

WORKING PAPERS

Canada's private sponsorship program: Success, shortcomings, and policy solutions

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**Canada's private sponsorship program:
Success, shortcomings, and policy solutions**

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Background of Canada's private sponsorship program

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that at the end of 2019, over 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide where amongst them, 26 million of those individuals are refugees and 3.5 million refugees were awaiting a decision on their asylum application (UNHCR, 2020). Most of these refugees remain in a protracted displacement for about 5 years or more and about 1% percent of them are offered a resettlement solution every year. In 2018 alone, Canada resettled 28,100 refugees surpassing the United States which resettled 22,900 refugees and as a result, Canada took the yearly lead in resettling the most refugees for the first time in 72 years (Falconer, 2019). In fact, Canada confirmed its lead in 2019 by resettling 30,100 refugees, followed by the United States with 27,500 and Australia with 18,200 refugees respectively (UNHCR, 2020). In Canada, about 3 in 5 refugees who arrived during this decade alone were admitted under the private sponsorship program. This program, formalized by the 1976 Immigration Act, was intended as complementary component to the federal resettlement program and this was motivated by the will of private individuals to support refugees (Labman, 2016). The Immigration Act established a set of regulations to allow citizens to identify refugees in need and to provide them with financial and emotional support for 1 year by taking the responsibility of their resettlement and integration. This includes housing, access to the labor market, health care, language and the recognition of their credentials (Lenard, 2016, p. 302). In the late 1970's, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) of Canada became the first non-profit organization to sign a private sponsorship agreement with the federal government to assist a large number of refugees. Ever since then, more than 350,000 refugees have been privately sponsored to resettle in Canada.

Private Sponsorship Fact Sheet

1979-2019	327,000 refugees have been welcomed by private sponsors
1979-1980	34,000 Indochinese refugees privately sponsored to settle in Canada
1980-1996	49,000 Polish refugees arrived through PSR
1982-2018	9,000 refugees from Iran privately sponsored
1988-2018	63,000 Iraqi, Afghani and Somali refugees arrived through sponsors help
2004-2018	17,000 Eritrean privately sponsored welcomed in Canada
2015-2019	71,000 Syrian refugees resettled, more than half of them through PSR
2015-2019	2 million Canadians personally involved in helping resettlement of Syrians
2019-2021	59,000 refugees are planned to be welcomed through PSR program
2020	123 organizations have signed agreements with IRCC to sponsor refugees

Source: Government of Canada, 2019; <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2019/04/by-the-numbers--40-years-of-canadas-private-sponsorship-of-refugees-program.html>

Although the private sponsorship program is not exclusive to Canada, as different countries recently integrated similar schemes, this immigration program remains the “longest-running and most successful in the world” (Lenard, 2016, p. 301) and it presents some distinct features. Not only is the private sponsorship program open to all foreign nationals, but the privately sponsored refugees are immediately granted permanent residence. Contrarily to other sponsorship programs offered by other countries by which they commonly grant a temporary permit to the foreign national instead. It does not require a family connection between sponsor and refugee, this means that it is additional to government quotas and any citizen or permanent resident can participate (Lenard, 2016). The private sponsorship program also deserves particular attention if we consider it in the context of the overall immigration policy. This policy is characterized by an efficient management of immigration, multiculturalism and by the positive outlook of Canadians towards immigration. This approach has also attracted international-level

players as different leaders have praised Canadians for respecting diversity and for nurturing the Canadian identity without rejecting others (Reitz, 2012, p. 519).

