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## Assistance for Government-Sponsored Refugees Chosen Abroad

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*Assistance for Government-Sponsored Refugees Chosen Abroad* (In Brief)

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# **ASSISTANCE FOR GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED REFUGEES CHOSEN ABROAD\***

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

For many years, Canada has fostered the resettlement of refugees and those in refugee-like situations through government sponsorship. Officials with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)<sup>1</sup> working abroad identify individuals who are in need of Canada's help and who are likely to be able to establish themselves successfully in Canada. In most cases, a referral from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is required before an applicant will be considered.

Two further categories of refugees also exist: privately sponsored refugees, who are assisted by groups of Canadians or by organizations that have an agreement with IRCC, and people arriving in Canada making inland refugee claims.<sup>2</sup> This publication addresses only the first category of refugees mentioned, government-sponsored (or government-assisted) refugees, and their potential entitlements.

## **2 ELIGIBILITY FOR HUMANITARIAN RESETTLEMENT IN CANADA**

Currently, there are two classes of government-sponsored refugees or people in similar situations who may be admitted to Canada from abroad as permanent residents on humanitarian grounds.<sup>3</sup> The two classes are as follows:

- the Convention refugees abroad class, which consists of those in need of resettlement (that is, there is no reasonable prospect now or in the near future of another permanent solution for them) and who meet the definition of Convention refugee, i.e., they must be outside their own country and have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, political opinion, nationality or membership in a particular group;<sup>4</sup> and
- the country of asylum class, comprising those persons in need of resettlement who are outside their own country and have been, and continue to be, seriously and personally affected by civil war, armed conflict or a massive violation of human rights. In short, the class addresses people in refugee-like situations who do not qualify as Convention refugees.<sup>5</sup>

### 3 STATISTICS

The Canadian government takes in thousands of refugees annually. Recent figures for the intake of government-sponsored refugees are listed in Table 1 below:

**Table 1 – Intake of Government-Sponsored Refugees, 2013–2017**

Year	Number of Government-Sponsored Refugees	Percentage of Overall Refugees <sup>a</sup>
2013	5,871	24.12
2014	7,573	32.52
2015	9,411	29.88
2016	23,523 <sup>b</sup>	40.25
2017	7,500 (target) <sup>c</sup>	18.75 (target) <sup>c</sup>

- Notes:
- “Overall Refugees” includes government-sponsored refugees, privately sponsored refugees, blended visa office–referred refugees, and humanitarian-protected persons in Canada and dependents abroad who are granted permanent resident status.
  - The relatively high number of government-sponsored refugees for 2016 was due to the Government of Canada’s commitment to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016.
  - The number and percentage of government-sponsored refugees resettled in 2017 were not available at the time of publication.

Sources: Table prepared by the authors using data obtained from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), [Key Highlights 2017 Immigration Levels Plan](#), Backgrounder; IRCC, [Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration, 2014](#); IRCC, [Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration, 2015](#); IRCC, [Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration, 2016](#); and IRCC, [2017 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration](#).

### 4 RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Government assistance to refugees selected overseas is provided through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), which has two components. First, IRCC provides funding to service-provider organizations for direct services, such as initial reception, orientation and assistance with finding permanent accommodation, navigating the new community, shopping and other basic life skills. The second component consists of income supports for eligible refugees, explained in detail below. Refugees in Quebec do not receive RAP support; instead, the Government of Quebec provides refugees with similar assistance through the Integrating Successfully program.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.1 INCOME SUPPORT ELIGIBILITY

To be entitled to income support, an individual must be selected to come to Canada as a government-sponsored refugee under one of the two classes set out above. It must be determined that the individual has insufficient funds to meet basic needs – food, rent, clothing and household effects – and that person must also commit either to directly enter the work force or to enrol in employment or language training programs. Eligible newcomers are generally provided with assistance for a maximum of 12 months. However, up to 24 months may be authorized in special circumstances or for special-needs cases that have been assessed abroad.

