ORAT
Office for Refugees
Archdiocese *of* Toronto

Refugee Resettlement
UPDATE

November 2026 • Issue No. 6

The World Day of Migrants & Refugees

The Archdiocese of Toronto marked the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees with a special Mass and Reception at St. Isaac Jogues Parish in Pickering, bringing together refugees, parishioners, clergy, government representatives, community leaders, and friends of the Archdiocese of Toronto's Office for Refugees (ORAT).

A Community United in Welcome: The Archdiocese of Toronto was privileged to welcome a number of distinguished guests who joined in marking this occasion, expressing their support for the important work of welcoming newcomers to Canada.

Among those present were the Honourable Lena Metlege Diab, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; MP Costas Menegakis; MP Garnett Genuis; MP Juanita Nathan; Kevin Ashe, Mayor of Pickering; Mr. David Pickles, Councillor for Ward 3 in Pickering; and Ms. Michelle de Berardinis, representing MPP Peter Bethlenfalvy, Ontario Minister of Finance.

Their presence reflected the importance of collaboration among the Church, government, community organizations, and local communities in supporting migrants and refugees as they begin new lives in Canada.

ORAT was also privileged to welcome representatives from various churches and community groups that

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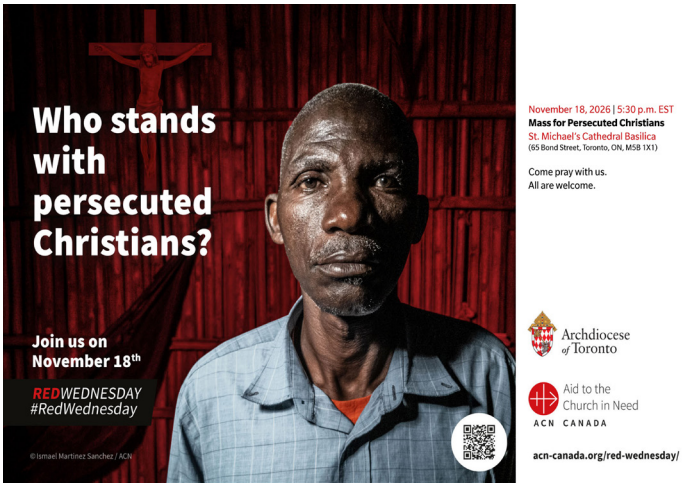
Red Wednesday



On November 18, 2026, join Catholics and Christians around the world in commemorating Red Wednesday, an initiative of Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that raises awareness of the persecution and suffering faced by Christians around the world.

Red Wednesday officially began with ACN UK in 2016 and has since grown into a global movement, with events taking place in more than 20 countries. This year's theme asks: "Who stands with persecuted Christians?"

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Red Wednesday

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In Toronto, where Red Wednesday has been commemorated since 2018, a special Mass will be celebrated on November 18 at 5:30 p.m. at St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica, with the Most Reverend Vincent Nguyen, Auxiliary Bishop of Toronto, presiding. As in previous years, the Cathedral's façade will be illuminated in red as a visible sign of solidarity with persecuted Christians.

All are welcome to attend this Mass and join in prayer for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ.

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it works closely with to sponsors refugees, including St. Joseph Syriac Catholic Church, St. Barsaumo Syriac Orthodox Church, St. Behnam Syriac Orthodox Church, the Eritrean Catholic Chaplaincy of Toronto, and the Eritrean Canadian Association of Nova Scotia.

From Vietnam to Canada: Bishop Vincent Nguyen's Journey

The event was also a powerful reminder that behind every refugee is a person—a story, a family, a journey, and a hope for a new beginning.

Among the most moving moments of the day were the personal stories shared by Bishop Vincent Nguyen and Emmanuel, each offering a profound witness to the courage, faith, and perseverance of refugees.

Bishop Vincent Nguyen knows personally what it means to flee one's homeland in search of freedom and safety.

