

Refugee Sponsorship In Nova Scotia

Information Package

isans | Immigrant Services
Association of Nova Scotia

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Sponsor a Refugee

Sponsoring a refugee family is a concrete way to respond to a humanitarian crisis unfolding overseas. Sponsorship is a commitment of at least two years which includes preparation, application, waiting, and helping the refugees to settle after arrival.

This is an overview of the steps to sponsor:

- Form a group with a minimum of 5 people
- Plan how you will fundraise
- Contact a Sponsorship Agreement Holder
- Meet the criteria set out by the Sponsorship Agreement Holder
- Identify a refugee(s) to sponsor
- Apply to sponsor
- Continue to fundraise and prepare for arrival
- Upon arrival, assist refugee(s) to settle during their first year in Canada

In this information package, you will find detailed information about these steps, along with background information on refugees, refugee resettlement, and the settlement process.

Refugee sponsorship will take some of your time and money for at least the next two years, and you will not be able to do it alone. You will need to work with others to share the tasks and support the refugee family to successfully settle here. Because there are many responsibilities, we believe a sponsoring group should include five or more individuals who can share the load. The two main areas that every group will be responsible for providing are time and finances.

We believe that after the first year you will be amazed at how much your energy and commitment has been able to accomplish and how much the refugees you have sponsored have benefited from your involvement.

Who is a Refugee:

A Convention Refugee is defined as:

- A person who is outside of their home country, or the country where they normally live
- They cannot return to that country because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on: race, religion, political opinion, nationality or membership in a particular social group

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has three possible durable solutions for refugees:

- *Voluntary Repatriation*: when the refugee may return home in safety and dignity
- *Local Integration*: when the refugee may remain in the country of asylum with permanent status and rights.
- *Resettlement to a Third Country*: when the refugee is resettled as a permanent resident in a third country, such as Canada.

Private sponsorship is a **solution of last resort**; there must be no other durable solutions for refugee(s) except resettlement. Refugees already in Europe or the USA are not eligible to be sponsored to Canada, as the Canadian government considers them to be locally integrated and therefore have a durable solution.

The UNHCR identifies and refers refugees most in need of resettlement solely on the basis of need under one or more of seven general categories:

1. Survivors of violence and/or torture
2. Medical needs
3. Women and girls at risk
4. Family reunification
5. Children and adolescents at risk
6. Lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions
7. Legal and/or physical protection needs

Why Resettle Refugees Here?

- When refugees are not able to return home and have no prospects of integrating into their current country of asylum, resettlement in another country is a solution that offers protection to those who are particularly vulnerable or whose life, liberty, safety, health or fundamental human rights are at risk.
- Resettlement is also an international responsibility that helps relieve pressure on countries which are providing asylum to large numbers of refugees.
- International sponsorship can also serve to reunite families that have been torn apart by
- By providing a legal escape route for refugees, Canada can help reduce the number of desperate people before they resort to smugglers and deadly boat crossings.

The Global Refugee Crisis

There are currently 51.2 million people who have fled their homes. 16.7 million are refugees (having crossed an international border), and another 33.3 million are internally displaced in their own country, the remaining number are people who are stateless. Globally we are experiencing the highest number of refugees since World War Two. Current refugee crisis include: Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Iraq.

In Nova Scotia this year alone we have welcomed refugees from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and the Congo, among other countries.

The Syrian Refugee Crisis Overview

As Syria staggers into its fifth year of a brutal civil war, almost 12 million people – fully half the country's population – are homeless, including 7 million internally displaced people inside Syria and 4 million refugees outside the country who have little hope of returning to Syria safely.

Half of those uprooted are children who have been traumatized by war, robbed of an education, forced from their homes and now live in appalling conditions in exile.

Syria's neighbours are struggling with the demands placed on them by the sudden influx of refugees. As of May 2015, there were almost 4 million registered Syrian refugees in the region, including 1.7 million in Turkey, 1.1 million in Lebanon and 600,000 in Jordan. As conditions deteriorate, with further influxes of refugees in Iraq and Egypt, the entire Middle East is threatened.

Canadians can help prevent a disaster from becoming a catastrophe. Every family that we can resettle is one step closer to a resolution. Refugee sponsorship and international resettlement offer a new life to the most vulnerable; eases the burden on regional host countries and holds out the hope that international pressure might help resolve Syria's crisis.

