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CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSLETTER ON REFUGEES

# REFUGE

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

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"Refuge" is a term meaning a shelter or protection from danger, a place of safety. Among the Israelites, there were cities of refuge. Merchant mariners over the centuries sought harbours of refuge where their vessels found safety in stormy weather. So it is not surprising that Webster's Dictionary defines a refugee as, "one who flees to a shelter or place of safety". The French who left France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in the 17th century and settled in Flanders and America were called refugees because, in the midst of political and religious persecution, they found safety in a foreign power.

But this is not contemporary usage. A refugee is one who because of fear flees the traditional country in which he lives and does *not* have a home. Whether the reasons for leaving include war, natural disaster or persecution, the contemporary connotation of the term in English refers to someone who is without a refuge, without a place of safety, without a home.

The development of this connotation in the word "refugee" is a frightening reflection of the enormity of the global refugee problem today. For over 13 million people from diverse cultures in a troubled world, refuge is not easily found.

Canada, however, is a country of refuge. In the past 5 years it has led the world in per capita acceptance of refugees for resettlement. That involvement has brought the experience of the refugee vividly before us and has proved our commitment to work toward the provision of refuge.

But since resettlement in Canada is an

appropriate solution only for a small number of refugees, our efforts to provide refuge must include a wider range of activities; for example, supplying emergency food, water and medicine to refugees abroad, or perhaps making temporary asylum in Canada more accessible.

In addition, we face pressing problems in trying to make the refuge we have provided here not simply a place of safety but a new home, where one can speak the language of his community, hold a job commensurate with his talents and training, and enjoy the freedom to hope for the future.

Canada has proved itself willing and able to address these issues. *REFUGE* is intended to help this process by providing information on refugee developments around the world, on Canadian policy, and most important, on the local efforts that can become models to the rest of us in our work.

This sharing of information can only be accomplished if you who work with refugees are forthcoming with your own experiences, knowledge, opinions, and discoveries in the form of articles, letters, announcements and suggestions.

*REFUGE* itself will endeavour to maintain the non-partisan stance so essential to encouraging cooperation. It will publish a variety of points of view. It will have a diverse funding base, including the financial support of its readership. Most important, it has a diverse Editorial Board committed to helping refugees.

I hope that *REFUGE* will be stimulating and helpful. I know it will be if it has the active participation of all Canadians concerned for refugees.

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**REFUGE** is dedicated to encouraging Canadian citizen participation in helping refugees, by providing a forum for sharing information and opinion on domestic and international issues pertaining to refugees.

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