The Canadian program of resettlement and the integration of refugees has been a considerable success. In 2016, the Canadian Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), John McCallum, argued that the Canadian model should be “exportable” to other countries. A representative from the UNCHR also mentioned: “our hope is that the successful Canadian private sponsorship model will inspire other states to develop programs appropriate to their context” (Ugland, 2018, p. 25). Recently, during the World Refugee Forum hosted by the UNHCR, which took place in Geneva from December 17th to December 18th 2019, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Marco Mendicino, confirmed that Canada is a role model as other countries have also started to implement similar community sponsorship initiatives (Harris, 2019). The overall Canadian resettlement policy consists of three main programs and is intended for people in need of protection from outside of Canada. Firstly, the Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) program is intended for refugees that are referred by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or other designated referral agencies. Since the late 1940’s, this program includes resettlement and income support services that are provided by the federal Government for a period of up to 12 months through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). Since 2002, the GAR’s selection process shifted from establishing a given criteria to the actual needs of protection of the individual in question. In fact, the 2002 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act “placed a greater emphasis on selecting GAR’s based on their protection needs rather than on their ability to establish in Canada. As a result, GAR’s often carry higher needs than other refugee groups” (IRCC, 2016a, p. 1). 2. The Private Sponsorship of Refugees program (PSR) is intended for refugees and individuals in similar circumstances and they are to be identified by sponsors who support them financially (or through a combination of financial and in-kind support) during their first year of arrival, or until they are self-sufficient (Government of Canada, 2018). This program, which officially launched in 1976, consists of 4 different methods of sponsoring refugees. Firstly, it can be done via a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), an organization that signs a duly completed official agreement with the Ministry of Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada in order to submit a sponsorship application for the foreign national. Secondly, a refugee can be sponsored by a Constituent Group, a community local group that is authorized by a SAH where the designated group of individuals would be able to provide support to the refugee in question. Thirdly, a refugee can be sponsored via a Group of five (G5) or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents (2 to 5 in Québec) who will be responsible for one or more refugees and will ensure that the necessary support is provided accordingly during the twelve-month sponsorship period. Lastly, a refugee can also be sponsored via a Community Sponsor (CS). A Community Sponsor is an organization located in the community where the refugee is expected to resettle. The organization itself does not have a formal agreement with Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and as such, they must present a financial and settlement plan every time they decide to sponsor someone accordingly.

As such, refugees can be resettled through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program as well as through government and private organizations. Thus, “additionality”, is a fundamental principle of the Canada’s model (Hyndman, Payne & Jimenez, 2016, p. 18). The “naming” principle – the possibility for the private sponsors to identify and propose the refugees they wish to resettle – is the other fundamental principle (Ugland, 2018, p. 19). It is important to emphasize that according to the agreement on immigration with the Government of Canada (1991), the province of Québec has its own private sponsorship program where the refugees destined for Québec must meet the selection criteria for the province of Québec. Therefore, the Québec government must first agree to settle a sponsored refugee in Quebec and only after that step will the application be sent to the federal government for the processing of the application, where at that stage the application will be treated the same as any other refugee sponsorship application in the country.

The third program introduced in 2013 known as the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program essentially matches refugees referred by the UNHCR or any other designated referral agencies with private sponsors (Government of Canada, 2018). Under this program, the resettlement cost is shared between the government and the sponsors. While the former provides initial start-up expenses and income support under the Resettlement Assistance Program for a period of up to 6 months, the latter provides the remaining 6 months of income support and ensures that the sponsor is responsible for providing social and emotional support during the first year since BVOR refugees are not eligible for resettlement services under the Resettlement Assistance Program (IRCC, 2016a, p. 2).

According to the figures of the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC, 2020), there are 154,820 refugees that were admitted through the following three programs between January 2015 and June 2020: 84,815 PSR's, 61,335 GAR's and 8,670 BVOR's respectively. As shown in the table below, the main country of citizenship of the resettled refugees during this period were from Syria, followed by Eritrea and Iraq.

