



Reception House
Waterloo Region



Annual Community
Impact Report
2025-2026



Who We Are



Founded in 1987, Reception House Waterloo Region supports refugees and newcomers as they settle in Waterloo Region. Through settlement services and community connections, the organization helps individuals and families build stable, independent lives.

Vision



A future where every newcomer finds belonging, security and the opportunity to build a fulfilling life

Mission



To guide and support refugees and newcomers with the resources, connections, and opportunities they need to build independent, successful lives in Canada

Our Values

- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Inclusivity
- ✓ Empowerment
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Innovation



Reception House Board of Directors



Board of Directors

Sheau Lih Vong - Chair
Julie Dopko - Vice-Chair
Hilde Bouckennooghe - Secretary
Ash Shinh - Director
Saba Shafiq - Director
Colleen James - Director
Kelly Kipfer - Director
Rick Silva - Director
Jennifer Wincey - Director



Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Babur Mawladin
Chief Executive Officer

Building Belonging Together



Sheau Lih Yong
Board Chair

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

It is with great pride and gratitude that I share this message as Chair of the Board of Directors for Reception House Waterloo Region. Despite a year of challenges, rising demand, global displacement and funding uncertainty, Reception House has remained steadfast in its mission to welcome newcomers and support safe, stable lives. I am grateful to our staff and volunteers, and to CEO Babur Mawladin for his leadership in strengthening the organization and advancing initiatives such as Home Begins Here. Thank you to our funders, donors, partners, and community allies for enabling this work, as we remain committed to strong governance and look ahead with optimism to deepening our impact in Waterloo Region.

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

As we reflect on 2025–2026, I am grateful and proud of what we have achieved together. Thanks to our funders, donors, board, staff, volunteers and community partners, Reception House continued to transform lives and strengthen our community. We remained focused on supporting government-assisted refugees while expanding our reach to more newcomers, enhancing our capacity to meet emerging needs while maintaining high-quality services. We also advanced our vision for affordable transitional housing—more than a building, it is a commitment to dignity, belonging and opportunity. These accomplishments show what is possible when we come together with shared purpose, creating opportunities, building futures and fostering a more inclusive community. Thank you for your continued support and partnership.



Babur Mawladin
Chief Executive Officer

“A strong community is built when everyone has a place to belong.”

Home Begins Here

Building the next chapter of newcomer settlement



Building on the work and lessons of 2025-2026, Reception House is taking the next step in addressing one of the greatest barriers facing newcomer families: **access to stable, affordable housing**

A New

Transitional Housing

34

Purpose-built
transitional homes



449-471 Wellington Street North Kitchener

Designed for newcomer families transitioning from temporary accommodation toward permanent housing and greater independence



MORE THAN A HOME

Home Begins Here brings housing and settlement supports together, helping families build stability while connecting to:



Employment



Health Care



Language
Training



Family Supports



No one should spend their first days in Canada moving from shelter to shelter.

We are taking action to build a home for refugees, a foundation for new beginnings

Babur Mawladin,
Chief Executive Officer



A Year of Turning Points

Reception House helps newcomers navigate meaningful transitions:

From arrival to housing stability

From language barriers to connection

From isolation to belonging

From support to independence

Across every program, Reception House helped create turning points where settlement became stability, connection and greater independence.

The following pages show how that impact was achieved through four interconnected pillars:

- ✓ Resettlement and housing stability
- ✓ Comprehensive client support
- ✓ Community connection and inclusion
- ✓ Pathways to employment and independence



Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)

The Resettlement Assistance Program helps newly arrived Government-Assisted Refugees transition safely and successfully to life in Canada. By providing individualized resettlement support and connecting people to essential programs and services, the program empowers newcomers to navigate systems, access services, and begin building independent and connected lives in our region.



RAP by the Numbers



387 individuals welcomed & supported



77 youth & 161 children served



100% secured permanent housing



All school-aged children enrolled in school



Eligible adults enrolled in language programs



Key Insight: Settlement success begins with stability, but is sustained through connection and practical guidance



RAP in Action



RAP supported 387 government-assisted refugees (128 families) as they rebuilt their lives in Canada. All arriving families were successfully transitioned into stable housing while receiving integrated supports in language, education, health care and daily living.

