

Canadian Council for Refugees

The CCR has published a paper on "Important changes in Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program". You can find it at <http://ccrweb.ca/en/changes-private-sponsorship-refugees> or in PDF version at <http://ccrweb.ca/files/psr-changes-2013.pdf>

The paper identifies the following overall concerns:

- We are moving towards a more government-led resettlement program, with less opportunity for private sponsors, as representatives of civil society, to respond to refugees that they believe deserve attention.
- Canada's response to refugees is becoming less global and more targeted. There are certainly advantages to focussing on particular populations (such as efficiency of processing and advantages in settling groups). However, a loss in capacity to respond to refugees globally leaves some marginalized refugees without a solution. It also deters Canadians interested in particular groups from sponsoring, if they cannot resettle those groups. Canada's resettlement program is also more vulnerable to developments that hamper the resettlement of a targeted group – this has been the experience recently when civil conflict in Syria blocked processing of Iraqi refugees, one of Canada's major priorities.
- Canada's response risks becoming more politicized, with specific programs increasingly initiated by the Minister, without a transparent process of consultation. Politicization compromises the human rights and humanitarian basis of the program.
- The groups involved in private sponsorship are likely to change, without any guarantee that overall capacity will be maintained or increased. Groups whose motivation is tied to naming and additionality may withdraw from the program. Other groups are being engaged, including groups that are interested in the particular populations that are current government priorities. Questions are being asked, however, about the long-term capacity of a private sponsorship community to mobilize resources to respond to primarily government-identified priorities.
- The government's highly negative discourse about refugees is having a damaging effect on public support for refugees, making it more difficult to mobilize groups for sponsorship.

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