Having fled the communist regime in Vietnam, Bishop Nguyen escaped to Japan before eventually making his way to Canada. His journey was marked by uncertainty, hardship, and the challenges faced by so many refugees who leave everything familiar behind.

Yet his story did not end with displacement.

In Canada, Bishop Nguyen discovered a new home and a new vocation. He became a priest and eventually a bishop, dedicating his life to serving God and the people entrusted to his care.

His presence was a powerful reminder that a refugee's story is not defined by how it begins. A journey that starts with fear and displacement can, through faith, perseverance, welcome, and opportunity, become a story of service and hope.

From a Refugee Camp in Ghana to a Toronto Hospital

Emmanuel's story offered another extraordinary example of what can happen when a refugee is given the opportunity to rebuild a life in safety.

His parents fled the brutal regime in their homeland of Togo and eventually found refuge in Krisan Refugee Camp in Ghana, where Emmanuel was born and raised. Life in the camp presented many challenges, and opportunities for education and employment were limited.

Emmanuel's life changed when he was selected by ORAT during one of its overseas refugee selection missions. He was subsequently matched with St. Isaac Jogues Parish in Pickering, the very parish that hosted this year's event.

Emmanuel embraced his new opportunity with determination. Within his first year in Canada, he successfully completed the examination required to become a Registered Nurse. Today, he serves as a nurse in the Emergency Department at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

His journey—from growing up in a refugee camp in Ghana to caring for patients in a Toronto hospital—is a remarkable testament to resilience, determination, and the transformative impact of welcome.

Emmanuel's story reminds us that when refugees are given an opportunityto rebuild their lives, they do not simply become recipients of Canada's generosity. They become neighbours, colleagues, professionals, caregivers, parishioners, and contributors to the communities they

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The World Day of Migrants & Refugees

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now call home. To read Emmanuel's full story please see page 4.

The event at St. Isaac Jogues was more than an annual observance. It was an opportunity to listen to refugee voices, to remember the journeys that brought so many newcomers to Canada, and to celebrate the remarkable contributions they are making to our communities.

For ORAT, these stories are at the heart of its mission.

Behind every refugee is a person. Behind every person is a story. And behind every story is the possibility of hope and a new home in Canada.

As the Archdiocese of Toronto continues its ministry of welcoming refugees, the stories of Bishop Nguyen and Emmanuel remind us why this work matters—and why every act of welcome can change a life.

Recognizing Our Constituent Groups

At the heart of this World Day of Migrants and Refugees event was an opportunity to recognize a group of people whose contributions often happen quietly, behind the scenes: our Constituent Groups (CGs), parish refugee committees, and Constituent Group Partner Organizations (CGPOs).

For many refugee families, these volunteers do far more than help them settle in Canada. They become a community, a source of support, and sometimes, a family away from home.

Becoming Family to Those Who Have None Here

Unlike many newcomers who have relatives in Canada to support them, newcomer families supported by our Project Hope program arrive without those existing family connections.

This is where our parishes and CGs step in.

Through their time, talents, generosity, and commitment, volunteers help newcomer families navigate the unfamiliar realities of life in Canada. From practical settlement support to the simple but meaningful gestures that help someone feel they belong; these volunteers walk alongside families during their first year in their new home.

This is why recognizing our CGs, parish refugee committees, and CGPOs is so important. Their work deserves to be seen, celebrated, and encouraged.

Celebrating Our Project Hope Partners

During the 2025–2026 resettlement year, the following parishes and CGs helped welcome and resettle Project Hope families, families that were selected during one of ORAT's mission trips:

- Holy Family Parish, Toronto
- St. Andrew's Cathedral, Victoria, BC
- St. Clement's Parish, Etobicoke
- St. Isaac Jogues' Parish, Pickering
- St. Ignatius of Loyola Parish, Mississauga
- St. Theresa's Parish, Scarborough
- Sudbury Project Hope, Sudbury

We are grateful for each community's willingness to open its doors and hearts to families beginning a new chapter in Canada.

