

## Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support (MCRS) and COVID-19:

### UPDATE and THANK YOU October 2020

Our team worked hard through the summer months, preparing files as refugee hearings and other processes began again. We also piloted the return of volunteers to our sites. We learned a lot, and hope to soon have our volunteers reengaged on a more regular basis.

When the lockdown went into effect in March, many of those we assist, accompany, and advocate for were caught in limbo with the uncertainty of their futures magnified. We celebrate that for some, this has finally been resolved. In the past weeks, **40 men, women, and children have had their claims approved.** This included someone who has been navigating the refugee claim process for EIGHT years! WOW! That is a long time and yet now, the waiting and persevering through the uncertainty has paid off!

These people can now begin the permanent residency process. For some, that means they can now also begin the process to be reunited with their families. Because of COVID-19, this will still be delayed, but they know that one day, their spouses and children can join them here, safe at last.

THANK YOU!

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THANK YOU to our many donors whose sustained generosity has ensured we could be here to hear this wonderful news. **Your possibility for impact is far from over.** There are another 829 people who are waiting to hear what the outcome of their refugee claim will be! Your continued giving – and encouraging others to give as well – keeps the good news stories of lives changed forever happening! If you have Facebook, take a break, and go listen to some of the stories of impact that you are continuing! You can start with this one:

### [YOU ARE CHANGING LIVES!](#)

As we go into the Fall, we are working toward being fully equipped to offer a COVID-safe place for refugee claimants to attend virtual hearings right from our office on Queen Street. This is what everything we do drives toward – that hearing that will determine whether someone can stay under Canada's protection, or if they will be sent back to the danger and persecution they tried to escape from.



### WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH OUR GUEST HOUSE AND GUEST HOMES PROGRAM?

Like so many other organizations, with the recent rise in COVID-19 cases, we have needed to shift yet again our hopes and expectations. This is especially true of our Guest House. With few people coming into Canada, there is little need for temporary accommodation, so our house sits at reduced occupancy.

***Yet, there is a lot of activity!***

We are using this as an opportunity to do some upgrades:



- ✓ New beds and mattresses that are fireproof, waterproof, bug proof, and comfortable.
- ✓ Ceiling fans in the bedrooms and common areas to ensure air quality and circulation.
- ✓ Water efficient fixtures have been installed.
- ✓ Deep cleaning and painting by staff and volunteers.
- ✓ Some of the flooring has been replaced.
- ✓ The front unit is also going to be fitted with a new front window system.

We also continue to sharpen our Covid-19 protocols and learning supports to maintain alignment with Public Health guidelines for congregate living.

**Most exciting is that many donors have had opportunity to visit and be inspired about the possibilities that are coming!**

In the meantime, we have modified our priorities, and soon we will be ready to receive those of our clients who need to get out of precarious living situations. Unfortunately, there are many and our focus will be on those whose very well-being is at risk. From our safe place, we will accompany them in finding secure, clean, and affordable housing. For the rest, our Housing Coordinator has already been kept busy, working to help several families facing displacement brought on by a variety of different situations.

Our team has connected with many of our private hosts, and we are thankful for their understanding as we suspend the “in home” program to protect against COVID-19 exposure. We remain engaged, listening, and using their valuable input to reimagine and develop a stronger, more comprehensive program. Our goal is to provide support and coaching for the skills and opportunities needed by refugee claimants to thrive in our community, whether living in someone’s home or staying at our Guest House.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?** There will be opportunity for volunteers to work with our staff and interns to further develop and complete the design of the program and its training components. Then, for those who love creative communication, there will be all kinds of opportunity to work on the various delivery platforms we hope to use to roll it all out! AND THEN, there will be no lack of opportunity to come alongside people as companions, coaches, bridge builders, and so much more, working to give them opportunities to thrive in their new community!

**We are excited, even as we sort through the fog and the challenges of this year of Covid-19.**

**We are anticipating the day when we can once again all walk the welcome mat together.**

**We envision an abundance of opportunity for collaboration and shared impact!**

**Thank you for your continued encouragement and prayers.** Thank you for waiting with us. This has been a hard year and we have felt the disconnect and desire to “just get going” right along with you. Yet, no one feels it more than those whose lives we want to touch. Just a little bit longer....

Peace always,

*Shelley*

Shelley Campagnola  
Executive Director

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