Admissions of Resettled Refugees by Country of Citizenship and Immigration Category, Jan. 2015 – Jun. 2020

	Syria	Eritrea	Iraq	Afghanistan	DR Congo	Somalia	Ethiopia
GARs	33.485	2.670	5,415	710	5,230	2.840	865
PSRs	34.690	17.210	10.625	8.370	895	3.410	3.495
BVOR	5.585	560	420	15	520	155	135
Total	73.760	20.445	16.460	9.095	6.645	6.405	4.495

Source: IRCC (2020). Resettled refugees – monthly IRCC updates, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/4a1b260a-7ac4-4985-80a0-603bfe4aec11>

Furthermore, these figures show that Canada experienced a considerable increase in the number of resettled Syrian refugees between 2015 and 2019 (more than 73,000 alone). This initiative was both supported by political will and community engagement. More than half of these Syrians were resettled through private sponsorship program and approximately 65% of them were privately sponsored by a SAH, in which 75% of them are connected to religious communities (Gingrich & Enns, 2019, p. 10).

Over the past few years, it can be observed that the number of admitted refugees arriving through a privately sponsored program has surpassed the number of those admitted through a government-assisted program.

Admitted refugees by resettlement program 2010-2019 and targets for 2020-2022

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 ¹	2021	2022
GARs	7,266	7,363	5,426	5,722	7,625	9,488	23,624	8,823	8,080	9,940	10,700	10,950	11,450
PSRs	4,833	5,584	4,227	6,332	5,071	9,747	18,646	16,874	18,560	19,130	20,000	20,000	20,000
BVOR	-	-	-	153	177	811	4,435	1,284	1,155	990	1,000	1,000	1,000

Source: IRCC (2019a), Permanent Residents – monthly IRCC updates, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/f7e5498e-0ad8-4417-85c9-9b8aff9b9eda>

¹ Government of Canada (2020), Notice – Supplementary Information 2020-2022 Immigration Levels Plan, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2020.html>

This change has been severely criticized both by scholars and community organizations as an “aberration” of the principle of additionality, which represents, as highlighted before, a fundamental principle of the program (Labman, 2016; Hyndman, Payne & Jimenez, 2016).

A short review of program outcomes

Research on Canadian immigration programs intended for the settlement of refugees is continuously growing and the results outline the development, outcome and successful integration and resettlement of refugees in Canada. The early sponsorship experience from 1979 to 1982 showed that private sponsors tended to offer refugees a broader range of services compared to the capacities of the government settlement programs (Neuwirth & Clark, 1981, p. 132-135). More recently, a study on the integration of 1300 Southeast Asians admitted to Canada during the 1979-1981 “boat people” crisis (Canada agreed to admit 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees between 1979 and 1981), demonstrated that the refugees privately sponsored were more successfully integrated than the government-assisted refugees within the first ten years after their arrival (Beiser, 2003, p. 211-214). This can primarily be explained by the strong link between the sponsors and the refugees, which not only facilitates their access to the wider community, but it also reinforces solidarity and social cohesion (Lanphier, 2003, p. 245). It can also be explained by the fact that privately sponsored refugees often develop a friendship with their sponsors that lasts beyond the sponsorship period, facilitating their successful integration (Carter et al., 2008, p. 18). The direct participation of civil society in the resettlement process represents another important drive for the success of the program (Hyndman, Payne & Jimenez, 2016, p. 18). Regarding the economic outcomes, it was highlighted that privately sponsored refugees earned on average more than other refugee groups (Dhital, 2015, p. 21) with government assisted refugees having lower employment rates (Hynie et al., 2019, p. 43). For this reason, the private sponsorship is often described as a win-win situation where the financial, cultural and emotional support offered by them “translates into economic benefits for the welcoming society as a whole” (Lenard, 2016, p. 304). Moreover, recent studies confirm that in the early years, employment rates and earnings were higher for privately sponsored refugees compared to the government assisted refugees, however the gap has diminished over time (Kaida, Stick and Hou, 2020, p. 6). Previous studies underlined that sponsors who exposed refugees to a broader range of services (Neuwirth & Clark, 1981) by offering them personal support, money and time has resulted in better integration opportunities (Beiser, 2003, p. 206), and better access to social capital networks compared to government assisted refugees (Dhital, 2015, p. 40). Other studies concluded that there was no clear correlation between better employment outcomes for privately sponsored refugees and the care of their sponsors (Agrawal, 2019, p. 47). This suggests that the outcome of resettlement is a reflection of the different socio-demographic characteristics of two groups than the role of private sponsors (Houle, 2019, p. 7; Hynie et al., 2019, p. 37). In a recent study on the integration of Syrian refugees in Canada, it was found that PSR’s were helped to find their job mostly by co-ethnic friends and only 12 % of PSR’s who had found jobs identified their sponsors as their source of employment (Hynie et al., 2019, p. 43).

