Letter to CBC Radio Information Morning
Sent November 19, 2026

Hi there,

Thank you for yesterday's story on the BVOR program and especially for this morning's interview with the family who came from Syria through it 11 years ago. Hearing how far they have come, and how grateful they still are, was a good reminder of what this program is about.

I don't think most Canadians realize how significant our refugee resettlement record is, or what a trailblazer Canada has been. We should be so proud.

Private refugee sponsorship in Canada started in 1979, when ordinary Canadians stepped up to help resettle about 60,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees in under two years. In 1986 the UN awarded the Nansen Refugee Award to "the People of Canada." It is the only time that award has gone to an entire nation.

Since then, Canadians have privately sponsored more than 300,000 refugees. Other countries come to us to learn how to build their own sponsorship programs.

The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program started around 2013 to target people who have urgent protection needs and low-to-moderate medical and settlement needs that local volunteer sponsor groups can effectively support. These include highly vulnerable refugees identified by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), such as families with young children, women and girls at risk, LGBTQI+ individuals, and survivors of violence or torture. The government and private sponsors share the cost and the support.

Through BVOR, refugees arrive with a community already waiting for them: people who help with housing, school, language and jobs. Privately sponsored refugees tend to find work sooner, and families like the one you spoke with show what that looks like over a decade.

Canada does integration of refugees and immigrants extremely well. Losing the BVOR means losing one of the tools that helps make that happen.

Thank you again for covering it!

Elizabeth

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