



# CCI OTTAWA



**2020-21 ANNUAL REPORT**

# OUR MISSION

**Building a more  
welcoming  
community**

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**Helping  
newcomers  
realize  
their full  
potential  
in Canadian  
society**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

- 3 President's Message**
- 4 Executive Director's Message**
- 7 Settlement**
- 9 Integration**
- 10 By the Numbers**
- 13 Building a More  
Welcoming Community**
- 15 Success Stories**
- 16 Laptops for Clients**
- 18 Our Financials**
- 19 How You Can Get Involved**

# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The fiscal year of 2020-2021 was one we will never forget. When we started the year, we were one month into a pandemic we thought might be over by summer. Two years later, we're still waiting to see the end of COVID.

At CCI Ottawa, many of our staff continue to work from home. We will continue to use a variety of online platforms to deliver services. We will continue to take advantage of remote work to expand our services into the communities where newcomers are settling. And we will continue to explore new and existing technologies to help us fulfill our mission.



The transition we made would not have been possible without the dedicated leadership of CCI Ottawa's Executive Director, Carl Nicholson. Thanks to his leadership and vision and the commitment of every member of CCI's staff, we quickly transitioned to an online environment and were able to continue our support of newcomers in our community.

Staff at our two transitional homes, Reception House and Welcome House, continued to provide services seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Although heavy travel restrictions were in place, Canada still accepted refugees who needed our help.

We continued to make home visits with precautions in place and we provided food baskets and grocery cards to the most vulnerable families. We provided laptops to newcomers so that they could connect with us. Every day, we continued to help newcomers learn a language, look for work, help their children in school, deal with emotional trauma, adjust to Canadian culture and make friends in the community. Earlier this fall, we provided school supplies to newcomer children in need.

As Board President, I want to thank my Board colleagues for their insight and dedication during the past year. It was a challenging year for all of us, personally and professionally, but we found a way to come together.

The CCI staff deserve a standing ovation for their dedication and compassion. They, too, were presented with many challenges during the pandemic. They were not immune to the negative impacts of COVID. And yet, day in and day out, they were there to help some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Thank you!

*Luise Czernenko Reid*

# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This past fiscal year was one unlike any during my time at CCI Ottawa. COVID-19 brought on many challenges. Many people experienced pain and they struggled.

When COVID restrictions were first introduced, it had an immediate impact on our clients. Some people lost their jobs. Some who ran businesses struggled to remain open. Others didn't know if they would have enough food to put on the table. Others went to work each day in high-risk jobs — delivery people, house cleaners, taxi drivers, bus drivers, grocery clerks, personal support care workers and other occupations that tend to rely on newcomers.

Young people struggled to adapt to going to school online. Like many of us, our clients suffered from the impact of being isolated and from the great uncertainty surrounding the future.

Due to language barriers and lack of access to technology, newcomers didn't always understand the changing COVID protocols. A study initiated by the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) revealed that newcomers, along with members of racialized and low-income communities, were more likely to contract COVID.

Meanwhile, newcomers still had to deal with the challenges of settling in a community. Finding a job, learning a language, enrolling their children into school, making friends, developing a network and more. COVID made the settlement journey that more challenging.

To help newcomers during this time, we transitioned to a digital delivery service. Whether it was through Zoom, phone or email, we contacted thousands of clients to find out what they needed and to let them know we were still here for them.

We beefed up our website, moved our workshops to Zoom, and created a series of videos in different languages to help newcomers make sense of all that was happening.

For people who lost their jobs, we helped them navigate the myriad of government support programs. For families in need, we provided grocery cards and food baskets. We provided personal protective equipment such as masks, hand sanitizers and gloves to those who were still working.

We also handed out Chromebooks and laptops to help people stay connected online with us and each other.



We worked with Ottawa Public Health to ensure the correct information got out to our clients about social distancing and then vaccines.

We did this while also ensuring our staff stayed healthy. We increased our cleaning efforts, put up signs encouraging social distancing, and provided personal protect equipment to the staff who needed to work in the office.

Although travel restrictions slowed the flow of refugees, Reception House and Welcome House continued to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

But as much as it was a year of struggle and pain, it was also a year of transition and opportunity.

