

## **Be More Flexible - Ottawa Urged, Immigrant Reps Offer Plan**

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Chaos and carnage now holding sway in the Port-au-Prince region requires a much more flexible and humanitarian approach to encourage as many Haitian-family reunifications in Canada as possible, Janet Dench, executive director of the Canadian Council for Refugees, said yesterday.

Dench unveiled an emergency six-point action plan designed to make complex bureaucratic barriers more flexible for thousands of starving Haitians desperate to take refuge with loved ones already established in Canada. It was developed by a broad coalition of more than 135 groups that work with refugees and immigrants.

Ottawa's response – thus far, anyway – for accelerated admissions from Haiti falls far short of humanitarian measures adopted for Vietnamese boat people, tsunami victims from 2004, Kosovars and Ugandans, added groups including the Maison d'Haiti of Montreal and the Conseil nationale des citoyens et citoyennes d'origine haïtienne.

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney had said Monday that "it won't take days and it won't take years" to "expedite" requests from Haitians displaced by the catastrophe.

"What the minister said, we cannot accept," Keder Hyppolite of the Service d'aide aux néo-québécois et immigrants, declared at a jam-packed news conference. "None of what we are asking is anything that hasn't been done before" by Canada, added Rivka Augenfeld, of the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiés et immigrantes.

The category of family members eligible for sponsorship, the coalition said, should be broadened to include "brother, sister, uncle, aunt, and niece or nephew, adult and non-orphaned" and, on a case-by-case basis, include "any other family members seriously and personally affected by this disaster."

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