KNOMAD

Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development

KNOMAD PAPER 49

Private Refugee Sponsorship in Canada: Sharing the Lessons of a Good Practice

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July 2023

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Abstract

In a global context where refugees in need of resettlement often remain without a durable solution, several countries have searched for ways to take in newcomers at low political and financial cost. It is within this setting that Canada and its "private sponsorship" program have become increasingly influential. No fewer than twelve countries now operate or have committed to developing sponsorship programs, all of whom differ in their national frameworks but are united by the prospect of enabling communities to support the economic and social integration of refugees independently of government assistance. As interest in private refugee sponsorship continues to grow around the world, the enticing mix of humanitarian sentiment and economic efficiency that has characterised its international appeal warrants further examination.

Having regard to worldwide refugee protection needs and the role private refugee sponsorship can play in it, this report provides a broad overview of Canada's unique approach to refugee resettlement. In doing so, it offers an (I) extensive outline of how private refugee sponsorship works, who it benefits, and how it came to be. On a similarly descriptive level, this report takes stock of the (II) outcomes this program has produced for refugees and sponsors—and accordingly reviews the issues that have resulted from them. With an eye to more critical perspectives, this report also examines the scholarly (III) critiques that have emerged against the program and concludes with (IV) coverage of its noted advantages and benefits. The intention in following this structure is to furnish a simultaneously clear and wide-ranging characterisation of private sponsorship as presently constituted in Canada—one that is detailed in its descriptions, nuanced in its analysis, fair in its critiques, and rigorous in its conclusions. With hope, a contribution of this nature can help concerned actors maintain a clear-sighted approach to discussions on private sponsorship.

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INTRODUCTION

As subjects, refugees beget extreme and catastrophic narratives. Some accounts will portray them as meek, powerless victims adrift in swelling currents of chaos and violence. Others will portray them as the current itself—an abstract, impenetrable force in the distance whose waves will one day flood the nation and seep through to its people (Tsoukala 2005, 174). In the same way that one cannot make out individual particles of water in the flood, so too are the individual identities of refugees lost in the mass.

It is this context of de-personalisation that makes refugee resettlement a difficult subject about which to speak responsibly—for the situation is *indeed* extreme and catastrophic. Of the estimated 1,445,383 refugees requiring resettlement in 2021, a mere 57,000 were resettled (UNHCR 2022, 3). This latter figure amounts to a global resettlement rate of just under 4 per cent. For every mention of the word "resettlement" (40 times) in the Global Compact on Refugees, 0.1 percent of those needing resettlement were indeed resettled. The situation is dire, and countries have not been up to the task in this aspect of global refugee protection.

With this alarming set of circumstances in mind, several initiatives have spawned around the world to explore and disseminate resettlement models—specifically effectively protecting large numbers of people at low (political or financial) cost. In this regard, Canada and its flagship "private refugee sponsorship" program have been a main topic of discussion (GRSI 2019b).

Interest in Canada's approach is logical. Despite making up approximately one half of one percent of the total world population, Canadians took in over a third of all resettled refugees worldwide in 2021 (Canada 2022c). These contrasting arenas of disproportionality, and the international acclaim Canada has received as a result (GRSI 2019b), form the context in which a dozen countries—including the United States as of 2023—now operate or have made a public commitment to develop sponsorship programs (GRSI 2022b). The attractive mix of humanitarian sentiment and economic efficiency that has characterised its international appeal, however, warrants further analysis.

Having regard to worldwide refugee protection needs and the role private refugee sponsorship can play in it, this report provides a broad overview of Canada's unique approach to refugee resettlement. In doing so, it offers an (I) extensive outline of how private refugee sponsorship works, who it benefits, and how it came to be. On a similarly descriptive level, this report takes stock of the (II) outcomes this program has produced for refugees and sponsors—and accordingly reviews the issues that have resulted from them. With an eye to more critical perspectives, this report also examines the scholarly (III) critiques that have emerged against the program and concludes with (IV) coverage of its noted advantages and benefits. The intention in following this structure is to furnish a simultaneously clear and wide-ranging characterisation of private sponsorship as presently constituted in Canada—one that is detailed in its descriptions, nuanced in its analysis, fair in its critiques, and rigorous in its conclusions. With hope, a contribution of this nature can help concerned actors maintain a clear-sighted approach to discussions on private sponsorship.

SECTION I. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF PRIVATE REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP IN CANADA

This first section provides an overview of private refugee sponsorship in Canada. Although not fully exhaustive of the program's aims and intricacies, it seeks to provide a relatively comprehensive survey of how the system works, who it serves, and why it exists. It does so in four parts.

Part A defines the core resettlement programs at issue in this report, briefly setting out their distinct functions and modes of operation. In doing so, it describes (i) refugee resettlement, (ii) government assistance for refugees, (iii) private refugee *sponsorship*, and (iv) the blended-visa office referral program.

The second part of this first section (B) outlines in greater detail the specificities and procedural aspects of refugee sponsorship. It first expounds upon who exactly can sponsor by elucidating the (i) different types of sponsorship groups and how they are formed, before setting out (ii) who exactly can be sponsored and how their cases are referred to Canada. This part then moves into the specificities of what happens upon the refugee's arrival, assessing (iii) the different commitments and responsibilities of sponsors and refugees alongside (iv) the procedures coming into play when these commitments are not met.

Following these explanations, the third part (C) steps back in time to briefly relate the history of sponsorship in Canada. It begins with an account of the program's (i) post-WWII beginnings as a mostly religious endeavour, moving forward into Canada's notable response to (ii) Indochinese refugees and the program's evolution through the 1990s into its mainstream resurgence (iii) with Syrian refugees in 2015.

The fourth and final part (D) takes a conceptual and empirical look into (i) who sponsors and their (ii) motivations for doing so. Its primary aim is to uncover what traits tend to define the people who choose to sponsor refugees, and what enables and sustains these choices over time.

A. Definitions

i. Refugee Resettlement

Refugee sponsorship is first and foremost a means to resettle refugees, i.e., to move refugees from a first country of asylum to a country where they may permanently reside (UNHCR 2018). This process implies that, unlike asylum-seekers, resettled refugees are chosen in advance by the state that admits them. Within the general international regime for the protection of refugees, resettlement is thus particular for its heightened degree of control and predictability. It is a process that allows refugees and states alike to plan ahead.

A refugee may be resettled to Canada through one of three general categories of protection. They arrive either as a government-assisted refugee (GAR), a privately sponsored refugee (PSR),

or as a "blended-visa office referred" (BVOR) refugee (GRSI 2022a, 23; Stansbury 2021, 7; Phillimore and Dorling 2020, 2). Each category will be assessed in turn.

ii. Government-Assisted Refugees

The resettlement process for a GAR, as the name suggests, does not involve private engagement on behalf of refugees. Refugees are instead referred to Canada for resettlement via the UNHCR or the overseas offices of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and are offered support by the Government of Canada for the twelve months following their arrival (Stansbury 2021, 7). This support comes in the form of funds for living expenses (food, housing, day-to-day needs, and basic necessities, etc.), arrangements with healthcare and language services, and general efforts at community integration (Canada 2022a; GRSI 2022a, 23; UNHCR 2018). In turn, this support is provided by the non-governmental (although government-funded) humanitarian organisations that make up Canada's "settlement sector," professionals specifically trained to aid refugees to resettle in communities across Canada (Stansbury 2021, 7; Smith 2020, 294).

iii. Privately Sponsored Refugees

Before moving further, a terminological note is warranted. The term "private" may connote relationships linked to labour and production, i.e., employment contracts, migrant worker status, or forms of property and ownership. Though "*private* refugee sponsorship" is indeed the term used within Canada's system, its associated connotations are misleading here. PSRs are not engaged in "productive" relationships with their sponsors—their sponsors are not their employers, nor their employees. It is a relationship of support and mutual expectations (Haugen et al. 2020, 569) not predicated on labour and compensation. This is an important semantic issue to note at the outset, for the relational values at the core of private sponsorship are based in care and not in profit. Some advocates have therefore chosen to refer to the program as "community sponsorship," which remains an accurate and arguably more appropriate designation.

With this terminological point aside, it is now possible to define private sponsorship. The PSR program allows Canadian citizens and permanent residents to resettle and thereby "sponsor" eligible refugees from abroad (Stansbury 2021, 7). Private sponsors, who come in many forms, are responsible for supporting refugees in the same way the government assists GARs. This means that for twelve months, sponsors finance the refugee's "start-up" costs and basic necessities, including housing, food, furniture, and transportation (Canada 2022a; GRSI 202a, 23). Sponsors are also expected to provide social and emotional assistance to refugees, leveraging contacts and connections to help establish them within their communities and make them feel welcome in Canada (Macklin et al. 2018, 45).

Although sponsors effectively "replace" the state in terms of the support they provide to refugees (Lenard 2020, 64), the PSR program should not be understood as a means for the government to abandon its own commitments to refugee resettlement. Indeed, the PSR program is premised on the notion of "additionality," meaning those sponsored are considered to be "over and above" the number of refugees already resettled by the government (GRSI 2019b). PSRs are only "additional" to GARs, and their arrival in Canada does not fill any of the resettlement spots made available by the state (Bradley and Duin 2020, 79).

A further crucial aspect about the PSR program is that it allows Canadians to resettle *specific* individuals or families (Phillimore and Dorling 2020, 6). In other words, sponsors "name" the people they wish to support, and often have prior connections to them as family or friends (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 52). Over the last decade or so, PSRs have accounted for over 50 per cent of resettled refugee arrivals in Canada, the vast majority of whom are "named" (Hyndman et al. 2021, 10). Resettled refugees that are not referred by the UNCHR or IRCC are, by far, most likely to arrive as PSRs (Stansbury 2021, 7).

iv. Blended-Visa Office Referred Refugees

The third and least popular mode of resettlement is the BVOR program, introduced in 2013 as a hybrid between the PSR and GAR programs (McNally 2020b). The refugees arriving through the BVOR program are not specifically "named" by sponsors, nor are they fully supported by the government. Instead, the UNCHR selects refugees to the Canadian government for resettlement, after which Canada matches them with willing sponsors in communities across the country (Labman and Pearlman 2018, 440). Sponsors are then only responsible for six months of financial support for the year following the refugee's arrival—but are expected to provide social and emotional assistance for the full year (Canada 2022a). The hope in establishing the BVOR program was to connect sponsors with the most vulnerable refugees while reducing the financial burden required to support them (Phillimore and Dorling 2020, 3). Thus far, the program has accounted for only 4 per cent of total refugees resettled in Canada since 2015 (see Table 2B).

B. Specificities and Procedural Aspects of Private Refugee Sponsorship

i. Sponsorship Groups

Private refugee sponsorship is not a solitary process. It requires that several people coordinate their efforts—as an organisation or as individuals—to meet their commitments to those they have pledged to support. Sponsorship groups can take many forms, and tend to vary according to group priorities, resources, and community needs. With that said, groups will invariably be assembled in one of the four configurations assessed below, placed in order of how many refugees they tend to sponsor on a yearly basis (Van Haren 2021).

The first type of sponsorship group is the "Sponsorship Agreement Holder" (SAH), an incorporated organisation having concluded a formal agreement with the IRCC to submit several refugee sponsorships a year. Most SAHs tend to be affiliated with religious and ethnocultural groups, although many are also humanitarian organisations (UNHCR 2018). Before concluding any agreements with the IRCC, SAH applicants are expected to have considerable experience sponsoring refugees and must demonstrate the necessary human and financial resources to continue doing so effectively (Canada 2022a). As of 2023, there are over 130 SAHs operating in Canada, now permitted to sponsor up to 13,500 refugees a year (Canada 2020b; Canada 2023a).

The second type of sponsorship group is the "Constituent Group" (CG), a subsidiary of an SAH that is authorised to sponsor and provide support to refugees under its agreement. CGs are based

in the refugee's expected community of arrival and must have their sponsorship application approved by their SAH before submission to the Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa (ROC-O), the administrative hub of refugee resettlement in Canada. SAHs are under no obligation to recognise prospective CGs and establish their own criteria for doing so (Canada 2022a).

The third type of sponsorship group is the "Group of Five" (G5), an association of five or more adult Canadian citizens or permanent residents cooperating to sponsor a refugee. Each individual contributes some of their time and resources so that they may together provide the refugee with the support they need during their sponsorship period. Given the comparatively informal structure of G5s, the government places an extra emphasis on ensuring that they are capable of meeting refugee needs. Indeed, of the five individuals (minimum) eligible and willing to contribute to the requirements of the program, at least three must contribute financially—and all members putting forward a financial contribution must fill out a "personal Financial Profile form" before doing so, with the group as a whole also needing to complete a "Sponsorship Undertaking and Settlement Plan" to demonstrate their organisational capacities (Canada 2022a).