We quickly realized that offering services virtually proved more flexible. Attendance increased for employment workshops and conversation circles. In fact, we were able to offer more conversation circles and expand them to almost every day of the week. Clients didn't have to worry about weather or find transportation to our offices in order to participate. They could join us from the comfort of their living room and at a time that suited them.

Going forward, we'll continue to deliver services in-person and online. Thanks to our investment in technology, our staff is also more mobile. In-person services will include meeting the client where they live or work.

We can't say thank you enough to the community support we received. Our volunteers continued to help newcomers learn English through Zoom conversation circles. Volunteers participated in homework clubs, computer training classes, art and recreation activities.

Our donors' support during this time didn't waver. In fact, they were there for us more than ever. Despite the uncertainty we all faced, our supporters continued to provide financial support to our many programs.

Our staff worked under difficult circumstances and delivered exceptional service. Our Board of Directors continued to provide sound direction.

Thank you to the many volunteers and donors. All of you have given us your time, energy, commitment, encouragement, money and inspiration.

On behalf of everyone at CCI, thank you for the opportunity to work together, to strengthen our community by helping newcomers settle, integrate and thrive.

*Carl Nicholson, Executive Director*



# SETTLEMENT

**Imagine leaving everything behind as you escape war, poverty or violence. You resettle in a new country but you have so many questions. How easy will it be to learn a new language? Where will your children go to school? Will you find a job? And you have to find answers to these questions while navigating the uncertainty of a pandemic.**

## HOUSING

We provide transitional housing for newcomers when they arrive in



Ottawa. Our two homes, Reception House and Welcome House, also provide meals, shared common areas and transportation. During the pandemic, we helped newcomers secure their vaccines and learn how to stay safe..

## LANGUAGE

Being able to speak English makes it easier to understand things like COVID protocols. Our language programs helped newcomers practice their English.

## JOBS

Many newcomers lost their jobs during the pandemic while many others continued to work in high-

risk occupations such as personal support workers, delivery drivers, warehouse workers and more. We helped newcomers navigate those challenges. For those who lost their jobs, we helped them apply for emergency benefits provided by the federal government.



## HEALTH

Many newcomers arrive with health challenges and COVID made it more difficult to navigate the health care system. We helped newcomers secure their vaccines and deal with health issues in a system that was at times overwhelmed because of COVID. Our partnership with The Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre allowed us to help newcomers address their health needs.

## EDUCATION

Online learning was a challenge for all students. But for newcomer youth, challenges also included the lack of appropriate computers or Internet access. We provided Chromebooks and laptops to newcomers youth to ensure they could continue their studies.





There are  
BEAUTIFUL

# INTEGRATION

**Integration is about helping people adjust to daily life in Canada and helping them become part of their new community. It's about helping children and young people make friends and discover their neighbourhood. It's about helping moms and dads with those daily activities we take for granted. It's about ensuring seniors don't become isolated in our city. It's about making everyone feel like they belong.**

## EVERYDAY LIFE

Shopping for groceries, driving on the right side of the road, opening a bank account, finding a school, taking public transit — these are things we take for granted.



But they were challenging during the pandemic. We provided online programs to help newcomers adapt to everyday life in Canada.

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

One of the best ways for newcomers to integrate into their community is to make connections with everyday Canadians. By introducing them to established



members of the community, we help newcomers avoid isolation, make friends, and over time, understand the nuances of Canadian life.

## GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

An ideal way to learn about a new community is to get out and explore it. That was a lot more difficult to do during the pandemic. But when we could, we helped newcomers explore Ottawa through activities that introduced them to the Canadian way of life as well as our culture.



## A STRONG SPIRIT

We believe it's important people have strong spiritual health. We help newcomers meet their spiritual needs by connecting them with the faith community of their choice. Their faith community is also another source of support and an opportunity to make friends with people who share the same values.



