



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Growth was the theme of 2022-2023.

It was also the first full year under new leadership provided by Executive Director Myriam Mekni. She expertly guided CCI Ottawa as we grew our staff, began work on a new strategic plan, and continued with the renovations to our physical and digital work spaces.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank Myriam and her management team for their hard work and leadership. Despite many new faces, CCI Ottawa continued to deliver quality services to an increasing number of clients, including an increased number of refugee claimants.

As we look forward, we anticipate more change and growth in the settlement sector. As a result of the pandemic and the year that followed, we gained greater insight into the daily needs of newcomers.

There is a need for mental health services and CCI is attempting to address this by requesting government funding for crisis counsellors. We are also increasing our settlement team to help address the needs so many refugee claimants face in our city.

We anticipate growth in many of the services we offer as immigration numbers continue to increase. We are primed to offer more workshops and activities so that newcomers can more easily settle and integrate.

We couldn't do this work without the support of the community. I, and the Board, want to thank every individual who took the time to volunteer or donate to CCI Ottawa.

I want to conclude by inviting you to join us later this year as we celebrate 70 years of helping immigrants and refugees. It's a humbling experience to be part of an organization that has been doing such valuable work in the community for so many decades.

We were there to welcome the eastern Europeans who were fleeing oppressive, communist regimes. We were there to welcome the Boat People. We were there to help newcomers who fled conflict and poverty leading up to the end of the century. We were there when the Syrians arrived in great numbers, fleeing a brutal civil war. And we are here as thousands of Ukrainians make the decision to call Canada their new home.

With your support, we will continue to welcome newcomers from around the globe, to provide them with a new home, and most of all, a place where they can feel safe.



Luise Czernenko Reid, President

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The traditional Executive Director's report in an annual report is usually a review of the past year's successes, and what our vision will be for the coming year.

However, if you will indulge me, I would like to start by sharing a little bit about myself and my family.

We first arrived in Canada on December 21, 2012. Some of you may recall, there was a widespread conspiracy theory suggesting that cataclysmic events would destroy the planet on that day – believed to be the end date of the 5,126 year Mayan calendar. Fortunately, this was not the case! Humanity did not end. In fact, for me and my family, that day marked the beginning of a new life.

We came to Canada to pursue certain freedoms denied to us in our home country. In other words, we came seeking asylum. The decision and its subsequent journey were challenging, but we weren't alone. Thankfully, we received support from a local settlement agency. One not as big as our own CCI in Ottawa, this agency nonetheless set us up with services, guidance, and a lot of heartfelt help. Eventually, Canada accepted our family's asylum claim and we became permanent residents. And in November of 2021? Our family became proud Canadian citizens. Life is never perfect of course, but now my family is safe, connected to a welcoming community. We have a sense of home and belonging.

I share this with you as an example of what can be achieved by any of us when we allow ourselves to dream.

Today, I enjoy the privileges of freedom. But I also believe that freedom comes with responsibility. It needs to be nurtured and supported by individuals, and by our communities. This includes the community we more formally refer to as the settlement sector.

I can't express how fortunate I feel to be a part of this sector, and to be the Executive Director of a landmark settlement agency. And to lead a team of amazing people devoted to the kind of compassionate work that gave me and my family a wonderful start to a better life.

In last year's message, I made a point of talking about the future, and what we were doing to adapt and prepare for it. One of our goals was to improve our working space and enhance our ability to perform collaboratively, with an increased level of capacity for delivering services.

We began by renovating our four floors so that CCI's counsellors could work together more closely as a team. These renovations also allowed us to offer better and more equipped meeting spaces for workshops, activities, and other supportive services.

We have also embraced technologies such as video conferencing to add increased levels of access for our clients. We also moved to an appointment-only service which has streamlined our staff's ability to plan their day and declutter

their capacity to perform their duties. Eliminating the first come first serve model has given our staff the ability to prioritize needs, provide clients with timely services, and offer them the security of knowing precisely when they will receive the help they need.

These changes have enabled CCI to serve more clients over the previous year. We were also able to assist 800 refugee claimants. We should, as a team, be proud of these accomplishments. They are evidence of our openness to improve and embrace change.