The fourth and final type of sponsorship group is the "Community Sponsor" (CS), a group (incorporated or not) in the refugee's expected community that is prepared to engage itself in sponsorship "as an organisation." Similar to G5s, they must provide statements demonstrating their ability to meet their obligations towards the refugee before sponsoring and have no formal agreements with the IRCC or Canadian government. Unlike G5s, their commitment is more structured and "organisational" in nature, as contributions would be produced in the name of the association itself, and not its individual members (Canada 2022a).

Although one never sponsors alone, specific individuals can be nonetheless prohibited from submitting applications. These include former sponsors held in default of their obligations, persons having committed a serious or violent criminal offence in Canada and elsewhere, those subject revocation proceedings under the Citizenship Act, and anyone in default of court-ordered support payments (Canada 2022a; UNHCR 2018).

ii. The Sponsored and How They Are Referred to Canada

Having touched upon who can sponsor refugees, it is necessary to consider who they can sponsor. To this effect, sponsoring groups can be matched with a refugee through one of two mechanisms. The first and most common mechanism is "sponsor referral," or "naming." Through this method, sponsors specifically "name" the refugee they wish to sponsor (Refugee Council of Australia 2017, 3). This is to say that the sponsored refugee is not a stranger to sponsors—they are often connected to sponsors via family and want to be resettled in their relative's community (Hyndman et al. 2021, 8). The second (and rarer) method is sponsorship via the BVOR program, where a refugee initially identified by the UNHCR is matched via the IRCC with a private sponsor in Canada. By contrast with "named" sponsorship, BVOR refugees are almost always unknown to their sponsors prior to arrival (Canada 2022a; GRSI 2022a, 23).

For sponsor-referred ('named') cases, there is often a significant delay between the submission

of an application and the actual arrival of the sponsored refugees in Canada. Although estimates vary according to the volume of applications received by the overseas IRCC offices, the time elapsed between the receipt of an application and the arrival of the refugee usually reaches the 18–36-month range (Martani 2021, 7). For BVOR cases, refugees are typically able to travel to Canada as soon as a match has been established with a private sponsorship group and can arrive within a timeframe of 1 to 4 months (Canada 2022a). However, in large part due to the considerable backlog of BVOR applications caused by pandemic-related travel restrictions, delays for BVOR processing can now take up to two years in time (Canada 2022b).

In any event, both mechanisms hold in common is that they are strictly dedicated to sponsoring "refugees." As such, people qualifying for resettlement in Canada—regardless of the method— must first and foremost be considered refugees (UNHCR 2018). This is to say that they must either satisfy the necessary criteria to be considered a "Convention refugee" or a member of the "Country of Asylum class" in Canadian law upon determination of the IRCC (Canada 2022a; GRSI 2022a, 23). Only then may they be considered for sponsorship.

iii. Commitments and Responsibilities of Sponsors and Refugees

The sponsorship process carries its share of responsibilities for sponsors and refugees alike. Sponsors agree to support refugee resettlement for the twelve months following their arrival. During this period, sponsoring groups are expected to finance the cost of food, housing, and other "living expenses" such as clothing and furniture. They are also responsible for setting up the refugee's healthcare arrangements and enrolling their children in school. Beyond these more baseline forms of support, sponsors will also help the refugee search for employment, access language training, and introduce them to friends and contacts within their community (Canada 2022a). Overall, although costs will vary according to settlement location and specific family needs, the total annual settlement cost for one refugee is approximately $16,500, with a family of four being appraised at around $28,700 (RSTP 2018). Of course, this cost is meant to be shared among members of the sponsoring group, many of whom will be residing in the same community as the refugees.

Refugees also have responsibilities to carry out during the process. In terms of their application, refugees must gather and provide all relevant supporting documentation to the IRCC, UNHCR, and ROC-O, and continuously provide accurate and complete information about their claim and circumstances in their country of asylum (Canada 2022a). They must also submit themselves to medical examination and security checks when asked (UNHCR 2018). In terms of travel, the responsibilities of refugees are mostly financial in nature. Although the IRCC can provide refugees with travel arrangements in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), refugees are expected to cover their transportation costs. In practice, however, most are given "travel loans" from the IRCC to fund their passage into Canada—unless the IRCC is concerned that the refugee will not be able to repay their loan, in which case sponsorship groups may be asked to pay in part or in full (Canada 2022a).

Upon arrival in Canada, refugees are "expected to make every effort to become self-sufficient as soon as possible." This idea of "self-sufficiency" is again understood to be mostly financial in

nature (Lenard 2019, 71). As such, while sponsors are expected to support refugees for their first year of resettlement, refugees are encouraged to actively seek employment, take language courses, and pursue educational opportunities where possible (Canada 2022a). Further, refugees are not prohibited from shouldering some of their own settlement costs with what money they have earned in Canada or prior to their arrival. This is also to say that refugees reserve the ability to manage their own finances—sponsors cannot coerce refugees into giving up control of their money (Canada 2022a).

iv. Sponsorship Withdrawals and Breakdowns

Where sponsors or refugees fail to meet their commitments, or where circumstances arise where these commitments can no longer be met, sponsorships can be "withdrawn" or "break down." Sponsorship "withdrawal" occurs when a sponsorship is cancelled prior to the permanent resident visa having been issued to the refugee. It is considered to be the final recourse for when all other efforts to meet sponsorship conditions have been unsuccessful or when the circumstances of the parties involved have drastically changed. Requests for withdrawal must be directed to the ROC-O alongside a substantial explanation of the reasons for this action, and supporting reasons deemed inappropriate or unacceptable may have negative implications for the sponsoring group's future applications (Canada 2022a)

Where sponsorship withdrawal occurs, sponsors have the responsibility to locate a new sponsorship group for the refugees. However, there are instances where it may not be feasible to find a new sponsoring group, such as when the refugee has found an alternative durable solution or when new personal information about the refugee renders the sponsorship unviable. In such instances, it is likely that the refugee's application will simply be refused (Canada 2022a).

Once a visa has been issued, sponsorship withdrawal is prohibited. Instead, protocols for sponsorship "breakdown" are initiated once the refugee arrives in Canada. A sponsorship breakdown is a formal declaration signalling the conclusive failure of the sponsorship arrangement—it is a drastic and final measure and must be preceded by efforts from all parties (including the IRCC) to resolve the issues amicably via mediation or other resolution methods. Where a resolution cannot be reached, the IRCC will instead carry out an investigation and determine who bears responsibility for the breakdown. Sponsors held responsible will be deemed "in default of their obligations" and could face a permanent ban from sponsorship. Sponsors found not responsible will be released from their obligations (Canada 2022a).

Although sponsorship breakdown does not revoke the refugee's permanent resident visa or affect their status in any way, their sponsorship is considered to be formally cancelled. This means that refugees could be ineligible for income support through provincial or municipal social assistance programs during the sponsorship period (one year after their arrival). Additionally, if a sponsoring group is considered to be in default, they could be required to reimburse the government for income support provided to the refugees (Canada 2022a).

C. A Brief History of Private Refugee Sponsorship in Canada

i. Postwar Beginnings: 1946–1978

After briefly describing the functions and processes characterising private sponsorship today, it is worth understanding how things came to be. Private sponsorship as a legislated policy was first included in Canada's landmark *Immigration Act* of 1976, and officially entered into force in spring 1978 (GRSI 2022a, 9). With that said, private sponsorship as a concept predates its textual inclusion in the *Act*, which merely formalised Canada's postwar refugee resettlement practice (Cameron 2020, 31). Indeed, religious groups in post-WWII Canada, the first and largest of whom was the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR), had established an ongoing program to privately sponsor refugees nominated for resettlement in Canada. Consistently active and remarkably effective, these groups managed to sponsor approximately 60,000 of the 163,984 displaced people resettled in Canada between April 1947 and March 1952 (Cameron 2020, 23).

By 1953, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration sought to streamline and gain some control over the practices that had emerged through ongoing sponsorship programs with different (mostly religious) groups. The government's proposal would be for the creation of an "Approved Church Program," a measure aimed at enhancing coordination between the government and recognised Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish sponsorship groups. Through this program, groups would be authorised to sponsor refugees for admission to Canada through uniform procedures and without demonstrating any prearranged employment or housing accommodations (Cameron 2020, 25–26). The enduring challenge would be finding the appropriate balance between sponsor independence and government oversight.

ii. Indochina and Program Expansions: 1979–2015

After two decades of sporadic and mostly religious sponsorship (GRSI 2019b; Phillimore and Dorling 2020, 2) the program would considerably expand through the Indochinese refugee crisis—an expansion that was largely fortuitous, as public concern over the need to resettle refugees from Southeast Asia happened to coincide with a change in government in 1979. With a relatively unstable and new government in power, Canada chose to rely on private sponsorship to uphold its international responsibility-sharing commitments with respect to refugee protection (Cameron 2020, 32).

From 1979 and 1980, private citizens would take on the sponsorship of 34,000 refugees (GRSI 2019b; Labman 2016, 69). A one-for-one matching scheme was soon implemented whereby the government committed to matching private sponsorships for up to 50,000 refugees—but the number eventually increased to 60,000 due to unexpectedly high citizen engagement (Cameron 2020, 32; Labman and Pearlman 2018, 443). In 1986, the remarkable response of Canadians nationwide to the Indochinese refugee crisis resulted in the "people of Canada" being awarded the prestigious Nansen Medal by the United Nations (Canada 2020b). The Nansen Medal is bestowed in recognition of "exceptional service to refugees," and, to date, 1986 remains the only year where an entire country's population received this honour (GRSI 2022a, 9).

As the Indochinese crisis subsided, a vibrant sponsorship community would emerge across Canada, sponsoring over 100,000 refugees from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. However, unlike the sponsorships undertaken following the crisis in Southeast Asia, these groups were less interested in supporting "vulnerable strangers," and mainly prioritised their family and ethno-religious kin through "naming" (Labman 2016, 69; Labman and Pearlman 2018, 441). Broadly humanitarian efforts would nonetheless occur over the years, as these new sponsorship communities demonstrated their flexibility in response to crises in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, and Iraq (GRSI 2022a, 9; Haugen et al. 2020, 562). With that said, mainstream and public engagement of the type seen in response to Indochina would not occur again until 2015.

iii. Resurgence and Renewal: 2015–Present

The PSR program's return to mainstream prominence came in 2015, spawned in large part by the tragic image of Alan Kurdi, the Syrian child whose lifeless body washed up on Turkish shores—and who came to symbolise the need to protect those fleeing from violence (GRSI 2022, 9). Following the revelation that Kurdi's family hoped to join their relatives living in British Columbia, many Canadians felt an acute sense of outrage over restrictive border policies and responded with a renewed and intense engagement with the PSR program (Macklin et al. 2018, 40). Strikingly, in the month Kurdi died, the most searched item on Google in Canada was "how to sponsor a Syrian" (Coffin-Karlin 2020, 155).

Over a span of 18 months, Canadians from more than 400 communities committed to offering financial, emotional, and community support to approximately 18,000 Syrian refugees through the PSR program (GRSI 2022a, 9). It is now estimated that over 40,000 have been privately sponsored (Canada 2023b), and that over two million Canadians have some personal involvement in assisting Syrian refugees through resettlement (Canada 2020b). Since 1979, it is estimated that sponsors have welcomed nearly 375,000 refugees (table 1A).

D. Sponsors and Their Motivations

i. Who Are the Sponsors?

The question of who sponsors and why they do so has attracted significant scholarly attention, although most the recent and comprehensive studies to this effect have not always produced consistent results.

In terms who tends to engage in private sponsorship, Macklin et al. (2018, 45) note at the outset that formal eligibility to participate assumes a certain degree of socio-economic stability. A sponsor must have enough money to contribute to the support of another human being, the time to dedicate to this support, and the intercultural and interpersonal skills needed to help integrate newcomers into the community (Macklin et al. 2018, 45).

The above-mentioned traits have a fairly straightforward resonance with the demographic traits of sponsors. Indeed, they tend in large part to be women (74 per cent) above fifty years old (74

per cent) with household incomes above $100,000 (54 per cent) or $200,000 (27 per cent) (Macklin et al. 2018, 45). The largest group of sponsors is retired (36 per cent) and highly educated (35 per cent holding a master's degree or higher). Sponsors are also overwhelmingly of "European heritage" (88 per cent) and born in Canada (79 per cent), with a solid proportion of identifying as Christian (47 per cent) (Macklin et al. 2018, 45). Interestingly, results on who tends to sponsor differ somewhat with those who are merely "interested" in sponsoring. In the latter category, Canadians aged between 25 to 34 (19 per cent) display slightly more interest in sponsorship than those aged 55 to 59 (15 per cent), and first-generation Canadians show greater interest (22 per cent) than second-generation (14 per cent) and third-generation or higher (16 per cent) (Environics Institute 2021, 17).

ii. Sponsor Motivations and Priorities

In terms of *why* people choose to sponsor refugees in Canada, reasons are again varied, multifactorial, and rarely mutually exclusive. Motivations range from religious commitments to secular values and from national identity to international solidarity (Macklin et al. 2018, 40). Emotions, particularly the visceral connection to personal or familial histories of immigration, may also serve as strong motivators for sponsorship (GRSI 2019b).