In addition to acknowledging these groups at our the World Day of Migrants and Refugees event, ORAT also recognized their contributions in the Catholic Register, celebrating their service and helping share their stories with the wider Catholic community.

A Message of Gratitude from Cardinal Leo

This year, the recognition extended beyond the World Day of Migrants and Refugees event. His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo, Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto, also acknowledged the work of CGs that helped resettle Project Hope families during the 2026–2027 resettlement year.

In a letter of appreciation addressed to each group, Cardinal Leo commended their service as a witness of Christian love. He wrote:

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Recognizing Our Constituent Groups

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"Your steadfast commitment, rooted in the charity of Christ, has brought tangible hope and welcome to our brothers and sisters in their new homeland. Through your loving accompaniment, you have borne witness to the Gospel command to welcome the stranger, and your efforts reflect the merciful face of Christ in the world."

These words capture the heart of refugee sponsorship: it is not simply about helping someone arrive in a new country. It is about accompanying a person or family as they begin again, restoring a sense of belonging, and putting the Gospel call to welcome the stranger into practice.

To all our CGs, parish refugee committees, and CGPOs: thank you for making room in your communities and in your lives for our newcomer families.

May your continued service inspire more communities to respond to this call, so that every newcomer family has the opportunity to experience not only a new homeland, but also the warmth of a community that welcomes them as its own.

A Journey of Hope

After years of displacement and a nine-year resettlement journey, one newcomer is building a life of service in Canada.

For one family from Togo, the journey to safety began with a sudden act of violence. In 1993, the family's father was working as a printer for the press and was involved with the opposition party. Through the media, he helped expose serious violence and killings. Days later, the military stormed his workplace, severely beat him and his colleagues, and left them near death.

Bystanders rescued him and helped him escape to Ghana. That same night, military personnel went to the family home looking for him, making it clear that returning to Togo was no longer safe. His wife

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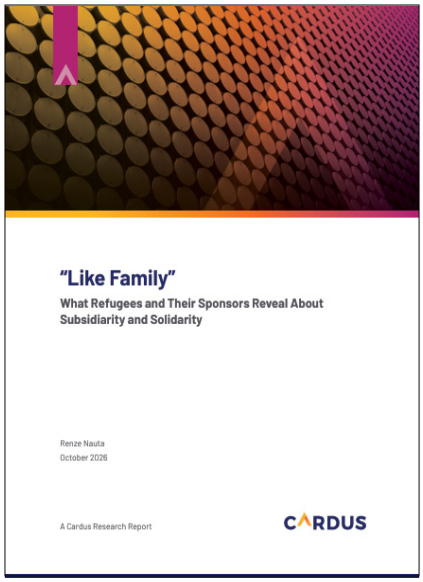
Like Family: A Lesson on Solidarity

Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program offers more than a pathway to safety. It creates relationships through which refugees are welcomed, supported, and given opportunities to rebuild their lives in Canada. Two recent reports by Cardus highlight the importance of these relationships and the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity that underpin them.

In March 2026, Cardus' Program Director, Renze Nauta published Bonds of Solidarity: How Subsidiarity Helps Canadians Care for Refugees. The report examined how subsidiarity—the principle that decisions and responsibilities should be entrusted to the lowest competent level—strengthens refugee sponsorship. When families, parishes, and community organizations take an active role in welcoming newcomers, they can offer personalized support that responds to refugees' practical, social, and emotional needs.

Cardus has now followed up this research with Like Family: What Refugees and Their Sponsors Reveal About Subsidiarity and Solidarity. Drawing on interviews with refugee families and their sponsors, including families resettled through parish communities, the report explores how these principles are lived out through the experience of sponsorship. It reveals that sponsorship is not simply a formal arrangement to provide settlement assistance; it can foster relationships characterized by friendship, care, and a sense of belonging.