This year, I would like to submit, to our staff and supporters, an invitation to dream. Rather than adapting and changing to keep pace with the future, I want us to imagine how we can influence and be a part of it.

We renovated our building, but now it is time to renovate our vision. We need to examine our infrastructure, policies, practices, and procedures. Not only with an eye on improving but with a collective set of eyes motivated by the dream of becoming a modern, innovative settlement agency with the potential to influence the future instead of reacting to the circumstances influencing it.

Soon, we will be sharing our 2024-2028 Strategic Plan. I believe it represents goals that are good for the health of our organization, while also laying a framework for us to be aspirational and not just reactive. But if it's going to succeed it's going to need help. From all of you. Our staff. Partners. Funders. And government.

These days, we hear the word diversity thrown around a lot. Mostly, the conversation is about respecting diversity. As we should. But we rarely

talk about the benefits of diversity. That is to say, new perspectives. New points of view. And new methods for approaching problems.

Diversity is a potent ingredient in innovation. Moving forward, I want us to brew and add this ingredient to our work. I know it will help us. But I also believe that by being advocates of this narrative we can help push back against rising anti-immigration sentiments, which are the antithesis of our cause.

Our clients are diverse. Our staff is diverse. Ottawa is diverse. Imagine what we might accomplish by leveraging all of it in the service of a dream.

I arrived in this country with little more than exactly that – a dream. Now, I am grateful to live and work in Canada. We are not on the edge of a cataclysm. Rather we are on the precipice of exciting opportunities. Let us embrace them by continuing to bring out the best in each other and living up to the value and importance of our work. Our clients are thankful for us. And we are thankful for them. Together, we can shape the future.



Myriam Mekni, Executive Director

OUR STORY SO FAR

OUR MISSION

Our mission is two-fold. We want to help newcomers reach their full potential in Canadian society and we want to build a more welcoming community.

OUR GOALS

CCI Ottawa has been helping newcomers since 1954. Our goal is for newcomers to be contributing members of their community, to be welcomed and to feel at home.

Helping refugees rebuild their lives needs all of us – working together so that they can achieve what most of us take for granted – education, a place to live, a job, being part of a community.

**UN High Commissioner
for Refugees
Filippo Grandi**

OUR PRINCIPLES

Committed to social justice in all policies, programs and services

Provide assistance to newcomers regardless of race, national/ethnic origin, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical ability

Use approaches that are empowering, client-centered, and that address the physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of the person

Recognize the central importance of volunteers, staff and members of the community

Work with related agencies, community organizations, and various faith groups to ensure a smooth settlement process

Be accountable to stakeholders, our funders, creditors and the community-at-large

SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

The Settlement Program helps newcomers with all aspects of settling and integrating into a new community, such as housing, health, education, securing documents, food and more.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Served 6,123 individual clients from 124 countries.
- 189 group sessions attended by 840 clients.
- Provided services to 884 refugee claimants.
- Top 5 languages spoken by clients: English: 27%, French: 11%, Arabic: 10%, Ukrainian, 6%, and Spanish: 5%.
- Top 5 countries of origin of clients: Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Congo.
- In partnership with COSTI, delivered 46 Orientation to Ontario workshops to 838 clients in English, Arabic, Dari, and Ukrainian.
- 24 individuals (13 adults, 11 children) privately sponsored through the CCI SAH Program.
- Housing team distributed more than \$73,000 in gift cards to 751 families (2,256 individuals).
- Housing team helped 356 families with housing support.
- Housing Team served 212 Ukrainian families (526 individuals) with support through the Host Matching Support Program.



CSS PROGRAM

Client Support Services Program helps Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) during their first year of resettlement and integration. It delivers a mobile, intensive case management service that recognizes their complex needs. It works with the community to provide GARs access to services such as health, housing, education, language training, employment and other community services.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Supported 2,397 GARs.
- Provided 14,008 case management services.
- Supported 421 secondary migrant GARs who moved to Ottawa from other cities.
- Top 3 countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq.
- Number of Afghan clients: 756.
- More than 200 clients attended various workshops, including digital literacy.
- More than 600 clients received tailored digital support to enable access to virtual services.

