

# The Refugee and Immigration Project Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto

## Project Charter

Approved by Senior Pastor May 3, 2011

The Refugee and Immigration Project is authorized by the Senior Pastor in accordance with and subject to the established policies of the Board of Directors and it will be implemented within the terms of this charter.

### Introduction and Background

Over the past five years MCC Toronto volunteers have been supporting GLBT refugees in two ways. We support inland GLBT refugees (those claiming refugee status once having landed in Canada) by hosting monthly GLBT peer support group meetings where the refugees support each other offering help through the Canadian refugee process. This volunteer led team has seen hundreds of refugees pass through these meetings since 2005. We estimate that about 80- 90% have had a successful hearing and been accepted into Canada.

The second way MCC Toronto has supported GLBT refugees is amassing teams of volunteers to offer on-the-ground logistical/settlement support to refugees we have sponsored. We have sponsored two such refugees who were brought to our attention through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) or the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The government of Canada provided financial support for both of these refugees while under our care and the time range of financial support can range from 12 to 24 months and is at the Government of Canada's discretion. Volunteers from MCCT helped these refugees integrate into the Toronto GLBT community.

Based upon meeting with Canada's Minister of Immigration it has become clear that the GLBT community is being requested to increase sponsoring more GLBT refugees to Canada. This could be through government assistance, direct sponsorship including financial resources or establishing groups of five individuals who would be financially responsible for assisting a refugee for a period of one year after arrival in Canada.

### Project Purpose and Outcomes

The Refugee and Immigration Project provides a bridge to hope, safety, freedom and wholeness for GLBT refugees who fear or have experienced persecution, torture or risk of their lives in their home countries or the countries where they normally live. This is accomplished through sponsorship of refugees to become settled as permanent residents of Canada, as well as the social, emotional, spiritual and legal support to build new foundations for their lives.

The expected outcomes of this project over three years include sponsorship of at least two refugees per year; facilitating a GLBT Refugee Peer Support Group that meets monthly and provides assistance in preparing for an immigration hearing; providing individual support to individual refugees and immigrants who do not or cannot attend the peer support group; facilitating small group spiritual support for GLBT refugees and immigrants relevant to their respective faith traditions; and, engaging in advocacy for justice in refugee and immigration policy.

### Project Scope

The following program initiatives will be implemented to achieve the outcomes expected for the Refugee and Immigration Project:

1. GLBT Peer Support Group

- Facilitate a monthly meeting where refugees share their concerns and experiences and help the newer refugees navigate the immigration, social services, legal and financial matters of living in Canada.
  - Assess the needs of individual refugees in the peer support program and explore additional resources for support and connect refugees to those sources.
  - Provide one-on-one support to refugees to prepare for their immigration hearing, including writing a letter of support.
2. Refugee and Immigrant Individual Support
    - Provide individual one-on-one support to inland refugees and immigrants who do not or cannot attend the refugee peer support group.
    - This support may include assistance in locating housing, social assistance, legal aid or other services.
  3. GLBT Refugee Sponsorship Support
    - Provide sponsorship support for settlement of refugees once they arrive in Canada.
    - Sponsorship support includes financial support to a refugee for a period of the first transition year in Canada. This amounts to approximately \$15,000 per refugee for food, lodging and associated costs.
    - Provide, in addition to financial support of an individual refugee, emotional, social and spiritual support.
    - Collaborate with other organizations in identifying individuals outside Canada as refugees needing sponsorship and assist in providing financial assistance and/or support to permit a smooth transition from their location to Canada.
    - Explore Sponsorship Agreement Holder status for MCC Toronto with Citizen and Immigration Canada
  4. Refugee and Immigrant Spiritual Support
    - Develop a curriculum to offer affirming information and spiritual support for GLBT refugees and immigrants in a supportive small group setting.
    - Identify and recruit qualified facilitators of respective faith traditions to lead spiritual support groups.
    - Provide this multi-faith program for specific faith traditions on a periodic basis.
  5. Advocacy for Justice in Refugee and Immigration Policy
    - Collaborate with other organizations engaged in conversations on just and effective public policies related to refugees and immigration.
    - Coordinate with other organizations and Canadian national, provincial and local governments to assure that MCC Toronto's voice will be heard in advocacy for justice regarding refugee and immigration issues.
    - Communicate and cooperate with other denominations and faith communities working on matters related to refugees and immigration