This program is fully funded by
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Canada (IRCC)



Our Client's Journey: From New Arrival to Community Builder

Before arriving in Canada, Faith was an educator, mentor and advocate in refugee camps in Kenya. Through volunteer opportunities, public speaking engagements and a newcomer-led art initiative supported by Reception House, she gained Canadian experience, expanded her professional network and built valuable community connections. In 2025, she joined a local refugee-serving organization as an Employment Coordinator, where she helps newcomers overcome employment barriers and achieve their goals. Faith's journey reflects the power of recognizing newcomers' strengths and creating pathways for leadership, belonging and success.



Impact : Increased ability to navigate appointments, schools, and health care independently over time

Client Support Services (CSS)

We help newcomers build stability and independence

Through case management, clients with complex needs receive individualized support to access health care, housing supports, education, employment and other community services, while building greater stability and independence

This program is fully funded by
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship
Canada (IRCC)

Funded by:	Financé par :
 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

Steps to Success



Internationally
trained



CSS support &
personalized
planning



Credential
recognition



Canadian
licensing



Employed as a
Physiotherapist

Our Client's Journey:

Rebuilding a Career in Canada

Lilian arrived in Canada with 5 years of experience as a physiotherapist and a goal of continuing her career.

With personalized support from CSS, she navigated credential recognition, licensing and exam preparation while building professional connections in Canada.

Lilian passed the Canadian physiotherapy examination and is now a registered physiotherapist working in Ontario.



Impact : From international experience to a healthcare career in Canada — in less than one year

From Support to Stability



CSS provided intensive, coordinated support to help newcomer families overcome complex barriers, build stability, and move toward greater independence



Greater Stability— Families secured housing, accessed essential supports, enrolled children in school and pursued employment



Greater Independence— Clients built the confidence and skills to navigate appointments, transportation, and community services on their own



Pathways Forward— Families could focus on English-language learning, education, employment and creating new opportunities for their children



Stronger Community Connections — Clients reported feeling safer, more connected and better equipped to navigate life in Canada

CSS by the Numbers



10,400+

**Navigation and
co-ordination
interventions**



15,000

**Interpretation
supports**



65%

**Of community-service
referrals included client
accompaniment**



82%

**Of clients assessed,
were identified as
high needs**

Voices of impact:

"I might not have survived in Canada without the help of Reception House" — Samuel G

Newcomer Women & Youth Employment Program

With support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, we launched an employment program for newcomer women and youth that strengthened our capacity and impact. Today, as an Employment Ontario service provider, we are expanding opportunities across the region and building stronger workforce partnerships.

Through personalized employment supports, participants built the skills, confidence and experience needed to pursue meaningful employment opportunities

Pathways to Employment



Build Skills

One-On-One Coaching
and training



Gain Experience

Volunteer and Workplace
Opportunities



Build Connections

Confidence, Connections, and
career readiness



Employment builds more than income

It builds independence, confidence, and belonging

Nadia's Story:

Confidence to Step Forward

Through the Women's Support Group, Nadia strengthened her English, digital skills and confidence. She now volunteers in multiple organizations and continues to progress toward employment.

Employment Services

"The support didn't just help me in the moment; it changed the direction of my life." Nadia M

THE IMPACT



140

Newcomer
women and youth
supported



66%

Secured volunteer
placements



15%

Secured
employment



52%

Participated in the
Women's Support
Group



Thank you to our Funder: This impact was made possible through the generous support of the **Ontario Trillium Foundation**. Their investment helped newcomer women and youth build skills, confidence and pathways to meaningful employment

Our Youth Soccer Club



Organized in Partnership with

- YTR Youth Programs
- Adventure4Change
- Grand River Cup
- YMCA
- St. Benedict's Secondary School

Areas of Impact

- Mental Health Support & Wellness
- Educational Success & School Engagement
- Active Lifestyles Through Sport
- Life Skills Development & Community
- Social Inclusion & Sense of Belonging



Voices of Impact: "When I arrived in Canada, Reception House's soccer tournament helped me build friendships, reconnect with my passion for the game, and feel a true sense of belonging in my new community."

