



BVOR NEWS

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

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Refugee sponsorship leads to refugee pilot project



Nova Scotia is noted for its friendly people, beautiful scenery and laidback lifestyle. It also has experienced a declining population in recent decades, especially among young people. But residents of Pictou County on Nova Scotia's north shore have found that helping refugees in need also helps population growth.

Recently, refugee sponsorship has led to the creation of an innovative community-based pilot project. Pictou County Safe Harbour, started in 2015 to sponsor Syrian refugees, is a founding partner of the new [Refugee Talent Project](#).

With Pictou County Regional Enterprise Centre. This community-based pilot project will bring skilled refugees as immigrants to the area, helping local employers who struggle to find skilled workers nearby. One such refugee family has already arrived through the project, and more are expected soon.

Working with the local Trinity United Church, Safe Harbour brought their first refugee family to the area in 2016. Safe Harbour has now sponsored 10 refugee families from Syria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 50 people in total, and is expecting another Congolese family soon.

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.

Nine of Safe Harbour's families are BVOR refugees, seven sponsored with the help of the special 2018 BVOR fund.



Other active sponsorship groups in Pictou County include Westville Warm Hearts and CAiRN. Neighbouring Antigonish has at least three sponsorship organizations: SAFE, Tri-Heart and CARE. Between them, these five organizations have brought another 100 refugees to the north shore of Nova Scotia. In total, about 150 refugees have resettled in the region.

Newcomers have found employment as teachers, construction workers, health care workers, cleaners and painters. The first arrivals, the Almethyb family, today own Maple Cedar Syrian Kitchen. “These families have really flourished here,” says Kailee Brennan of Safe Harbour. Members of Safe Harbour’s active [Facebook group](#) emphasize how important the newcomers are in the life of the community. “They have taught many the meaning of hospitality and caring for one another,” says one member.

The refugee newcomers are not the only ones contributing to a local population increase. Brennan moved to Pictou County in 2018 to work for Safe Harbour, and her husband followed soon after. Their first child is due any day. As newcomers and sponsorship continue to flourish in the region, we hope to hear more of dynamic sponsorship initiatives from the north shore.

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BLENDED VISA OFFICE-REFERRED (BVIS) PROGRAM

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







Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

RSTP services to sponsors continue virtually:

RSTP continues to provide a full range of virtual services to Canada’s refugee sponsorship community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please check our website, www.rstp.ca, for dates and times of upcoming online workshops and courses.

RSTP trainers across Canada are available for virtual consultation from 9 to 5 each day, by appointment. Among the services they provide by telephone, email and virtual platforms are:

- Support with refugee sponsorship applications
- Guidance for sponsors with post-arrival issues

Please refer to our website’s contact list for the name, phone number and email address of the RSTP trainer in your region: <http://www.rstp.ca/en/contact-us>

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