

# RSTP Bulletin

*The latest news and updates on the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program*

## Summary of Measures Introduced in Response to COVID-19

The Government of Canada, including Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), along with the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have introduced several measures to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Several of these measures have a direct impact on refugee sponsorship and resettlement to Canada, as sponsored refugees do not become permanent residents until they arrive at a port-of-entry in Canada.

On March 16, 2020, the [Prime Minister of Canada announced travel restrictions](#) to Canada (with [certain exceptions](#)) that came into effect on March 18, 2020.

IRCC and the IOM have cancelled all planned arrivals in March 2020 and April 2020 for refugees sponsored under the Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR), the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR), the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) and the Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) programs until further notice.

If you received a Notification of Arrival Transmission (NAT) for an arrival scheduled in March 2020 or April 2020, you should have already received a cancellation notice for this NAT from IRCC.

Information on when travel to Canada may resume for sponsored refugees is not currently available.

Refugees that were in possession of a valid permanent resident visa prior to the travel restrictions coming into effect on March 18, 2020 may be able to travel to Canada subject to the IOM's capacity to facilitate travel and other considerations and requirements. IRCC will contact sponsors and refugees in this situation directly if/when travel to Canada is possible; sponsors should not contact IRCC.

IRCC has suspended its Transportation Loan collection activities for a period of six months until September 2020. Newcomers who have questions about their loan, or who wish to make alternative arrangements for payments during this period, should contact [IRCC's Collection Services](#).

On March 17, 2020, [UNHCR and the IOM announced](#) they were temporarily suspending resettlement travel for refugees in order to reduce the exposure of refugees to COVID-19.

Both the IOM and UNHCR have been assisting refugees who were approved for resettlement to Canada but were not able

to travel because of the current travel restrictions.

Any sponsored refugees overseas that were scheduled to travel to Canada and are affected by the travel restrictions should contact their local IOM and UNHCR offices for assistance, or their sponsors should [email IRCC](#).

For the latest information on the travel restrictions and how COVID-19 is affecting operations at IRCC, please [click here](#).

## Question

**How has COVID-19 impacted the processing of refugee sponsorship applications at the Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O) and at Migration Offices overseas?**

## Answer

[ROC-O staff are working remotely](#) and they are still processing refugee sponsorship applications submitted by email.

If you are submitting a new refugee sponsorship application to ROC-O, you are strongly advised to do so [via email](#) so the application can be processed. The email address for ROC-O can be found [here](#).

In order to avoid duplication, ROC-O have advised sponsors that applications already submitted by mail should not be resubmitted via email; mailed applications already received by ROC-O will be processed in the order they were received when ROC-O resumes normal operations.

Migration Offices overseas have either reduced their operations or closed their offices until [further notice](#). As a result of these measures, there may be delays to application processing at ROC-O and at Migration Offices overseas.

## Multi-Language Resources on COVID-19 to Share with Refugee Abroad and Sponsored Newcomers

A handout that collates multi-language resources on COVID-19, its symptoms and how to prevent its spread (including in Amharic, Arabic, Farsi, Karen, Lingala, Oromo, Somali, Swahili, Tigrinya and many other languages) can be found in English and French on the RSTP website [here](#) and [here](#).

Sponsors are advised to share the resources linked in the handout with refugees overseas that they are sponsoring and sponsored newcomers that have already arrived in Canada.

# UPCOMING RSTP WEBINARS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Announcement Regarding the BVOR Program

Due to the disruptions to normal operations caused by COVID-19, IRCC will not be posting any cases for the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program until further notice.

Cases for potential matching that are currently on the RSTP matching database will be removed, effective immediately.

This will not affect cases that had already been matched, and for which the sponsorship had already been approved by the Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O). However, IRCC is not able to provide specific dates on when those cases might arrive in Canada, following the announcement of the Prime Minister on March 16, 2020 on travel restrictions

IRCC will contact sponsors directly by e-mail once the refugees they are sponsoring are ready to travel and to advise them on additional requirements with which they will have to comply in light of COVID-19.

## RSTP Trainers & Staff Are Still Available to Provide Training and Information to Sponsors

RSTP Trainers and staff are working remotely and are still able to assist refugee sponsors via email, over the phone and through virtual meetings. We are also able to host and deliver online training sessions and online workshops.

To find your nearest RSTP Trainer, and the contact details of other RSTP staff, please [click here](#).

## New RSTP Trainer for Ottawa!

Serena Richardson, the former SAH representative for the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada, has joined RSTP as the Trainer for Ottawa and Northern Ontario.

Serena can be contacted via email at: [srichardson@rstp.ca](mailto:srichardson@rstp.ca)

## Video on How to Submit an Application to ROC-O Via Email

If you are submitting a new refugee sponsorship application to ROC-O, you are strongly advised to do so [via email](#) so the application can be processed.

A video explaining how to prepare and submit an refugee sponsorship application to ROC-O can be found [here](#).



## Our New and Revamped Webinar Series Will Be Starting Soon!

Sign up to our mailing list by [clicking here](#) to get the latest information on our new webinar series that will be starting in April 2020.

## ICYMI: 2020 National SAH Conference Postponed Due to COVID-19

The 2020 National SAH Conference, that was scheduled to take place in Toronto, ON from Monday May 25, 2020 to Wednesday May 27, 2020, has been postponed until further notice due to COVID-19.

The decision to postpone the conference was made with the health and safety of attendees in mind and after consulting with the conference organizing committee, which includes representatives from the SAH Council and IRCC; the RSTP advisory committee, which includes SAH representatives and SAH Council members; and, IRCC.

Further information about the new dates for the conference will be shared shortly once they have been finalized.