In studies carried out by Macklin et al. (2018, 48), it was found that media coverage had been a very important motivation for a majority of sponsors (76 per cent), with the specific image of Alan Kurdi even being "very or somewhat important" for many (84 per cent). Personal or family histories also emerged as "very or somewhat important" motivators for sponsorship (76 per cent), although personal connections to specific regions were not considered to be important at all for most (71 per cent) (Macklin et al. 2018, 48). In turn, the study carried out by the Environics Institute (2021) found that a desire to "help people in need and support them in starting a new life" was the most common reason for participating in refugee sponsorship (24 per cent), with religious affiliations (6 per cent) and family histories of migration (3 per cent) ranking very low (2021, 15). Although it is notable that 44 per cent of respondents surveyed in the Environics study did not provide a particular response as to what motivated them to sponsor (2021, 15), the contrast between these findings and those provided in Macklin's study raises questions as to whether it is possible to fully grasp the intentions behind the decision to privately sponsor refugees.

With these inconsistencies in mind, it is notable that, although a solid majority of Canadians (84 per cent) indicate they have "heard about or are familiar with refugee resettlement" in Canada, most Canadians do not closely follow the issue of refugee resettlement. Among those aware, only 8 per cent report following the issue "very closely," while the majority follows it "somewhat closely" (40 per cent) or "not very closely" (48 per cent), and 5 per cent do not follow it at all (Environics Institute 2021, 5). To this effect, when asked about who assists or sponsors refugees coming to Canada, 63 per cent of Canadians believe *both* the government and private citizens play a role in sponsorship. A smaller percentage, 19 per cent, believe only the government is responsible, and 4 per cent think it is solely the responsibility of private citizens. An additional 14 per cent of respondents were unable to provide an answer to this question (Environics Institute 2021, 6).

These findings about general awareness are interesting, for the factors distinguishing those who would consider participating in the sponsorship program (31 per cent) from those who would not (69 per cent) are knowledge and attitudes about refugee sponsorship more generally (Environics Institute 2021, 17). Despite most Canadians not closely following the issue of refugee resettlement, definite or probable consideration for participating in the sponsorship program is most evident among those who personally know other people having participated (45 per cent) and those who think the sponsorship program is "very effective" (41 per cent). Interest is also more pronounced among those who know refugees in their community (29 per cent) and follow refugee issues more generally (25 per cent) (Environics Institute 2021, 17).

Conversely, the range of reasons why Canadians would probably or definitely not consider getting involved with refugee sponsorship tend to be rather practical. Many can simply not afford it (20 per cent) or are too busy (16 per cent), with others being just generally uninterested (17 per cent) or seeing it as too much of an obligation (5 per cent) (Environics Institute 2021, 17). What does not seem to emerge as a factor is hostility towards refugees and immigration writ large. Public opinion surveys have consistently shown that approximately 60 per cent of Canadians do not believe that there is too much immigration in Canada, and that over three-quarters consider immigrants to have a positive impact on the economy (Haugen et al. 2020, 563; Lenard 2019, 71).

SECTION II. OUTCOMES AND ISSUES OF PRIVATE REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

A general overview of the program having been provided, the report's second section turns its attention to the outcomes produced by private refugee sponsorship and the issues resulting from them. It sets about doing so in five parts.

First, part A lays out a set of parameters for how to evaluate the outcomes resulting from private refugee sponsorship. Grounded in considerations suggested to this effect by McNally (2020a), it lists fifteen specific questions that should be asked when assessing the program.

With those considerations in mind, part B is a straightforward presentation of the numbers and statistics that have characterised Canada's resettlement efforts since 1979. More specifically, part B displays the numbers on refugee sponsorship per category of immigration (GAR/PSR/BVOR) from 1979 to 2021, with disaggregated numbers on refugee sponsorship per country of citizenship and community (province/territory) of intended destination from January 2015 to March 2023. These figures have been chosen in order to illustrate the trends in popularity that have characterised private sponsorship since its expansion in 1979, but also to note how these trends interact with government attempts to regain control over "naming" and family reunification.

Part C then sets out to interpret these results, first noting the (i) significant increases in private sponsorship over the past decade before (ii) subjecting the historically low interest in the BVOR program to analytical scrutiny. Tying these two issues together, part C concludes by critically assessing an enduring tension in Canada's approach to private sponsorship—namely, whether

"naming" and its implications for family reunification are cause for concern or celebration. This last issue is especially relevant for understanding the steep drop-off in private sponsorship numbers that occurred in the early 1990s.

Having interpreted the numbers on refugee sponsorship in light of existing scholarship, part D then describes some of the reported results on how private sponsorship enables refugees to access services and integrate their new communities. It starts by assessing whether privately sponsored refugees are (i) advantaged in their attempts at obtaining and sustaining gainful employment, and subsequently whether the social bonds they forge in their communities benefit them in this respect. The analysis then moves on to (ii) refugee self-sufficiency at the end of the sponsorship period and their capacity to (iii) access healthcare and housing, before concluding with an account of how PSRs engage with (iv) language services when compared to GARs.

This section is completed (E) with a short description of the efforts and obstacles in disseminating private sponsorship across the world. More specifically, this part will highlight the advocacy carried out by the (i) Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), (ii) the current sponsorship programs operating outside of Canada, (iii)and discuss Smith's (2020) research on promises and pitfalls of policy transfer on a global scale.

A. How to Evaluate Results

Given the breadth and comprehensiveness of the present analysis, it will be useful to establish a set of parameters upon which one could evaluate the PSR program and the outcomes it produces. By setting these parameters, policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders can establish specific criteria and indicators against which the effectiveness and impact of the program can be measured, thus ensuring a focused, consistent, and transparent assessment of the regime's performance. Introducing these benchmarks could even help enable comparative analysis with similar programs or initiatives in other countries, which could, in turn, inform policy decisions and enhance the effectiveness of the regime.

With this mind, McNally (2020a) has established fifteen benchmarks for evaluating the "success" of private sponsorship: one should ask whether (1) the program provides permanent protection and avenues to citizenship; (2) the settlement needs of refugees are met; (3) refugees report having good experiences with the program; (4) the program successfully integrates refugees (as compared to GARs); (5) the most vulnerable get resettled; (6) the program effectively contributes to meeting the global need for resettlement; (7) the principle of additionality is respected; (8) the program encourages positive public opinion on newcomers; (9) residents and civil society are mobilised in support of refugees; (10) there is sufficient sponsor interest and support to sustain the program in the long run; (11) the process is clear, transparent, and efficient; (12) sponsors can be held accountable to their obligations; (13) sponsors are adequately trained and supported; (14) sponsorship facilitates the reunification of refugee families; (15) and the program does not focus on high-profile migrants at the expense of other forced migrants.

The parameters established by McNally (2020a) are not exhaustive, and additional questions could be raised about what it means to be "meet the needs of refugees," what characterises a

"fair process," how to measure "successful integration," or what counts as an "effective" contribution to global refugee resettlement. Even so, these benchmarks outline a fairly comprehensive set of considerations to keep in mind while undertaking this analysis and serve as a solid starting point for interpreting results.

B. By the Numbers: Refugee Sponsorship per Immigration Category, Country of Citizenship, and Communities of Intended Destination

Chart 1. Number of Refugees Resettled by Year and by Immigration Category (Canada 2022c; Canada 2021; Canada 2020a; Canada 2019; Canada 2018; Canada 2017; Canada 2016a; Canada 2016b).
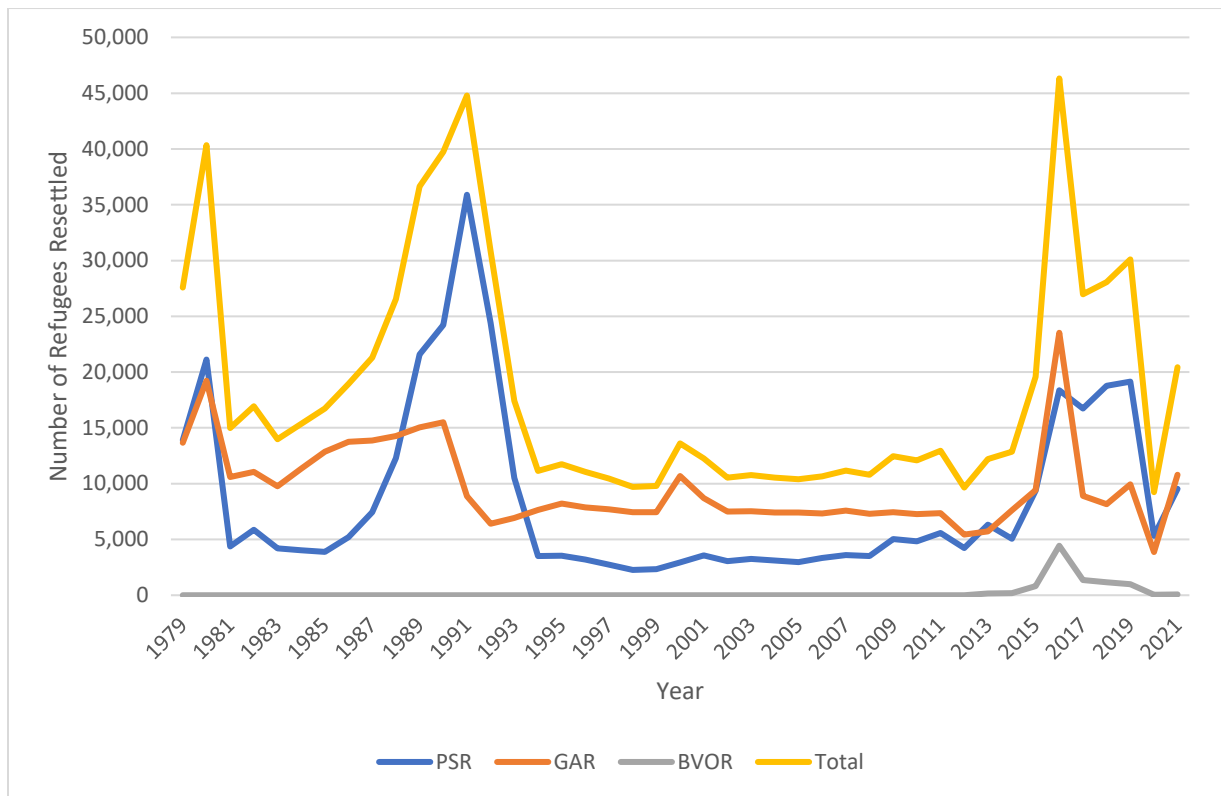
Table 1A. Number of Refugees Resettled by Year and by Immigration Category (Canada 2022c; Canada 2021; Canada 2020a; Canada 2019; Canada 2018; Canada 2017; Canada 2016a; Canada 2016b).

Year	PSR	GAR	BVOR	Total
1979	13,893	13,671	--	27,564
1980	21,111	19,233	--	40,344
1981	4,387	10,593	--	14,980
1982	5,877	11,056	--	16,933
1983	4,213	9,755	--	13,968
1984	4,017	11,343	--	15,360
1985	3,878	12,851	--	16,729
1986	5,200	13,742	--	18,942
1987	7,433	13,857	--	21,290
1988	12,278	14,279	--	26,557
1989	21,581	15,055	--	36,636
1990	24,234	15,493	--	39,727
1991	35,893	8,886	--	44,779
1992	24,403	6,419	--	30,822
1993	10,499	6,928	--	17,427
1994	3,513	7,635	--	11,148
1995	3,546	8,203	--	11,749
1996	3,189	7,868	--	11,057
1997	2,742	7,711	--	10,453
1998	2,267	7,432	--	9,699
1999	2,348	7,443	--	9,791
2000	2,934	10,671	--	13,605
2001	3,576	8,697	--	12,273
2002	3,044	7,506	--	10,550
2003	3,252	7,516	--	10,768
2004	3,118	7,417	--	10,535
2005	2,976	7,425	--	10,401
2006	3,338	7,327	--	10,665
2007	3,588	7,572	--	11,160
2008	3,512	7,296	--	10,808
2009	5,037	7,429	--	12,466
2010	4,833	7,266	--	12,099
2011	5,584	7,363	--	12,947
2012	4,227	5,426	--	9,653
2013	6,328	5,728	153	12,209
2014	5,072	7,626	177	12,875
2015	9,350	9,411	810	19,571
2016	18,362	23,523	4,434	46,319
2017	16,728	8,903	1,349	26,980
2018	18,763	8,156	1,157	28,076
2019	19,143	9,951	993	30,087
2020	5,313	3,871	52	9,236

Year			
2021	9,541	10,811	76	20,428
Total	374,121	416,344	9,201	799,666

Table 1B. Distributions (in Percentage) of Refugees Resettled by Year and by Immigration Category.

