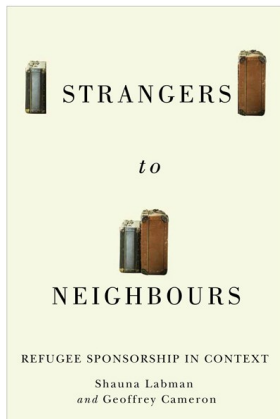




BVOR NEWS

Refugee
Sponsorship
Training
Program

Issue 33. June 2021.



Summer reading on sponsorship

It may not be light reading, but the book *Strangers to Neighbours: Refugee Sponsorship in Context* should find a place on the summer reading lists of busy sponsors and SAH staff on vacation.

Edited by Shauna Labman, human rights professor, and Geoffrey Cameron, migration researcher and lecturer, the book is called “an in-depth look at refugee sponsorship policy.” Of course, it’s much more than that. Featuring essays on the PSR, BVOR and GAR programs, the range of authors and their interests guarantees a stimulating read for anyone involved in sponsorship. The authors include past and present SAH Council members, sponsors and refugee advocates. The essays are well-researched, accurate and have constructive suggestions for improving both policy and the sponsorship experience.

Strangers to Neighbours opens with an essay by Geoff Cameron on the origins of Canada’s PSR program. He traces the current program’s origins

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program

The BVOR Program helps resettle refugees identified by the 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.

to the post-WWII era, and the advocacy of many Canadian religious organizations for sponsorship of Europe’s displaced persons and refugees.

In another chapter, two well-known SAH Council members, Sabine Lehr of Victoria’s Inter-Cultural Association and Brian Dyck of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), explore both the benefits and tensions of “naming” refugees under the PSR program. Kaylee Perez, also of SAH Council and MCC, contributes to a chapter on MCC’s involvement with the PSR program. MCC’s support for refugees has its origins in the Mennonites’ own history of religious persecution and exile. The essay outlines the synergies created by MCC, the international Mennonite church network, its international development activities and refugee resettlement.

The BVOR program is discussed in several essays. Rachel McNally focusses on how the program has met the sponsorship interests of rural Nova Scotia communities. Her chapter also gives

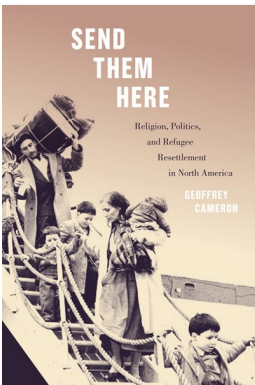
an overview of the BVOR program to 2019.

Several essays focus on sponsor/sponsored relationships. Law professor Audrey Macklin *et al* explore how the concept “like family” both helps and hinders those who are sponsored, and notes that the sponsorship framework itself promotes this kind of relationship.

The essay on judicial review and the author’s suggestions are enlightening. Also of note is the essay on the US sponsorship model as an act of political resistance to anti-refugee politics. The book is rounded out by case studies on projects such as Winnipeg’s Operation Ezra. Labman’s concluding chapter provides a terrific summary of each essay.

Strangers to Neighbours is available through [McGill-Queen's University Press](#). You can also ask your local library to order a copy.

More sponsorship reading



Geoffrey Cameron’s latest book, *Send Them Here*, focuses on the role of North American religious organizations in refugee resettlement. [Available through McGill-Queen’s University Press](#) or your local library.

BLENDED VISA OFFICE-REFERRED (BVOR) PROGRAM

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

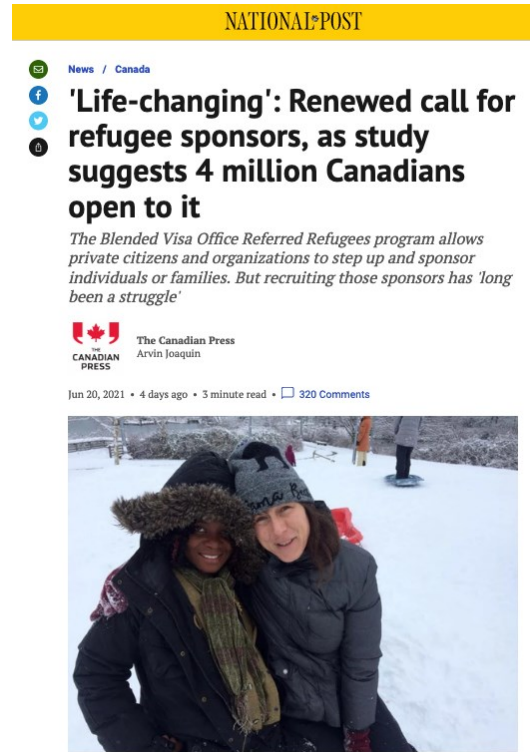
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BVOR in the news

Check out these [Toronto Star](#) and [National Post](#) articles about the BVOR program. Both appeared on World Refugee Day, June 20.



BVOR changes lives of sponsors too

“It was the most life-changing experience for them but also for me. It changed my entire view of the world.” said BVOR sponsor Karina Reid of Richmond B.C. in the National Post article above. “The BVOR program is life-changing ... It opens doors to curiosity, understanding and wanting to make your community a better place.”

“I first got involved with refugees as a BVOR sponsor in a small town. Now I am doing my PhD with a focus on refugee sponsorship policy. BVOR changed my life,” said Rachel McNally on Twitter. Rachel wrote the chapter *BVOR: Perspectives and Experiences from Rural Nova Scotia* in the book *Strangers to Neighbours*, re-viewed above.