Further, individuals must sign an income support agreement before receiving income support.<sup>7</sup> They are required to show that they understand the terms and conditions of the agreement before being given their first cheque. IRCC makes it clear to program beneficiaries that income support is not an automatic benefit, but rather a privilege that carries with it an obligation on the part of the client to make serious efforts to become self-sufficient. Assistance may be refused, reduced or discontinued in the following cases:

- refusal to take advantage of opportunities to become self-sufficient, such as language training or other courses or programs, as recommended by IRCC;
- refusal to actively seek work or accept any reasonable job offer without just cause;
- abandoning a job without just cause;
- receipt of employment income by any member of the family beyond that allowable under the program guidelines;
- leaving Canada for an extended period;
- possession of assets beyond those normally possessed by persons requiring financial assistance;
- failure to declare assets or report other income; or
- a change in family situation or living arrangements, such as marriage, family breakdown, death, birth, someone leaving Canada or new family members arriving.

#### **4.2 AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED<sup>8</sup>**

Clients are given an initial, one-time start-up cheque for clothing, basic household needs, utility installation or hook-up charges, school start-up costs (if applicable), linens, staples and household goods. In lieu of money, the actual goods may be provided. The maximum amounts payable for the one-time start-up cheque items are provided in Appendix A of this paper.

In addition to the one-time start-up allowances and special allowances, RAP includes monthly allowances for food, shelter, incidentals and other basic expenses. Under the program, the food and shelter portion of the income support money is guided by the maximum prevailing social assistance rates within the province of residence. Government-sponsored refugees are not eligible to receive provincial social assistance benefits while receiving RAP income support. The minimum and maximum amounts payable for the monthly allowances are provided, by province, in Appendix B.

## **5 IMMIGRATION LOANS PROGRAM**

The Immigration Loans Program (ILP) is available to all newcomers to Canada, although resettled refugees constitute the vast majority of the clientele. This is mainly because refugees must pay for their transportation to Canada and other related expenses but are not often able to pay these costs up front. In addition, the funding

refugees receive through other sources (e.g., RAP) may not be enough to meet all their expenses.<sup>9</sup>

The ILP is capped at \$10,000 per family. Clients are responsible for paying loans back in full, beginning one year after their arrival in Canada. The timeline for repayment varies based on the amount of the loan, and ranges from 36 to 96 months. Approximately 93% of immigration loans are repaid. However, “[w]here resettled refugees face hardships in repaying their loans following arrival in Canada, the terms of repayment can be eased by [IRCC] (for example by extending the repayment period).”<sup>10</sup> If loans are not repaid, the Government of Canada can direct the case to a private collection agency, use income tax refunds to pay the loan or take other legal measures to ensure repayment.

## 6 INTERIM FEDERAL HEALTH PROGRAM

The Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)<sup>11</sup> offers basic health care coverage to refugees for a limited period. Government-sponsored refugees receive hospital, health care professional, laboratory, diagnostic and ambulance services through the IFHP until they can qualify for provincial health insurance plans. As long as they are receiving income from the RAP or its equivalent in Quebec, government-sponsored refugees are also entitled to supplemental benefits similar to those received by individuals on social assistance in Canada: prescribed medications, limited dental and vision care, devices to assist mobility, and psychological counselling. Lastly, the IFHP covers certain pre-departure medical services for refugees abroad selected for resettlement in Canada.

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### NOTES

- \* This document is based on a previous publication prepared by Benjamin R. Dolin and updated by Michel-Ange Pantal, both formerly of the Library of Parliament.
- 1. Formerly Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC].
- 2. For information on inland claimants, see Julie Béchard and Sandra Elgersma, [Refugee Protection in Canada](#), Publication no. 2011-90-E, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, 15 July 2013.
- 3. A third class, the source country class, was discontinued in October 2011. See [Regulations Amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations](#), SOR/2011-222, 6 October 2011, in *Canada Gazette*, Part II, Vol. 145, No. 22, 26 October 2011, pp. 2146–2147
- 4. The definition of the “Convention refugees abroad class” found in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* refers to the definitions of “refugee” found in the United Nations *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*. See United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], [Convention relating to the Status of Refugees](#), Art.1; [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act](#), S.C. 2001, c. 27, s. 96; and OHCHR, [Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees](#), Art. 1. See also [Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations](#) [IRPR], SOR/2002-227, ss. 144 and 145.
- 5. IRPR, ss. 146 and 147.