There are refugees also impacted by the war in Syria including Iraqis, Kurdish, and Palestinian communities. Their situations are as equally challenging and also require resettlement. Refugee Sponsorship is applicable to refugees from Syria, as well as refugees from other countries as well.

Timeline of Syrian Conflict

- March 2011: Civil uprising begins.
- April 2011: Flow of Syrian refugees to neighbouring countries begins as 2,000 cross into Turkey.
- July 2012: First UNHCR refugee camp is opened in Jordan.
- December 2012: United Nations says more than 500,000 Syrian refugees have fled by year's end.
- March 2013: United Nations says more than 1 million Syrians are now refugees. Growing numbers flee the cities of Deraa, Homs, Aleppo and Damascus.
- May 2013: United Nations says 4.25 million Syrians are displaced within Syria.
- June 2013: António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, calls Syria the "worst humanitarian disaster of our era."

- December 2013: United Nations says by end of year 2.3 million Syrian refugees have fled into Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt.
- August 2014: United Nations reports that the number of Syrian refugees has surpassed 3 million with more than a million people having fled in the last 12 months alone.
- December 2014: United Nations reports that in 2014 138, 016 Syrians sought asylum in Europe.
- June 2015: The number of Syrian refugees is expected to reach 4 million
- September 2015: Support for Syrian refugees is galvanized around the world with the publication of the photo of Alan Kurdi

What is Private Sponsorship

Private sponsorship is the resettlement of refugees to Canada, in which the financial costs of sponsorship and settlement support is provided by private groups or organizations. It is a legal commitment. Sponsors commit to providing financial support (e.g. for lodging and food) and care for the sponsored refugee for up to 12 months or until the sponsored refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)

A Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) is an organization that has signed an agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). A SAH works with Constituent Groups (CGs) that may sponsor refugees under the SAHs agreement. SAHs assume overall responsibility and liability for the management of sponsorships under their agreement. In order to manage this liability, SAHs set criteria for groups sponsoring under their agreement.

There are other methods to sponsor refugees which include Community Sponsor and Groups of 5 applications. New CIC regulatory changes in 2012 placed a requirement that refugees sponsored through these methods must have a UNHCR refugee determination certificate. Owing to the difficulty in getting this documentation and also the complexity of Community Sponsors and Groups of 5 applications, very few of these applications (less than 20%) have been approved by CIC in the past 3 years. Constituent Groups that partner with a SAH have a far better track record for successful refugee sponsorship and acceptance.

Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) in Nova Scotia

There are 91 SAHs in Canada, some are local and others are regionally or nationally organized. The majority of SAHs are run by volunteers. If there is a natural link between your group and a SAH (i.e. Baptist Church – Baptist Convention), you can contact them to find out about their process.

Local SAHS

- Archdiocese of Halifax/Yarmouth – Deacon Robert Britton (bbritton@halifaxyarmouth.org)
- Anglican Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI – Marie Kettle (anglicanrefugeesns@gmail.com)
- Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) - Evelyn Jones (ejones@isans.ca) or Abdel Musa (amusa@isans.ca)

National/Regional SAHS

(National or Regional Representative first, followed by the volunteer representative in NS if there is one)

- Canadian Unitarian Council – April Hope (april@cuc.ca); local Halifax contact – Andy Blair (ahblair@yahoo.com)
- United Church of Canada – Khwaka Kobo (kkukubo@united-church.ca); local Maritimes contact – Bev McDonald (pharmin@ns.sympatico.ca)
- Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches – Paul Carline (paul.carline@baptist-atlantic.ca); local NS contact – Rev. Dennis Nickerson (revdennisnickerson@gmail.com)
- Presbyterian Church – Rob Shropshire (rshropshire@presbyterian.ca) – based in Toronto

Sample Criteria for a SAH

Constituent Groups (CGs) often sign agreements with a SAH when they make the decision to sponsor refugees. Below are some of the criteria that the SAH may require from the group:

