



## **Frequently Asked Questions – Project Hope – Archdiocese of Toronto**

### **Q. What is the goal of this initiative?**

A. Catholic Churches in the Archdiocese of Toronto have been active in refugee sponsorship for many years. However, in recent days we have seen an unprecedented crisis that demands a global response. The Archdiocese of Toronto has set a fundraising goal of \$3 million to be raised in the next 100 days. Funds will be used to sponsor 100 refugee families to Canada and to settle these families in the Archdiocese of Toronto.

### **Q. How does this initiative relate to the Year of Mercy as promulgated by Pope Francis?**

A. Pope Francis has designated a Year of Mercy to begin December 8, 2015. We view this initiative, on the eve of the Year of Mercy, as a tangible expression of our solidarity and care for our neighbour. In a special way, during the Year of Mercy we reflect on both the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In the bible, the corporal works of mercy (expressed in Matthew 25:34-40) speak of our call to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and shelter the homeless.

### **Q. How can I give financially?**

A. Those wishing to support the campaign may donate online at: [www.archtoronto.org](http://www.archtoronto.org) or through their local parish via cheque, made payable to: Archdiocese of Toronto – Project Hope – Refugee Sponsorship. Special humanitarian relief envelopes are also available through local Catholic churches.

### **Q. Is this just a financial appeal?**

A. No. We are also asking our 225 Catholic churches in the Archdiocese of Toronto to establish or re-establish refugee sponsorship committees, working with the Office for Refugees. These volunteers are critical in a successful settlement for families. Volunteers assist both pre and post family arrival, assisting families in securing housing, enrolling in language classes, searching for employment, finding a doctor/dentist, learning more about the local area and, of course, providing fellowship and friendship. Once families arrive, volunteer committees offer a full year of support. Other faith groups are welcome to inquire regarding resources to start their own sponsorship committees.

**Q. Can I choose the family or where they will come from?**

A. No. We are prioritizing refugees who are fleeing war-torn countries or areas riddled with violence and persecution. The Archdiocese of Toronto's Office for Refugees has a long history of effective screening and selection. They will be empowered to select families based on the spaces provided by the federal government (per country) as well as numerous other factors.

**Q. How long will it take for the refugee family to arrive in Canada?**

A. There is no easy answer to this question. Refugee sponsorship is based on a number of factors including regulation by the government that is not controlled by private sponsors. Five years ago, wait times were up to 3-4 years. More recently we have seen families arriving in Canada 9-12 months after their paperwork has been processed.

**Q. Will the church only sponsor Catholic families?**

A. No. While thousands of Christians face persecution, notably in the Middle East, the campaign will not be limited to Catholic or Christian families. We will identify those most in need regardless of religious affiliation.

**Q. It is a wonderful gesture that you're doing this but don't you think the government should be doing more? Aren't you letting them off the hook?**

A. We work very closely with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration on all our refugee cases. Successfully settling a refugee family requires more than a government agency, it requires community support in many ways. The government has worked to reduce wait times for refugees over the past few years and our parish communities have provided the community support. This is not a political or partisan issue for the church. We will bring refugee families to Canada as quickly as we are able to.

**Q. How will you handle the increased volume of refugees through your system?**

A. Most of our support infrastructure is already in place – at least 160 of our parish communities have, or recently had, an active Refugee Committee of faithful parishioners dedicated to help settle refugee families. Our hope is that they will continue their important work and that others will join them to help welcome new refugee families. If more outreach workers are required to handle the case load, we will ensure the Office for Refugees has the resources it needs to work effectively.

**Q. Do you have a sense if there are really that many Syrian refugees who want to come to Canada? The people we're seeing in the news want to be in Europe.**

A. An estimated 9 million Syrians have fled their homes in recent years, according to the United Nations. Millions of them remain in refugee camps, living in difficult conditions. The number of Syrian refugee applications through our Office for Refugees

has increased significantly in the past few years. The director of the office, Dr. Martin Mark, is travelling to the Middle East in October to expedite the application process for those who are seeking protection from Canada. We also have sponsored many refugees from Iraq and are conscious of thousands that are also fleeing parts of Africa dealing with civil unrest, persecution and violence.

**Q. How long will Project Hope go on?**

A. Our goal is to raise \$3 million in 100 days and to identify 100 refugee committees and groups, each taking responsibility for supporting a Syrian refugee family. The volunteer component of Project Hope will continue until all sponsored families arrive.

**Q. What will you do if you exceed your goal?**

A. If we are blessed to exceed our \$3 million goal, we will continue to accept refugee applications as we have for years and, at the same time, turn our attention to supporting those vulnerable people who remain in the Middle East. Organizations like the Catholic Near East Welfare Association are tasked with supporting those who remain in their homeland, under very difficult conditions.

**Q. Where will the refugees settle in the GTA? Do you have a place for them?**

A. Housing for refugee families is arranged with the assistance of the local refugee committee at each parish. In this way, newly arrived refugees will be scattered throughout the region of the Archdiocese of Toronto, stretching from Toronto to Georgian Bay and from Oshawa to Orangeville.

**Contact Information:**

**Donations:** Office of Development (416) 934-3411 or online [www.archtoronto.org](http://www.archtoronto.org)

**Sponsorship Committees:** Office for Refugees (416) 645-0827

**Media/Public Relations:** Office of Public Relations & Communications  
(416) 934-0606