



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

New initiative to house refugees in Ottawa: Roofs for Refugees

Ottawa, ON – January 22nd, 2016 - The Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI) today made a public appeal for Ottawa residents to offer vacant housing to newly arrived refugees, and helped to launch a new web site to help connect those offers to refugee families.

Affordable housing is a high priority for resettled refugees, but finding that housing is a challenge. It's made even harder in a rental market dominated by small units, when the average family size of Syrians currently in CCI's reception centres is more than 5 people. Every day a refugee family spends in the reception centres is another day that they aren't able to get on with their new lives. Housing determines where the children will enrol in school, where the family will go for language classes and much more.

To create extra capacity in the housing market, CCI is asking Ottawa landlords and residents to free up their empty apartments or houses, especially those with two or more bedrooms, for rental by refugees.

"We're saying to Ottawa, 'That house that's been sitting empty since your tenant or your uncle moved out? Tell us about it,'" says Carl Nicholson, executive director of the Catholic Centre for Immigrants. "We have families who would love to call those places home."

To help sort through housing offers and connect them to refugees in need, a new web platform was launched today. Roofs for Refugees roofs4refugees.ca is the Canadian affiliate of the international organization Refugees Welcome. Developed and staffed entirely by volunteers in partnership with Refugee 613 and CCI, Roofs for Refugees is launching in Ottawa first, with plans to add chapters in other major Canadian cities in the coming months.

Through the Roofs for Refugees portal, homeowners and landlords will be able to upload details of the housing they have to offer as well as offer to host refugees in shared accommodation. R4R's trained volunteers will screen the offers, generate listings and help to match the newcomers to permanent housing. In the near future, R4R expects to make the listings available to other settlement agencies, private sponsors and refugees themselves.

"We are excited to launch Roofs for Refugees in Ottawa," says Olivia Tran, one of the founders of the Ottawa chapter of the online housing referral service. "It is a simple, streamlined way to address one of the priority issues for refugee settlement."

For more information:

Catholic Centre for Immigrants

Carole Ouellette

Communications Coordinator

Catholic Centre for Immigrants / Centre catholique pour immigrants

Tel/Tél.: (613) 232-9634 Ext./poste: 312

www.cciottawa.ca

Roofs for Refugees:

Olivia Tran

Ottawa Coordinator, Roofs for Refugees

613-222-8998, Olivia@roofs4refugees.ca

Refugee 613

Louisa Taylor

Director

louisa@refugee613.ca

613-355-1497