- A list of all group members with their contact information
- A detailed Settlement Plan including information on which volunteer is assigned to each task
- A percentage (i.e. 50 or 100%) of funds are raised before the application is submitted
- That the funds raised are held by the SAH until the refugee arrives
- Criminal and child abuse registry checks for group members
- Attendance at sponsorship orientation and training sessions (i.e. Settlement Issues workshop)

Sponsoring Group Responsibilities

When signing a Sponsorship application (forms include the '*Undertaking*'), sponsors assume the following responsibilities with respect to the refugee family:

Reception:

- Meet the refugee upon arrival at the airport and welcome them in the community
- Provide orientation to life in Canada

Lodging:

- Provide suitable accommodation, basic furniture, and other household essentials

Care:

- Provide food, clothing, local transportation costs and other basic necessities of life

Settlement assistance and support by helping refugees:

- complete required forms including health insurance, social insurance, and child tax benefits
- open a bank account
- learn English (i.e. attend English Classes);
- understand the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents
- find employment
- access resources (i.e. community support groups, settlement services)
- register children in school and guide them in dealings with the school system
- locate a family physician and dentist

The support begins on the date the sponsored refugee arrives in Canada. The sponsorship continues for a period of one year or until the refugee becomes self-supporting. The ultimate goal is to help the refugee(s) become independent!

Refugees resettled in Canada are responsible for paying for their overseas medical examination, travel documents and transportation costs to Canada. Refugees may receive a repayable loan from CIC to cover these costs. Sponsoring groups are not responsible for repaying these travel loans.

Sponsoring Groups are not responsible, unless they have co-signed loans, for any debt that a refugee incurs in Canada. Sponsors are also not responsible for any liabilities arising from the refugee applicant's misconduct.

Questions About Sponsorship

Does Religion Play a Role in Refugee Sponsorship?

No. Many Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) are affiliated with religious organizations in Canada. But they offer protection to refugees based on humanitarian need and have a long track record of offering help to people of all faiths. It is a rigorous tradition in Canada that refugees are selected for resettlement on the basis of need.

Sponsors do not engage in any form of religious proselytizing and seek only to assist families in settling in Canada.

Is There a Security Risk with Refugee Resettlement?

More than 75% of Syrian refugees are women and children. UNHCR criteria give priority to vulnerable groups such as women at risk, children, survivors of trauma or torture, refugees at heightened risk of sexual violence or exploitation and refugees who require resettlement to ensure family unity.

Refugees approved for resettlement have undergone a rigorous security screening by both the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government of Canada before being accepted. No existing security protocols will be compromised.

Will They Be a Burden?

No. Studies have shown that sponsored refugees benefit from the networks of their sponsors, find work quickly and match or outperform other immigrant groups.

Sponsorship Process

Identifying a Refugee for Sponsorship

There are two ways to identify a refugee for private sponsorship:

1. The sponsor names a specific person (perhaps a relative or friend of someone living locally)
2. Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) – these are refugees whose application has been pre-approved and pre-screened. These cases are available to SAHs.

1. Named sponsorship	2. Blended Visa Office Referred
Identified by a local family/individual for sponsorship (also referred to as a 'named sponsorship' or 'full sponsorship' or 'family-linked sponsorship')	Identified by a Visa Office overseas (Blended Visa Office Referred or 'BVOR')
Fully funded by private sponsors	Start-up costs paid by sponsors 6 months income support paid by sponsors 6 months income support paid by CIC
Sponsors provide all financial and all settlement support	Sponsors provide <u>some</u> financial and all settlement support
Eligible for MSI (healthcare) Children and pregnant women <u>only</u> are eligible for IFHP (Interim Federal Healthcare Program – supplementary health care)	Eligible for MSI All are eligible for IHFP for 12 months
Processing times overseas can vary, as refugees must be interviewed and screened by Canadian Embassies overseas Allows for the reunification of families separated by war and conflict	Processing times are (usually) quick, as refugees' applications have been pre-approved and pre-screened Provides resettlement to refugees who have no family links to Canada

Blended Visa Office Referred:

- Cases are posted weekly to a secure SAH list
- SAHS can select and reserve cases for sponsorship
- Cases are available to be sponsored immediately (as most are 'travel ready')
- Cases are given priority over regular private sponsorship cases
- Processing times (from application submission to arrival) can vary from 2 – 6 months

How do we Apply?