6. Under the Canada–Quebec Accord on immigration, the Quebec government commits to selecting its appropriate share of refugees from the pool of federally approved cases for resettlement and provides them with settlement services similar to those offered elsewhere in the country. Therefore, refugees resettled in Quebec have access to a limited number of federal refugee assistance programs, although they qualify for federal health care assistance and loans. See Julie Béchar, [Immigration: The Canada–Quebec Accord](#), Publication no. 2011-89-E, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, 5 April 2018; and Quebec, Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Diversité et de l’Inclusion, “Volet 2 : Accueil et installation des personnes réfugiées ou protégées à titre humanitaire outre-frontières,” [Programme Réussir l’intégration 2017-2018](#), pp. 15–19 [AVAILABLE IN FRENCH ONLY].
7. CIC, “[Resettlement Assistance Program – Agreement for Income Support Recipients](#),” Appendix B, Annex 2, in *IP 3 – In-Canada Processing of Convention Refugees Abroad and Members of the Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Classes: Appendices*, August 2016.
8. CIC, [IP3: In-Canada Processing of Convention Refugees Abroad and Members of the Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Classes – Part 2 \[Resettlement Assistance Program \(RAP\)\]](#).
9. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, [Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs \(GAR, PSR, BVOR and RAP\)](#), Final Report, 7 July 2016.
10. [Regulations Amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations](#), SOR/2018-22, 12 February 2018, in *Canada Gazette*, Part II, Vol. 152, No. 4, 21 February 2018, pp. 305–306.
11. See Government of Canada, [Interim Federal Health Program – Information for individuals](#).



**APPENDIX A – RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM: ONE-TIME START-UP  
ALLOWANCES AND SPECIAL  
ALLOWANCES, JUNE 2018**

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One-Time Start-Up Allowances		
Allowance	Maximum Rate, Single Adult	Maximum Rate (Couple with Four Dependents)
Staples	\$210	\$660 (\$90 per additional dependent)
Clothing (regular)	\$375	\$1,750 (\$250 per additional dependent)
Clothing (winter) <sup>a</sup>	\$175	\$850 (\$125 per additional dependent)
Basic household needs	\$600	\$850 (\$50 per additional dependent)
Furniture	\$1,550	\$4,305 (\$420 per additional dependent)
Linens	\$80	\$480 (\$80 per additional dependent)
Utility installation	\$75 per household	
One-Time Special Allowances		
Maternity clothing	\$200, with a medical note	
Newborn (born in Canada)	\$750 (cost of furniture for the newborn deducted if provided)	
School start-up <sup>b</sup>	\$150 per student aged 4–21	
Funeral or burial expenses	Reviewed case-by-case, based on provincial social assistance rates	

- Notes:
- a. For all refugees arriving between 16 October and 14 April of the next year, the service provider organization at the port of entry will issue winter clothing.
  - b. Families may receive this amount twice if they arrive after the start of a school year.

Sources: Table prepared by the authors using data obtained from Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, [“Start-up costs for all Provinces \(excluding Quebec\),” Resettlement Assistance Program \(RAP\) Rates \[NEW\]](#); and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), [IP3: In-Canada Processing of Convention Refugees Abroad and Members of the Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Classes – Part 2 \[Resettlement Assistance Program \(RAP\)\]](#).