Year	PSR	GAR	BVOR
1979	50.4%	49.6%	--
1980	52.3%	47.7%	--
1981	29.3%	70.7%	--
1982	34.7%	65.3%	--
1983	30.2%	69.8%	--
1984	26.2%	73.8%	--
1985	23.2%	76.8%	--
1986	27.5%	72.5%	--
1987	34.9%	65.1%	--
1988	46.2%	53.8%	--
1989	58.9%	41.1%	--
1990	61.0%	39.0%	--
1991	80.2%	19.8%	--
1992	79.2%	20.8%	--
1993	60.2%	39.8%	--
1994	31.5%	68.5%	--
1995	30.2%	69.8%	--
1996	28.8%	71.2%	--
1997	26.2%	73.8%	--
1998	23.4%	76.6%	--
1999	24.0%	76.0%	--
2000	21.6%	78.4%	--
2001	29.1%	70.9%	--
2002	28.9%	71.1%	--
2003	30.2%	69.8%	--
2004	29.6%	70.4%	--
2005	28.6%	71.4%	--
2006	31.3%	68.7%	--
2007	32.2%	67.8%	--
2008	32.5%	67.5%	--
2009	40.4%	59.6%	--
2010	39.9%	60.1%	--
2011	43.1%	56.9%	--
2012	43.8%	56.2%	--
2013	51.8%	46.9%	1.3%
2014	39.4%	59.2%	1.4%

2015	47.8%	48.1%	4.1%
2016	39.6%	50.8%	9.6%
2017	62.0%	33.0%	5.0%
2018	66.8%	29.0%	4.1%
2019	63.6%	33.1%	3.3%
2020	57.5%	41.9%	0.6%
2021	46.7%	52.9%	0.4%

Table 1C. Variations of the Distribution (in Percentage) of Refugees Resettled by Year and by Immigration Category.

Year	PSR	GAR	BVOR
1979	50.4%	49.6%	--
1980	+1.9%	-1.9%	--
1981	-23.0%	+23.0%	--
1982	+5.4%	-5.4%	--
1983	-4.5%	+4.5%	--
1984	-4.0%	+4.0%	--
1985	-3.0%	+3.0%	--
1986	+4.3%	-4.3%	--
1987	+7.5%	-7.5%	--
1988	+11.3%	-11.3%	--
1989	+12.7%	-12.7%	--
1990	+2.1%	-2.1%	--
1991	+19.2%	-19.2%	--
1992	-1.0%	+1.0%	--
1993	-18.9%	+18.9%	--
1994	-28.7%	+28.7%	--
1995	-1.3%	+1.3%	--
1996	-1.3%	+1.3%	--
1997	-2.6%	+2.6%	--
1998	-2.9%	+2.9%	--
1999	+0.6%	-0.6%	--
2000	-2.4%	+2.4%	--
2001	+7.6%	-7.6%	--
2002	-0.3%	+0.3%	--
2003	+1.3%	-1.3%	--
2004	-0.6%	+0.6%	--
2005	-1.0%	+1.0%	--
2006	+2.7%	-2.7%	--
2007	+0.9%	-0.9%	--

2008	+0.3%	-0.3%	--
2009	+7.9%	-7.9%	--
2010	-0.5%	+0.5%	--
2011	+3.2%	-3.2%	--
2012	+0.7%	-0.7%	--
2013	+8.0%	-9.3%	+1.3%
2014	-12.4%	+12.3%	+0.1%
2015	+8.4%	-11.1%	+2.8%
2016	-8.1%	+2.7%	+5.4%
2017	+22.4%	-17.8%	-4.6%
2018	+4.8%	-3.9%	-0.9%
2019	-3.2%	+4.0%	-0.8%
2020	-6.1%	+8.8%	-2.7%
2021	-10.8%	+11.0%	-0.2%

Table 2A. Resettled Refugees by Province/Territory of Intended Destination and Immigration Category (January 2015–March 2023) (excluding Nunavut) (Canada 2023c)

Intended Destination	PSRs	GARs	BVORs	Total
Alberta	25,305	15,810	795	41,910
British Columbia	8,855	11,185	1,265	21,305
Manitoba	8,165	5,325	695	14,180
New Brunswick	410	4,725	260	5,395
Newfoundland and Labrador	440	2,540	180	3,160
Northwest Territories	35	--	10	45
Nova Scotia	1,795	3,830	605	6,225
Ontario	52,740	40,590	4,690	98,015
Prince Edward Island	240	495	55	790
Quebec	24,310	12,195	20	36,520
Saskatchewan	3,045	6,005	310	9,355
Yukon	20	--	55	75
Total	125,495	102,730	8,915	237,140

Table 2B. Distributions (in Percentage) of Resettled Refugees by Province/Territory of Intended Destination and Immigration Category (January 2015–March 2023) (Excluding Nunavut)

Intended Destination	PSRs	GARs	BVORs
Alberta	60.4%	37.7%	1.9%
British Columbia	41.6%	52.5%	5.9%
Manitoba	57.6%	37.6%	4.9%
New Brunswick	7.6%	87.6%	4.8%
Newfoundland and Labrador	13.9%	80.4%	5.7%
Northwest Territories	77.8%	--	22.2%
Nova Scotia	28.8%	61.5%	9.7%
Ontario	53.8%	41.4%	4.8%
Prince Edward Island	30.4%	62.7%	7.0%
Quebec	66.6%	33.4%	0.1%
Saskatchewan	32.5%	64.2%	3.3%
Yukon	26.7%	--	73.3%
Total	52.9%	43.3%	3.8%

Table 3. Admissions of Resettled Refugees by Country of Citizenship and Immigration Category (January 2015–March 2023) (Excluding Countries with Fewer than 100 Total) (Canada 2023b)

Country of Citizenship	PSRs	GARs	BVORs	Total
Afghanistan	18,725	19,215	60	38,000
Bhutan	10	575	5	590
Burundi	795	1,670	85	2,555
Cameroon, Federal Republic of	10	95	--	110
Central African Republic	25	2,385	20	2,435
Colombia	25	950	90	1,060
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	1,420	7,890	550	9,860
Congo, People's Republic of the	65	175	--	245
Egypt	455	40	--	500
El Salvador	25	160	--	185
Eritrea	29,185	3,570	575	33,335
Ethiopia	4,990	1,175	140	6,305
Honduras	5	115	--	125
Iran	1,200	1,315	115	2,630
Iraq	15,055	6,265	430	21,755
Ivory Coast, Republic of	50	485	10	545
Jordan	115	60	--	175

Lebanon	235	40	--	280
Liberia	35	185	115	335
Mali, Republic of	--	240	--	245
Myanmar (Burma)	250	820	250	1,325
Nigeria	5	230	--	240
Pakistan	2,655	720	25	3,400
Palestinian Authority (Gaza/West Bank)	310	445	40	790
Rwanda	410	195	10	610
Sierra Leone	15	100	10	125
Somalia, Democratic Republic of	6,175	4,770	170	11,115
South Sudan, Republic of	595	485	75	1,160
Sri Lanka	150	35	--	185
Stateless	990	510	85	1,580
Sudan, Democratic Republic of	500	2,400	220	3,120
Syria	40,100	43,730	5,635	89,465
Turkey	20	190	--	215
Uganda	25	125	55	200
United States of America	105	5	--	115
Vietnam	85	155	5	250
Yemen	260	290	10	560

C. Interpreting Results

i. Major increases

As showcased in table 1A, the past decade, particularly since 2015, has seen a significant increase in refugee sponsorship. Hyndman et al. (2021, 3) note in their analysis to this effect that the last decade saw a 400 per cent increase in private refugee sponsorship, with PSRs comprising three-fifths of all refugees resettled to Canada in 2020. By contrast, government assisted refugee resettlement increased by only 25 per cent in the same period (Hyndman et al. 2021, 3). This trend of major increases is likely to continue into the current decade (Refugee Council of Australia 2017, 6). Indeed, it was announced in 2023 that the sponsorship cap on SAHs would be raised by 1000 per cent, now allowing individual SAHs to sponsor 13,500 refugees per year. It is hoped that this measure will ultimately help the Canadian government achieve its goal of welcoming over 83,500 privately sponsored refugees by 2025 (Canada 2023a).

ii. Assessing Low Interest in the Blended-Visa Office Referral Regime

As suggested by the numbers laid out in tables 1B and 2B, interest in the BVOR program has been extremely low. The reasons for this are of course varied and systemic, but the main thrust of the issue is that the BVOR model fails to sustain sponsor enthusiasm (McNally 2020b, 143). When placed in comparison to the PSR program, the problem is easier to grasp: The core feature of Canada's private sponsorship regime has been sponsors' ability to "name" the specific refugees they wish to support—it is thus a program where sponsors are largely motivated by family ties or other personal connections to the refugees (Hyndman et al. 2021, 8; Labman 2016, 71). By contrast, the BVOR program relies exclusively on the good-will and altruism of citizens to sponsor strangers, alongside the financial enticement of the State covering costs for six months of resettlement (McNally 2020b, 142; Labman and Pearlman 2018, 442). In practice, sponsors prefer to prioritise existing relationships over the potential protection of more vulnerable strangers—and are even willing to take a larger financial hit in doing so (Hyndman et al. 2021, 8).

On a more structural level, McNally (2020b, 143) has also noted that the Canadian government's failure to consult with existing sponsorship groups or consider input from civil society when introducing the BVOR model may have resulted in a mismatch between government targets and sponsor interest. It is thus unsurprising that the program elicited very limited engagement in its initial years, with admissions falling well below the targets established by the Canadian government. Even so, the low interest in BVOR has raised concerns among refugee advocates, who worry that "unused spaces" send the message that Canadians are uninterested in participating in global efforts to protect refugees (McNally 2020b, 144).

Low interest in BVOR does not mean that the program does not serve important purposes or that it offers no incentives for sponsor participation. For one, the program could be instrumental in increasing the number of UNHCR-referred refugees resettled to Canada, which would be a step towards actively contributing to the protection of the most vulnerable (Bradley and Duin 2020, 85; McNally 2020, 136). In this vein, with its heightened emphasis on vulnerability and detachment from the principle of "naming," the BVOR program offers a positive way to "mitigate

the risk that refugees will be sponsored only if they come from high-profile situations or have personal connections to Canadians" (McNally 2020b, 136). On a more practical level, sponsors who have participated in the BVOR program have reported that they enjoy the process, specifically emphasising the relative absence of delays and paperwork when compared to the PSR program and their success with involving small communities across the country in the integration of refugees (McNally 2020b, 138).

iii. Tensions Over Family Reunification: Concern or Advantage?

The nature of sponsorship applications has evolved over time. Although the program's initial aim was to formalise the existing sponsorships carried out by religious groups in postwar Canada, public outcry over the Indochinese "boat people" crisis led to a surge of interest in refugee sponsorship throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, eventually culminating in the private sponsorship of 34,000 Indochinese refugees through some 7,000 individual sponsoring groups (GRSI 2022a, 9). One of the main breaks with Canada's postwar practice was that Indochinese sponsorship mainly involved sponsoring *strangers*, as there was no established Indochinese community in Canada (Labman 2016, 69). In other words, sponsors could not prioritise their existing relationships—as very few Canadian residents had any connection to the region from where their refugees were arriving (Labman and Pearlman 2018, 441).

The sense that sponsorship was meant to be a means of granting refuge to "vulnerable strangers" foregrounds the modern debate over the nature of sponsorship—specifically, the tension between private sponsorship and family reunification. Simply put, some have expressed concern that the program deviates from its original purpose of protecting the vulnerable when it becomes a supplementary tool for expanding family reunification (Labman and Pearlman 2018, 441; Lehr and Dyck 2020, 47). The source of this concern is of course Canada's unique "naming" principle, whereby sponsorship groups may submit the "name" of a refugee or refugee family it is specifically interested in sponsoring (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 42). Sponsors in practice have used the "naming" principle to satisfy the demand for family-linked sponsorships, with some estimates suggesting that nominations for extended family or close friends constituted between 95 and 99 per cent of private sponsorship referrals (Labman 2016, 69). Without a doubt, "naming" enables sponsors to prioritise their existing relationships with refugees and their families.

The tension between family reunification and government resettlement priorities came to a head in the early 1990s, as a government report carried out in 1995 found that naming had become an unofficial matching mechanism—and concluded that this mechanism was undermining the program's original humanitarian intent (Labman 2016, 69). The report specifically identified the pressure from previously sponsored refugees to bring their family members to Canada as the primary reason for the emphasis on named sponsorships and proposed that implementing an effective matching process for unnamed refugees would make unnamed sponsorships more appealing to sponsors and address this issue (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 47–48).

