



**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL DELIVERED**

**Remarks from Dr. Martin Mark  
Director, Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto**

**Press Conference - Launch of “Project Hope” - September 8, 2015**

Good morning. My name is Dr. Martin Mark and I am the Director of the Archdiocese of Toronto’s Office for Refugees. I want to thank the media for sharing this story of heartbreak and distress with the world. There is so much that we must do.

I would just like to say a few brief words about the process of bringing a family to Canada. While we all pray that refugees will come to our country as quickly as possible, this is not an overnight process. There is extensive paperwork and documentation required to ensure that the process is fair, safe and thorough.

Five years ago, we saw refugee sponsorships that took an average of 2-3 years to process. Today, we are seeing wait periods about half that time, with many families settling a year after processing commences.

Regarding the emergency relief appeal we are launching today, our goal is to bring 100 refugee families to the Toronto area as quickly as possible. As to where the families will come from, we will prioritize families coming from war torn countries. These include Syria and Iraq, where we have settled hundreds of families to date. I will be traveling with a team to the Middle East on a previously scheduled trip this October to help expedite the application process. As the cardinal mentioned, we must be mindful, not just of the Middle East but also the other parts of the world where we are also in a crisis situation.

We have chosen the dollar figure of \$3 million for our goal as it typically costs \$30,000 to sponsor a family of four to come to Canada and help them settle in their first year here. To support 100 families will cost approximately \$3 million. If we raise more than \$3 million, we will be able to sponsor more families. We are also looking at financial support for those who remain in their own countries in places like the Middle East, as this is a huge population that must not be forgotten. Groups like the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) do incredible work for those who struggle to remain in their homeland.

We will also be looking to local churches to mobilize volunteers as part of their Refugee Sponsorship committee. As noted by His Eminence, there is a need to assist newcomers to find housing, enrol them in ESL classes, help them find doctors, dentists, drive them

to appointments and most importantly, have friendly visits and establish a ministry of presence.

Information regarding the initiatives discussed this morning will be made available on the Archdiocese of Toronto's website: [www.archtoronto.org](http://www.archtoronto.org)

If there are churches of other faiths that wish to participate in this initiative we are open to dialogue and assistance.

The important priority from our perspective is that we engage as many people as possible in the financial and volunteer campaign and bring refugee families here as quickly as possible.

Thank you very much.