



Archdiocese  
of Toronto

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## **MEDIA RELEASE – For Immediate Distribution**

### **1 Year Anniversary of Project Hope Emergency Refugee Resettlement Campaign**

TORONTO (September 8, 2016) One year ago, on September 8, 2015, Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto announced an ambitious 100-day campaign to raise \$3 million to welcome 100 refugee families to the Greater Toronto Area as soon as possible. A year later, the Catholic community is reflecting on the successes of the effort while highlighting the need to hasten the arrival of those who remain displaced and waiting anxiously to call Canada home.

Project Hope raised \$3.7 million to sponsor refugees fleeing areas of conflict and insecurity. A particular emphasis was placed on refugees fleeing Syria and Iraq. Cardinal Collins commented on the overwhelming outpouring of generosity:

“The incredible response to Project Hope allowed us to mobilize both human and financial resources quickly and effectively. I am most grateful to everyone who embraced this outstanding effort; from those who have volunteered, sponsored and supported families in the past to those with no past involvement. It was particularly heartening to see schools, businesses and other faith communities partner with us to foster a culture of care for those fleeing violence and persecution.”

The archbishop continued, “While we celebrate the accomplishments of Project Hope and applaud the government’s initial commitment to Syrian refugees, we also must reiterate our message to the government to expedite the arrival of those who have been left behind not only in the Middle East but in so many other areas of conflict. We believe much more can and should be done.”

Assistance for refugee families through Project Hope began in October 2015 when a team of eight volunteers from the Archdiocese of Toronto’s Office for Refugees traveled to Jordan, identifying and streamlining the application process. The first refugee family arrived from Syria on December 20, 2015.

The Archdiocese of Toronto is one of the largest private sponsors of refugees in Canada, providing leadership through a full-time office since 2009. Commitments to Project Hope were above and beyond current efforts underway in the archdiocese before the crisis of 2015 garnered headlines around the world.

Director of the Office of Refugees for the Archdiocese of Toronto, Dr. Martin Mark, commented on the challenges that lie ahead: “We thank the government for its assistance in hastening the arrival of Syrian refugees over the past year. However, beyond the headlines remain thousands of displaced people who need our help. More than \$3.7 million has been raised to support refugee sponsorship; our work is not yet done and we ask the government to move quickly. Our volunteer groups are waiting to welcome these newcomers. Let us work in partnership to get them here without delay.”

The Archdiocese of Toronto is Canada's largest diocese, stretching from Toronto north to Georgian Bay and from Oshawa to Mississauga. It is home to 1.9 million Catholics and 225 churches, with Mass celebrated in more than 30 languages each week.

**Statistics related to Project Hope resettlement efforts:**

- 105 Project Hope volunteer groups identified (68 parish groups, 37 other resettlement groups – businesses, other faith communities, local organizations)
- 154 refugee families (cases), representing 407 individuals submitted to the government requesting sponsorship.
- 44 families (cases), representing 133 individuals have arrived in Canada to date.
- Arrivals by country include: Syria – 41 families (130 individuals), Sudan – 3 (3 individuals).
- Cases still awaiting arrival – Syria - 48 families (111 individuals), Iraq – 60 families (162 individuals), Sudan – 1 family (5 individuals), Somalia – 1 family (1 individual)

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