



Image: CBC

## RSTP NEWS

### National SAH Conference 2016 Registration Deadline – April 15, 2016

The deadline to register for the National SAH Conference is fast approaching. **Please remember to submit your forms by April 15, 2016.** Due to the high interest in the conference this year it may be difficult for RSTP to accept any late registrations past this date. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Jenny Hwang at [conference@rstp.ca](mailto:conference@rstp.ca).

### Upcoming Toronto Event Hosted by RSTP and Amnesty International

On April 12, RSTP and Amnesty International are hosting a panel discussion to share refugee sponsorship experiences from the perspectives of both sponsored refugees and refugee sponsors. The panel will discuss all aspects of the sponsorship experience, including expectations, the preparation process, and life after arrival in Canada. There will be a Q&A period to allow attendees to ask questions of the panel about their refugee sponsorship experience. For more information, please click this link.

**Date:** April 12, 2016

**Time:** 7:00PM

**Location:** Beit Zatoun (612 Markham St., close to Bloor St. & Bathurst St.)

### E-Training - Introduction to Private Sponsorship:

If any of your co-sponsors or CG members would like to be involved in the next Introduction to Private Refugee Sponsorship e-training session, please have them email [etraining@rstp.ca](mailto:etraining@rstp.ca) to receive an email once registration for the Summer 2016 session opens up. The Summer 2016 session will begin in mid-June 2016. Additionally, if you or any of your CG members have taken the Introduction course and are interested in participating in the Advanced course, please also contact [etraining@rstp.ca](mailto:etraining@rstp.ca) to register.

## UPCOMING WEBINARS

### Sponsoring Refugees as a Community Sponsor

**Date:** Friday, April 15th, 2016

**Time:** 3:00-4:30 PM PST (6:00 – 7:30 PM EST)

**Registration:** To register, please click here.

### Overview of Group of Five Sponsorship

**Date:** Wednesday, April 20th, 2016

**Time:** 6:00-7:30 PM EST

**Registration:** To register, please click here.

## POLICY UPDATES

### Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)

As of April 1, 2016, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has restored the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) to the levels of coverage that were available before 2012. This applies to all resettled refugees, including privately sponsored refugees.

Coverage for IFH holders (all resettled refugees) is as follows:

**-Basic coverage** until the beneficiary qualifies for provincial or territorial health insurance (maximum of 3 months)

**-Supplemental and prescription drug coverage** as long as the beneficiary receives income support from the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) (or its equivalent in Quebec) or until the beneficiary is no longer under private sponsorship (initial coverage is for 12 months).

For further information about the IFHP policy changes, please see IRCC's website by clicking [here](#).

**A refugee who arrived March 15 (before the change of IFHP policy) would be able to seek basic care under the temporary measure (from the date of arrival until the end of March 31). From April 1 onward, any refugees who arrived and received IFHP coverage before April 1, 2016 do not receive retroactive coverage but are now able to access the additional services that they may not have been receiving before (depending on the type of coverage they had access to), including supplemental and prescription services.**

*You Asked: Is a return to Syria, whether brief or extended, during the application process grounds for refusal? Are there any details on which types of returns would lead to a refusal and which are permitted?*

IRCC said: "To be eligible for resettlement to Canada as a refugee, the legislation stipulates that an applicant must be outside of their country of nationality and there must be no reasonable prospect, within a reasonable period, of a durable solution in a country other than Canada, including voluntary repatriation or resettlement in their country of nationality or habitual residence. Therefore, **depending upon the particular facts and circumstances of the case, a return to Syria can be grounds for refusal.** In some circumstances, a temporary return to Syria may not lead to a refusal. Visa officers assess whether or not particular cases meet the requirements of the legislation based on the evidence presented by the applicant."

*You Asked: Are there currently any alternate options for Syrians in Iraq for visa interviews? Are they being offered interviews in Amman? How is processing continuing for Syrians in Iraq?*

IRCC said: "While there are challenges presented with accessing this population which impact processing times, this is not uncommon for refugee cases located in remote areas where Canada does not have a permanent presence and **should not be interpreted as a pause on processing.** IRCC remains committed to processing privately sponsored refugees residing in northern Iraq and other remote locations, including through ongoing cooperation with international partners such as the UNHCR and IOM to facilitate these efforts."

## INQUIRIES AND RESPONSES

*You Asked: I understand that IFH coverage is "fully restored" as of April 1, 2016. But here's my question: What about refugees that arrived after the official change of government on November 4, 2015 and are still within their initial year? Are they covered? And if so, from when?*

*We had refugees who arrived yesterday, or last week, or last month, who have medical needs. What is their status as far as IFH?*

IRCC has confirmed with RSTP that the IFHP policy change is **not retroactive**. This means that if a refugee is eligible for the IFHP, effective April 1, they became eligible for supplemental and prescription services for the remaining period of their eligibility under the program. Services provided prior to April 1 were covered under the IFHP temporary measures. For PSRs, this was basic and Public Health and Public Safety (PHPS) prescription drug coverage.

For example, **a refugee who arrives today (April 6) would be eligible for full coverage from their date of arrival since the date of arrival falls after the policy change date of April 1.**

***You Asked: Are any interviews being conducted outside of Beirut, Ankara and Amman? If so, where?***

IRCC has indicated that the visa offices in Beirut, Ankara and Amman are the ones that continue to primarily conduct interviews in those cities. They also said: "Visa offices may travel to other locations in their areas of responsibility when warranted to access clients who are not able to attend interviews at the visa office. At the present time, no interviews in other locations are scheduled."

***You Asked: How are processing times for the various visa offices calculated? The new system is different from the previous one.***

IRCC said: "Prior to December 31, 2015, processing times for many of our services were displayed by visa office. This was useful when applications for permanent or temporary residence were always processed by the nearest visa office. However, we now have the ability to move applications around our global network to ensure they are processed as efficiently as possible. This means your application may not be processed at the office closest to where you live. For many services, instead of asking about your nearest visa office, you are now asked for your country of residence. This provides you with a more accurate processing time."

For other services, you may see a single processing time, no matter where you live.

This is our commitment to process applications within that time. These processing times are updated on a weekly basis."

***You Asked: What are the processing times currently for non-Syrian G5 application at CPO-W?***

The current processing time for all Group of Five (G5) applications is **8 months**. AORs are sent in approximately 6 months.

***You Asked: How does Rome's processing queue work? Are transferred applications put to beginning of queue?***

IRCC has indicated to RSTP that for all applications going through the Rome visa office, the oldest applications are being processed first. For all PSR applications, the date that a complete application is received at CPO-W is the "application received date." Once cases are transferred from CPO-W to the appropriate visa office, they are processed in order of application received date relative to other applications in the same category at the same visa office, with certain exceptions for priority cases.



IMAGE: THE GLOBE AND MAIL