Most SAHs will handle the extensive paperwork on behalf of CGs, usually in return for a fee (maximum of \$100/application). They also require proof that the sponsor has the means to support the refugee.

When groups are ready to sponsor:

- the SAH will help you identify a refugee for sponsorship
 - the application forms will be completed and signed
 - the application forms are submitted to a CIC office in Winnipeg for processing (a process that can take weeks to months)
 - once approved, the application is sent overseas to the visa post. According to recent figures from Citizenship and Immigration, over the past year this took between 11 months (in Lebanon) and 21 months (in Turkey).
 - Refugees are called for interviews at the visa posts
 - If accepted, they complete medical and security screening
 - Refugees are then contacted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), who will make their travel arrangements.
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Settlement Preparation



The Settlement Plan is a plan detailing what you and members of your group will do to orient and support the newcomer(s) during the sponsorship. It will provide your group with a framework for working through the many details of who will do what, when, how, with what resources and where those resources will come from. This Plan should be used as a guide with the understanding that circumstances may change and that it may need to be revised and updated to reflect these changes during the settlement period

Detailed information about a settlement plan can be found at:

<http://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/27chapter7.pdf>

A settlement Plan needs to include information on:

- SIN, MSI, Child Tax Benefit, GST forms
- Housing
- Finances
- Shopping
- Interpreters
- Settlement Services
- Transportation, driver's licence
- Clothing
- Language Training
- Employment
- Childcare
- Health
- Education/Job Training
- Religion
- Culture
- Crisis & Trauma
- Recreation
- Budgeting
- Income Tax

While you're waiting

Janet Dench, executive director of Canadian Council for Refugees, acknowledged that the extended waits are discouraging for would-be sponsors. "It's really hard [for] sponsorship groups to have any incentive if it's going to take so long,"

But the time can be used preparing for the arrival of the refugees, who will need to be clothed and housed when they arrive. Taking classes through the government-funded Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (www.rstp.ca) is one way to get a full understanding of the responsibilities being undertaken. Workshops cover topics such as: finding suitable accommodation, navigating the health-care system and supporting someone who has experienced trauma or torture.

Sponsorship Group Responsibilities

Time

The first month will likely be the most demanding as the family deals with the shock of coming to an entirely new place and starting a new life, but over time as their comfort level in Canada increases, the need for your support will be reduced.

Finances

A refugee family of four will require a minimum of about \$20,000 for support for a year plus start up costs of \$7000; a family of five, about \$22,500 plus \$7200 start up.

The following is a guide which lists amounts required for different size families:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/5413ETOC.asp#appa>

The amounts are roughly equivalent to provincial Income Assistance payments. Start up money is used to buy household items, such as beds and pots and pans, and other items that the refugees might not have, such as winter clothing. Start-up costs – housing deposits, furniture, utilities, clothing etc. – are required at the beginning of a sponsorship, while housing, food and transportation will be ongoing expenses. Some of these *costs can be reduced by donations in-kind*, such as by providing a place to live. Smaller families involve lower costs.

If a refugee becomes financially self-sufficient during the 12-month sponsorship period, the sponsors are not obligated to provide income support for the remainder of the sponsorship. But they must be prepared to resume assistance if the refugee ceases to be self-sufficient during their first year in Canada.

After the first twelve months, the formal sponsorship commitments end, but we hope that sponsoring groups will have created strong links with the family that will make them want to stay in touch.

Organizing Your Committee

Any group of people can organize themselves to sponsor refugees. Once gathered, the group should form a committee to initiate fundraising and develop a settlement plan. Everyone on the committee must be willing to dedicate a significant amount of time and energy in preparation to receive and settle the newcomer family. In time, each member of the committee should have a specific role to play in the arrival preparations and in the settlement period.