### **Project Roles and Responsibilities**

The Refugee and Immigration Project will be managed by a Coordinator of Refugee Programs. This individual will serve on a part-time (four days per week; eighty percent of full-time) status. The Coordinator of Refugee Programs will report to the Executive Pastor. The Coordinator of Refugee Programs will be responsible for the essential functions of the job description for this position and will facilitate and/or supervise the following teams and groups:

1. Project Planning Team
  - Contribute to the strategic direction of the project by evaluation of results, review of developments and trends related to refugees and immigration, and consideration possibilities for future program initiatives.

- Serve in an advisory and supportive role to the Coordinator of Refugee Programs to explore needs and recommend future development of the Refugee and Immigration Project
2. Peer Group Support Team
    - Plans and hosts the monthly peer support group meetings.
    - Participates in one-on-one support activities of individual refugees
  3. Sponsorship Coordinating Team
    - Recruit, train, support and manage individuals and groups who provide refugee support services.
    - Collaborate with the Coordinator of Refugee Programs to establish relationships and interact with provincial, national and international government and non-governmental agencies to adequately support sponsored refugees.
  4. Spiritual Support Team
    - Identify sources and resources for curriculum development of GLBT affirming information and spiritual development approaches for specific faith traditions.
    - Identify and recruit individuals within specific faith traditions who can facilitate GLBT affirming spiritual support groups.
    - Facilitate the implementation of small GLBT affirming spiritual support groups for refugees and immigrants.
  5. Refugee Sponsorship Groups (within and outside the congregation)
    - Invite individuals to participate in groups of five to sponsor a GLBT refugee for a period of one year after arrival in Canada.
    - Provide training for individuals who will participate in group sponsorship of a refugee.

### **Project Funding Resources**

The funding for the Refugee and Immigration Project will come from the following sources:

1. Foundational support for this project over three years has been designated to this purpose by the generous Margaret and Wallace McCain donation. This will fund the staffing and infrastructure needs of this project.
2. The monthly contributions at MCC Toronto to the Refugee Sponsorship Fund will support individual sponsorships.
3. Groups of five individuals will be invited to sponsor a refugee for a year for a combined total of \$15,000.
4. Additional fund-raising initiatives will be developed by the Coordinator of Refugee Programs in collaboration with staff and volunteers at MCC Toronto and supporters of this project in the larger community.
5. Additional funding will be sought to continue funding of staffing and infrastructure needs beyond the third year.

### **Cooperative Partnerships**

The Refugee and Immigration Project will work in cooperation and collaboration with other organizations and agencies to achieve its purpose and outcomes. Specific cooperative partnerships include but are not limited to:

- Rainbow Railroad
- Canadian Council for Refugees
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere
- Amnesty International
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- COSTI Immigrant Services
- Anglican United Refugee Alliance

- YMCA Newcomer Information Centre
- MCC Global Justice Ministry Center
- The 519 Church Street Community Centre
- Sherbourne Health Centre
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and Settlement.org
- Refugee Sponsorship Training Program
- Fred Victor Employment Services
- Woodgreen Community Services
- Rainbow Refuge Action Network (Vancouver)
- Queer Nation
- LGBT Youth Line
- No One is Illegal (Vancouver/Toronto)
- Refugee Lawyers' Association of Ontario
- SOY (Supporting our Youth) – Express
- Culture Link
- Sojourn House
- Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees
- QAY – Queer Asian Youth
- Lesbian and Gay Immigrant Task Force
- Romero House
- Matthew House
- Christie Refugee Welcome Centre
- FCJ Refugee Centre
- The Furniture Bank