The Canadian program for Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) is considered more suitable than the government assisted sponsorship program as the PSR ensures a smoother and long-term integration of refugees (Beiser, 2003; Dhital, 2015; Hyndman, Payne & Jimenez, 2016). Aside from its success in resettling refugees, the private sponsorship and public-private partnerships are more favorable as they reduce both short and long-term government costs incurred in relation to the refugee settlement. The costs are either entirely covered or shared amongst the private citizens during the sponsorship period (Lenard, 2016, p. 304) where aid can

be offered to a greater number of refugees and private sponsorships adds to the numerous government-assisted projects and leads to an increase in the number of resettlements.

In summary, the main positive aspects of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program (PSR) are the promotion of social and economic integration of refugees, the reduction of government costs, the increase of refugee resettlement capacity and the facilitation of the compliance with international humanitarian obligations. Lastly, it also provides citizens with a direct channel for action, assistance and a more personal experience with refugees as well as the promotion of the regionalization of immigrant settlement (Ugland, 2018, p. 23).

Program's implementation issues

As stated above, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program is the oldest and the most successful program in the world. This program alone has offered protection to more than 350,000 refugees since 1978. Nevertheless, there are still challenges that we must face. Government priorities, such as the unwillingness to increase the number of GAR's, and inadequacy of services offered could limit the intake of refugees through this program and could potentially threaten the successful integration of refugees. While language is seen as a fundamental drive for the social integration of refugees and their access to employment, language skills can also limit other aspects of settlement such as their ability to accessing key services and actively participating in Canadian society, especially their access to the labour market (McLean, Friesen & Hyndman, 2006, p. 12). Several challenges were also identified such as long wait times to gain access to training programs. Training programs are not job-specific and are not suitable for those with low-level education or those who are illiterate (CCR, 2011, p. 12). Considering the fact that learning a language is influenced by demographic, pre-migration and post-migration factors (AAISA, 2017, p. 20), language trainings must be drawn up according to the people to whom they are addressed, gender dimension included, since the "one-size-fits-all" approach is not the best one (Beiser & Hou, 2000, p. 327). In the case of Syrians, administrative data indicates that 89% of adults accessed government funded language assessments and 77% of them accessed government funded language trainings since their arrival in Canada (IRCC, 2019b, p. 7). Nevertheless, language challenges have been seen as a difficult barrier for Syrians, leading them to feeling isolated (AAISA, 2017, p. 66). Women and those with lower language skills are more likely to be socially excluded (Hynie et al., 2019, p. 46). Other research underlined the inaccessibility of language classes for mothers of young children, mainly due to the lack of available child-care services and other times due to the fact that families only send one parent to these trainings, usually the father of the household (ISS of B.C., 2018, p. 7).

Another top priority for the resettlement success is represented by the opportunities of employment, which impacts both economic and social integration aspects of these refugees. Especially in their early years of settlement, refugees experience significant employment challenges (Beiser & Hou, 2001, p. 1328). Indeed, research has demonstrated that refugees experienced high rates of unemployment during the early years after their arrival and they face various obstacles such as the language barrier, the lack of Canadian work experience and difficulties regarding the recognition of foreign educational credentials (Agrawal, 2019, 954). Other research suggests that even when refugees obtain employment opportunities, they tend to start with a lower salary and a lower skill level regardless of their qualifications (AAISA, 2017). Syrian refugees who arrived in Alberta in 2015 and 2016 reported their inability to work in their area of expertise because their credentials were not recognized (however credential-recognition problem affects many economic immigrants as well as refugees), their area of expertise did not meet the labour market needs or because of the level of language competencies, which was also a major challenge for them (AAISA, 2017). Refugees complained that despite their qualifications and

professional experience, it was unlikely that they would find a job that matched their skills and abilities (Agrawal, 2019, p. 954). Similar employment outcomes and barriers were found in the settlement of Syrian refugees in other provinces (IRCC, 2019b; Hynie et al., 2019).