These relationships have practical benefits. Research on refugee outcomes has found that privately sponsored refugees often experience stronger integration outcomes, including improved employment prospects and greater assistance in navigating everyday life in Canada. Sponsors

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Like Family: A Lesson on Solidarity

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help newcomers find accommodation, connect with community services, learn how Canadian society works, and establish the relationships that can sustain them long after their initial arrival.

For Catholic parishes, this research affirms the importance of the Church's mission to welcome those fleeing war, violence, and persecution. Through refugee sponsorship, parishioners put their faith into action, transforming the call to love our neighbours into a tangible expression of Christian charity.

The parish community becomes more than a source of practical assistance; it can become a place where newcomers are welcomed, relationships are formed, and people begin to feel at home.

Together, Bonds of Solidarity and Like Family remind us that successful refugee resettlement is about more than providing a safe place to live. It is also about building relationships, restoring hope, and creating the conditions in which newcomers can flourish. The experience of private sponsorship demonstrates how subsidiarity and solidarity work together: local communities are empowered to respond directly to human needs, while society as a whole shares responsibility for welcoming those seeking refuge.

A Call to Action: Be Part of the Welcome

As Catholics, we are called to put our faith into action by welcoming the stranger and standing alongside those who have been forced to flee their homes. Consider how you, your family, or your parish community can help refugees rebuild their lives in Canada. Learn more about the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, explore opportunities to support newcomers, and share these reports with others to help raise awareness of the transformative impact of refugee sponsorship.

Although current government-imposed sponsorship limits have significantly restricted the number of new cases that can be accepted, parishes and parishioners can continue to cultivate welcoming communities and support refugees who are already here.

Together, we can build bonds of solidarity that enrich our parishes, strengthen our communities, and affirm the dignity of every person.

EDUCATION CORNER

Uganda Country Report

Uganda is a landlocked country in East Africa, bordered by South Sudan to the north, Kenya to the east, Tanzania and Rwanda to the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to the west. The country is home to Lake Victoria, the source region of the White Nile, and a diverse landscape of lakes, mountains, savannahs, and fertile agricultural land.

Kampala, the capital and largest city, is the country's political, economic, and cultural centre. Uganda's location at the crossroads of East and Central Africa has made it an important destination for people fleeing conflict, persecution, and instability in neighbouring countries.

Uganda's Geo-history: Uganda gained independence from British colonial rule in 1962. Its post-independence history has been marked by periods of political instability, conflict, and displacement, including the rule of Idi Amin, civil conflict, and the prolonged insurgency by the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda.

Despite these challenges, Uganda has developed a longstanding reputation for welcoming refugees from neighbouring countries. Its open-door approach to asylum and relatively progressive refugee policies have made it one of the world's major refugee-hosting countries.

Uganda's refugee response is governed by the Refugees Act of 2006 and the Refugees Regulations of 2010. These frameworks provide for refugee protection, freedom of movement, access to employment, and the opportunity to live in settlements and communities rather than exclusively in closed refugee camps. Uganda is also a signatory to the 1951

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Ebola Temporary Border Measures

Source: Public Health Agency of Canada / IRCC October 1, 2026

Although the risk to Canada is low, to reduce the chances of Ebola entering Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada put temporary measures in place for foreign nationals living in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Uganda.

In May 2026, the Government of Canada introduced temporary measures to minimize the risk of exposure to Ebola disease in Canada. In July 2026, additional measures were introduced prohibiting the entry of foreign nationals who had been in the DRC within the previous 21 days. These measures are being extended by 60 days and will end on November 27 , 2026.

Under these measures, immigration documents and final decisions on applications were temporarily suspended for residents of the DRC, Uganda and South Sudan.

In exceptional circumstances, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada continues to have the authority to give consideration to humanitarian and compassionate needs of individuals and the protection needs of resettlement applicants. These are considered on a case-by-case basis, balancing against the public health risks posed to Canadians and any mitigation measures that may be in place.

