claim.

- The United States is considered a "safe third country," meaning that most refugees cannot make a claim at the US-Canada border.

- There are different visa requirements for countries with records of human rights violations.
- Airlines face fines if they bring passengers without the proper documents into Canada.

Once in Canada, asylum seekers and refugees face other issues. Many are separated from their families for long periods of time because of policies that hinder family reunification. There is no way for refugee children in Canada to apply to be reunified with their parents and siblings. At the same time, many asylum seekers struggle to get legal support because provincial cuts have limited access to legal aid.

Learn More

www.ccrweb.ca

www.cpj.ca

www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html

www.united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/sponsor-refugee

"[F]or I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me..."

Matthew 25:35