# BY THE NUMBERS



**139**

Newcomers who stayed at Reception House received help to find their new home in Ottawa



**5,533**

Refugees and immigrants were provided with services in our Settlement Program

**287**

Youth participated in workshops and activities



**64**

Foreign-trained medical professionals found employment in the health care sector; 15 became volunteers



**813**

Government-Assisted Refugees received support from Client Support Services counsellors



**242**

Number of households that received housing help from Settlement



**39**

CCI helped 11 parishes sponsor 39 refugees from Eritrea, South Sudan and Syria



**240**

Adults and youth received employment services



**975**

Families and single adults received services from Community and Employment Connections team

**41**

Newcomer families were connected to their faith community



**605**

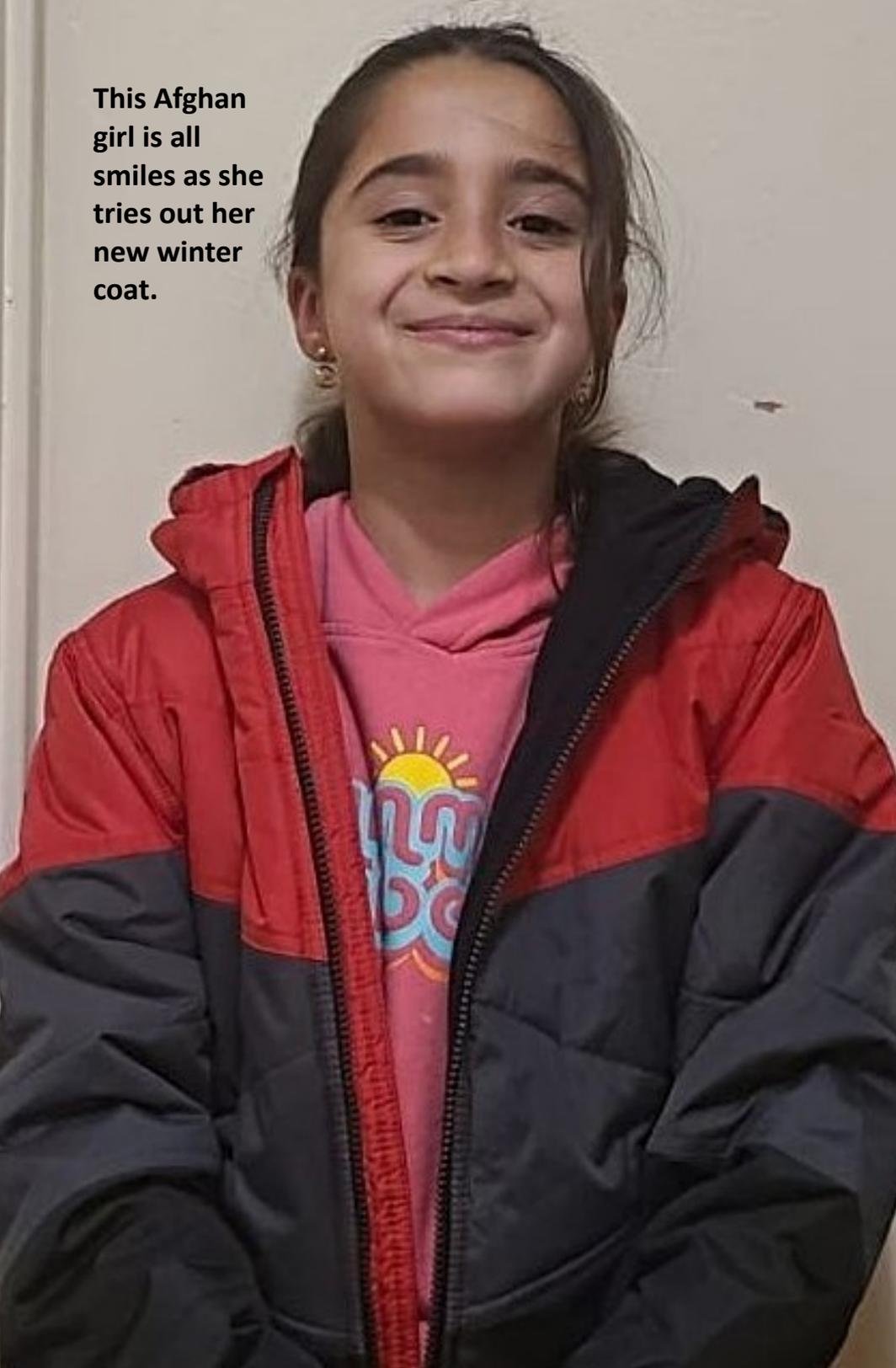
Refugee claimants received assistance from our Settlement Department



