



Nova Scotia

United Nations representative to visit Halifax to pitch more refugee sponsorship



Jean-Nicolas Beuze will also visit Fredericton on April 25

[Shaina Luck](#) · CBC News · Posted: Apr 20, 2018 5:45 AM AT | Last Updated: April 20, 2018





A Rohingya refugee man with a child walks through a Bangladesh refugee camp. Jean-Nicolas Beuze says there are roughly 25 million refugees in the world presently. (Mohammad Ponir Hossain/Reuters)

The United Nations refugee agency is getting ready to make a visit to Atlantic Canada to pitch the idea of increasing sponsorship of refugees in this region.

"We tend to think a lot in terms of big urban centres: Montreal, Vancouver, Toronto, to some extent Ottawa," said Jean-Nicolas Beuze, the representative of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Canada in a telephone interview.

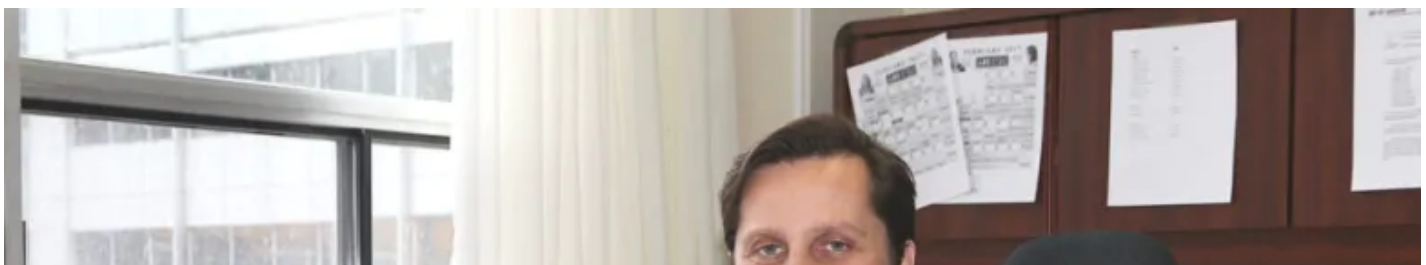
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"But I really believe that a lot of the solutions are actually in those provinces like Nova Scotia, where again there is ample space, willingness to receive people, and also from an economic point of view there may be easier ways for refugees to integrate."

'Dreaming of living in a province like Nova Scotia'

Beuze will be visiting Halifax on Monday to meet sponsors, potential sponsors and refugee settlement agencies. He will also observe the Atlantic Immigration Pilot, a federal-provincial program that allows employers to hire people who are not Canadian citizens, if they cannot fill jobs locally.

Beuze's goal is to match more international refugees with this area, in particular using the Blended Visa Office-Referred program. It allows private sponsorship groups to support a family for six months, which will be matched by the government for a further six months.





Jean-Nicolas Beuze became the UNHCR Canada representative in January 2017. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

"Those refugee families are dreaming of living in a province like Nova Scotia," he said. "We have a lot of our refugees who are farmers, fishermen, who are not interested in moving to big urban centres, for example. Who are much more comfortable being in smaller communities, in rural parts of the country. And Nova Scotia really offers this unique opportunity to allow them to come and integrate very easily."

Beuze said rural communities are able to pull together to help refugee families.

"The communities in Nova Scotia, in particular perhaps in more rural places, are very closely associated and are strong communities who will dedicate a lot of time and support."

Laura Hambleton works with the national organization Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, which is hosting the UNHCR's visit. Her group helps people privately sponsor refugees. She is organizing a talk by Beuze on Monday evening at the Halifax Central Library and says 115 people have already responded that they will attend.

Popular talk

"It certainly has been really popular. There are people coming from universities, from student societies, from faculties, from settlement organizations," she said, noting that attendees are

coming from all over Nova Scotia from Cape Breton to the South Shore, and as far away as P.E.I. and New Brunswick.

Hambleton said many of the refugees she's seen under private sponsorship programs have skills such as agriculture or have owned their own businesses.

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"Those are people that are really, really needed in the Atlantic provinces," she said. "There's also a lot of economic reasons as well."

The UNHCR will also visit Fredericton on April 25.

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