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Interview

Preparation

Preparing refugee sponsorship applicants for an interview

The interview is an important part of the refugee sponsorship application process. Applicants are invited to an interview at a Visa Office abroad via email or by phone. The purpose of the interview is to establish whether the applicant is eligible and admissible for resettlement to Canada under the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program and whether resettlement to Canada is the best 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.¹ 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.

Before the interview

Carefully **review copies of all application forms** and **supporting documents** that were submitted to the IRCC with respect to your application. If you do not have the copies of the application package, 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 there are any changes in family composition (e.g. marriages, newborn or adopted children, or deaths) that are not reflected in the application forms, please inform the Visa Office and your sponsors immediately so that the forms can be updated.
- In the application forms **ALL** your family members (i.e. your spouse/common law partner, you or your spouse/common law partner's children under the age of 22 and any children under the

¹This 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).

age of 22 of you or your spouse/common law partner's dependent children) should be mentioned, including those who are missing, whose whereabouts are not known or who are presumed to be dead. If you notice that some of your family members (both accompanying and non-accompanying) are not included on the forms, namely on the Generic Application Form for Canada and the Sponsorship Undertaking and Settlement Plan, please inform your sponsors and the Visa Office immediately so that the forms can be updated.

- Make sure that the contact information (phone number and email address) on the forms is **correct** and **up-to-date**, as this is the information the Visa Office will use to communicate with you and invite you for an interview. Also ensure that other information on the forms, such as your personal history, list of addresses and refugee story, is also **correct** and **up-to-date**. If you find any mistakes in the application forms, please notify your sponsors and the Visa Office immediately so that the forms can be updated.
- 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 (e.g. news articles, letters, statements from friends and family, police reports, medical 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 (such as a passport, ID cards, refugee documents);
- ✓ Documents related to your marital status and the composition of your family (e.g. marriage and divorce certificates, birth or baptism certificates of your children, etc.);
- ✓ All documents and letters issued to you by the UNHCR or the government of the country where you are currently living;
- ✓ Documents related to your status in the country where you are currently living;
- ✓ Documents showing your problems in the country where you are currently living; and,
- ✓ Documents showing compelling medical and/or 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 refugee story** that is on the *Schedule 2: Refugees Outside Canada* form that was submitted to IRCC as part of your application package. 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 **accurate**;
- **Remember your refugee story well.** We recommend **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 situation and story, 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 refugee story or you believe that some of the relevant events, incidents or dates are missing, please inform the Visa Office and your sponsor about this 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 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 and the Visa Officer.
- The Visa Officer will ask you about the **nature and causes of your personal refugee story and the current situation in your home country and the country you are currently in**, e.g., 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 asked about your education, work experience, family life, French and English skills, knowledge of Canada and

What to bring 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 refugee story and your fear of persecution at home.
- If you bring new documents to the interview, ones 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 are not in English or French, please bring a translated copy.

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 them.

motivation to settle there.

How to conduct yourself during the interview

- Do not be afraid of the Visa Officer who will conduct the interview. Ask questions at the start of the interview about the purpose of the interview, the role of the Visa Officer and the interpreter (if applicable) and the format of the interview.
- You should **trust** the Visa Officer and give **complete and truthful** answers to their questions. Answer all questions to the best of your knowledge and ability and give answers that are clear and straight to the point.
- If you did not understand the question, **do not be shy**. Ask the Visa 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 **providing false, fabricated or embellished information may result in your application being rejected**.
- **Do not hide** information from the Visa Officer.
- 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 spouse/common law partner and 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 **changes in your family composition**. If you recently got married or had a child, let the Visa Officer know. **If you do not declare your new family members, they may never be allowed to join you in Canada later on.**
- If you are nervous, upset or need a break to compose yourself, do not be shy or afraid to ask the Visa Officer for a break.
- **Do not leave the interview without saying everything** that you wanted to tell the Visa 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** and the interpreter can understand you;

- Answer all questions **clearly and break each answer into short parts**, so the interpreter is able to translate every word you say. **Remember:** interpreters are not allowed to summarize your answer or omit any parts of your answer, they must interpret your answer fully and accurately.
- **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.
- **If the interpreter** misquotes you or misunderstands what you have said to them, do not be shy or afraid to correct them.
- **Do not wait until the end of the interview** to tell the Visa Officer that you think the interpreter made mistakes or that they misunderstood what you said.
- 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 or dialect as you, and that causes misunderstanding, you should politely inform the Visa Officer and ask for another interpreter immediately.
- If you do not feel comfortable about sharing the details of your personal refugee story with the interpreter due to their gender, e.g. you are female and the interpreter is male (or vice-versa), you should politely inform the Visa Officer and ask for an interpreter that is the same gender as you.

After the Interview

A Visa Officer may make the decision and share it with you at the end of the interview. However, in most cases, a Visa Officer may need more time to make the decision.

If after the interview you obtain any new documents, please immediately submit them to the Visa Office and your sponsors.

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. It is also recommended that right after the interview you prepare a summary of your interview starting with the point you entered the building, a list of questions that you were asked and the answers that you gave.



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

Last updated: January 2019