



## **1. Canada is not being “overwhelmed” by refugee claims. Canada has welcomed refugees for decades.**

Although the number of annual claims can go up or down, 25,000 refugee claims has been the approximate annual average for more than 20 years in Canada.

As a member of the international community, Canada helps find solutions to prolonged and emerging refugee situations, and helps emerging democracies try to solve many of the problems that create refugee populations. To do this, Canada works closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

## **2. Canada does not take more than its “fair share” of refugees.**

The overwhelming majority of the world’s refugees are situated in the developing world, countries like Iran, Pakistan, Jordan, Kenya, and even tiny Ecuador. Most refugees flee to their neighbouring countries, and are unable to travel overseas to make refugee claims. Given Canada’s geographic location, it is exceedingly difficult for refugee claimants to reach Canadian territory. In 2013, developing countries hosted 86% of the world’s refugees (which is an increase of 16% from 10 years ago). The least developed countries were providing asylum to 2.8 million refugees by the end of 2013.

Only a small minority of refugees and asylum-seekers make claims in the world’s richest countries, including Canada. By any standard, per capita or total number of refugees received, Canada comes somewhere in the middle of host countries, neither the largest nor the smallest.

## **3. Refugee claimants are legally entitled to arrive in Canada without papers. They are not “illegal” or “fraudulent”.**

Refugees are, by definition, people who have a well-founded fear of being persecuted. They have been forced from their homes by human rights abuses. It is often impossible or too dangerous for them to obtain passports or proper travel visas to leave their countries of origin. Often they must cross borders without any documents.

All refugees have a right to protection, wherever they are. The United Nations Refugee Convention, to which Canada is a signatory, allows refugee claimants to use false documents or no documents to escape persecution. In Canada, refugees cannot be prosecuted for using false

travel documents or arriving without any documents. The Supreme Court of Canada has also confirmed that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights of asylum-seekers to fundamental justice.

#### **4. Refugees do not need to “wait their turn” to be resettled from refugee camps abroad.**

Refugee camps are not the “regular” or “normal channels” for refugee claimants to seek protection. Refugee claimants do not need to go to refugee camps and “wait their turn”. The United Nations system of international refugee protection allows refugees two primary means of seeking protection: going to a refugee camp, or asking for protection from any country signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, such as Canada. Refugee camps are not orderly processing centers where claimants arrive, take a number, and are processed in a systematic fashion. Many refugee claimants cannot reach refugee camps, and those that do, are not guaranteed protection. In fact, most refugee claimants who end up in a refugee camp are never resettled.

#### **5. Refugee claimants who arrive in Canada by boat are not “queue jumpers”.**

Refugee claimants who arrive in Canada by boat are not “jumping the queue” or bypassing the “proper” process of applying for refugee protection. Refugees have an internationally protected right to seek asylum, whether they arrive by boat, plane, or foot. There is no queue.

#### **6. Refugee claimants do not pose a threat to Canada’s security.**

Refugee claimants do not pose threats to Canada’s national security – they are seeking security and protection from threats to their own lives. Canadian law excludes refugee claimants if they are found to be inadmissible on the basis of national security, serious criminality, organized criminality, or human rights violations. Refugee claimants go through a front-end security screening. Through this process, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) checks all refugee claimants on arrival in Canada. Since the screening was put in place, the number of claimants found to represent any kind of security concern has been statistically insignificant.

In Canada, an overall drop in crime has paralleled the increase of immigration since the 1970s. According to the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, immigrants are “much less involved in criminal activity than are those who were born in Canada.”

Since October 1, 2010, 2,234 Syrian refugees have been admitted to the United States. None have been arrested or removed on terrorism charges. Refugees are not terrorists. Many refugees are victims of terrorists.

Sources: Canadian Council for Refugees, Amnesty International, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, and U.S. Department of State

## **7. Refugees are not a drain on our resources.**

Only a handful of the world's refugees (about 0.007% in 2008) receive assistance from the Canadian government, and usually for a very limited amount of time (one year). All refugees who resettle to Canada (except for Syrian refugees) are expected to pay back the travel costs associated with their resettlement.

Studies show that refugees and immigrants also contribute positively to the Canadian economy. Refugees integrate themselves into the work force, many start small businesses that employ both themselves and other Canadians. Many refugees are well educated or highly skilled which means they can positively influence the work force by sharing their knowledge and skills with non-immigrant coworkers. Refugees pay more into our social systems than they extract. In addition, immigration helps to offset the effects of our declining birth rate and aging population.