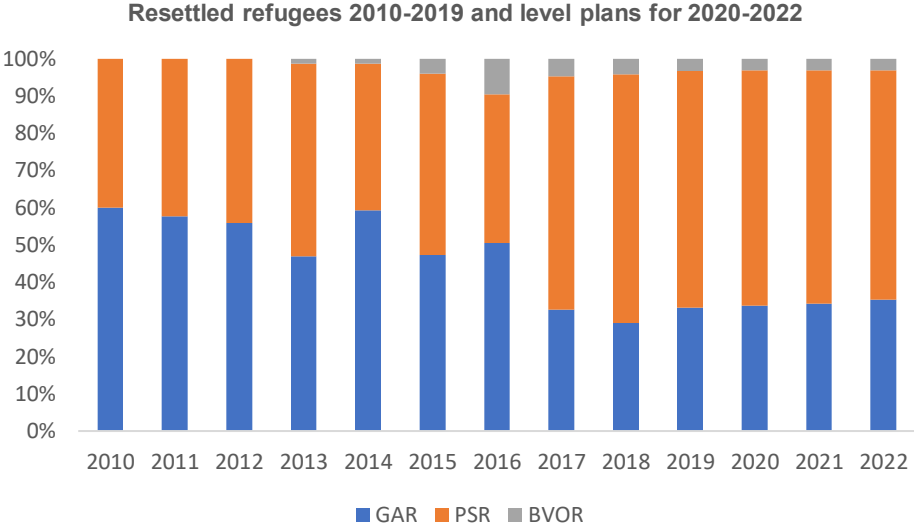
Similarly to employment and language, housing is an immediate need for the settlement of refugees. The vast majority of newly-arriving refugees have to settle in private sector rental housing, like most low-income households in Canada, since social housing availability is limited to refugees with extreme needs (there are different advantages of social housing for the minority of refugees who were able to access it) (Rose, 2019, p. 12; Rose & Charette 2017). In fact, refugees experienced difficulties in finding an acceptable house in adequate condition, suitable in size, and above-all affordable – especially since affordability represents the most important barrier for refugees, notably in high-cost cities (Rose & Charette, 2020; Rose 2019; Rose & Charette, 2017). Considering the high rental cost in proportion to their financial resources (Helly & Bourgeois, 2020, p. 94), housing affordability directly impacts suitability as renters are often forced to live in over-crowded apartments mainly because they cannot afford a bigger house with more adequate conditions (Hiebert, 2014, p. 74). Finding affordable and permanent housing is undoubtedly a big challenge for all resettled refugees (IRCC, 2016b) and studies confirm unequivocally that affordability was a primary challenge in finding the first permanent housing for government assisted refugees (Rose & Charette, 2017) while this challenge also affects privately sponsored refugees (IRCC, 2016b, p. 13). During the Syrian operation, housing options were affected by insufficient information regarding family size and configuration, challenging the capacity to manage the situation due to the unexpectedly large family sizes and the need to respect the occupancy codes. In the case of privately sponsored refugees, despite the low prevalence of large families, the housing challenges resembled those of the government-assisted refugees at least in key aspects (Rose & Charette, 2017, p. 25). The housing challenge was also amplified by the limited housing capacity of the main cities of destination, resulting in an increasing number of refugees becoming homeless and opting for emergency shelters (ESDC, 2019).

