



Archdiocese  
of Toronto

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**MEDIA RELEASE – For Immediate Distribution**

**“Project Hope” Emergency Refugee Resettlement Campaign  
Tops \$3 Million Goal, First Families Arrive This Weekend**

TORONTO (December 18, 2015) The Archdiocese of Toronto’s “Project Hope” emergency refugee resettlement campaign surpassed its ambitious \$3 million fundraising goal, reaching \$3.1 million in just 100 days. The first refugee families sponsored through Project Hope will arrive in Toronto on December 20, with more expected in the coming weeks.

Launched on September 8, 2015 by the Archbishop of Toronto, Cardinal Thomas Collins, the effort brought together churches and religious communities from across the Greater Toronto Area, corporations, schools and individuals, giving of their time, talents and treasure to support private refugee sponsorship.

Processing of refugee families through Project Hope began in October when a team of eight volunteers from the Archdiocese of Toronto’s Office for Refugees (ORAT) traveled to Jordan, identifying and streamlining the application process. The Archdiocese of Toronto is one of the largest private sponsors of refugees in Canada, with a dedicated office providing leadership since 2009. Project Hope is above and beyond current efforts that were underway in the archdiocese before the current crisis.

In addition to funds raised for Project Hope, volunteer committees have been formed to facilitate the welcome of 89 refugee families to date. Committees will journey with newcomers and provide practical assistance during their first year in Canada. These committees are a critical component to a successful resettlement strategy. There are still opportunities for committees of six to 10 people to join this cause and assist in welcoming the sponsored families. Those wishing to contribute financially to the campaign may still do so by visiting [www.archtoronto.org/projecthope](http://www.archtoronto.org/projecthope), with funds raised beyond the \$3 million goal re-invested to welcome additional families sponsored through ORAT.

Cardinal Collins expressed his gratitude to the community for its generous response: “It has been wonderful to see the outpouring of support for Project Hope from both our Catholic community and those of other faiths. We have also seen corporations, community groups and individuals beyond our faith community engage in this refugee settlement effort. It is heartening to see such goodwill and co-operation alive and at work in our archdiocese.”

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.

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## **The Archdiocese of Toronto Salutes Its “Project Hope” Guardian Angels**

On September 8, 2015, the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto launched an ambitious 100-day campaign to raise \$3 million to welcome 100 refugee families to the Greater Toronto Area as soon as possible. Along the way, we have witnessed tremendous stories of generosity. Below you will find a snapshot of just a few of our “Project Hope” Guardian Angels, making a difference in the community:

**Catholics Without Borders** – A team of eight volunteers, through the Archdiocese of Toronto’s Office for Refugees, traveled to Jordan in October 2015 to identify and process more than 100 families to be supported by Project Hope. Working long days in difficult conditions, the group gave selflessly to accelerate the refugee sponsorship process for hundreds that will soon call Canada home.

**A National Effort!** The staff of Bayshore HealthCare wanted to make a difference. Holding various fund raising events at their offices across Canada, over \$11,800 was raised to assist refugee families that would be arriving in Canada. This was matched by Stuart Cottrelle, President of Bayshore HealthCare, resulting in a \$23,795 contribution to Project Hope. Mr. Cottrelle noted “I am very proud of our staff and not surprised by their passion, generosity of spirit and willingness to help.” (picture available.)

**Paying it Forward** – After coming to Canada as Vietnamese refugees in the 1980s, Catholics from St. Cecilia’s Parish in Toronto are “paying it forward”, establishing their own sponsorship committee to give back in thanksgiving for the generosity afforded to their community more than three decades ago.

**A Different Type of Party** – Learning of the heart-wrenching stories of refugees in the Middle East, Trish Wardrop wanted to do something about it. She quickly organized a holiday party for more than 75 friends in her west-end neighbourhood, encouraging them to bring a gift card to help locally sponsored refugee families. The result? The group collected \$1200 in gift cards that will be distributed to Project Hope families in Etobicoke. (photo available)

**A+ for Effort** - When Toronto’s Archbishop, Cardinal Thomas Collins, called on schools and students to get involved in Project Hope fundraisers, they quickly mobilized, raising more than \$100,000 in 100 days to support the campaign. York Catholic District School Board led the way with \$70,000 in funds raised, more than enough to support two families of four for a full year. (photo available)

**Leadership in Action** – City of Toronto, Ward 5 Councillor, Justin Di Ciano was moved by the image of the body of a three-year-old Syrian boy, washed up on shore after trying to escape his homeland. “Really, when I saw that picture of that little boy on the beach, my mind went straight to my son – I saw my son on that beach,” said the father of two. The Councillor personally committed \$30,000 to sponsor a family and an interview on CBC Radio led to a \$250,000 anonymous donation from an Etobicoke resident towards Project Hope. (photo available)

**Welcome Home!** Leon’s Furniture, one of Canada’s largest furniture retailers, committed to help volunteer sponsors prepare accommodation for their refugee families. With a total gift of \$50,000 (\$500 for 100 Project Hope Refugee Families) they’re making the transition a little easier by helping to provide new furniture to our newest Canadians.

**A Teachable Moment** – Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board decided that, in addition to raising \$10,000 to support Project Hope, they would also create classroom curriculum resources to help students understand the challenges faced by refugees worldwide. They've already implemented lesson plans and activities educating students about the plight of refugees and our role in welcoming those displaced to our community.

**Rolling Up Their Sleeves!** Heathbridge Capital Management decided they wanted to do more than just provide a financial donation to support Project Hope. In addition to donating \$30,000 to sponsor a refugee family, the company has mobilized a volunteer committee made up of employees that have committed to journey with their family for their first year in Canada. (photo available)

**It Takes a Village to Raise a Child** - St. Bernadette's Catholic Church in Ajax has a robust refugee sponsorship committee of 30 people. They meet regularly, working closely with local businesses as well as elementary and secondary schools. The group has a fully furnished two-bedroom apartment, ready for their refugee family, including a seven-week-old baby, the day they arrive. Eagerly awaiting the chance to meet their new friends, the St. Bernadette's sponsorship committee recently enjoyed a 45-minute SKYPE chat with their family, assisted by a local Arabic translator. (photo available)

Media interested in learning more about our Project Hope "Guardian Angels" are encouraged to contact the Office of Public Relations & Communications to arrange an interview.

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