## **8. Refugees do not come to Canada to abuse the system or get rich.**

It is important to remember the cause for which they resettle to Canada. Unlike economic migrants, refugees have arrived in Canada in search of protection. The wars and conflicts that caused people to flee their countries in the first place did not discriminate between the rich or poor, and many of them led successful lives before being forced to leave everything behind in search of safety.

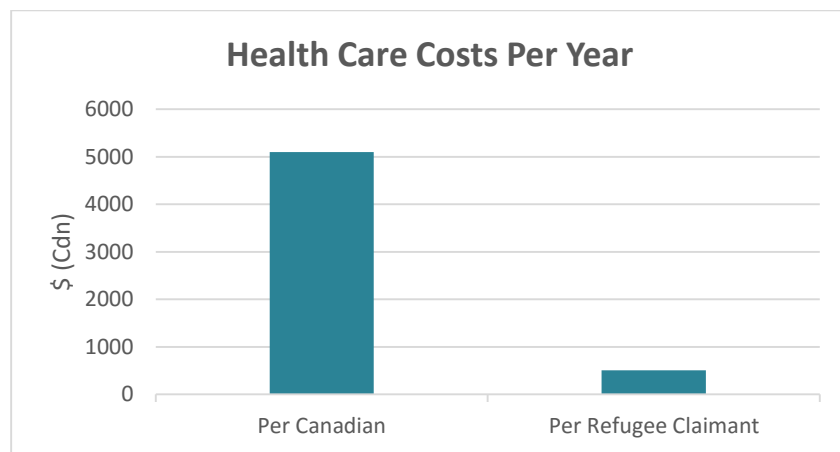
An April 2003 study done by the U.K. based Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) found that the majority of asylum-seekers are driven by "conflict and repression rather than economic factors." In a detailed analysis of refugee trends, the study concluded the ten most common countries of origin of asylum-seekers in Western Europe are linked by their chronic instability, rather than their poverty.

## **9. Incoming refugees will have little to no impact on access to affordable housing.**

Housing and settlement experts say that refugees do not make a noticeable dent in access to housing in Canada. Many Canadians may be struggling to find affordable housing, and the social housing waiting list is long, but it doesn't mean that refugees cannot be accommodated in Canada's housing market. Refugees do not receive preferential treatment in seeking housing. Some will access housing through the rental market, and others will wait their turn in the social housing queue.

## 10. Health care has been drastically cut for refugee claimants. They do not enjoy “gold-plated” care.

Refugee claimants have never enjoyed a “gold-plated” health care system. Before July 1, 2012, refugee claimants did not receive better health care than Canadians. They received health care roughly similar to that of welfare recipients in most provinces. On July 1, 2012, the federal government drastically cut health care benefits to all refugee claimants and to privately sponsored refugees. None receive preventative health care or medications. Some receive care and medication benefits for serious health risks only. Others receive health care only if their condition threatens the health or security of Canadians. The cost of health care for refugees and refugee claimants amounts to just 10% of that of other Canadians.



## 11. Refugees in Canada do not receive greater assistance from the government than other Canadians.

**Refugee claimants** and refugees recognized by the Immigration and Refugee Board receive no special income assistance. Depending on provincial regulations, they may be entitled, like other residents, to social assistance.

**Privately sponsored refugees** are not entitled to any government income assistance (federal or provincial) during the period of their sponsorship (usually for one year after arrival). Their income support must be provided by their sponsors.

**Government assisted refugees** have access to financial assistance from the federal government through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). This financial assistance is generally for one year maximum and is received only if they do not have their own financial resources or income. The exact rate depends on the size of the family and is tied to social assistance rates. It is the minimum required to meet basic food and shelter needs.

## **12. Having a smart phone does not mean you are not a “real” refugee and do not need help.**

The people settling in Canada come from diverse backgrounds, including middle-class, wealthy, or educated families. However, they have been forced to leave their homes due to horrific conflict. Cell phones aid in keeping in touch with family, calling for help, and navigation as they leave their home country. Would you flee your home without your cell phone?

## **13. Refugees will change our community.**

Yes they will — just like your ancestors did. The French, Irish, Scottish, Germans, Dutch, and many more, all left their mark on Canada. Immigrants are hard-working, entrepreneurial, and innovative. Welcoming refugees into Oxford County is not only a humanitarian act, it is also a long-term investment in our community.



Social Planning Council Oxford  
[www.spcoxford.ca](http://www.spcoxford.ca)

47 Hunter Street, Woodstock, ON , N4S 4G7  
Tel: (519) 602-2421 | Website: [www.spcoxford.ca](http://www.spcoxford.ca) | Email: [info@spcoxford.ca](mailto:info@spcoxford.ca)  
[facebook.com/spcoxford](https://facebook.com/spcoxford) | [twitter.com/spcoxford](https://twitter.com/spcoxford)