**589**

Newcomers received support from our food pantry

**This Afghan girl is all smiles as she tries out her new winter coat.**



# BUILDING A MORE WELCOMING COMMUNITY

**Building a more welcoming community involves everyone — Canadians and newcomers. We believe for newcomers to truly integrate, thrive, and feel at home, it takes the support of the whole community. Here's what we do to help build a more welcoming community.**

## RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

Every day volunteers help us deliver programs and services to newcomers in Ottawa. Volunteers give but also receive. When they work with newcomers, they learn about new cultures, meet new people, expand their horizons and realize they share similar values. Our volunteers didn't let COVID stop them. They continued to work with newcomers virtually.



## PARTNERSHIPS

By working with numerous organizations, together we are able to talk about the value newcomers bring to our communities. We explore ways of helping newcomers integrate into everyday Canadian life. This helps build a more welcoming community.

## RAISING AWARENESS

We regularly engage with the community to share stories about newcomers and discuss immigration issues. We make presentations to schools, service clubs, churches and other organizations to talk about the value newcomers bring to their community and how they can welcome newcomers. This outreach helps us all build a more welcoming community.



Outreach

## SET AN EXAMPLE

Often we are asked, how can I welcome a newcomer? Simple gestures will help build a more welcoming community. Here are a few to try. Introduce yourself to the newcomer families in your neighbourhood. Ask how their children are doing in school. Invite them to a barbecue or out for coffee. Ask them to join you the next time your family participates in a local activity. Be a friend and help them adjust to daily life in Canada. These are simple, yet powerful gestures that will build a more welcoming community for all.



This young newcomer, who is staying at Reception House, was delighted to receive a bike.

# Syrian Success Stories

*It was six years ago when the first of 25,000 Syrian refugees started to arrive in Canada, with a little more than 2,000 arriving in Ottawa during a three-month period. Several hundred Syrians continue to arrive in the capital each year since then. Many have started their own business while many young Syrian newcomers have thrived in school. Here are two examples.*



When Mohamad fled the Syrian civil war, he never imagined ending up in Canada. But he did, along with 25,000 other Syrians. Like many, he was excited but anxious about building a new life here. There are so many uncertainties living in a strange country, having to learn a new language and find a job. Today, Mohamad and his partner operate Mobile Auto Care. They saw a business opportunity to offer seasonal tire changes to drivers. The business is rolling on with dozens of good reviews. Congratulations, Mohamad!

Ghina Salloum is one of 4 daughters of Abdel-Raouf and Amani Salloum. When she arrived in 2015, she started Grade 9 with very little English. But during the next four years, she became an outstanding student leader at Gloucester High School. She grew to take on some of the most challenging courses available, and accepted an offer to study Biomedical Science at the University of Ottawa. During her final year, she was honoured by the school board for her excellent in student leadership. (Ghina is in the centre)





## Helping clients transition to the digital world with free laptops

When COVID shut down our offices, we quickly transitioned to a digital world.

We moved our programs online and communicated with clients by phone, email and Zoom.

But we quickly discovered that many newcomers didn't have access to a home computer.

So we went on a laptop buying spree. During the pandemic, we

have bought or received donations of several hundred Chromebooks, which we have handed out to newcomers.

With these Chromebooks, newcomers can improve their English language skills with Conversation Circles. They can attend our employment workshops to help them look for work. And young newcomers were able to keep up in school.

# Getting back her citizenship

Iman Bahormoz always thought she was Canadian.

That changed when she applied for citizenship for her son. It was 2018 and IRCC notified her that her citizenship, granted 17 years earlier, had been an error.

Iman is originally from Yemen. She's 34 and has two children—Mira, her seven-year-old daughter, and Joseph, who is six and was born in Yemen.

Iman became a citizen when she was 16 in 2003 as her father is a Canadian citizen.

