



▶ BEFORE THE INTERVIEW.....1



▶ DURING THE INTERVIEW.....3



▶ AFTER THE INTERVIEW.....5

Interview *preparation*

Preparing Refugee Sponsorship Applicants for an Interview

The interview with Canadian visa officers is an important process in the determination of refugee sponsorship applications. Applicants are invited to the interview via mail, email or by phone. The purpose of the interview is to establish whether the applicant is eligible and admissible for resettlement under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program and whether resettlement to Canada is the preferred solution to the applicant's situation.

Since the decision of the visa officer depends significantly on the outcome of the interview, this document* will offer some recommendations on how to prepare for an interview and what to do during and after the interview. Please note that this document does not represent legal advice; however, it may serve as a guideline to help you better prepare for your interview with the Canadian visa officer.

Before the Interview

Carefully **review copies of all application forms** and **supporting documents** that were submitted to the visa office with respect to your case. If you do not have the copies, please let your sponsors know immediately so that they may help you obtain the copies. When reviewing the application forms and supporting documents, please pay attention to the following:

- Is the family composition indicated in the forms still the same? If any changes (marriages, births or deaths) are not reflected in the application forms, please inform the visa office (and your sponsors) prior to the interview;
- In the application forms **ALL** your family members should be mentioned including those whose whereabouts are not known or who are considered deceased. If you notice that some of your

* The document was produced with the help of the existing guidelines created by Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC), the Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT) and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR).

family members (both accompanying and non-accompanying) are not included in the forms, please inform the visa office and your sponsors in writing immediately.

- Make sure that information in the application forms is **correct** and **up-to-date**. If you find mistakes in the application forms, please notify the visa office and your sponsors prior to the interview;
- Make sure that you have provided **all available** supporting documents that are **relevant to your case**.

Examples of supporting documents:

- ✓ Proof of your personal refugee story (news articles, letters with threats, statements from friends and family, police reports, etc.);
- ✓ Documents showing what happened to other people who faced a situation similar to yours (for example, relatives who were recognized as refugees);
- ✓ All available personal identification documents;
- ✓ Documents related to your marital status and composition of your family (marriage and divorce certificates, birth or baptism certificates of your children, etc);
- ✓ All documents and letters issued to you by the UNHCR;
- ✓ Documents related to your status in the country where you are currently residing;
- ✓ Documents showing your problems in the country where you are right now; and
- ✓ Documents showing compelling medical, psychological problems (such as doctor's reports, medical conditions, etc.)

Know Your Refugee Story

Keep in mind that one of the most common reasons for rejection is inconsistency that occurs when facts given at the interview are different from the information provided in the application forms. As a result, carefully **read your personal story** that was submitted to the visa office as part of your application.

While reviewing your story, please pay attention to the following:

- Make sure that all **events** that happened to you (and your family) are **true** and **properly dated**;
- **Remember your story well**. It is recommended that **you make a list of important details** regarding the **time, date and location** of the events that happened to your family and **persons or organizations** associated with your distressful situation, as you may forget these details during the interview.
- **Practice the interview** in advance with someone you trust. The person can ask you questions about your life in your home country and the reasons why you had to flee.

- **If you notice mistakes** in your personal story or you believe that some of the relevant events, incidents or dates are missing, please inform the visa office (and your sponsor) about that prior to the interview:
- If you would like to **add information** about some relevant events that happened to you or the members of your family, which are not already mentioned in your personal story, please inform the visa office and your sponsors in writing immediately.

During the Interview

The Canadian visa office will inform you of the date, time, and place of your interview. Do not miss your interview date.

- You should arrive at the specified location on the day and time given to you. You should not be late, try to arrive prior to the interview time.
- You will be interviewed by a Canadian visa officer. If you have requested an interpreter, the interpreter will also be in the room with you.
- The visa officer will ask you about the **nature and causes of your refugee claim and current situation in your home country and country of asylum**: why you had to leave your home country, why you cannot go back and why you cannot stay where you are.
- In addition, you may also be questioned on your education, work experience, family life, French and English skills, knowledge of Canada and motivation to settle there.