We will continue to monitor developments and communicate with sponsors and refugees as further information becomes available.

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Uganda Country Report

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Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 Refugee Convention.

Religious Affiliation & Impact on Religious Minorities: Uganda is a predominantly Christian country, with significant Roman Catholic, Anglican, Pentecostal, and other Christian communities. Muslims constitute the country's largest religious minority, alongside smaller communities practicing other faiths. Christianity and Islam both have established places of worship and play important roles in the country's social and cultural life.

Although Uganda generally provides an environment in which religious communities can practice their faith, the experiences of refugees depend on their individual circumstances, country of origin, and reasons for displacement. Some refugees may have fled religious persecution, while others have escaped armed conflict, political persecution, ethnic violence, or other serious human rights violations.

For refugees who have found safety in Uganda, access to legal protection and basic services remains important. Even where formal protection is available, limited resources, economic hardship, and prolonged displacement can make it difficult for individuals and families to rebuild their lives and achieve long-term stability.

Displacement & Humanitarian Conditions: Uganda is one of Africa's largest refugee-hosting countries. As of September 30, 2026, the country hosted approximately 2 million refugees and asylum seekers, according to data from theGovernment of Uganda and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

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A Journey of Hope

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later joined him, and the family began a new life in Ghana's Krisan Refugee Camp, where their child was born.

Growing Up in Krisan: Life in the camp was difficult. The family lived close to the surrounding bush, and venomous snakes and scorpions sometimes entered their rooms. Because refugees had little access to formal employment, the family survived by making charcoal, fishing, farming, and performing manual labour. Through every hardship, they continued to work, persevere, and hope.

A Long Road to Canada: In 2016, ORAT visited the Krisan Refugee Camp and selected the future nurse for resettlement to Canada. For the first time, a different future seemed possible. The immigration process began in 2017, but Immigration Canada rejected the application in 2019. With ORAT's help, the decision was appealed and overturned by the court.

From selection in 2016 to arrival in 2025, the journey took nine years—years marked by applications, rejection, appeal, uncertainty, and persistent hope.

A Welcome and a New Beginning: When the long-awaited day finally came in 2025, members of the St. Isaac Jogues refugee committee were at the airport to offer a warm welcome. The parish provided a safe place to stay, food, clothing, encouragement, and the support needed to begin building a new life. From the moment of arrival, the newcomer knew that the journey would not be faced alone.

Today, that new life is taking shape through service. The former refugee now works full-time in a permanent position as a Registered Nurse in the Emergency Department at St. Michael's Hospital while pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Critical Care.

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Uganda Country Report

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The majority have fled conflict and persecution in neighbouring countries, particularly South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Other refugee populations include people from Eritrea, Sudan, Burundi, Somalia, and additional countries.

The continued arrival of refugees reflects ongoing insecurity across the region. In South Sudan, conflict and instability have forced many people to seek safety across the border. In the eastern DRC, armed-group violence and insecurity have displaced families from their homes, while the conflict in Sudan has driven further displacement into neighbouring countries, including Uganda.

Among the refugee populations in Uganda are Eritreans who have fled their country due to indefinite national service, political repression, restrictions on fundamental freedoms, and the risk of persecution. Many Eritreans face significant challenges while living in exile, including limited livelihood opportunities, prolonged uncertainty, and difficulties securing a durable solution. For those unable to return safely to Eritrea, resettlement to a third country can provide an important pathway to long-term protection and the opportunity to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

Uganda's refugee response combines settlement-based support with protection and services in urban areas, including Kampala. In settlements, refugees may receive land for shelter and cultivation, with the aim of promoting self-reliance and integration into host communities. Refugees can also access education, healthcare, and employment opportunities under the country's legal framework.

