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# IN BRIEF

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## The Resettlement Assistance Program

### INTRODUCTION

For many years, Canada has fostered the resettlement of refugees and those in refugee-like situations through government sponsorship. Officials with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) working abroad identify individuals who are in need of Canada's help and who are likely to be able to establish themselves successfully in Canada. In most cases, a referral from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is required before an applicant will be considered.

The private sponsorship of refugees by groups of Canadians or by organizations with an agreement with CIC is also possible. As well, many people arrive in Canada and make inland refugee claims. This paper concerns solely government-assisted refugees and their potential entitlements.<sup>(1)</sup>

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR HUMANITARIAN RESETTLEMENT IN CANADA?

There are three categories of refugees or people in similar situations who may be admitted to Canada as permanent residents on humanitarian grounds. These three groups are:

- The Convention Refugees Abroad Class – Members of this class must be in need of resettlement (that is, there is no reasonable prospect now or in the near future of another permanent solution for them) and must meet the definition of Convention refugee: they must be outside their own country and have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, political opinion, nationality or membership in a particular group.<sup>(2)</sup>
- The Country of Asylum Class – Members of this class must be in need of resettlement, be outside their own country and must have been, and continue to be, seriously and personally affected by civil war, armed conflict or a massive violation of human rights. In essence, the class addresses people in refugee-like situations who do not qualify as Convention refugees.
- The Source Country Class – Members of this class must be in need of resettlement and must be living in one of the countries that meet specified criteria.

(The list of countries is found in a schedule to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* and currently includes Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Sierra Leone and Sudan.) Members must be seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict in that country, must have been detained or imprisoned as a result of legitimately expressing themselves or exercising their civil rights, or meet the definition of Convention refugee.

### INCOME SUPPORT ELIGIBILITY

Government-assisted newcomers may be eligible for support through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), administered by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. To be entitled, individuals must be selected to come to Canada as a government-assisted refugee under one of the categories set out above. They must be determined as having insufficient funds to meet their basic needs – i.e., food, rent, clothing and household needs – and must also commit to either directly enter the work force or enrol in employment or language training programs. Eligible newcomers are generally provided assistance for a maximum of 12 months. However, up to 24 months may be authorized for special-needs cases that have been assessed abroad.

CIC makes it clear to program beneficiaries that income support is not an automatic benefit, but rather a privilege that carries with it an obligation on the part of the recipient to make serious efforts to become self-sufficient. According to the department, assistance may be refused, reduced or discontinued in the following cases:

- refusal, without just cause, to take advantage of training or services recommended by CIC;
- refusal, without valid reasons, to actively seek work or accept any reasonable job offer;
- quitting a job without just cause;
- receipt of employment income by any member of the family beyond that allowable under the program guidelines;

- possession of assets beyond those normally possessed by persons requiring financial assistance; or
- a change in the family situation or living arrangements such as marriage, family breakdown, death, birth, someone leaving Canada or new family members arriving.

## THE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

Recipients are given an initial start-up cheque for clothing, household items, bedding, staples, telephone installation and furniture. In lieu of money, the actual goods may be provided. The cheque will also include loans for their last month's rent, utility deposits and telephone deposit. In addition, one month's living allowance is provided, which includes funds for food, transportation, incidentals and rent.

The special allowances that may be provided include the following:<sup>(3)</sup>

- Clothing Allowance (basic)
  - \$225 per adult
  - \$150 per child
- Clothing Allowance (winter)
  - \$150 per adult
  - \$100 per child
- School Start-up
  - \$150 per child
- Special Diet Allowance
  - \$37/month
- Newborn Allowance
  - \$500
- Maternity Allowance
  - \$150/clothing
  - \$37/month for up to 9 months
- Children under 6 years old
  - \$50/month
- Transportation Allowance
  - \$50/month per adult

For basic household needs, a one-time payment is provided as follows:

- \$950 per single recipient without accompanying dependents
- \$1,500 per single recipient plus 1 dependent
- \$2,075 per single recipient plus 2 dependents
- \$1,625 per couple without accompanying dependents
- \$1,915 per couple plus 1 dependent
- \$350 for each additional dependent

Under the program, the food and shelter portion of the income support money is guided by the maximum prevailing social assistance rates within the province or territory of residence. In Ontario, for example, a single person would receive about \$520-\$580 per month. With the additional start-up one-time payment, a first month's cheque for a single person could be as high as \$1,890. Of course, a government-assisted refugee is not eligible to receive provincial social assistance benefits while receiving RAP income support.