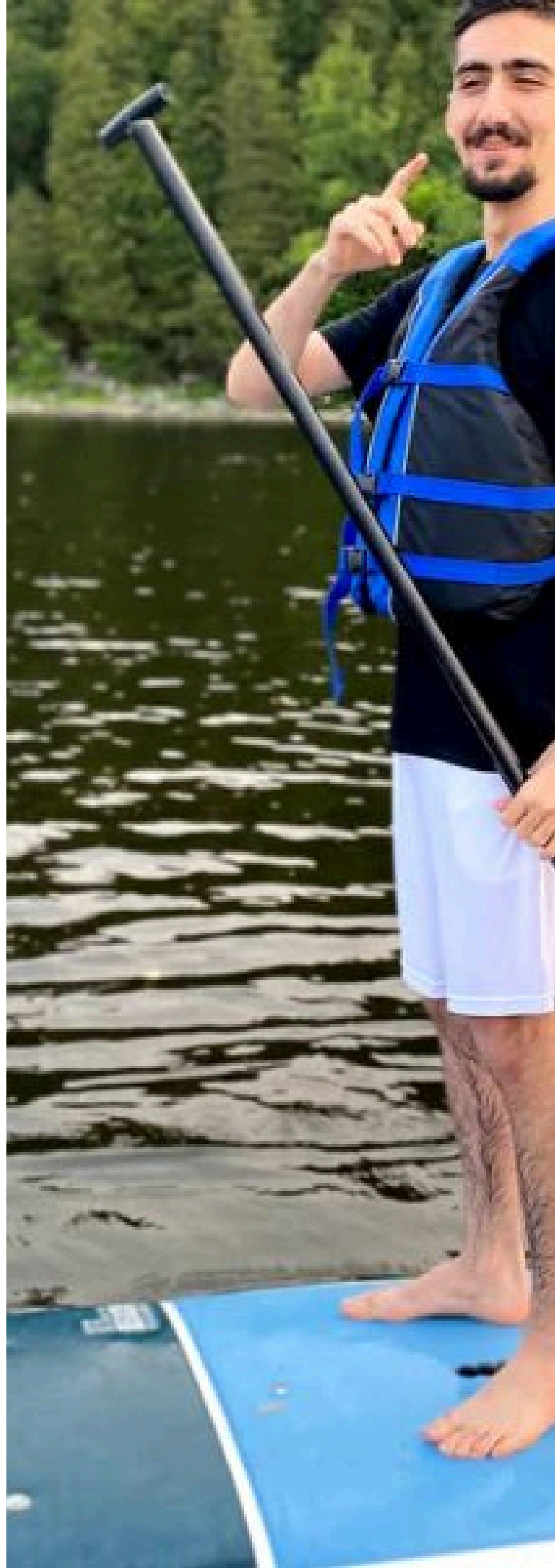


CEC PROGRAM

The Community and Employment Connections Program helps newcomers integrate and adjust to life in Canada by helping them learn a new language, find a job and participate in recreational, sports and social activities for families and youth.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1,503 families and single adult clients were provided with services and programs that helped them with employment, youth leadership, sports/recreation, matching/mentoring, and learning English or French.
- Served 546 children and youth.
- More than 758 referrals made to local community organizations and services.
- More than 150 volunteers donated 2,656 hours of time to CEC programs.



RECEPTION HOUSE

Reception House is a transitional home for refugees who are fleeing poverty, war and violence. Staffed 24/7, the home provides food services, common lounge areas as well as a warm, friendly environment where newcomers can feel safe and at home. Staff help newcomers find their first Ottawa home and offer a children's program.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Served 1,190 government-assisted refugees (GARs).
- Supported 361 GAR Secondary Migrants from other provinces.
- Helped 882 GARs find permanent housing.
- Provided services to 510 Afghan refugees.
- Provided services in 6 locations.
- Served 17 immigrants who were referred to us by the City of Ottawa.





WHY I VOLUNTEER

Valeriia is ambitious and focused. Like all newcomers who come to Canada, the settlement journey is not always an easy one, but she pushes forward every day. We recently had a chance to sit down with Valeriia. This interview was edited for length.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I was born and raised in Ukraine and I moved to Toronto in 2016. I wanted to pursue my education here, so I did a two-year diploma at George Brown College and then I worked at the local hospital for a while. I realized I wanted to do something different. I wanted to do a post-secondary education and I was able to get accepted into Carleton University, so I moved to Ottawa.

