

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Resettled refugees and asylum seekers receive financial support from federal and provincial governments, however they face costs and barriers unique to their circumstances.

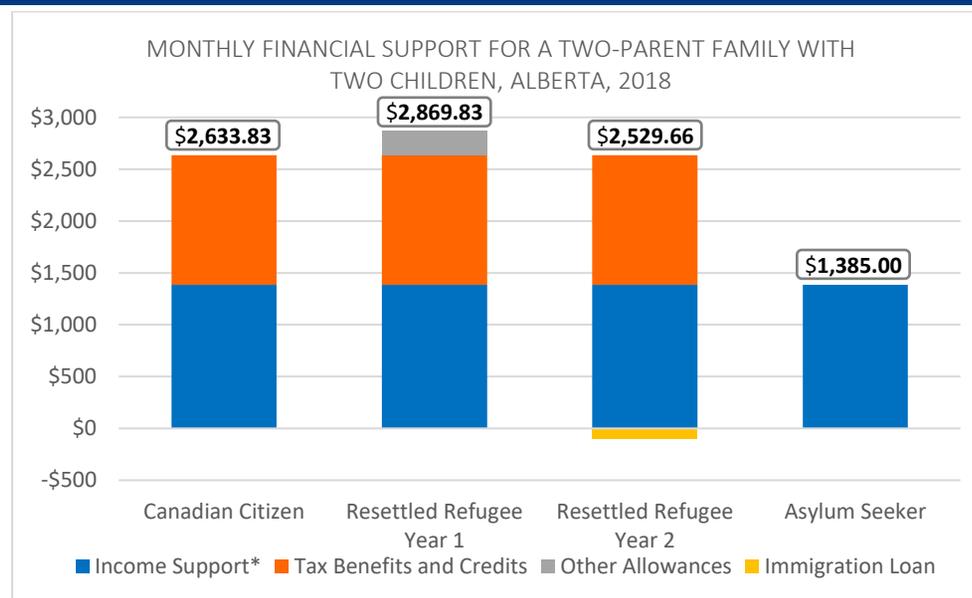
The figure shows the financial support provided to a two-parent family with two children in Alberta, based upon their status either as a citizen, resettled refugee, or an asylum seeker. Resettled refugees are those relocated to Canada from abroad after being selected by the federal government or a private sponsor. Asylum seekers are individuals or families seeking refugee status in Canada, without prior selection, and whose claim must be adjudicated from within Canada.

Canadians with low incomes receive social assistance from their province of residence, along with some additional financial support from the federal government through a combination of tax credits and benefits. A two-parent family with two children living in Alberta would have received \$2,641.25/month in 2018. Resettled refugees receive this same amount from either the federal government or their private sponsor. During their first year in Canada, this family of resettled refugees would have also received an extra \$236.00/month to cover transit passes and phone bills.

The additional funding provided to resettled refugees ends after their first year in Canada. After that, they must begin repaying the federal loan that allowed them to move to Canada. Having a missing or murdered family member may result in them being audited and their benefits paused by the Canada Revenue Agency.

Resettled refugees cease to receive these extra allowances after their first year in Canada. They must also begin repaying a loan to the federal government. This loan covers their plane tickets to Canada and any documentation and medical exams necessary to bring them here. The size of these loans depends on the composition and circumstances of the family. Repayment ranges from \$33 - \$104.17/month, during a 36-96 month period.

Asylum Seekers may also receive income support, but they are not eligible for tax benefits, credits, or rebates, such as the Canada Child Benefit. A two-parent, four



\* Income support is provided by the federal government or private sponsors during a resettled refugee's first year in Canada. The amount provided is equal to that administered by the province in which they first landed in Canada. Source: Resettlement Assistance Program Rates – Calgary, 2018; Financial Benefits Summary, Alberta Works, 2018

person family of asylum seekers living in Alberta would have received only \$1,385.00/month in 2018, an amount barely sufficient to pay rent on a 2-bedroom apartment in Calgary or Edmonton.

Resettled refugees and asylum seekers also experience unique financial barriers not faced by most Canadian citizens. Refugee families may be split by conflict or war, and some do not know the whereabouts of their family members. This may lead the Canada Revenue Agency to pause their benefits while they audit the family and investigate the status of their missing or murdered family members. Income earned by a family member living in a refugee camp overseas may also disqualify their family members in Canada from receiving income support.

Immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers do not receive more financial support than Canadian citizens. While resettled refugees receive extra allowances during their first year in Canada, they must begin repaying a federal loan in their second year. Their eligibility for tax benefits is further complicated by a tax system which does not account for circumstances unique to refugees. Rectifying this may require changes to both tax and welfare policy.