POSITION	TASKS
Chairperson	Calls regular meetings, liaison between groups, and with settlement agencies
Secretary	Writes and distributes minutes
Treasurer	Keeps a record of money raised/donated specifically for refugee sponsorship, issues receipts (if necessary), helps to track expenses upon arrival of refugees, assists the refugee to open a bank account and learn to live with budget
<u>Other tasks:</u>	
Member 1	Accommodations - searches for affordable accommodations (look for a place where fuel, water and possibly electricity are included in the rent; think of convenient bus routes, location of schools, etc.), <i>often good to have two people in committee work on this task</i>
Member 2	Furniture and household items - looks for furniture and keeps a record of what is available through donations
Member 3	Education - inquiries about learning English (English as Another Language: EAL) classes and support – for adults and children, contacts the local school about registering children, contacts settlement agency about language assessment for adults, sets up volunteers tutors (if necessary)
Member 4	Medical – searches for family doctor and dentist, ensures refugees have initial health assessment when they arrive, looks for support for mental health issues (if necessary), monitors services covered by IFHP (Interim Federal Healthcare program – supplementary benefits for refugees, if applicable)
Member 5	Documentation – collects information about different programs to register for (MSI, SIN, Pharmacare), assists refugees in completing documentation upon arrival
Member 6	Social – keeps track of community events and encourages members of the groups (not just the committee members) to involve and invite the refugee family in social events, provides neighbourhood and bus orientation to the refugee family, organizes potlucks for the group, etc.

Fundraising

When you decide to sponsor, you take on a significant financial obligation. If you need to raise funds, it may be useful to set up a committee to deal strictly with fundraising. You will want to ensure that finances are carefully and appropriately monitored.

Fundraising will vary depending on whether your organization is a registered charity, a non-profit organization, or an ad-hoc group.

Consult the Canada Revenue Agency for up - to- date information on how to handle fundraising as a charity (www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/cps/cps-028-eng.html)

Preparing a Budget

Item	Cost/Month	Things to Consider
Rent		Is the rent at a level the newcomer will be able to afford after the sponsorship ends?
Electricity/water/fuel		Are electricity, water and fuel included in the rent?
Food		Take into account that newcomers will need some national foods in their diet.
Transport		Monthly bus passes for adults and children.
Phone/Internet		Phone can be hooked up for local calls only, purchase calling cards for international calls/Internet service
Household supplies		Laundry and cleaning supplies
Clothing/ Personal supplies		Will need to purchase start-up clothing (ie. winter boots, etc.) at beginning/ Toiletries
Furniture		Use donations and second hand stores. May have to buy some furniture, e.g., dressers, mattresses
Health		Plan for costs not covered by medical plan – i.e. dental
Discretion		Pocket money; recreation
Education		School trips, books and supplies; day care to allow parents to study

		English
Reserve		Allow a minimum extra of 5% of budget for unanticipated expenses.
TOTAL FOR 12 MONTHS:		

Other Pre-arrival Preparations

Prior to the arrival of the refugee(s) the group or committee should take some time to review their Settlement Plan and make any changes that may be needed. This would also be a good time to identify or, if previously discussed, confirm what needs to be completed by whom and when.

Here is a general idea of how the plan could look:

What Do We Need to achieve?	Activities	Who?	By When?	Resources Required?	Who Needs to Know?
Monthly budget developed	1. Research local cost of living 2. Find out about community resources for budget planning support for the newcomers 3. Design budget, etc....		Eg. Aug. 31 Sept. 15 Sept. 15	For each item, list all resources required: money, materials, etc.	Finance Committee
Apartment rented	Search local vacancies in \$500 - \$700 range 2. Talk to prospective landlords, etc....		Oct. 15	Will need \$1000 - \$1400 for first and last month's rent.	Finance Committee Housing Committee
Furnishings and household items in place	1. What furnishing are already available from in-kind donations and what is still needed				

Settlement Tasks: Specific

Task	Detail	When	Who
Housing	Prepare bedrooms	Now	
Furniture & Household Items	Find, organize items for rooms	Now & pre-arrival	
Food Shop	Buy staples for family	Pre-arrival	
Clothing Shop	Collect donations of and purchase winter clothes	Arrival	
Airport Arrival	Provide transportation from airport to apartment	Arrival	
Medical	Set up initial doctor & dentist appointments	1 st Month	
Budgeting	Accompany family to bank to open an account, discuss budgeting in Canadian context	1 st Month	
Documents	Assist in completing forms (complete list on page 4 of this guide)	1 st Month	
Registration at ISANS & EAL Assessment	Make appointment and accompany family	1 st Month	
Orientation topics	Explaining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency procedures (calling 911, fire, etc.) • Medical emergencies • Bus System • Apartment • Neighbourhood • Services – Food Banks, etc. • Recreation – Parks, etc. • Libraries 	Months 1 - 3	
Social Events	Visit local library, rec centre, community centre, faith centre	Ongoing	
Orientation topics	Explaining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying their Travel Loan • Paying Taxes 	Month 3 – 6	
Job Search	Assisting in finding family members employment	Months 6 +	
Housing	Inform and apply for Public Housing Request change to tenancy lease (go from yearly to month-to month contact)	Month 6+ Month 8th	
End of sponsorship	Inform and refer to Provincial Income Assistance if needed	Month 12	

