

## 2023-2 Equity of Services for all Newcomers to Canada

**Moved:** Abdikheir Ahmed – Aurora Family Therapy Centre

**Seconded:** Codi Guenther – New Journey Housing

**WHEREAS** the Settlement Sector, migrant rights activists, student unions, ethnocultural associations and other concerned groups in Manitoba have, for many years, been calling on the Federal and Provincial governments to recognize the importance of newcomers with temporary status, to Canadian society and economy, and to provide equal services and treatment to all newcomers to Canada, regardless of immigration status or nationality.

**WHEREAS** newcomers with temporary status continue to be ineligible for many of the services available to immigrants and refugees, they experience discrimination and exploitation in labour and housing markets, and health coverage, and are afforded few opportunities to transition to permanent residency.

**WHEREAS** assigning eligibility for various benefits based on immigration status makes navigating the benefit systems very challenging for both the newcomers themselves and their support persons. This confusion also leads to newcomers falling between the cracks and many will not access certain benefits because they were not aware of them.

**WHEREAS** those making refugee claims in Canada, who were forcefully displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations have often undergone multiple traumatic experiences and faced numerous administrative barriers including a lengthy refugee sponsorship process, and access to resettle to a third country.

**WHEREAS** historically, the Canadian government has refused to issue temporary visas to people who are forcefully displaced.

**WHEREAS** Ukrainians coming to Canada under the Canada Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program (a form of temporary immigration status), are receiving comprehensive supports from the Federal Government and the Government of Manitoba, not provided to other newcomers with temporary status (ie. international students, migrant workers, visitors, refugee claimants), and even some supports that are not provided to any other group of newcomers to Canada.

**WHEREAS** this level of flexibility and innovation in supporting newcomers is unprecedented and greatly welcomed by newcomer serving organizations across Manitoba.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that MANSO supports the equal treatment of all residents of Canada, regardless of immigration status or nationality. Immigration status and nationality should not be indicators of one's eligibility for programs or services, or determinants of quality of life or individual opportunities for success. MANSO urges the Canadian government to issue temporary visas and open work permits for those who have been waiting for their sponsorship application for more than two years to ensure they have access to safety and protection in a timely manner.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that MANSO, alongside the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), of which it is a member, urges the Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba to develop a framework for responding to other similar crises, using the response created for displaced Ukrainians as a precedent. The rapid response framework should be based on objective criteria driven by the need for the protection of displaced peoples, rather than wide media coverage or organized political pressure.

We recommend that the framework for emergency responses, based on objective criteria:

- o Be transparent

- o Respect equity in responses

- o Avoid negative impacts on other refugees (through respecting the principle of additionality – both of numbers and of resources)

- o Provide resettlement primarily through the Government Assisted Refugee Program (because private

sponsors should not bear the main responsibility for emergency responses, and it is important to avoid an impact on other privately sponsored refugees)

To ensure equity in access and to dismantle current perceptions that some lives are more valuable or worthy of protection than others, it will be important to make certain that these measures are made accessible to all without discrimination. Moreover, these measures need to account for the particular vulnerabilities of people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ and gender diverse persons, women, elders, youth and others who face challenges and barriers when attempting to cross borders and who are usually disproportionately affected by these crises.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that MANSO join OCASI in championing the Ontario funding model for refugee and immigrant services as the one to be adopted by the federal government: services based on need and not on immigration status as this is the humanitarian approach that ensures equity in the system.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that MANSO find appropriate ways to present this position for conversation with the sector and wider community for advocacy with all levels of government, and communication with the media.

## **References**

OCASI (March 2023) ED Statement

CCR (March 2022) Equity letter to IRCC

AUUC (October 2022) Equal Opportunity for all Newcomers to Canada Resolution – 48<sup>th</sup> AUUC National Convention

CCR (March 2023) Refugee Claimant Statement