— Musab S

Community Initiatives

Community programming focused on connection, bridging gaps between arrival and belonging through youth engagement, cultural spaces, and collaborative innovation



Youth Building Project



Reached approximately 150 youth



12-member Youth Advisory Committee



7 workshops and events

Youth co-designed programs, developed leadership skills and built confidence through workshops, mentorship, and experiential learning

Youth reflection: “I’ve enjoyed pitching ideas for workshops and really feeling like I can contribute”

This program was funded by Astley Family Foundation



Impact: Youth strengthened communication, job readiness, and sense of belonging



AI Hackathon

More than **150 participants** collaborated to design an oral-first, AI-supported language learning tool for refugees with limited literacy

The event demonstrated the value of co-design—combining academic expertise with lived experience to address real barriers

Pathways to Peace Project

- 120 children and youth engaged
- 22 art sessions delivered

Through trauma-informed art activities, youth expressed emotions, developed coping skills and built resilience while preparing for school

This program was funded by Kindred Credit Union



Impact: Improved emotional regulation, stronger self-expression, and reduced social isolation among participating youth

Community Initiatives



French Café Project

The French Café hosted **7 sessions with over 50 participants**, creating a welcoming space for Francophone newcomers



Participants gained access to information from regional service providers, built social connections that reduced isolation and strengthened well-being

This program is fully funded by the Waterloo Region Community Foundation



Water Lilies Fund



Impact :

Greater confidence, reduced isolation, and stronger connections to community resources

Iman's Story

A Safe Beginning, a Place to Belong

Every newcomer family deserves a safe place to begin building a life in Canada. Iman's story reflects the impact of sustained housing support and the need for earlier access to appropriate housing.

When Iman arrived in 2022, securing safe, accessible and affordable housing was essential. Despite ongoing advocacy from Reception House's Housing Team, it took more than three years to find a home that met her needs. Through consistent coordination and support, the team ensured she remained connected to options and resources throughout that time.

Her move into permanent housing is a meaningful outcome and a testament to this work.

At the same time, her experience highlights a broader reality: timely access to suitable housing remains a challenge. Home Begins Here responds to this need, helping newcomers transition into stable housing sooner.

Photo: Staff celebrated Iman's long-awaited move with a potluck at temporary accommodations



Home Begins Here

Just like Iman, every family deserves a safe place to begin their life in Canada. Yet many newcomers are placed in temporary settings that make it harder to achieve stability and move forward.

Home Begins Here will address this gap by creating 34 units of purpose-built housing at **449–471 Wellington Street North, Kitchener, ON**. Designed specifically for refugees and newcomers, this transitional and temporary housing project integrates housing with on-site supports to help families transition from crisis to stability more quickly.

With decades of experience in newcomer settlement, Reception House is building on proven expertise to deliver a model that strengthens outcomes across the system—helping families access safe housing sooner and build their lives with dignity and independence.



[Scan to Learn More](#)



[Scan to Donate](#)



387

Government-Assisted
Refugees welcomed
across families



97%

arrived with limited
or no English
proficiency



62%

of arrivals were
Rohingya refugees



161 children (42%)
77 youth (20%)
143 adults (37%)
6 seniors (2%)



