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# The Minister Writes

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Dear Mr. Adelman:

In recent weeks there have been a number of inaccurate reports concerning government services available to Indochinese and other refugees. The nature and extent of the misinformation currently circulating on this subject have compelled me to address the issue personally. While we all recognize that it is extremely difficult to correct any media misinterpretation of the facts, I am concerned that the media coverage may distort the public understanding of the work of many refugee organizations; such coverage fails to reflect the broad range of joint government/voluntary sector projects and programs which are either proposed or underway to assist refugees in Canada. I also wanted to ensure that you had received information about some recent initiatives in the refugee resettlement field.

You are familiar with the broad range of current settlement programs, such as ISAP (Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program) and AAP (Adjustment Assistance Program). Transportation loans are also available to refugees, and a group of special programs, organized in cooperation with the provinces, assist in the resettlement of those with special needs, such as tubercular and handicapped refugees.

As you may be aware, we are currently reviewing all settlement and integration programs in association with the Secretary of State and the Minister of State (Multiculturalism). Although this review is still ongoing, a major policy issue emerging is the need for extensive consistent and accessible language training across Canada for all adult immigrants, including refugees. While the conclusion of the EIC/SOS review is not anticipated for another few months, I felt I should begin to address the issue immediately.

I recently announced a policy change to ensure that refugees sponsored by relatives and those sponsored by private groups have equal access to language training allowances. This provision should assist a considerable number of refugees and ease the financial burden on sponsoring groups who previously carried all the costs themselves. Without the

restrictive financial strain, I hope that sponsors will encourage the newcomers in their care to sign up for full-time language training courses.

Language training is only one aspect of the resettlement process, and there are many other initiatives being considered, both through the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and as a result of the joint review. I am very aware of the urgent need to provide more adequate employment services for immigrants, particularly refugees. I hope to study this, and immigrant language training needs during the coming months, and I welcome your guidance and expertise. However, I did feel that there were short-term measures which could be undertaken now. I recently invited all private groups involved with refugees to consider how we might use the CEIC employment development program known as NEED (New Employment Expansion and Development). I hope to launch additional community-based language training components through this funding mechanism. I also plan to make use of PED (Program for the Employment Disadvantaged) to ensure that employers can more easily receive direct wage subsidies to employ refugees.

In the area of guidance and job placement, I am also considering the establishment of separate immigration/employment counselling units in Canada Employment Centres. Alternatively, such units could be operated through the Outreach Program or through ISAP. Again, this will require further study and I welcome your views.

As you know, the refugee plan for 1983 will allow for the resettlement of up to 12,000 refugees assisted through the government funding. An additional unlimited number may be sponsored by the private sector. Although we were somewhat discouraged about the future of private sponsorship at the beginning of 1981, it now appears that private sponsorship continues to make a significant contribution to Canada's ongoing refugee resettlement program. In 1982, I anticipate that over 4,500 people will have been assisted by relatives and private groups. I expect that the long-term aspects of sponsorship will be the

topic of further discussions with you over the winter months, and I again invite your thoughts on this very crucial aspect of our refugee work.

I hope this letter has responded to some of your concerns and corrected any misinformation circulated by news reports. There is enormous potential in the field of refugee resettlement for new ideas. To put these ideas into effect, I look forward to continuing guidance and advice from non-governmental organizations who clearly understand the difficulties refugees face in adjusting to life in Canada.

Yours sincerely,  
*Lloyd Axworthy*

Dear Mr. Adelman:

I am writing in response to your letter of October 16 in which you describe a sponsorship model which would allow us to maintain our refugee intake in a time of economic restraint.

As you know, the refugee levels for 1983 have now been announced and, although there has been a decrease from 14,000 to 12,000, private sponsorship is increasing slightly and we are committed to other humanitarian programs for Poles, Lebanese, and El Salvadorans, as well as family reunification programs such as that for Vietnamese. All in all, therefore, we will maintain a significant level of refugee resettlement.

More fundamental changes such as the one you have proposed require changes in financial authorities and the way in which applicants are identified and selected abroad. I would like to approach this kind of change more systematically, following a full airing of the various permutations and combinations of government and private sector inputs, which can be achieved through conferences or other fora. I hope this process can be launched early in the new year.

Thank you for your draft proposal. I am confident we will have an opportunity to discuss it in the near future.

Your sincerely,  
*Lloyd Axworthy*