Settlement Checklist After Arrival: (General)

Have you planned the following?

- Meeting the refugee upon arrival
- Housing
- Furniture
- Food
- Clothing (including: coat, shoes, boots, hat)
- Interpretation
- Transportation
- Personal items
- Provide pocket money/ recreation
- Provide phone card
- School books, supplies

After Arrival

- Basic health assessment (to anticipate any needed medical interventions)
 - Explain what to do in a medical emergency and other type of emergencies
 - Give a tour of home and neighbourhood
 - Intake appointment at ISANS (Call 423-3607 to book; Intake worker will organize English Assessment, book ISANS Orientation, and set up meeting with Employment Counsellor)
 - Complete forms/applications (MSI, SIN, GST, etc.)
 - Complete EAL assessment and register in EAL School
 - Registration of Children in School (if applicable)
 - Open a Bank Account, assist with budgeting
 - Provide bus tickets/bus pass and explain the Bus System
 - Find a family doctor, dentist, optometrist
 - Provide interpretation
 - Explain Travel loans
 - Assist in finding work
-

Furniture and Equipment “Wish List” For Sponsored Family

Kitchen

can opener
clock
coffee and tea pots
colander
cookie sheet
cooling rack
cutlery and tray
cutting board
dish cloths & towels
dish rack
frying pan
garbage pan
grater
hand mixer
kettle
knives
ladle, tongs, spatula, turner
measuring cup and spoons
mixing bowls
baking pans (cake, loaf
muffin, pie)
pitcher
potholders
potato peeler & masher
recipe book
scissors
toaster
wooden spoon

Dining

table and chairs
cutlery
dishes
glasses
cups/mugs
serving dishes
table cloth/place mats
pepper & salt shakers
Living Room
sofa

easy chairs
curtains/drapes/blinds
lamps - floor/table
table -coffee, end
television & stand
cushions
bookcase/shelves

Bedrooms

alarm clock
beds & mattresses
bedspread
blankets
coat hangers
curtains
dressers
lamps
mirror
pillows
sheets & pillow cases
wastebasket

Bathroom

bath mats
clothes hamper
hair dryer/curling iron
shower curtain
scales
toilet brush
towels and face cloths
wastebasket

Laundry/Cleaning

broom & dustpan
basket
drying rack
iron and ironing board
laundry basket
sponge mop
vacuum cleaner
/electric broom

For Children

desk, chair & lamp
story books
toys/games

Other

framed pictures
basic tools and nails
house plants
paper/pens/pencils
radio
sewing supplies
umbrella
vases
calendar
computer(s)

Personal Supplies

comb & brush
razor & shaving cream
nail file/clipper
tooth brushes & tooth paste
deodorant, shampoo
soap

Household Supplies

detergent - dishes, laundry
household cleaner
kleenex
paper napkins
toilet tissue

Food Staples

baking powder & soda
cereals
flour, sugar, salt, spices
margarine, oil
pasta, rice
tea

Note: it is recommended that mattresses, sheets & bedding be purchased new to avoid possible bedbug issues

Forms/Applications to Complete

1. **MSI (Medical Services Insurance)** – Provides coverage for doctor and hospital services, available for permanent residents on arrival in Canada. Forms available by calling **1-800-563-8880**, applicant would need a copy of their landed document or permanent resident card and a confirmation of residency.
2. **Nova Scotia Pharmacare Program** is a provincial drug plan designed to help Nova Scotians with the cost of prescription drugs. The program offers protection against drug costs for families who have no drug coverage or if the cost of the prescription drugs becomes a financial burden to them.