It was in early 2018 that her citizenship was turned upside down.

At the time she was looking after her sick mother in Yemen.

She reached out to Amjed, her settlement counsellor. He connected her with one of the lawyers who provide services to our clients for free. It was determined that Iman should board a plane as soon as possible and come back to Canada.

Iman's son, Joseph, returned to Canada in November of 2019 but had no status which made him ineligible for benefits and health care.

He was even denied care at the Ottawa Hospital and was not on the list with other family members

for Ottawa Housing.

Amjed felt there must be a faster path to getting the citizenship status resolved.

He sought legal advice with several firms. He also helped her find a room in one of the family shelters.

He convinced Ontario Works to consider her as an eligible application on a conditional basis and he worked with IRCC. Meanwhile, Iman relied on the foodbank, donations and some support from the shelter.

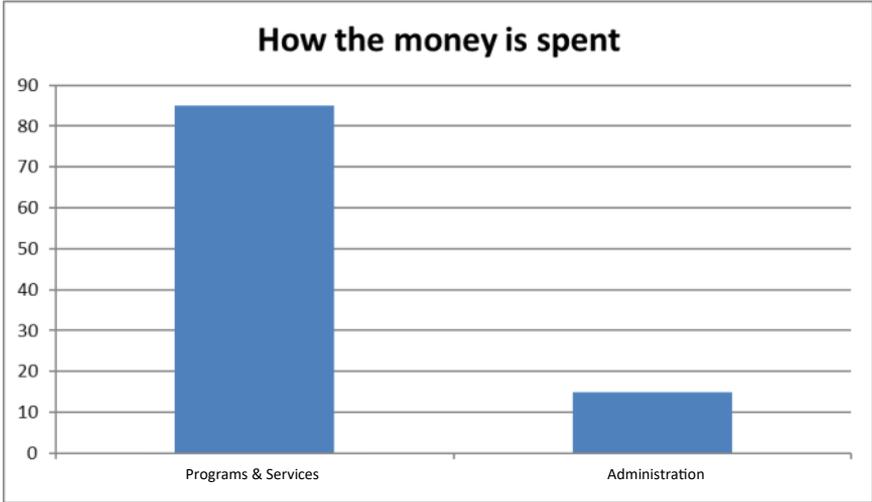
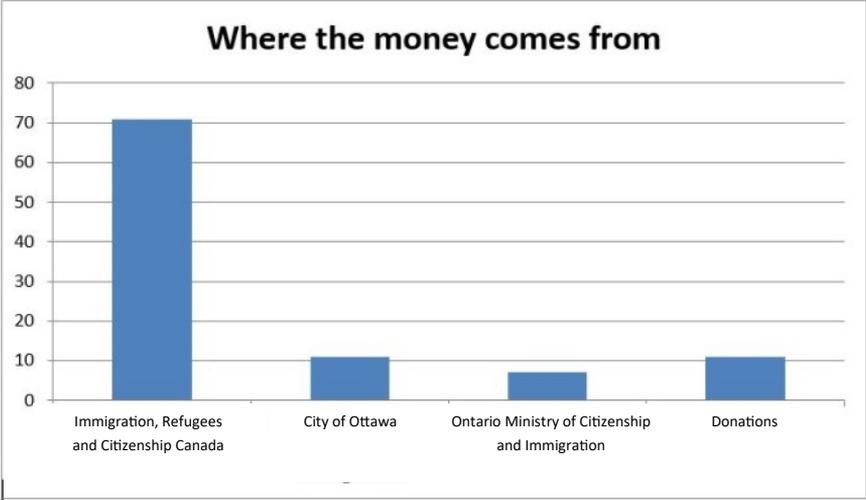
In a last bid, Amjed reached out to immigration consultant Renata Brum. In May, 2020, they submitted their case to IRCC. Finally, they decided to approach the IRCC's minister's office directly.

Five weeks later, IRCC ruled she was still a Canadian citizen pending a review. Iman's team put a 128-page document together to argue her case.

On January 8, 2021, Iman got the news she wanted. She was granted citizenship and it was made official in a special citizenship ceremony on January 28.