How did you discover CCI Ottawa?

Through my school. When I was researching where I wanted to do my practicum, I indicated I wanted to work with newcomers like myself and one of the options was CCI. I did a little bit of research about the organization, looked at the website and social media channels.

I was really impressed with the mission and the goals of the organization. They aligned with my personal values.

Why did you want to work with newcomers?

I have personal experience of being a newcomer and there are many challenges, but I was lucky because I had a lot of support from my parents and loved ones. But not everyone has that support. So I wanted to extend that support to others, the kind of support I had, to extend it to other people. I feel very passionate about supporting people who come to Canada and their integration.

What were some of those challenges for you?

Language. English is not my first language. It's not even my second language. Getting to know people was another challenge. Culturally, there are a lot of things that are different from where I grew up. Socially, it is a very different environment. You are far away from your family, from your loved ones. It's lonely and it's very isolating. It can be hard financially. It can be difficult finding a job. A lot of things are off limits for you and it is frustrating.

What message do you have for people who are interested in volunteering?

There's so much to do. Anyone can find their passion. We have the Youth Program. You can help organize different events. If you are an expert in a certain area, you can organize a workshop for youth newcomers. We've had workshops that explore healthy relationships, the concept of consent, finding a job. You can volunteer and provide support. There are English conversation circles. They (newcomers) come here and need confidence in how they communicate and speak. English Conversation Circles are the place where they can practice and socialize and extend their

professional networks. If you are passionate about helping someone, you can join the Matching and Mentoring Program. That's where you can provide the personalized one-on-one support. It could be as easy as helping someone take a bus or you could help someone with more complex issues, such as searching for a job or understanding the healthcare system.

What are your goals?

Even though I've been here for almost eight years, I still consider myself a newcomer. I'm still working on my education. I want to get my degree. I want to work in policy and I want to work on something in immigration. I would love to contribute more to policy development.



WELCOME HOUSE

Welcome House is a transitional home for newcomers and refugee claimants in Canada. We help newcomers take their first steps in Ottawa. We provide referrals to legal services, settlement services, education, and integration services. We provide 3 meals a day as well as numerous programs.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Moved 31 families (154 people) to private housing.
- Average length of stay: 3-4 months for most clients.
- Children's Program to help children adjust to their new surroundings and make friends. This program is supported with volunteers.
- We conduct home visits to help clients with life skills and discover services and activities in their new community.



SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

There are two sponsorship programs at CCI. In one program, we work with area churches to support them in their sponsorship efforts. In our second program, we are a sponsorship agreement holder and we work with local groups to help them sponsor family members and refugees.

Last year, we worked with 13 parishes to bring 37 refugees to Ottawa. As a Sponsorship Agreement Holder, we welcomed 24 refugees to our community.

PASTORAL PROGRAM

The Pastoral Program helps newcomers find additional means of support by connecting them to the faith community of their choice.

In 2022-2023, we connected 396 families (116 people) from nine countries to provide them with information about their faith community in Ottawa.



YOUTH PROGRAM

The Youth Program (CEC and Settlement) offers workshops and recreational and sports activities to young newcomers to help smooth their transition to a new community. The program helps them make friends, gain confidence and adjust to life in a new culture.

- Free social activities such as holiday celebrations, art workshops, field trips, and meet-ups.
- Sports activities such as youth soccer and a women's sports day.
- School support during the school year with a weekly Homework Club.
- Support to expand their social network.
- Explore post-secondary school opportunities.
- Résumé and job search support.
- English or French language practice.
- Referrals and connections to other services in the community.

Last year, 546 young newcomers and children received services or participated in workshops and activities.



EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

We offer employment services to help newcomers find meaningful employment.

Community and Employment Connections

The CEC Employment Team helps newcomers with their résumé, interview skills, job searches and understanding of Canadian work culture. The program is for newcomers who have a low level of English or who don't have a lot of work experience. It serves youth and adults. Last year, the team provided services to 477 people.