To address this issue and regain some control over the program, the government initiated several pilot projects starting in late 1990s and early 2000s. These projects combined public and private financial support for targeted refugee populations, often involving 3 to 4 months of government

support, with sponsors being responsible for the remaining 8 to 9 months of support. The power to name the refugees varied across different projects but was often strictly regulated and constrained—and in 2011 and 2012, administrative caps were placed on sponsorship submissions writ-large (Labman and Pearlman 2018, 441). Since government approval is required for "named" sponsorships, the Canadian government's antagonistic approach to "naming" has also involved a high refusal rate of sponsor-referred names, with nearly half being denied between 1998 and 2007 (Labman 2016, 69). It would therefore appear that government restraints on "naming" enforced throughout the early 1990s and 2000s are to blame for the colossal drop-off in sponsorship numbers during that period—with the number of PSRs being reduced tenfold from 1991 to 1994 (35,893 to 3,513), and not reaching the figure of 10,000 again before 2016 (18,362) (table 1A).

Government attempts to curtail "naming" also underscore a clear tension between civil society refugee advocates and policymakers. Although the motivations for engaging in sponsorship are complex and multifactorial, it seems fairly clear that sponsors are more often driven by a personal connection to specific peoples, regions, and individuals than a desire to fulfil government priorities for refugee resettlement (Labman 2016, 69). At the very least, the literature suggests that the Canadian government has systematically undervalued sponsor interest in facilitating family reunification for previously sponsored refugees (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 48).

What the literature also suggests is that the Canadian government's opposition to "naming" is potentially misguided. For one, on a practical level, "naming" specific family members in subsequent sponsorships plays a crucial role in sustaining the private sponsorship program (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 55). The demand for resettlement of additional family members following a state-led resettlement effort has been termed the "echo effect" in current scholarship, which has found that in the case of Syrian private sponsorship, over half of sponsors for PSRs and BVORs (58 per cent) reported being approached for subsequent family-linked sponsorships after completing their initial year of support. Among BVOR sponsors, it seems that the proportion of former refugees requesting subsequent sponsorships for family reunification from their sponsors is even higher (66 per cent) (Hyndman et al. 2021, 8). Strikingly, studies have found that the act of naming individuals sustains sponsorship groups even when members may feel tired, ambivalent, or hesitant to sponsor again immediately (Hyndman et al. 2021, 8). As a means of sustaining sponsor interest and enthusiasm, "naming" appears to be a remarkably effective tool.

On a more legal or theoretical level, "naming" refugees enables civil society to complement Canada's efforts in fulfilling its domestic and international obligations towards refugees. Indeed, section 3.2(f) of the IRPA notes that one of the objectives of the Act is to facilitate family reunification and support the social and economic well-being of refugees in Canada. Since there are limited affordable pathways for GARs to reunite with their still-refugee family members, reuniting refugees with their families via "naming" can address situations that may not fit government, providing reunification avenues for extended refugee families (Hyndman et al. 2021, 9; Lehr and Dyck 2020, 50). Naming also enables international protection in a broader sense, with the UNHCR recognising the role of family reunification in the integration of beneficiaries of international protection within host societies (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 57). As discussed below, the existence of social networks and social capital resulting from family

reunification often facilitates the integration process for sponsored refugees.

D. Access to Services and Integration Outcomes

i. Socioeconomic Integration and "Bonding Capital"

In assessing the "success" of private refugee sponsorship, few factors carry more weight than the program's ability to "effectively" integrate refugees into their host communities. As such, a significant body of research has emerged on the question and has produced some promising results. In short, longitudinal research carried out on the integration outcomes of privately sponsored Syrian and Indochinese refugees indicates that sponsored refugees demonstrate higher rates of employment, earnings, faster attainment of permanent housing, accelerated language acquisition, and more frequent and quicker access to employment services compared to government resettled refugees (Martani 2021 4; Stansbury 2021, 8; Ball 2022, 3).

With that said, current research is still divided on whether these superior outcomes for PSRs should be attributed to the program itself, and whether these advantages are sustained in the long term. The most comprehensive study in this regard was carried out by Kaida, Hou, and Stick (2020, 19), whose main findings suggest that employment and earnings advantages of PSRs when compared to GARs endure over fifteen years—but can be partially attributed to "pre-migration characteristics," in particular higher levels of education among PSRs (finding reproduced by Boyd and Perron 2020, 75). On the other hand, Stansbury (2021, 8) notes how previous studies focusing on Indochinese arrivals have occasionally found that the relative benefits enjoyed by privately sponsored refugees, particularly in terms of employment outcomes, gradually wane and eventually disappear after approximately eight years in Canada. These studies would thus suggest that long-term outcomes of both programs may be comparable, thereby questioning the sustained advantages of private sponsorship compared to the GAR program (Refugee Council of Australia 2017, 3).

What is less controversial across studies is the significance of social networks, both within and outside the refugee's cultural communities, in fostering a sense of belonging and facilitating access to employment opportunities for privately sponsored refugees (Martani 2021, 4). Current research underscores the importance of community support and resources in promoting successful integration and the need to overcome social and structural barriers to employment through mobilizing social networks (Hynie et al. 2019, 48). For instance, a study carried out by Hanley et al. (2018, 143) found "bonding capital" (social connections within the refugee's own community) to be the most significant form of social capital available to the recently resettled Syrians. Participants had access to extensive family networks and Syrian friends they met through religious services, French classes, and Syrian social events. These connections provided support, information, and opportunities for employment and housing, which are crucial for successful integration.

ii. Self-Sufficiency and "Month 13"

Sponsors commit to supporting refugees for one year, and the strictly legal component of their relationship ceases one year removed from the refugee's arrival in Canada. As Lenard (2019, 66) has shown, the most tangible aspect of this one-year cut-off is financial: at the outset of "month 13," sponsors are no longer financially responsible for supporting refugees. Sponsors and refugees are expected to understand that refugees should be financially self-sufficient (or on their way to achieving self-sufficiency) by then, and sponsors in practice tend to place a heavy emphasis on having the refugees achieve financial independence at "month 13" (Lenard 2019, 71).

A corollary of sponsors prioritising financial self-sufficiency at "month 13" is their eventual disappointment when some refugees transition to social assistance. Having understood their role as one of equipping refugees with the necessary tools for financial independence, they may view reliance on social assistance as a failure of the whole sponsorship endeavour (Lenard 2019, 72).

This narrower view of the sponsor role is potentially problematic. A refugee's recourse to social assistance at "month 13," rather than symptomatic of a failing refugee sponsorship endeavour writ-large, arguably indicates how failure to be immediately independent is not abnormal (Martani 2021, 5). Studies have shown that a significant portion of privately sponsored refugees (approximately 30 per cent) transition to social assistance either immediately at Month 13 or at a later stage. Explanations for this phenomenon vary (trauma, language barriers, new and unfamiliar environment, etc.)—but they lead to the conclusion that a certain degree of reliance on social assistance among refugees should be expected and should not be cause for disappointment among sponsors (Lenard 2019, 72).

iii. Access to Services

Sponsored refugees arrive as permanent residents, entitling them to most of the social benefits that Canadian citizens receive. With that said, accessing services has proven to be a complex challenge for many refugees upon arrival (Ball 2022, 9). In terms of housing, refugees must often find accommodations via the private sector, for spaces in social housing tend to be limited to refugees in extremely precarious situations. Recourse to the private sector tends to pose challenges for refugees and sponsors, who, like many Canadians, face difficulties in finding suitable and affordable housing—especially in high-cost cities (Martani 2021, 6). Accessing the healthcare system can also be challenging for refugees, with many reporting difficulties in finding a family doctor and having to endure long waitlists (Martani 2021, 6). This state of affairs is particularly concerning given the high proportion of refugees requesting mental health assistance (Martani 2021, 6).

Of course, sponsors have an important role to play in helping sponsored refugees access and navigate services—but as Ball (2022, 9) notes, sponsors often require support and training to fulfill this role effectively. This support is partially achieved due to the government training of sponsors provided by the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), which provides classes to willing sponsors nationwide. However, more work remains to be done. As suggested again by

Ball (2022, 9), sponsors could work to involve service providers and other partners in the development and implementation of community sponsorship programs, enabling a collaborative approach to strengthen post-arrival connections between refugees and settlement workers. Especially in the context of large SAHs that sponsor thousands of refugees every year, engaging service providers and other partners in the resettlement process can set up newcomers with the resources they need to thrive in Canada.

iv. Language Issues

Language plays a crucial role in the social and economic integration of refugees, as it enables them to access key services and actively participate in Canadian society—most notably the labour market (Martani 2021, 6). In the context of private refugee sponsorship, however, language proficiency upon arrival seems to have less important of an impact on employment outcomes. Indeed, the study carried out by Kaida, Hou and Stick (2020, 19) found that refugees with limited proficiency in official languages benefitted equally from private sponsorship when compared with refugees with strong language skills. This finding can be attributed to the availability of government-funded language training for *all* refugees, independently of whether they were in private sponsorship or government-assistance programs. In fact, GARs were even more inclined to use the free language training due to their guaranteed financial support from the government during the initial year of resettlement—and their relatively lower employment rates when compared to PSRs.

E. Exportability of the Program

i. Role of the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative

As alluded to at the outset of this report, the private sponsorship of refugees in Canada has attracted global attention for its perceived effectiveness and popularity. The main vehicle for global dissemination of the Canadian PSR program has been the GRSI, a joint initiative led by the Canadian government, the UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation, the Shapiro Foundation, and the University of Ottawa Refugee Hub. Since its 2016 launch (during the UN and US Refugee Summits), the GRSI has worked with civil society organisations and states to promote the adoption of private refugee sponsorship programs across the world. The group's advocacy has culminated in several countries[1] now operating or having made a public commitment to develop private sponsorship programs, with many of these states even underlining their support for support for community-based refugee sponsorship in advance of the 2018 United Nations General Assembly and agreement on the Global Compact on Refugees and again at the first Global Refugee Forum (GRSI 2018; GRSI 2019a; GRSI 2022c).

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[1] Aside Canada, twelve countries operate or have made a public commitment to develop private sponsorship programs. They are: Argentina; Australia; Belgium; Brazil; Germany; Ireland; Italy; New Zealand; Portugal; Spain; the UK; and the US (GRSI 2022b; GRSI 2022c).

ii. Global Experiences with Refugee Sponsorship

Global experiences with refugee sponsorship are inevitably varied. No national context is alike, and despite the Canadian model's strong influence on worldwide policy development, the programs that have drawn upon it for inspiration have differed from it in several respects. Most notable among these programs—if not always the most developed—are those established in Australia, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, the UK, and the US (IRAP 2018, 14). Although detailed descriptions and evaluations of these schemes are beyond the scope of this report, understanding how they work could prove crucial in helping relevant stakeholders better plan out their resettlement efforts. As such, the ensuing paragraphs will briefly examine the core aspects of some of these programs in turn. Although Ireland and New Zealand both operate community sponsorship models modelled on Canada's. the slight differences between them are not sufficiently relevant to warrant discussion, and these countries will accordingly not be discussed in this report (Mismash 2021, 20, 49–60; New Zealand 2023a; New Zealand 2023b; New Zealand 2023c; New Zealand 2023d; New Zealand 2023e; Arnold and Quinn 2016; Ireland 2018a; Ireland 2018b; Ireland 2018c; Ireland 2018d; Irish Refugee Council, 2022).

Australia's first attempt at refugee sponsorship, the Community Refugee Resettlement Scheme, followed Canada's PSR program in 1979 (Vogl, Hoang, and Hirsch 2020, 268). With that said, over four decades would pass before the Australian government finally launched its own permanent community sponsorship program in the form of the "Community Support Program" (CSP) in 2018. Through the CSP, individuals, businesses, and community organisations are given the opportunity to nominate specific refugees to support and resettle upon their arrival in Canada (Vogl, Hoang, and Hirsch 2020, 264). Approved proposing organisations (APOs), the organisations selected by the Department of Immigration to assess sponsor applications and assist resettlement, play a similar role to SAHs in Canada. The CSP caps the number of privately resettled refugees at 1,000 per year (Vogl, Hoang, and Hirsch 2020, 273).

Although the general structure of Australia's program resembles Canada's (including the possibility of naming), its contrasts are profound. For one, Australia has not bound itself to the principle of additionality: "each sponsored refugee takes a place away from the government's own resettlement commitment" (Vogl, Hoang, and Hirsch 2020, 275). The program is therefore vulnerable to the critique that the CSP is just a means of outsourcing government spending to the people (Mishmash 2021, 18). Just as worrying is the exact scale of the costs laid upon sponsors. Unlike SAHs in Canada, APOs demand fees from their sponsors going as high as AU$20,000 per application (Vogl, Hoang, and Hirsch 2020, 275–76). Beyond being a significant barrier to wider participation in the program, Hirsch, Hoang, and Vogl (2019, 117) note the potential here for inequity and exploitation. If sponsorship is reserved only to those who can afford the fees, it is easy to imagine how families desperate to reunite with their loved ones could put themselves in precarious situations to secure the well-being of their relatives. Enabling such situations would be a dangerous output of any sponsorship scheme.

