



BVOR NEWS

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

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Workplace Sponsorship helps newcomers

Moved by the photos of Alan Kurdi that affected so many Canadians, Laurie Cooper of Whistler, B.C. headed to Greece in 2015 to help refugees in whatever way she could.

“When I was working in the refugee camps in Greece I met many young people that spoke excellent English, and I thought that they could easily have jobs in Canada,” Laurie says.

On returning to Whistler, she met Norman Mastalir, the managing director of the Fairmont Chateau Whistler Resort. After telling him about her experience in Greece and her interest in sponsoring refugees, his immediate response was to ask, “How can we help?”

The hotel has since made 12 open-ended job offers to refugees that Laurie’s group sponsors. Three currently work at the hotel, and several more will arrive over the next few months. The hotel provides subsidized housing, full-time employment, training and orientation for the newcomers. The newcomers also gain important Canadian experience to add to their resumes.

The partnership between the hotel and the sponsors is considered a success by all involved. “Any business would be happy to welcome the kind of colleagues we’ve had join us here through this program,” says Norman Mastalir. Mohammad Aljamous, a newcomer working at the hotel, adds that “many [refugees] have the qualifications and skills to work at your business.” Hear what else they have to say in RSTP’s video [Checking In: Partnership Helps Sponsored Refugees](#).

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program

The BVOR Program helps resettle refugees identified by United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) as the most vulnerable in need of resettlement. It is called blended because it is a cost sharing arrangement. Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides up to six months of income support for the newcomers, while private sponsors provide another six months of financial support, start-up costs and up to one year of social and emotional support.

This is just one of several initiatives linking refugee newcomers to Canadian workplaces. Jim Estill of Danby Electronics has settled more than 200 Syrian refugees, all of whom have had the opportunity to work at his Guelph factory. Colleagues at a Hamilton, Ontario [metal bar](#) who got together with relatives to sponsor a Syrian family are now applying for a second BVOR sponsorship. Lawyers at Toronto’s Goldblatt Partners LLP are also getting ready to sponsor their second refugee family. There are many ways that workplaces can be involved in sponsorship. Colleagues can form a group to sponsor a refugee or refugee family. Employers might provide meeting space or support employment, training and volunteer opportunities for newcomers. An employer could even fund the full cost of refugee sponsorship. [See RSTP’s workplace sponsorship website page](#) for more details. The [Refugee Hub](#) has also produced a number of case studies on workplace sponsorship that will soon be available on their website. Whatever kind of workplace you’re part of, large or small, for-profit or non-profit, you can provide networks and opportunities of great benefit to refugee newcomers. “This is an opportunity for them to start a new life in a safe country,” says Laurie Cooper.

Featured BVOR profile

Eritrean family looking for sponsors:

Eritrean family five with their adult son are looking for sponsors in Canada. Subjected to torture and violence in Eritrea and fearing persecution, they fled their country for Sudan, where living conditions are harsh for refugees. There are restrictions on refugees freedom of movement as they are asked to stay in camps. Living conditions in the camps are poor, but living outside of the camps puts refugees at a higher risk of abuse, extortion, and forcible return. Due to the country's limited resources and poor economic conditions, it is also difficult for refugees to find employment. *(UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, 2019)*

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has identified this family for resettlement to Canada. Most refugees experience increased vulnerability due to experiences that led them to leave their country of origin. For this family resettlement is the only way they will ever be able to live full and meaningful lives.

You can make a difference in this family's life by sponsoring them to come to Canada. Form a group and contact the Refugee Sponsorship Training program. Ask us about the BVOR program.

RSTP will help you through the process !

BLENDING VISA OFFICE-REFERRED (BVOR) PROGRAM

For more information, visit www.rstp.ca or email bvor@rstp.ca

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Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Right now, there are 31 new BVOR profiles available on RSTP's matching database.

Refugee populations in the BVOR program include:

- Syrian, Iraqi
- Congolese, Ethiopian, Eritrean
- Somali, Sudanese, Ugandan, Liberian

Particular vulnerabilities or reasons for resettlement include:

- Women and girls at risk
- Survivors of violence and/or torture
- Lack of foreseeable alternative solutions

To learn more about the countries BVOR refugees come from, visit: <http://www.rstp.ca/en/refugees/country-condition-information/>

Profiles of BVOR refugees needing sponsors can be found in the RSTP-BVOR Matching Database:

<https://cathcrosscultural.sharepoint.com/rstp>



Your workplace can help refugees like Mohammad Aljamous, above, find a safe, secure home from which to rebuild their lives. Mohammad works at Fairmont Chateau Whistler Resort, benefiting from a unique partnership between sponsors and the hotel.