



18 March 2022

The Honourable Sean Fraser, PC, MP  
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
365 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1L1

**Re: Canadian immigration measures in response to the invasion of Ukraine**

Dear Minister,

The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) welcomes the immigration measures recently adopted by the Canadian government to respond to people fleeing the crisis in Ukraine following the Russian invasion. This is an important precedent marking a roadmap on how Canada is to respond to urgent crisis situations.

The measures adopted stand out in that they demonstrate a new openness to offering temporary visas to people fleeing an emergency, and we are hopeful that these measures will be extended to many other peoples that are in similar situations in other geographical areas.

Historically, the Canadian government has refused to issue temporary visas to people affected by a crisis when the temporary stay of an individual may turn permanent. We support the government's new approach, which allows Canada to offer refuge much more quickly and to many more people, than through the permanent residence process.

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, trans and gender diverse persons, women, elders, and others who faced challenges and barriers when attempting to cross borders and who are usually disproportionately targeted by these crises.

We are also glad to see that the government is planning measures for extended family members – we have often highlighted the need to have more flexibility than currently offered in the Family Class to allow Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor family members who are forcibly displaced.

The positive measures introduced in response to the displacement from Ukraine must also apply to other similar situations. A fundamental principle of refugee protection is that it must be offered irrespective of race, religion, or ethnic background. Canadians want to know that their government is responding equitably to all emergencies. This is particularly true for Canadians with origins in parts of the world that too often seem to be neglected.

We urge the government to develop a framework for responding to other similar crises, using this response 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:

- Be transparent
- Respect equity in responses
- Avoid negative impacts on other refugees (through respecting the principle of additionality – both of numbers and of resources)
- 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)

With respect to the current special Ukraine measures, we urge that they be made available to all persons fleeing the country, and not just Ukrainian citizens. We are deeply concerned about displaced people who had found temporary refuge in Ukraine, only to be forced to flee a second time following the invasion of Ukraine. Some have resettlement applications to Canada in process. Temporary visas should be made available to them as well as to Ukrainian citizens.

We also urge that the Canadian government ensure that all refugees, no matter their nationality, have access to resettlement. We are aware that some Russians who had fled their country are now struggling as a result of the sanctions against Russia: some have had their bank accounts frozen. Some of them have pending refugee applications for resettlement in Canada due to political and/or SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics) persecution. No one should be penalized because of the actions of a government that they are fleeing.

As Canada aspires to be recognized as a leading country for refugee protection, it is crucial that we adopt an equitable framework for responding to crises, based on humanitarian principles. The forgotten crises must not continue to be forgotten by Canada.

Yours sincerely,



Aleks Dughman-Manzur  
President