**APPENDIX B – RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: MONTHLY ALLOWANCES, FEDERAL MINIMUMS AND MAXIMUMS BY PROVINCE, JUNE 2018**

Support Based on Household Composition	Basic Needs Allowance	Shelter Allowance	Housing Supplement, if Eligible <sup>a</sup>	Other
<b>British Columbia</b>				
Minimum amount	\$335 (single adult)	\$375 (single adult)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> <li>• Dependents turning 18 receive a monthly allowance of \$150 plus local costs of transportation</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$1,049 (two seniors)	\$820 (couple and five children; single parent and six children)		
<b>Alberta</b>				
Minimum amount	\$304 (single adult)	\$323 (single adult)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$852 (couple and six children) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$56 for each additional person</li> <li>• Additional \$33 per child aged 12–17</li> </ul>	\$665 (couple and six children) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$20 for each additional person</li> </ul>	\$300 for household units of six or more	
<b>Saskatchewan</b>				
Minimum amount	\$225 (single adult, with or without children)	\$259 (single adult, employable, in Moose Jaw)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$610 (two adults, both with disabilities, with or without children)	\$849 (single parent and five or more children; couple and five or more children, in Saskatoon or Regina)		

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Support Based on Household Composition	Basic Needs Allowance	Shelter Allowance	Housing Supplement, if Eligible <sup>a</sup>	Other
<b>Manitoba</b>				
Minimum amount	\$220 (single adult)	\$495 (single adult)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$929 (couple and three children aged 12–17, plus \$117–\$189 per additional child, depending on age) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seniors receive an additional \$20</li> <li>• People with disabilities receive an additional \$105</li> </ul>	\$862 (10-person household) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$25 per additional person</li> </ul>		
<b>Ontario</b>				
Minimum amount	\$337 (single adult)	\$384 (single adult)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$1,189 (two seniors, with or without children)	\$990 (family of six or more, including at least one senior)		
<b>New Brunswick</b>				
Minimum amount	\$338 (single adult)	\$199 (single adult)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> <li>• \$75 per family with one or more dependents aged 18 or under</li> <li>• Dependents turning 18 receive a monthly allowance of \$150 plus local costs of transportation</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$950 (13-person family)	\$558 (13-person family)		
<b>Prince Edward Island</b>				
Minimum amount	\$222 (single adult)	\$539 (single adult)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$1,530 (couple with six children aged 12–17, plus \$144 per additional child)	\$995 (family of seven or more)		

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Support Based on Household Composition	Basic Needs Allowance	Shelter Allowance	Housing Supplement, if Eligible <sup>a</sup>	Other
<b>Nova Scotia</b>				
Minimum amount	\$275 (single adult; single parent and one child; single parent and two children)	\$300 (single adult; up to \$535 under special circumstances)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> <li>• Dependents turning 18 receive a monthly allowance of \$150 plus local costs of transportation</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$550 (couple; couple and one child)	\$620 (couple and one child; single parent and two children)		
<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>				
Minimum amount	\$534 (single adult)	\$149 (single adult)	\$200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication allowance of \$30 per file</li> <li>• Dependents turning 18 receive a monthly allowance of \$150 plus local costs of transportation</li> <li>• Fuel supplement up to \$71 for clients residing on the island part of the province, where the cost of heat is not included with rent</li> </ul>
Maximum amount	\$756 (two adults)	\$372 (single adult with children; couple with or without children; family of two or more)		
<b>Monthly Special Allowances</b>				
Transportation <sup>b</sup>	Based on local public transportation rates; \$75 per eligible client if public transportation is not available			
Maternity food	\$75, with a medical note			
Dietary	Maximum of \$100, based on provincial social assistance rates, with a medical letter outlining health requirements <sup>c</sup>			

- Notes: a. Where the housing allowance and other sources of income are insufficient to meet shelter needs and there is a determined need for supplementary income.
- b. A transportation allowance is given to Resettlement Assistance Program clients of the age of majority and is based on the current cost of monthly public transportation in the client's region.
- c. All provincial social assistance rates currently provide for up to \$75 for a special dietary allowance.
- Source: Table prepared by the authors using data obtained from CIC, [IP3: In-Canada Processing of Convention Refugees Abroad and Members of the Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Classes – Part 2 \[Resettlement Assistance Program \(RAP\)\]](#). For the provincial rates, see Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, [Resettlement Assistance Program \(RAP\) Rates \[NEW\]](#).