In comparison with Australia, Germany's approach to refugee sponsorship has been more decentralised and based to a greater degree in volunteer work. It has nonetheless been among the most effective in Europe. Three German initiatives thus far have been of note. First among

them has been the Länder (federal states) admission programs, which via federal legislation allowed German citizens and residents to fully sponsor their family members escaping the Syrian civil war (ERN 2017, 27; Duken and Rasche 2021, 5). With each German Länder (except Bavaria) administrating the program according to its own regulations, sponsors managed to support over 23,000 refugees from 2013 to 2018. The second program, similarly decentralised, has been the Humanitarian Admissions Program. It is a system of small-scale resettlements in collaboration with the UNHCR that allows applying relatives to sponsor their refugee family to Germany, with 20,000 places to this effect being provided in 2013 and 2014 (ERN 2017, 27). Third and most recent among these programs is "NesT," or "New Start in a Team." This is the first pilot project for a Germany-wide community sponsorship program, launched in 2019 with the goal of resettling up to 500 vulnerable refugees whilst providing them with financial and social support upon their arrival (Share Network 2023, 8). Under NesT, a group of at least five persons (like Canada's G5s) are matched with prospective refugees selected by the UNHCR (Share Network 2023, 10), and are tasked with providing them appropriate housing for a period of two years. For at least one year after their arrival in Germany, refugees are also entitled to non-material support (help searching for schools, jobs, doctors) from sponsors (Pohlmann and Schwiertz 2020, 3).

Although the program is still too young to be fully evaluated and critically assessed, German refugee advocates have expressed hope and concerns about NesT. The hope largely resides in sponsor capacity to protect and successfully integrate refugees, whereas the concern stems from the lack of any "naming" principle within the framework. Similar to the BVOR system in Canada, NesT was designed to favour vulnerability over family reunification in terms of refugee selection criteria (Pohlmann and Schwiertz 2020, 4). Time will tell whether this lack of a "naming" procedure in Germany will dampen sponsor enthusiasm as it did for Canadian BVORs.

Riding on a global push for the humane treatment of Syrian migrants, advocacy groups in the UK (Citizens UK and the National Refugee Welcome Board) lobbied their government for a community sponsorship scheme. Their efforts were successful, and resulted in the creation of a program launched in July 2016 whereby UK residents could, via registered community charity groups, sponsor and support refugees fleeing armed conflict (ERN 2017, 24; Alraie, Collins and Rigon 2018, 7; van Selm 2020, 191–92). Refugees would be admitted through the UK's Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), each respectively aiming to resettle 20,000 and 3,000 Syrian refugees by 2020. Due to pandemic-related complications, the programs were eventually merged, and community sponsorship with it (Walsh 2023, 4).

As it stands, there are three salient elements to the UK's approach to community sponsorship, all of which contrast interestingly with Canada's programs. First, it is notable that the UK scheme operates in a similar way to the BVOR regime. Rather than naming the specific refugees they wish to support, sponsors are matched with refugees via UK authorities, who in turn are referred cases through UNHCR identification processes (ERN 2017, 25). As with NesT, it will be interesting to see whether this model will run into the same issues as the BVOR system. Second, the UK system has not always respected the principle of additionality. Refugees admitted via sponsorship did not create any more spaces beyond those already provided under the VCRS and VPRS, unlike in Canada (Alraie, Collins and Rigon 2018, 7). With that said, as of 2020, sponsorship places are

supposed to be over and above the numbers already guaranteed by the government plan (van Selm 2020, 193). This should be a welcome development for refugee advocacy groups, although it is still too early to tell whether the recent change has materialised. The third and final element was the UK's remarkable response to Ukrainian migrants. Following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the UK rapidly created two new visa programs for those fleeing the conflict. One of these was the "Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme," which granted Ukrainian families entry to the UK if they had a named sponsor. As of July 2022, the program had received a staggering 123,200 applications and had granted 103,200 visas. By that same period, 62,300 people had already arrived under the Sponsorship Scheme (Walsh 2023, 5, 16). Through its response to Ukrainian families, the UK model showcased its ability to provide a rapid and flexible response to the needs of a large number of displaced people. One hopes that this degree of efficiency can be maintained in the face of future challenges for the program.

Most recent and momentous among community sponsorship programs is the "Welcome Corps," the US private sponsorship program whose first beneficiaries met their sponsors mere days before the publication of this report (United States 2023a). Heavily influenced by Canadian policy and forged in collaboration with Canadian policymakers, the "Welcome Corps" is no doubt of one the more straightforward examples of "policy transfer" as it relates to community sponsorship (Moran 2023). Per its official launch statement in January 2023, the goal for the first year of the program's is to match 10,000 US citizens with 5,000 refugees, before eventually allowing sponsors to specifically identify or "name" refugees and refer them for admission to the US (United States 2023b; Al Jazeera 2023; Garrity 2023). Unlike the UK and Germany, the US has more closely emulated the Canadian model via its embrace of the "naming" principle. With time, it will be interesting to see whether "naming" will similarly affect the American sponsorship process.

As of the writing of this report, it is far too early to assess the effectiveness of the "Welcome Corps," although it has certainly generated much enthusiasm (United States 2023a). With that said, at least one element regarding the program's structure is still worth noting. Namely, that private sponsor groups are only required to provide welcoming services, i.e., "secure and furnish initial housing, provide for initial basic needs, and make connections to relevant services, such as health care, education, and employment services," for the refugee's first 90 days in the community (United States 2023c). When compared to other sponsorship programs worldwide, including Canada's, this sponsorship period is extremely short. Moreover, given how refugees often take longer than one year to become financially self-reliant, one could question whether the sponsorship period proposed by the "Welcome Corps" is sufficient (Lenard 2019, 71). In other words, although the stated goal of the program is for "refugees to become self-reliant as quick as possible," ninety days may be too short a time (Garrity 2023). As the program begins to work with its first newcomers, future empirical research may shed more light on different outcomes vis-à-vis economic integration.

In addition to the private sponsorship programs that draw more explicitly on the Canadian model, some countries (Argentina, Switzerland, Poland, Slovakia) have involved the private sector when granting "humanitarian visas" to refugees (IRAP 2018, 27). Most notable among these states is Argentina. On its face, the Argentinian model may seem rather traditional: Sponsors name the

refugees (often family) they wish to support and partner with local NGOs to provide resettlement services to them (Mishmash 2021, 19). However, the program occupies a unique place within the country's resettlement program, in that it is the primary pathway for refugee resettlement—and will soon be the country's *sole* means of resettlement (Bond and Kwadrans 2019, 93), for Argentina has no government-assisted resettlement program at all (Mishmash 2021, 19). As such, the private sector has effectively replaced the state in its entirety.

Argentina's exceptional arrangement could be problematic for a host of reasons, not least of which is the temporary nature of the protection afforded to refugees in this program. Refugees are only granted a two-year visa upon entry and are thus vulnerable to refoulement at the end of this initial period. This limited protection, coupled with a relatively restricted approach to refugee selection in general (almost exclusively limited to Syrians and Palestinians), strikes a contrast with Canada's more inclusive approach to resettlement and sponsorship (Mismash 2021, 19).

Aside more standard or traditional models of community-based sponsorship, "Humanitarian Corridors" were also employed in Italy, France, and Belgium as an alternative means of accommodating Syrian refugees. This model enabled faith-based organizations to sign agreements with the state in order to receive and support refugees initially granted entry to the country on humanitarian visas—and to help resettle these refugees *in addition to* those processed via the government's resettlement regime (Share Network 2023, 6). Humanitarian Corridors first opened in Italy in late 2015, and through 2018 sponsors managed to resettle 2,239 refugees while providing them with financial, legal and social support upon arrival (ERN 2017, 17–19). Following the Italian example, a coalition of five religious organisations concluded an agreement with the French government to sponsor up to 500 refugees residing in Lebanon, providing them with financial support for travel and settlement for one year upon arrival (ERN 2017, 21–22). In the end, only 365 were sponsored (Duken and Rasche 2021, 5). Belgium followed suit with its own Humanitarian Corridor program and admitted only 150 refugees through it, with all such resettlement operations across the three countries closing in 2018 (Duken and Rasche 2021, 5).

Although short-lived, common to all Humanitarian Corridor programs was a sense of flexibility, for respective sponsoring organisations were given some leeway in taking different approaches to both pre-departure selection and post-arrival reception (IRAP 2018, 38; ERN 201—7, 18). This room for variation between sponsor groups could provide the adaptability needed to deal with the ever-changing needs and desires of refugee populations on the ground. More crucially, the relatively simple process whereby a country can establish Humanitarian Corridors makes the policy well suited to transfer (IRAP 2018, 38). This in part should explain the speed with which the program spread from Italy to France and Belgium, however limited subsequent engagement with the program ended up being.

iii. Limits of Policy Exportation

Despite GRSI attempts at dissemination, the question of whether Canada's sponsorship model is "exportable" has no clear answer. In fact, interviews conducted with policymakers, scholars,

UNHCR personnel, and European civil society organisations carried out by Smith (2020, 291) have indicated that the notion of Canada serving as a model for other countries has been driven by supply-side attempts at policy leadership rather than a genuine demand for transfer. The sense has been that the success of sponsorship in Canada derives from its unique history and geography, and that the context elsewhere is radically different and potentially inhospitable to refugee resettlement (Smith 2020, 294). Policy transfer faces some considerable obstacles and must offer compelling incentives for compliance.

Speaking to the European context, Smith notes that EU Member States have several incentives to adopt a model similar to Canada (Smith 2020, 295). Namely, that additional resettlement could help fulfill the responsibility-sharing obligations outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees, alleviate undocumented migration by providing safe and legal channels for refugees, and address the demand to enhance integration for refugees already in Europe. However, some serious obstacles remain in the form of the EU's generally lackluster commitment to resettlement (as opposed to development aid), its emphasis on bolstering border controls, and the fact that most European states have not embraced the concept of multiculturalism (Smith 2020, 295–96; Tan 2020, 27). The context in which a prospective PSR program would take place would likely not necessarily be conducive to its success, thereby limiting its potential for exportation. In light of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that most European community sponsorship schemes have only granted access to a limited number of refugees, with programs being predominantly "ad-hoc" and of relatively short duration (Duken and Rasche 2021, 5).

As Tan (2021, 5–6) notes, the resulting dynamics of transnational policy exportation is one in which "European policymakers adapt the overarching concept to the national context," extracting and combining the characteristics of the various models that have emerged in Europe and elsewhere. Despite the admiration expressed and inspiration taken from the Canadian model, countries establishing refugee sponsorship regimes very rarely emulate it in its entirety. The current trend in global policy seems to suggest that states will only pursue refugee sponsorship when it is legally feasible ("within existing legal frameworks"), where political will allows for it, and when civil society has the capacity to take on an active role in resettlement services (Tan 2021, 5–6). Suffice it to say that these conditions are not present in all countries at all times—and even when countries do establish refugee sponsorship programs, as has been the case in Western Europe, they vary significantly in their approaches to additionality, refugee selection, and the protection status granted to beneficiaries (Duken and Rasche 2021, 4). With time, more clarity will emerge as to how the differences between programs affect shared goals of effective resettlement.

SECTION III. CRITIQUES AND CHALLENGES OF PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP

The first two sections of this report offered general overviews of the aims, functions, and history of the private refugee sponsorship program, also interpreting some of the central outcomes it has produced and the issues that have arisen accordingly. The latter two sections of this report will be more pointed and critical, beginning with a summary of the main critiques that have been levelled against the program as presently constituted.

This section begins with the frustrations expressed over the various inefficiencies of the program, and the consequences these frustrations have on the general sustainability of sponsorship. As such, part A describes the grievances on behalf of sponsors and refugees in terms of the (i) delays and overly complex bureaucracy that have characterised the regime thus far—and explains how these grievances can lead to (ii) emotional burnout and severe backlash against the program as a whole.

Following this discussion of the inefficiencies and frustrations associated with sponsorship, part B moves into the problem of "managing expectations." This problem is relevant in two ways. First, in terms (i) of the Canadian government's failure to meet sponsor expectations in upholding additionality. Second, in terms of (ii) sponsors sometimes holding inappropriate status and role expectations with the refugees they support. Although these two points are distinct in their practical implications, they are conceptually related in how they underscore the need for all involved in private sponsorship to understand and uphold their commitments.