What To Bring With You To The Interview:

Please bring the **originals** of all the documents in your possession, such as:

- Identification documents for you and all family members included in your application;
- Documents that can support your personal story and your fear of persecution back home
- If you bring to the interview documents that you could not submit to the visa office before, you will need to explain to the visa officer why you could not provide them prior to the interview.
- If any of your documents is not in English or French, please bring a translated copy of the document.

If you do not have any of the required documents, please be prepared to explain to the visa officer the reasons why you do not have the document.

How to conduct yourself during the interview?

- Do not be afraid of the immigration officer who will conduct the interview. Always **look at the interviewing officer** when you speak. Try not to look down.
- You should **trust the visa officer** and give **complete and truthful** answers to his/her questions. In addition, your answers should be clear and straight to the point.

- If you did not understand the question, **do not be shy**. Ask the officer to repeat or rephrase this question for you.
- **Do not exaggerate** your story. You should only **tell the truth**, even if it sounds too simple. Remember that **declarations containing false information may result in an immigration application being rejected**.
- Do not assume that the visa officer knows something that is obvious to you; you should **tell everything** what you expect the visa officer to know. Especially when it comes to certain **traditions** and **cultural peculiarities** that are relevant to your personal refugee story. You should carefully explain everything that you want the visa officer to know.
- If you have **family members** who are also part of the application, make sure you also talk about any risks of danger that they would face if returned to their home country. This also includes **risks to your children**.
- If you have submitted **documents** previously, you can remind the visa officer of the documents and point out how they support your story.
- Make sure to tell the visa officer if there has been any **change in your family composition**. If you recently got married or had a child, let the visa office know. **If you do not declare your new family members, they may not be allowed to join you later on**.
- If you are nervous or upset and need a break to compose yourself, do not be shy or afraid to ask the officer for a break.
- **Do not leave the interview without saying everything** that you wanted to tell the officer. If you do not fully state during the interview all the dangers that you faced or may face if you return home, then the visa officer may not consider these dangers when making the decision.

Working with an interpreter

If you do not speak French or English, interpreters can assist you during the interview. **If you have to use the help of an interpreter during the interview:**

- Make sure that you **understand the interpreter** well and you are understood in turn;
- Answer all questions clearly and **break each answer in short parts**, so the interpreter is able to translate every word you say. Remember that interpreters are not allowed to summarize your answer or omit any parts of your answer;
- Do not be afraid to speak truthfully** in front of the interpreter, regardless of their religious, cultural, or ethnic background. The role of the interpreter is to help you and the visa officer understand each other. The interpreter cannot influence the decision of the visa officer;
- If you think that the interpreter **made a mistake or omitted some of the**

- information**, you should **inform the visa officer immediately**. Do not be afraid to interrupt, if you need to correct a mistake made by the interpreter;
- e. If you are convinced that the interpreter provided to you is **not doing a good job**, please **inform the visa officer immediately**. For example, if the interpreter does not speak exactly the same language as you, and that causes misunderstanding, you should politely ask for another interpreter immediately.
- f. **Do not wait until the end of the interview** to tell the visa officer that you think the interpreter made mistakes;
- g. **If the officer or the interpreter** mistakenly quotes you or misunderstands what you have said to them, do not be shy or afraid to correct them.
- h. If you are a woman and the interpreter is a man (or vice versa) and you do not feel comfortable talking about your personal experiences in front of them, do not be shy or afraid to tell the officer about that.

After the Interview

A visa officer may make the decision and share it with you at the end of the interview. If your application is approved, you will be given medical forms at the end of the interview. However, in some cases, a visa officer may need more time to make the decision.

If you were not given the medical forms at the end of the interview:

- It is recommended that right after the interview you prepare a summary of your interview starting with the point of your entering the building. Please make a list of questions that you were asked and the answers that you gave.
- If you think that something went wrong during the interview, for example you forgot to mention some important facts, please inform the visa office and your sponsors in writing immediately.
- If after the interview you obtain **any new documents**, please immediately submit them to the visa office (and your sponsor).

© 2012, Catholic Crosscultural Services and the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program.
This document is protected by copyright and is intended for authorized users. If you are not authorized and wish to use this material, in whole or in part, please contact us at resources@rstp.ca

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program Tel:
416.290.1700, 1.877.290.1710
Fax: 416.290.1710
E-mail: info@rstp.ca, Website: www.rstp.ca