

Government Proposes Opening Up North Caucasus for Returning Russians

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A residential district in Stavropol, one of the most stable regions in the North Caucasus. **ix**

The government has suggested offering subsidies to Russian émigrés who want to return to their homeland and settle in the North Caucasus region, in an extension of a program designed to draw Russian natives to under-populated or troubled areas.

Under the program, in effect since early 2007, the government pays a 240,000 ruble (\$7,300) resettlement fee to Russians returning from abroad to live in what the government has designated as "priority regions," namely, the Far East and the Siberian Zabaikalsky region. Another 120,000-ruble payment is offered to each family member, on condition they all stay in their new district for at least two years.

Regional Development Minister Igor Slyunyayev has proposed adding the North Caucasus to the list of "priority regions," Interfax reported Thursday.

"We had developed a concept of priority resettlement for compatriots who want to return from abroad to Russia," Slyunyayev said. "I have given orders to add to the priority settlement territories the regions of the North Caucasus and above all, the Stavropol region."

Unlike some of its neighboring North Caucasus regions, such as Chechnya or Dagestan, the Stavropol region enjoys relative stability and is populated mostly by ethnic Russians.

About 250,000 former Russian natives and former citizens have returned during the seven years the program has been running, he said, adding that another 25 million may also be interested in coming back.

More than 65 percent of those returning are ethnic Russians or other Slavic people, such as Ukrainians, and the majority are moving from other former Soviet republics, officials have said.

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