Our **Career Transitions** Program helps internationally-trained health care professionals find work in their field or transition to a new career. Clients take part in a three-week instructional program that teaches them about the Canadian labour market and work culture. We also provide job referral services and help them prepare for employment with résumé and interview assistance. Last year, 71 clients completed the program. Seventy found work in the health care sector.

Settlement Online Pre-Arrival Program works with newcomers who are not in Canada but who have permission to immigrate. This self-directed program helps newcomers learn the ins and outs of the Canadian workplace, the labour market and more. 110 clients obtained employment.



CIN PROGRAM

The Community Integration Network program offers knowledge exchange and skills development to staff from Community Connections, Settlement Workers in Schools, Library Settlement Partnerships and other similar programs funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) across Ontario

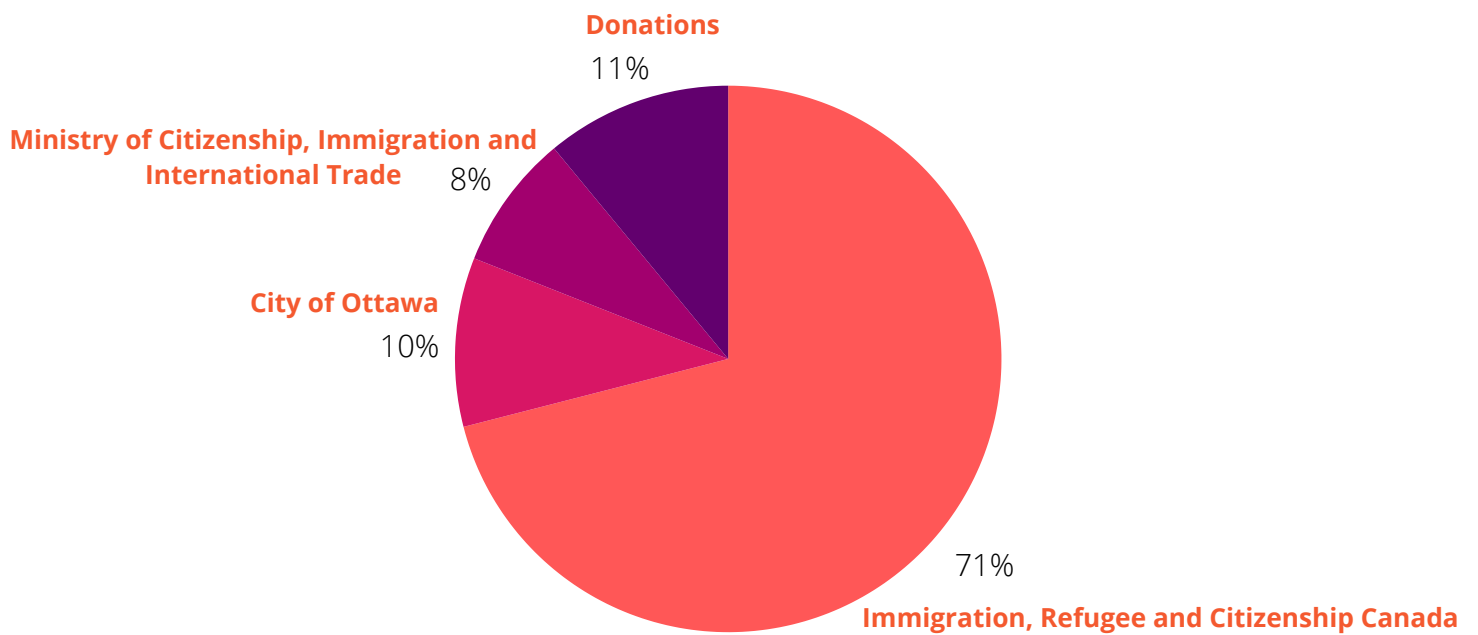
HIGHLIGHTS

- After the pandemic, CIN convened in-person meetings to support the need for agencies to reconnect and regroup. Forty-eight managers from 34 agencies shared their programs and services and reflected on the challenges caused by the pandemic, working remotely and an unprecedented level of staff turnover.
- CIN hosted Virtual Knowledge Exchange Sessions to support 290 participants from the 90 agencies in the CIN network. Important themes included Strategies to create effective Hybrid Meetings, and Staff Deployment, Retention, and Burnout in the SWIS Programs.
- A year after CIN deployed 240 Chromebooks to 20 agencies, the team surveyed the results. All agencies had positive results and the Chromebooks were still in working order and constant use. This information helped the agencies obtain more devices for their clients.