According to the government of Canada, Syrian refugees identified the need for *health care*, support for their mental health and well-being as claimed by 71% of government assisted refugees, 32% of privately sponsored and 35% of Syrian BVOR respectively (IRCC, 2019b, p. 10). They also underlined barriers in accessing the healthcare system due to the difficulties in finding a family doctor and long waitlists (IRCC, 2019b). The major health issues identified by the government assisted refugees who arrived in Alberta include kidney diseases, high blood pressure, dental problems, hearing and vision issues, heart conditions, seizures, and diabetes (Agrawal, 2019, p. 949). Despite these problems, refugees were satisfied with the care they received (Agrawal, 2019). Furthermore, a lack of mental health services available for all refugees was identified. As such, mental health issues may be a potential challenge for the Syrian refugee population (IRCC, 2016b, p. 28).

The number of children and youth was a key characteristic with the intake Syrian refugees arriving in Canada where 46% of them were under 15 years old. Furthermore, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada reports that a large percentage of Syrian children were enrolled in school. However, parents identified concerns about their role in the education of their children, mainly because of a lack of sufficient information regarding the Canadian school system (IRCC, 2019b, p. 13). Moreover, a study highlighted the need for teachers to foster intercultural competencies and increase knowledge about anti-discriminatory education (Gagné et al., 2018, p. 61).

For several years now, the number of privately sponsored refugees has exceeded those assisted by the government. This can be seen as a deviation from the “additionality” principle, by which refugees in the PSR program are intended to be resettled in addition to those arriving under the GAR program, as the PSR program “allows Canadians to get involved in refugee resettlement and offer protection space over and above what is provided directly by the government” (IRCC, 2016a). Therefore, the support of private individuals is complimentary to the commitment of the

government to sponsor refugees. As such, the high number of privately sponsored refugees raises the question whether the government is beginning to privatize refugee resettlement (Hyndman, Payne & Jimenez, 2016, p. 3).



Source: IRCC (2019a), *Permanent Residents – monthly IRCC updates, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada*.

Furthermore, according to the government of Canada, this trend will also continue over the next three years, with a small increase in the intake of resettlement admission targets for GAR’s in 2021 and 2022 with an intake of 10,950 and 11,450 refugees respectively while the PSR’s levels plan are fixed with 20,000 PSR’s to be admitted per year up to and including 2022 (Government of Canada, 2020).

There are also some other important challenges that need to be considered. Various studies have pointed out that sponsorship has failed in some cases, putting refugees in a very difficult situation. Refugees expressed serious concerns about certain sponsors being unable to provide financial support. In fact, some revealed that they were not receiving the required monthly allowance which they were entitled under the sponsorship agreement (Agrawal, 2019, 954). It was reported that due to insufficient support from sponsors, an unexpected number of refugees were seeking help from community organizations for housing and other basic needs (Rose & Charette, 2017, p. 27). Some privately sponsored Syrian refugees were “suffering tremendously” because of the manipulation and the complete lack of financial and emotional support from their sponsors (Klingbeil, 2016). This problem was notably observed in cases where the sponsors were distant relatives, rather than close family, community, religious or citizen groups (Bégin, 2016).

Long waiting times represents a major concern for both refugees and sponsors because although the processing times vary from 18 to 36 months at best, changes in family sizes and family composition and can directly affect the funding and required planning for sponsoring refugees. This can incur additional delays aside from considering the need to amend applications depending on the circumstances of the applicants. Another concern regarding refugee system, although not linked with the private sponsorship, is related to the delay in obtaining work permits. This delay forces refugee claimants to turn to welfare program because without the necessary documentation, despite the willingness to work, nobody is willing to hire them (Campbell, 2020). However, during the Syrian operation this delay was considerably reduced. After 18-month suspension, the Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration du Québec reopened on January 20th, 2020 by accepting the admission of 750 collective sponsorship