The final part (C) of this section addresses the moral concerns raised in regard to the potential inequities associated with private sponsorship—particularly the practice of "naming." Authors have noted with apprehension that (i) sponsorship offers countries an opportunity to be extremely selective with who they admit, prioritising some "model" or "good" refugees whilst denigrating others. Relatedly, some have argued that resettlement (ii) is too large an investment for too few people, and that it diverts resources from the more vulnerable refugees who remain in the global South. As such, Lenard (2020) (iii) contends that sponsorship, specifically "named" sponsorship, protects refugees who already possess a degree of social capital over the most vulnerable. According to her, these concerns should militate for "vulnerability" to be the preferred criterion for sponsorship.

A. Inefficiencies and Frustrations

i. Delays and Bureaucracy

Beyond the Canadian government's failure to uphold the principle of additionality, sponsors have expressed frustration over the overly complex bureaucracy and systemic delays marring the PSR program (McNally 2020a).

In terms of bureaucracy, Lange (2020, 212) notes how the administrative complexity of the sponsorship application process has increased to the point where volunteer lawyers are even needed to assist individuals. Government response to this issue came in the form of the RSTP, established in 1998 with the mandate of attending to the ongoing training and informational needs of sponsors. As noted earlier, the RSTP has since been able to provide public education to prospective sponsors in cities nationwide—but has been inadequately resourced to meet the increasing demand for personal help in filling out all the required forms to initiate private refugee sponsorship and has therefore been of limited assistance in this regard (Lange 2020, 214–15). Thériault (2020, 228) has further observed a lack of transparency around visa officer decisions

and has remarked that judicial review tends to be out of reach for refugees whose resettlement applications are rejected.

In terms of delay, a study conducted by Coker (2017, 7) found that over 97 per cent of SAHs expressed concerns about the lengthy waiting period from the time an application is filed to when sponsored refugees actually arrive. Some groups reported waiting for up to six years to receive the families they are sponsoring. Despite the goal of swift resettlement, the vetting process conducted by immigration officers, particularly at IRCC processing centers overseas, often causes significant delays. The limited resources at visa posts and challenges faced by refugees in providing application information from conflict zones or refugee camps also contribute to these delays (Lange 2020, 213).

Efforts to address these endemic delays have not always been successful. One notable example of a failed measure came in Fall 2016, when delays and frustrations over the slow processing of Syrian refugee sponsorship was reaching their peak (Labman and Pearlman 2018, 446). The IRCC had responded to the mounting pressure by expediting the processing of Syrian profiles, but the increased pace of referrals led to profiles being matched with sponsors before the completion of final vetting. In other words, cases were made available to potential sponsors prior to final eligibility, medical, and security decisions—and sponsors were therefore left waiting. In an attempt to address the situation, a letter from IRCC suggested offering replacement cases to sponsors affected by the delay. Accepting a replacement sponsorship would result in cancelling sponsorship the previous profile. This decision received mixed reactions, caused intense debate, and was largely described in the media as a disappointment. Sponsors rejected the idea of treating refugee families as replaceable commodities. Even in cases where sponsors had not specifically named refugees to sponsor or had no pre-existing relationships, sponsors had developed strong connections with the intended resettlement refugees and sought assurances from the Canadian government that delayed families eventually be resettled once ready (Labman and Pearlman 2018, 446). While the government confirmed that delayed families would eventually be resettled, sponsors remained skeptical, especially considering the low targets for Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) and GAR refugees in the provisional admissions numbers.

This example underscores a crucial point: the public embrace of refugees also brings expectations (Labman and Pearlman 2018, 445). As was noted in relation to the Canadian government's sponsorship-heavy (Labman 2016, 74) approach to Syria, the experience of sponsors mobilising to arrange housing, social support, and finances—only to find themselves waiting years for their applications to be processed and refugees to arrive—was lived as a disappointment for many.

ii. Burnout and Backlash

Although private refugee sponsorship is a valuable opportunity to foster community connections between citizens and refugees, advocate for refugees, and create a generally welcoming environment for newcomers, it is a process that carries its share of challenges and frustrations for both refugees and sponsors (Labman 2020, 305).

For one, maintaining member engagement poses a struggle for many SAHs. While some groups manage to uphold their sponsorship commitments, others find it increasingly difficult to keep their members actively involved amidst delays, uncertainty, and bureaucratic purgatory. Simply put, studies have indicated that prolonged wait times dampen the enthusiasm of the group and make sustaining interest a challenge. This is to say nothing of how processing delays hinder the capacity of SAHs to effectively plan out their sponsorships, or of how explaining the causes of such wait times to disappointed sponsors is often a burdensome task (Coker 2017, 7).

The sense of burden, disappointment, and frustration expressed by some sponsors has recently been described as "neoliberal fatigue" (Elcioglu 2023). Per Elcioglu (2023, 109), "neoliberal fatigue" refers to the "political lassitude" that grows within sponsors as they are forced to "find individual and makeshift solutions" to address systemic gaps in social services. Private refugee resettlement programs not only assign the responsibility of refugee integration to citizens but also burden them with the daunting task of helping newcomers adapt to a life with inadequate social provisions. The urgency with which sponsors must deal with these difficulties leaves them with little time or mental capacity to reflect on the structural factors contributing to these challenges and can leave many feeling "fatigued" or "burned out." In turn, as the numbers of privately sponsored refugees increase, so too does the concern for potential burnout. Rather than witnessing a surge of support leading to a more positive policy environment, there is a risk of backlash and exhaustion resulting from the considerable investment of time and resources. Frustrations within the sponsor community, caused by the slow and delay-ridden resettlement bureaucracy, could prove detrimental to the state's resettlement program, as citizens become disillusioned with the process and lose their motivation (Bradley and Duin 2020, 79).

Long waiting times, it should go without saying, also pose a significant problem for refugees. To name but one issue related to private sponsorship, resettlement delays tend to also incur delays in obtaining work permits within the refugee system. This delay forces refugee claimants to rely on welfare programs, for employers are unwilling to hire them without necessary documentation (despite refugee willingness to work) (Martani 2021, 7). These are issues to keep in mind in present times. Indeed, sustained high demand and COVID-related restrictions on travel have contributed to a surge in the backlog of PSR applications in recent years. As of 2022, the PSR inventory stood at over 70,000 applications, with processing delays reaching nearly three years (Canada 2022b).

B. Managing Expectations

i. Additionality and Privatisation

The principle of additionality—that privately sponsored refugees are considered to be admitted *in addition to* the existing resettlement placements determined by the state—is the "cornerstone principle" of the PSR program (Bradley and Duin 2020, 79). The very introduction of the sponsorship program aimed to *increase* the number of refugees admitted to Canada, whilst granting various constituencies and stakeholders a direct say in who could be resettled in the country. As emphasised by the GRSI (2019b), additionality was also crucial in building trust between the government and civil society. One concern among civil society organisations at the

time was that the government would use the PSR program to shift the costs of resettlement on civil society—the promise of additionality was meant to address this concern (Labman 2016, 72–73).

Now over forty years removed from the inception of the PSR program, it has become increasingly clear that the Canadian government has not been able to uphold the promise of additionality (Coker 2017, 15; Martani 2021, 6). In fact, the majority of sponsorships were already sponsor-referred within the program's first decade (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 44; Labman and Pearlman 2018, 443). The number of PSRs regularly exceeds those assisted by the government, and current projections predict that this trend will continue at a ratio of approximately 2:1 (Canada 2022; Martani 2021, 6). As such, it would seem that private citizens—more often that the Canadian government—have taken up the responsibility to advocate for, support, and settle refugees in their communities (Labman 2016, 72).

The Canadian government's failure to uphold additionality raises questions as to whether the government has begun to privatise refugee resettlement, and about the implications of doing so. Ilcan and Connoy (2021, 300) describe this movement towards privatisation as aligning with a general neoliberal trend in Canadian governance, characterised by an increased tendency to contract out public services and transfer public authority to private citizens and non-profit organisations. However, beyond these broader concerns about neoliberalism, some have warned that private sponsorship has specifically allowed the government to withdraw from direct responsibility for admission totals (Bradley and Duin 2020, 80). If private sponsors are unable to meet the government's admissions targets in admissions, past trends indicate that these places are left empty. Without a firm commitment to additionality on the government's end, private sponsors are therefore caught in the difficult position of needing to ensure via their own action that the country's total numbers are at least maintained (Labman 2016, 73; Bradley and Duin 2020, 80).

This difficult position, as Labman (2016, 74) suggests, risks shaping a skewed or mistaken political narrative. Highlighting and praising the efforts of private sponsors in resettling refugees—even stressing how these efforts go beyond those put in by the Canadian government—may give the impression that sponsorship is the "political barometer" of refugee support in Canada. However, the problem with this narrative is how "it absolves the government of responsibility for either action or failure" (Labman 2016, 74). If the target numbers for refugees are met, the government portrays it as a result of private initiatives rather than an active government response. Conversely, if the numbers are not met and refugees fail to arrive, blame is placed on private sponsors. Failing to meet the promised numbers not only reduces the number of refugees receiving protection but also suggests that resettlement is not demanded or supported by Canadian citizens. The numbers, nevertheless, present a different narrative. Since 1979, Canadians have privately resettled over 350,000 refugees (table 1A), spending an estimated $79 million per year and dedicating an additional volunteer contribution of over 1,600 hours per refugee family (Labman 2016, 74; Canada 2022). These tangible contributions provide a compelling, convincing, and inspiring testament to Canadians' commitment to refugee resettlement despite the government's lackluster commitment to the principle of additionality.

ii. Paternalism and Status

While most relationships between sponsors and refugees are appropriate, the power imbalance between positions implies a risk of exploitation. For instance, some leaders in the sponsorship movement have remarked that refugees may be pressured to repay sponsors or work for specific employers against their will. These risks have not borne out and these practices are specifically banned by the Canadian government (Refugee Council of Australia 2017, 5), but they speak to a broader concern about sponsorship. Namely, that the power differential between sponsor and refugee is fertile ground for paternalism.

Haugen et al. (2020, 566) warn against a "paternalistic approach" to sponsorship, which they describe as an attitude where sponsors become frustrated when newcomers do not heed their advice—an attitude stemming in part from a failure to recognise the knowledge and agency of refugees. Sponsors who adopt a "paternalistic approach" will assume a "parental role" towards refugees, treating them as helpless children who must "be taught the 'way we do things around here' as a condition of their integration into Canadian society." Other sponsors, who adopt a more "passive paternalism," will display condescension towards refugees' values and experiences rather than dismissing them outright, holding strong expectations that refugees should express gratitude for the sponsorship work they have undertaken and listen to their advice and suggestions (Haugen et al. 2020, 568).

A more appropriate approach, as noted again by Haugen et al. (2020, 569), would be "mutualistic" in nature. The mutualistic approach to sponsorship focuses on treating refugees as equals, learning from them, and being self-critical of sponsors' own values and assumptions. It emphasises flexibility in defining success based on refugees' understanding and supports refugees' choices without treating them as children. Mutualistic sponsors acknowledge the equality of refugees in sponsorship, respect their opinions, and recognize that they may have their own understanding of what is best for them.

Role expectations can be constraining for refugees, with many emphasising how their worth and value to others and society ought to be acknowledged beyond the mere label of "refugee" and the narratives of "struggle" the label entails (Kyriakides 2020, 200; Safouane 2020, 217). Sponsors should therefore be aware of the challenges faced by newly arrived refugees, respect their autonomy, and avoid projecting expectations of gratitude. A more effective approach to sponsorship management stresses the importance of maintaining good relationships, managing expectations, and facilitating effective communication between sponsors and refugees. (Refugee Council of Australia 2017, 5).

C. Inequities and Moral Concerns

i. Migration Management

Beyond issues related to the practice or implementation of private refugee sponsorship, some critiques of the program impugn its very essence. Such is the critique of Bradley and Duin (2020,

76), who argue that resettlement serves a "migration management function" enabling certain states to selectively fulfill their responsibilities towards forced migrants. Through resettlement, these states control the entry of refugees and avoid the uncertainties associated with spontaneous arrivals of asylum-seekers. This approach allows them to choose refugees who align with their interests, while stigmatising those who manage to reach the global North and seek asylum there as "queue-jumpers." It is in this sense that a program like refugee sponsorship allows states to celebrate the "good refugee" whilst denigrating the forced migrants who arrive in their country in a less "organised" fashion.

ii. Too Large an Investment for Too Few People

An enduring challenge raised in the literature—one related to the notion of "migration management"—concerns the misalignment between resources allocated for refugee resettlement and the priorities of the international refugee protection regime (Bradley and Duin 2020, 77). The main point in this regard is that refugee resettlement is too large an investment for too few people, especially considering the urgent needs of refugees remaining in the global South.