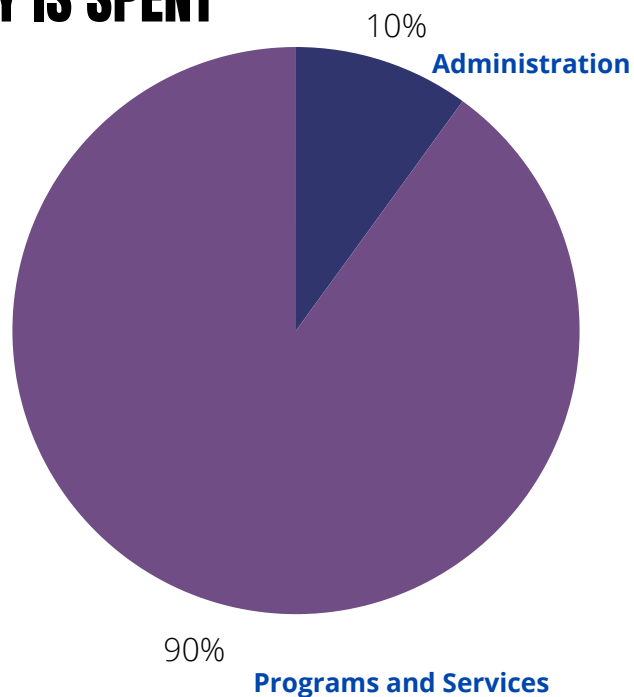


OUR FINANCIALS

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM



HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT



FOUNDATION MESSAGE



Jim McIntyre, Fundraising Manager

The CCI Foundation raises funds to support and enhance many programs and activities at CCI.

Imagine you are a seven-year-old child, and you have just arrived in Ottawa with your family.

You were born in a refugee camp, and that's the only life you have known. How would you feel going to school in for the very first time? Would you know how to behave? Life in a camp can vary widely, but chances are you have never sat a desk, put your hand up to use the washroom, or know how to line up for a bus. Or even been on a bus! Chances are you have never seen a colouring book. You might not even speak English or French!

Fortunately, refugees who come to Ottawa via Canada's government sponsorship program are first housed at CCI's Reception House. Here, a child will join our Children's Program. This program gives children a chance to learn about schools in Canada, and allows them time to adjust, and find out what Canadian classrooms are all about.

This program is just one of the many activities that rely on support from our donors through CCI's Foundation.

You are directly helping refugees and newcomers when so many things in their lives have changed. You help give them confidence and a sense of belonging.

Whether it's the Children's Program, our Skating Buddy Program, youth sports, or providing invaluable support to churches with their refugee sponsorship, the CCI Foundation is involved throughout CCI, offering resources to ensure the programs we offer are the best they can be.

The Foundation receives support from a variety of sources. Generous individuals, Catholic Religious Orders, churches, schools, service organizations, local businesses, and granting institutions.

The support we receive from the community not only helps fund activities, but it is also an important indicator that the work we are doing is recognized and valued in, a message that we can share with our newest neighbours!

THANK YOU

TO ALL OF OUR PARTNERS

Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Ottawa Catholic School Board,
Language Assessment Centre at YMCA, YMCA Employment Services,
Connecting Ottawa, Community Legal Clinics, Legal Aid Ontario,
World Skills Employment Centre, Immigrant Women Services of Ottawa,
The City of Ottawa, Employment Ontario, Ottawa Police Service, Refugee 613,
Interval House, Matthew House, Carty House, Ottawa Food Bank,
Ottawa Public Library, Saint Paul University, University of Ottawa,
Algonquin College, Community Health Centres, Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre,
Ottawa Community Loan Fund, World Skills, La Cité, CESOC,
the Vanier Community Service Centre,
and Point d'Accueil Francophone (PAF).