applications under the Program for Refugees Abroad where only 100 are from groups of two to five people with a “first come, first served” formula. In order to ensure that their request was to be processed by officials, aspiring private sponsors slept all weekend in the offices of the Quebec Immigration Ministry in Montreal and then left to mail out their applications as they must be sent to the Ministère by courier mail, one application at a time, with a cost ranging from \$500 - \$1000 Canadian dollars per application (Paré, 2020). Beyond the exaggerated cost, this modality has been harshly criticized by sponsors and organizations that support refugees for being very restrictive. In addition, some incidents have been reported to the ministry where there have been attempts of corruption and intimidation by individuals who tried to “buy places” in order to by-pass others to gain priority processing (Gervais, 2020). More recently, in October 2020, the Quebec government moved to partially suspend private sponsorship by organizations for a year after receiving serious allegations about the program, though it didn't provide details. Therefore, for one year only groups of 2 to 5 people can sponsor a refugee.

Policy recommendations

As outlined above, despite Canada's private sponsorship program, it is the oldest in the world and it has offered protection to more than 350,000 refugees although some challenges still persist. The following recommendations could help policy makers address these challenges in order to improve the effectiveness and quality of the program:

- Enhance the quality of language classes by making them suitable for a more diverse audience and addressed with particular attention to gender dimension in order to allow mothers with young children to attend classes. In fact, as aforementioned, due to the lack of available childcare services and sometimes due to the fact that families only send one parent to these trainings, usually the father of the household, the accessibility of mothers of young children to language courses is affected. Therefore, more childcare provisions for people attending language classes and more flexibility in the hours and locations at which classes are offered seems critical to resolve this issue. Moreover, a shift from the “one-size- fits-all” approach to the customized classes seems fundamental for the purpose of removing barriers and accelerating the integration of refugees.
- Explore possible methods regarding the recognition of foreign credentials and diplomas in order to allow refugees to a more accessible and wider range of employment opportunities. However, credential-recognition represents a problem which similarly affects economic immigrants.
- Deliver training courses which matches the refugees' existing skills and vocation to the labour market in Canada, so they can readily work in Canada for a short-term period considering the very low employment rate of refugees in the early years after their arrival.
- Returning to the principle of additionality. In the last decade alone, the number of privately sponsored refugees has become much greater than the number of government-assisted refugees. Furthermore, this trend is expected to continue in the next years. As result, a shift has been observed from the supplementary role of private sponsors with respect to the substitution of the public sponsorship over the past few years. To respect this fundamental principle, the government must therefore increase the number of assisted refugees to a level that is at least greater than or equal to the number of privately sponsored refugees. The government also requires an appropriate budget associated with the increase in the number of government-assisted refugees.
- Considering that there are nonetheless cases with reports of insufficient support from private sponsors, the government should monitor these cases more closely and carefully evaluate if

privately sponsored refugees are indeed receiving resettlement services from their private sponsors as expected and immediately intervene when needed. Moreover, the government strategy should also aspire to improve the refugees' involvement in the resettlement plan. This could be done by providing more awareness to refugees in regards to the support that is readily available for them shortly after their arrival in Canada. As for the sponsors, their role, obligations and responsibilities as a sponsor must be clearly understood in order to establish a strong relationship between refugees and sponsors based on their genuine partnership rather than as a dependency.

- While housing is considered as the primary challenge for government assisted refugees, this issue also affects privately sponsored refugees. The program assumes that refugees are supported by the sponsor for their housing during the 12-month period of the sponsorship and while they are finding permanent accommodation for housing. However, often times, the government must provide additional support, i.e. through enhancing social housing capacity. Therefore, as in the case of gaining access to education and health services provided by the government, it is crucial for privately sponsored refugees to have access to all available settlement services in order to avoid having them to fully depend on the support and the resources provided by their private sponsors.
- There is an immediate need for speeding up the processing times by frequently updating management tools, implementing measures and creating new incentives in order to continuously attract future sponsors and to avoid losing the commitment of the community towards the private sponsorship program as a whole.

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