# OUR FINANCIALS



# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED



## Volunteer

We rely on the contributions of generous and committed volunteers. You can help newcomers learn a language or how to navigate the city. You can introduce them to everyday services and help them learn more about Canadian culture and values. We offer a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities.



## Donate

**One-time Gift:** Go to [cciottawa.ca](http://cciottawa.ca). All it takes is a few simple steps for you to make an impact in a refugee's life.

**Monthly Gift:** A monthly gift provides predictable and stable funding.

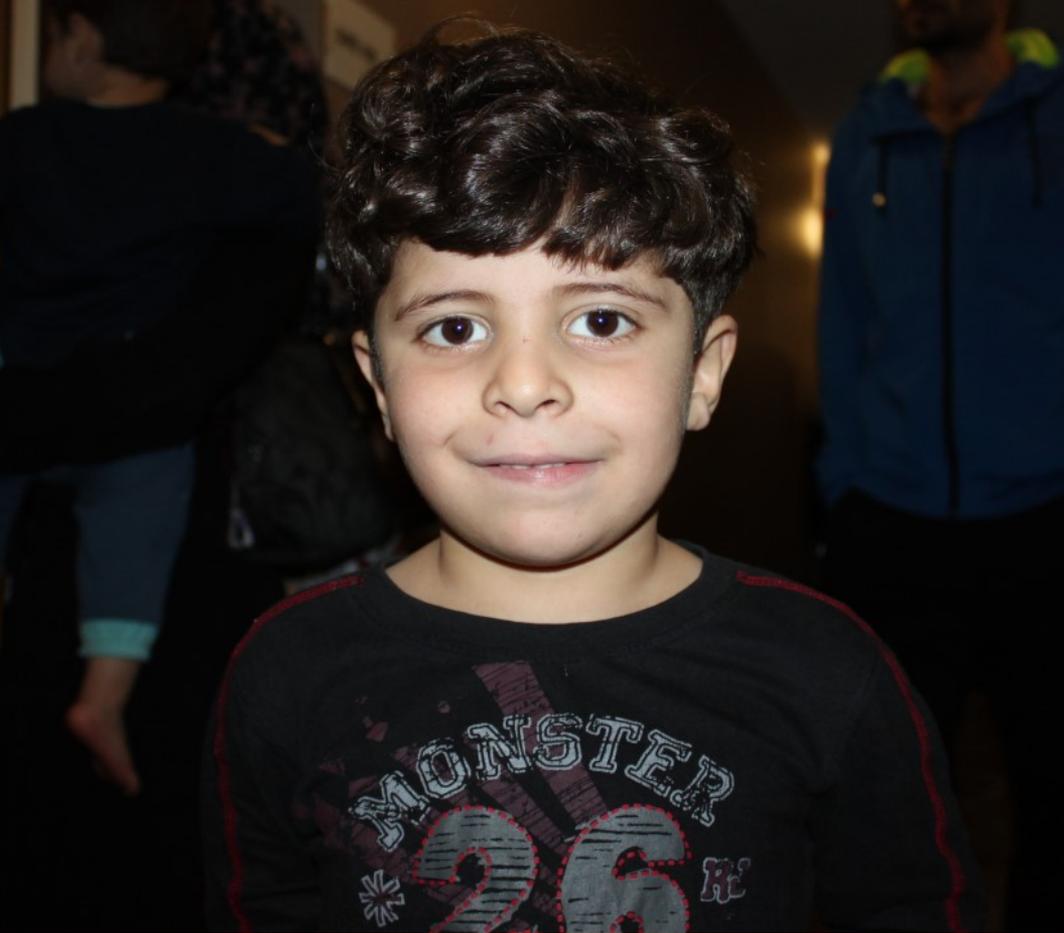
**Tribute:** Make a gift in honour or memory of a loved one.



## Sponsor

We are able to help groups who are committed to sponsoring a refugee family.

- Recruit and train sponsors
- Help submit documents
- Support sponsors as they prepare for their refugee families to arrive
- Ensure sponsored refugees are supported quickly



# Thank you for your support

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[www.cciottawa.ca](http://www.cciottawa.ca)

613-232-9634