## THE INCOME SUPPORT AGREEMENT

In order to receive income support, clients must sign an Income Support Agreement. They are required to show that they understand the terms and conditions of the agreement before being given their first cheque. A copy of the standard agreement is included as an Appendix to this paper.

## STATISTICS

The Canadian government provides financial support and immediate essential services for thousands of refugees annually. Recent figures for government-assisted refugees are as follows:

| Year | Number of Government-Assisted Refugees | Percentage of Overall Refugee Class* |
|------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2000 | 10,666                                 | 35.46                                |
| 2001 | 8,697                                  | 31.16                                |
| 2002 | 7,504                                  | 29.87                                |

\* The overall refugee class includes government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada, and dependants of refugees abroad who are granted permanent resident status.

- (1) For information on inland claimants, privately sponsored refugees and other immigration categories, see *Canada's Immigration Program*, Background Paper 190E, and *Canada's Refugee Protection System*, Background Paper 185E, both prepared by Margaret Young and Benjamin Dolin, Parliamentary Information and Research Service, Library of Parliament, and available on-line at:  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp190-e.htm>  
 and  
<http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/bp185-e.htm>.
- (2) See the United Nations *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, Article 1, and the United Nations *Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, Article 1.
- (3) Figures available from CIC in October 2004.

## APPENDIX

### AGREEMENT FOR INCOME SUPPORT

#### RECIPIENTS

The Government of Canada through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) provides financial assistance to eligible newcomers for the basic needs of life. This assistance is available to persons under certain conditions within the first year of their arrival in Canada or until they are economically self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

Income Support is not an automatic benefit program and can be refused, discontinued or reduced if certain conditions are not met.

#### Agreement of Income Support Recipient

While receiving Income Support under the Resettlement Assistance Program,

I \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ ,

on behalf of myself and my dependent family members, agree to the following terms and conditions:

1. I will declare to Citizenship and Immigration Canada all my funds and assets and the funds and assets of my dependent family members presently in our possession or which will follow at a later date. These assets include gold coins, precious stamps, jewellery and precious items, automobiles or any moneys to be transferred to us in Canada.
2. I and my dependent family members will report all income or benefits received from all sources including employment, employment insurance, worker's compensation, training allowances, social welfare payments, and income tax refunds (excluding child tax credits, notwithstanding special arrangements for Family Bonus in British Columbia).
3. I will report any of the following to Citizenship and Immigration immediately: pregnancy, birth of a baby, commencement of paid work, death of a family member, hospitalization, incarceration, separation or departure from Canada.
4. I will actively seek work and be available for work at all times. I will not refuse any reasonable offer of employment or abandon employment without just cause. I will not limit myself to employment in my normal occupation but will be willing to consider all available jobs.
5. I and my dependent family members will avail ourselves of appropriate training and settlement measures.

6. I will use the Income Support funds advanced only for the purposes for which they are intended: to provide for myself and my dependants the most basic and common of household needs and effects such as food, rent, clothing, furniture, basic household furnishings and basic, monthly telephone charges.
7. I am aware that only basic, initial, telephone installation charges are payable under the Income Support program, and any and all charges for long distance, directory assistance and any optional, additional, telephone equipment and accessories are my sole responsibility.
8. I agree to repay any benefits given to me which exceed the amount to which I am properly entitled.
9. I understand that if I voluntarily move Income Support benefits already given for rent, furniture/furnishings, clothing, accommodation etc. cannot be given again.
10. I acknowledge that the above information was fully explained to me to my complete satisfaction by Citizenship and Immigration or through an interpreter and I fully understand the contents. I realize I could face criminal prosecution if I am found in violation of any or all these terms and conditions.
11. I acknowledge I was given a copy of this document.

Accepted and agreed this                      day of                      , 19                      ,  
in the City of                      .

\_\_\_\_\_  
Recipient

\_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse

\_\_\_\_\_  
Interpreter (if used)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Citizenship and Immigration