The program is available to all Nova Scotians with a valid health card and there is no premium or fee to join the program. The annual out-of-pocket cost is capped at a percentage of family income. Specific questions about individual situations can be answered by calling **1-800-544-6191**.

3. **Interim Federal Health (IFH)** – Limited medications and vaccines for sponsored refugees **only if needed to prevent or treat a disease that is a risk to public health or to treat a condition of public safety concern**. General Inquiries: **1-888-242-2100**. **The exceptions are:** BVOR refugees who receive full IFHP (which includes supplementary dental and health benefits) and all children.
4. **Social Insurance Card (SIN)** – An identification card that allows you to apply for GST Credit, Child Tax Benefit, etc. To apply, complete application at Service Canada, card should arrive within two weeks. Everyone has a different number and it is illegal to use someone else's number. If lost, report it to police and to Service Canada.
5. **GST Tax Credit** – A program to help people with modest incomes, if they qualify, applicant will receive a cheque 4 times each year. To apply, complete form RC151 (on Revenue Canada website - www.cra-arc.gc.ca and mail to tax centre in your area). To apply, must be: 19 or older, a permanent resident, have a SIN number, provide date of birth, date of marriage (if applicable), and spouses SIN number (if applicable), report on any income earned for last 3 years, and have banking information ready. Must complete income tax each April.
6. **Canada Child Tax Benefit** (if applicable) – a monthly payment to help support families with children under 18. Amount differs according to income, number and ages of children. Traditionally the mother receives the payment. To apply look for forms on Revenue Canada website (www.cra.gc.ca). Applicant must provide children and parents' landing documents, children's birth certificates (if available), family income documents.

Family must complete income tax for both husband and wife each April in order to continue to receive child tax benefits. If new immigrant receives letter from Revenue Canada, follow up immediately as this may lead to suspension of payments.

Orientation Topics For Newcomers

Safety

911 and what to do in an emergency
Symbol for poison
Fire safety
Child safety (car seats, cords, supervision, balconies, water safety, playground, helmets, storing poisonous substances and medications, electrical outlets, items babies can choke on)
Personal safety (going out alone at night, carrying large amounts of cash, keeping door locked, answering the door to strangers, carrying a card with your name, address, etc.)
Elevator and escalator safety
Car safety (drinking and driving, seatbelts)
Street safety (traffic lights and signs, crosswalks)

Finances

Canadian currency
Bank Account/Using Bank Services
Budgeting
Immigrant Loans
Income Tax
Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Renting Accommodation

Lease obligations/Rights
Rent payments
Utilities payment
Public housing information

Apartment Living

Noise level
Use of appliances (stove, fridge, freezer, washer and dryer)
Cleaning supplies
Garbage disposal
Thermostat use
Heating the apartment
Water use
Laundry use
Fire Alarm/Intercom
Follow-up on inspection findings
Power outages
Bathroom (what not to flush down the toilet)

Telephones

Phone application and use
Long distance calls
Use of phone cards/public phones

Shopping

Procedures
Money (coins and bills)
Finding and recognizing items in stores/ recognizing items on sale
Store policies on exchanges/refunds
Store sales/flyers
Second hand stores
Wholesale and dollar stores
Different stores to buy food

Mail

Mail delivery/postal box
Location of postal outlets

Local Transportation

Bus routes and schedules
Taxis (for emergencies)
Use of crosswalks and traffic lights

Life in Canada

Dressing for the weather
Personal hygiene (products)
Scent-free policies
Social norms (i.e. lining up, personal space, being on time, keeping appointments, etc.)
Recognizing stress and culture shock
Laws (child abuse, domestic violence)
Information for singles

Health Care System

Medical appointments
Family physician referrals
Hospital procedures
Ambulance use/cost
Pharmacy orientation (how to fill a prescription)
Medication safety (i.e. do not share medications)

Community Resources

Identifying resources (libraries, food and furniture banks, parks, family resource centres, faith centres)

Neighbourhood Orientation

(Under 1st month checklist)

Further Resources

United Nations High Commission on Refugees: <http://www.unhcr.ca/>

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP): <http://www.rstp.ca/en/>

Lifeline Syria: <https://lifelinesyria.ca/>