However, the scale of displacement places considerable pressure on available resources. Funding shortages, limited livelihood opportunities, and growing demands for housing, food, healthcare, education, and other essential services create significant challenges for refugees and host communities alike.

While Uganda provides an important environment

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A Journey of Hope

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"When I look back at the refugee camp where I grew up and at the life I am building today, I know that this journey has been about much more than moving from one country to another. It has been a journey from survival to opportunity."

Turning Gratitude into Service: Gratitude remains central to the story. ORAT, St. Isaac Jogues Parish, the sponsors, and many other supporters helped make a new beginning possible. Their practical assistance and encouragement offered more than immediate relief; they created the conditions for belonging, professional growth, and renewed purpose.

The aspiration now is to make the most of those opportunities: to contribute to Canada through nursing, support family, and help others walking a similar path. The journey also carries a wider message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees: behind every refugee is a person, and every person carries a story of family, dreams, struggle, and often years of uncertainty.

There is also hope—hope for a safe place to call home, an opportunity to rebuild, and a future in which families can live with dignity and security. For that hope to become real, countries must open their doors and communities must open their hearts to people who have been forced to flee.

"I am standing here today because a country opened its doors to me, a parish community opened its heart to me, and people chose to walk beside me as I began again."

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who welcomes refugees and newcomers and gives them the opportunity to begin again. I am deeply grateful to all those who supported me on this journey, and I thank God for protection, guidance, and a safe arrival in Canada.

St. Isaac Jogues Parish Refugee Committee with Emmanuel and Deacon Rudy

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Uganda Country Report

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for seeking protection, not all refugees are able to achieve a durable solution through local integration or voluntary return. For individuals who cannot safely return to their countries of origin and whose circumstances prevent them from establishing a secure future in Uganda, resettlement to a third country can offer an important pathway to long-term protection.

ORAT's Support: Since 2008, ORAT has assisted with 238 sponsorship applications, representing 494 individuals, residing in Uganda and seeking resettlement through Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program.

These applicants have sought protection in Uganda after fleeing conflict, persecution, and serious human rights violations in their countries of origin. Their circumstances and protection needs vary, reflecting the diverse displacement situations across East and Central Africa.

Through ORAT's continued commitment to refugee resettlement, individuals and families have had the opportunity to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. To date, 69 applications, representing 145 individuals, have successfully arrived in Canada and begun establishing themselves in welcoming communities, where they can access legal protection, education, employment opportunities, and essential services.

A further 158 applications, representing 313 individuals, are currently under review with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). ORAT remains committed to supporting its cosponsors and refugee applicants throughout the sponsorship process, providing guidance and assistance as families pursue a new beginning in Canada.

Through private sponsorship, ORAT and its community partners help turn the promise of protection into an opportunity for a safer, more stable future for refugees who have already endured significant hardship in their search for safety.

Refugees Residing in Pakistan

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has announced that, effective January 1, 2027, it will no longer accept new Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) applications for refugees residing in Pakistan.

According to IRCC, this exceptional measure reflects the current operating environment in Pakistan, the challenges associated with processing applications in the country, and the significant inventory of existing applications. The pause is intended to allow IRCC to focus its operational resources on processing applications already in its inventory.

To implement this measure, IRCC is invoking Section 9 of its Sponsorship Agreement.

What this means for sponsors and applicants

- Effective date: January 1, 2027.
- New applications: IRCC will no longer accept new PSR applications for refugees residing in Pakistan as of this date.
- Applications already received: Applications submitted to IRCC before the effective date will continue to be processed.

IRCC has indicated that it will continue to engage with the staff of the Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) Association regarding issues related to processing applications in Pakistan.

ORAT will continue to monitor developments and share relevant updates with our sponsorship community as further information becomes available.

Supporting ORAT

Our work is supported by the generosity of the Archdiocese of Toronto, ShareLife, various collaborating organizations and the faithful. If you would like to donate to support the work of this office, please click the donate button.

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