Despite the pressing need for resettlement opportunities, only 4 per cent of refugees worldwide were able to pursue this option in 2021 (UNHCR 2022). Conversely, the expenses incurred for resettlement far exceed the funds allocated to supporting voluntary returns and local integration in the global South, which are avenues accessed by a much larger number of refugees. Although expenditures in support of different refugee populations and durable solutions do not lend themselves well to comparative analysis, it remains striking that an estimated $135 per refugee is allocated on resettlement for every $1 provided for the support of refugees remaining in the global South (Bradley and Duin 2020, 77). This situation could prove to be even more concerning if states *reduce* their spending on refugees in the global South to allocate *more* funds to resettlement—an option that is rendered enticing by the heightened visibility of resettled refugees. By highlighting their support for a restricted set of refugees, states can divert attention from their inadequate support for even more marginalized groups of forced migrants, namely IDPs (Bradley and Duin 2020, 76). The potentially arbitrary distribution of resettlement benefits, coupled with this strategic focus on specific refugee communities at the expense of others, exacerbates the sense that refugee sponsorship is an inequitable scheme.

ii. Vulnerability as Criterion

The concern of inequity is also acute as it relates to "naming," and the proper criterion to be employed when selecting refugees for resettlement. Under the sponsorship system in Canada, which functions primarily via referral by private individuals, sponsors will usually have a personal relationship with the refugees they wish to support. The nature of these relationships (e.g., family, work connections) may vary—but the core criterion at issue remains the existence of a prior connection with Canadian permanent residents or citizens (Hyndman et al. 2021, 8; McNally 2020b, 137). As Lehr and Dyck (2020, 52) note, the emphasis on existing relationships with people living in Canada is indicative of the role social capital plays in sponsor selections. Resettlement, to the extent that it is done via "naming," becomes exclusively accessible to those with

connections to Canada, where sponsors or family members have the necessary financial resources. This situation could be deemed inequitable or unfair insofar as it prioritises the economic capacity of sponsors over factors directly related to the refugees and their needs.

With these potential inequities in mind, Lenard (2020, 64–66) presents a moral critique of "naming" and a defence of "vulnerability" as the core selection criterion for refugee resettlement. On her account, existing connections to a Canadian citizen or permanent resident are morally arbitrary and introduce a degree of unfairness into the distribution of resettlement spaces. Instead, she argues, these spots ought to be allocated based on the vulnerability faced by refugees in their places of refuge and the persecution they would face upon returning to their home country. The nuance here is the human rights aspect of naming family members for sponsorship. Acknowledging the fundamental human right to family life, as enshrined in Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, means that some connections to citizens or residents are not necessarily arbitrary. This is why, for instance, it is not possible to sponsor only one member of a family unit, and it is mandatory that a refugee's immediate kin and dependents be sponsored alongside them (Canada 2022a). However, "naming" individuals based on broader connections beyond family (religion, culture, race, ethnicity, etc.) raises concerns about discrimination. Lenard suggests that admitting refugees based on these criteria alone should be subject to careful scrutiny, for democratic states typically reject admission strategies that prioritise shared identities due to their discriminatory nature. Private sponsors should accordingly be discouraged from selecting refugees based on "discriminatory connections" and encouraged to choose from those prioritised by the UNHCR for their protection needs.

SECTION IV. ADVANTAGES AND BENEFITS OF PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP

Having described the critiques levelled against private refugee sponsorship in its third section, this report concludes by covering the program's advantages and benefits. It does so with the intention of providing a fair and nuanced assessment of private refugee sponsorship as practiced to date in Canada.

As such, this section starts by grouping together the advantages associated with the program's protection and integration benefits (A). More specifically, it notes how (i) sponsorship saves many human lives, (ii) "creates Canadians" in literal and symbolic ways, and strongly (iii) enables the agency of sponsored and formerly sponsored via the "naming" process.

The second and final part (B) of this section then stresses how sponsorship has been remarkably effective in fostering a constituency of concerned citizens. This effectiveness stems from the program's generally (i) positive sponsor experiences, (ii) the role it allows philanthropy to play in the protection of vulnerable populations, (iii) its ability to mobilise the legal community, and, most importantly, how it (iv) alters the dehumanising narratives surrounding migrants and refugees.

A. Protection and Integration

i. Sponsorship Saves Lives

Canada's private sponsorship of refugees has proven to be highly effective in enhancing refugee protection and has provided a durable solution for over 350,000 refugees since 1979, in addition to those resettled with government funding (table 1A). Despite its challenges, the program has achieved this outcome at minimal cost to the Canadian Government and serves as a model that can be adapted in other countries as part of global efforts to address the increasing need for resettlement opportunities (Martani 2021, 1–3; Refugee Council of Australia 2017, 2).

ii. Creating Canadians

A frequently stated goal of private refugee sponsorship is to "create Canadians." This aim appears relevant on two levels. On one level, the PSR program could be understood as aiming to "create Canadians" out of refugees. Per Haugen et al. (2020, 562), this aim implies that sponsors should support refugees not only in acquiring the necessary skills for successful integration, such as language proficiency and financial literacy, but also in becoming familiar with the norms and values that underlie social and economic interactions in Canada. Of course, these norms and values are diverse and subject to debate. Sponsors themselves hold varying perspectives on how to make someone Canadian, impart Canadian values, and create Canadian citizens. With that said, it is understood among sponsors that their approach to facilitating the process of becoming Canadian has significant implications for the refugees they are sponsoring (Haugen et al. 2020, 564).

On another level, the PSR program could be understood as forging what it means to be a Canadian "citizen" in a broader, symbolic sense (GRSI 2019b). As highlighted by Macklin et al. (2018, 38), the sense that Canadians are "here to help" on the international stage was bolstered by Canada's response to the Syrian refugee crisis, in which sponsorship was "unapologetically placed front and centre" (Labman 2016, 74). Through private refugee sponsorship, the idea of being Canada was meshed with the will to help others. Devoting oneself to a cooperative and altruistic endeavour—facilitating the integration of refugees into the substantive, identarian, and legal dimensions of citizenship—became a quintessentially Canadian act of citizenship (Macklin et al. 2018, 29). It is in these two levels that the PSR program "created Canadians."

iii. Recognising Migrant Agency

Migrants exercise considerable agency, and refugees in particular can bring about transformative changes to the structures in which they operate (Mainwaring 2016, 293; Safouane 2020, 217). Indeed, the PSR program, specifically through the role resettled refugees play in the process of "naming," offers a striking example of the transformative capacities of refugees.

The concept of "naming" grants sponsors a level of autonomy and influence in the resettlement process, allowing resettled refugees now residing in Canada to submit referrals for family members—provided they meet Canada's criteria for refugee protection. Since the selection of

BVORs and GARs is based on referral by the UNHCR, Canadian PSRs distinguish themselves as the only former refugees in the world who can designate specific individuals for admission to their country (Hyndman et al. 2021, 8; Lehr and Dyck 2020, 50).

In practice, former refugees frequently take the lead in initiating sponsorship and approaching family members or friends to serve as sponsors. Once the sponsorship group is formed, they assume formal responsibilities such as financial obligations and security checks. Former refugees who become sponsors often play a proactive role in securing housing, facilitating employment, and assisting family members in their initial settlement, with the formal sponsorship group serving as a support system (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 50). As such, the Canadian PSR program enables former refugees to act as brokers in developing social connections and building social capital within the larger community, contributing to the establishment of a welcoming environment (Hyndman et al. 2021, 9).

B. Fostering a Constituency of Concerned Citizens

i. Positive Sponsor Experiences

Although sponsoring refugees can be a complex and challenging task, experiences of sponsors have been shown to be overwhelmingly positive. Findings from a survey on refugee sponsorship experiences (Macklin et al. 2020, 180) indicated that the majority of respondents (86 per cent) rated their experience highly, with scores of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale (where 1 represented a very bad experience and 5 a very good one). Out of the survey participants, a significant portion (64 per cent) also expressed their willingness to engage in private sponsorship again, either as part of a sponsorship group (45 per cent) or in a more informal capacity (19 per cent), with 88 per cent of all respondents indicating that they would recommend private sponsorship to others (Macklin et al. 2020, 180). These positive experiences can be fertile ground for further engagement in refugee advocacy, and a potent means of combatting negative perceptions of newcomers in Canada.

ii. A Role for Philanthropy

Refugee resettlement in Canada has proven to be a suitable outlet for philanthropic activity. Especially in the context of pilot refugee sponsorship programs, governments often hesitate to make substantial investments until they have evidence of the model's potential for success. In such instances, private funding can play a crucial role in covering initial expenses until public support can be obtained (Fratzke et al. 2019, 1). This was notably the case during the operation of the "BVOR Funds" in 2018–19, which raised more than $7 million to support and encourage the sponsorship of 2,000 additional refugees to Canada via the BVOR program (Phillimore and Dorling 2020, 3). With the help of private funding, sponsorship programs can develop and expand the infrastructure they require to run a successful operation, thereby facilitating refugee access to life-saving resettlement spots (Fratzke et al. 2019, 2)

iii. Mobilisation of the Legal Community

One notable effect of the PSR program in Canada has been its ability to mobilise legal communities in support of refugees and sponsors. In fact, the Refugee Sponsorship Support Program (RSSP), a non-governmental "legal assistance service" for refugee sponsorship, was established in response to the lack of available legal assistance for sponsors (Canada 2022a). The RSSP operates through various programs, including a capacity-building program that provides training and expert assistance to lawyers and law students supporting sponsorship applications, a matching program that connects sponsor groups with pro bono lawyers and law students for direct support, and a public information program that offers guidance on the refugee sponsorship process (Lange 2020, 215–16). As it stands, the RSSP has trained over 1,400 lawyers and law students across eleven centers in Canada (in collaboration with the RSTP) and has supported nearly 3,000 refugees (Lange 2020, 215–16). They continue to provide personalized support to sponsors and refugees in preparing private sponsorship applications and judicial review if necessary (Thériault 2020).

iv. Changing the Narrative on Migration

One considerable advantage of the PSR program lies in its engagement of residents and communities in the process of welcoming refugees (McNally 2020; Refugee Council of Australia 2017, 3). This engagement has been significant: for Syrian refugees alone, a recent survey has indicated that over two million Canadians have personally participated in sponsorship (Canada 2020b). Although the political effects of this mass participation are difficult to precisely delineate, Bradley and Duin (2020, 79) have argued that if private sponsorship models can generate public support and commitment to refugees, they have the potential to create a strong foundation for progressive policies towards refugees at the local, national, and international levels. As it stands, recent studies have shown how the visceral experience of the refugee regime has had a profound impact on sponsors, leading them to question the strictness of Canada's immigration admissions policies and recognise the enduring links between "abstract homelands" and Canada (Elcioglu 2023, 109). European countries, which have recently faced the challenge of integrating significant numbers of undocumented migrants, have also recognised the potential positive association between refugee sponsorship and public consensus on refugees (Lehr and Dyck 2020, 51). Overall, it seems that the close relationships fostered between refugees and sponsors can serve as a vital ingredient for community cohesion and be the catalyst for the creation of a constituency of concerned citizens.

As people become directly involved in the personal lives and experiences of refugees, assistance and support often give way to friendship and solidarity (Labman 2016, 72). In turn, the sense of kinship developed between sponsors, refugees, and their communities can help reshape national narratives on migration. Residents have the opportunity through sponsorship to see refugees as individuals with aspirations, agency, status, and rights—as human beings to whom they can relate. State portrayals of migrants as perpetual security threats or helpless victims begin to ring hollow when refugees themselves are integrated as active components of community life (Mainwaring 2016, 302). At its best, sponsorship is an opportunity to individualise refugees and

delegitimise the stigmatising narratives that strip them of their agency and humanity. This is human solidarity in action.

CONCLUSION

Canada's private sponsorship program is not a panacea for all that ills domestic and international efforts at refugee protection. However, it has proven to be a remarkably innovative and effective tool for enabling the economic and social integration of refugees—and through the practice of "naming" refugees, a tool whereby they exercise agency and reunite their families. In a global context where the overwhelming majority of refugees in need of resettlement remain without a durable solution, Canada's approach may offer valuable insights for other countries in how to best plan out their resettlement efforts.

In hopes of eliciting some of these insights, this report provided a general overview of the Canadian approach. In doing so, it offered a detailed account of how the program functions, the outcomes it produces for those involved, and the issues have that have arisen from these outcomes. To ensure a fair and nuanced characterisation of the program, this report also sought out critical perspectives on private refugee sponsorship—analysing its promises, pitfalls, and residual ambiguities. Overall, this report was structured with the aim of enabling stakeholders to engage in clear and informed discussions about private sponsorship in the context of global refugee protection.

As Canada's approach evolves to meet global and domestic needs for resettlement and integration, it is imperative that governments, refugees, and civil society engage in ongoing evaluation, adaptation, and collaboration to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of their resettlement schemes. Ultimately, the goal should be to forge a collective response that upholds the rights and dignity of refugees everywhere they may travel, and in any community where they may   reside.

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