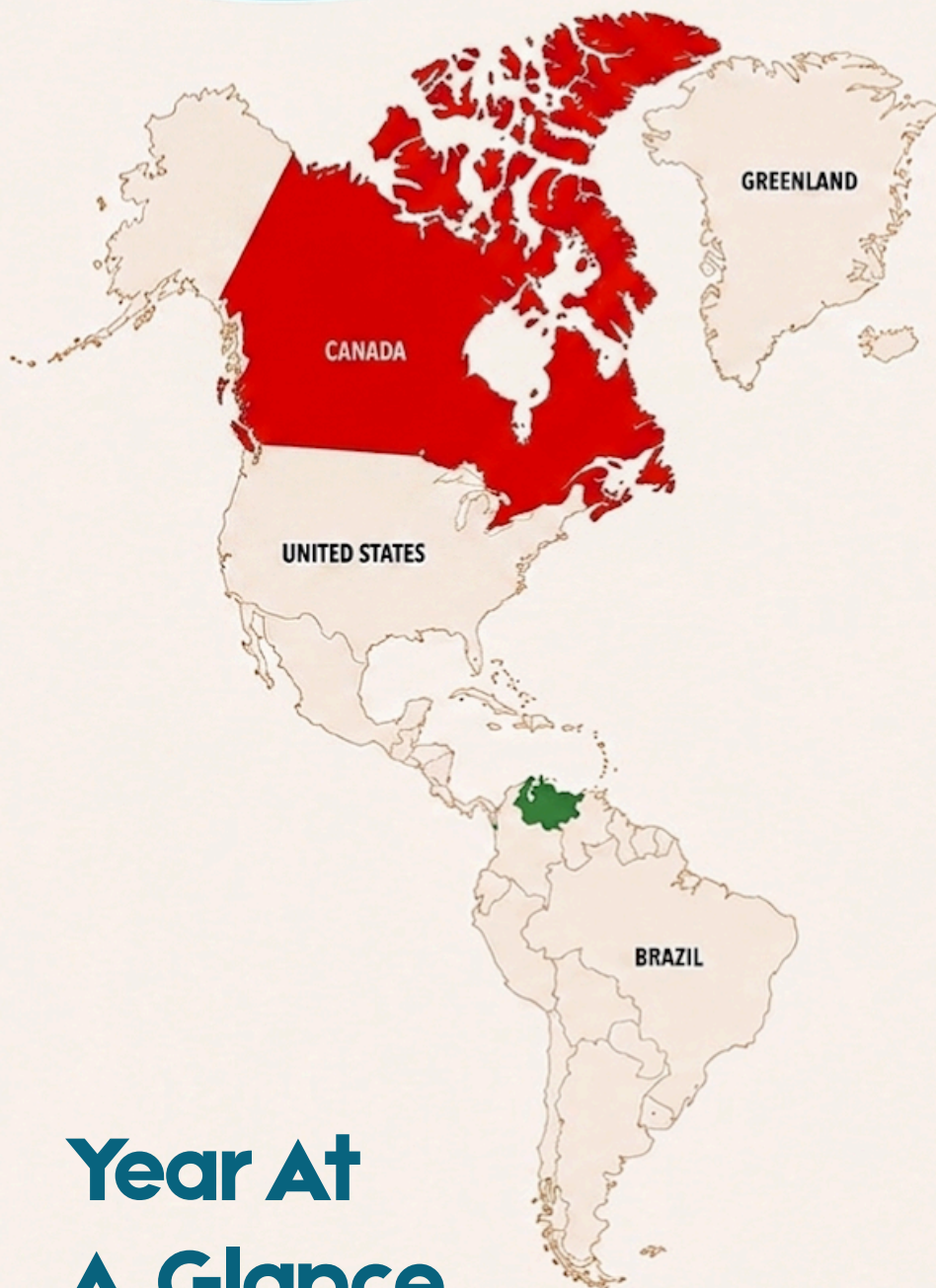
100%

of newcomer families
secured permanent
housing during RAP

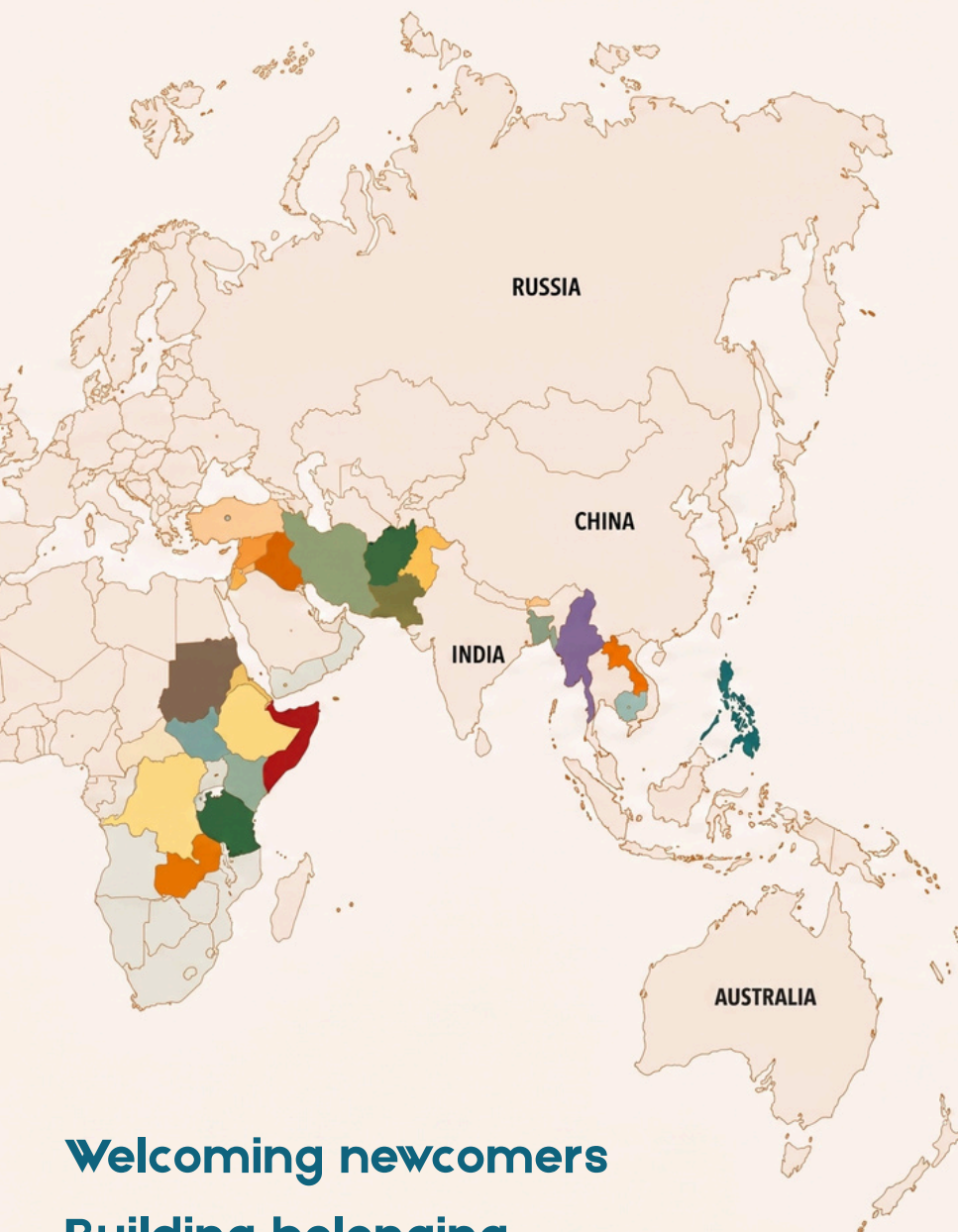


214

newcomers received
immediate orientation
to life in Canada



**Year At
A Glance**



Welcoming newcomers Building belonging



All

school-aged children
were successfully
enrolled in school



1,714

active clients served
throughout the year



808

new clients
accessed Client Support
Services



16,690+

direct service interactions
and referrals delivered



14,950+

interpretation supports
provided



31,900+

service hours invested
in supporting newcomer
families

Stronger Together



As we look ahead, Reception House Waterloo Region remains committed to building a more inclusive, compassionate and equitable community for all.

FUTURE GOALS OF RECEPTION HOUSE WATERLOO REGION



1. Expand access to safe, affordable, and supportive housing for newcomers through the “Home Begins Here” initiative



2. Increase the organization’s capacity to serve the growing needs of refugees and newcomers arriving in Waterloo Region



3. Strengthen employment, language training, settlement programs to help newcomers achieve long-term independence and success



4. Enhance partnerships with governments, businesses, educational institutions, and community organizations



5. Advance anti-racism, anti-hate, and inclusion initiatives that foster belonging and equitable opportunities for all residents



6. Create innovative solutions that address systemic barriers affecting newcomers, including housing, employment and social inclusion



7. Increase community awareness, engagement around newcomer experiences and contributions



8. Expand fundraising , donor engagement to ensure sustainable support for programs and services



9. Strengthen volunteer and mentorship opportunities that connect newcomers with the broader community



10. Continue building a welcoming Waterloo Region where every newcomer can find belonging, security, and the opportunity to thrive



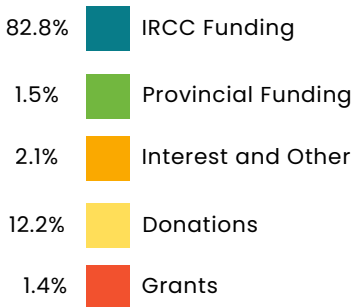
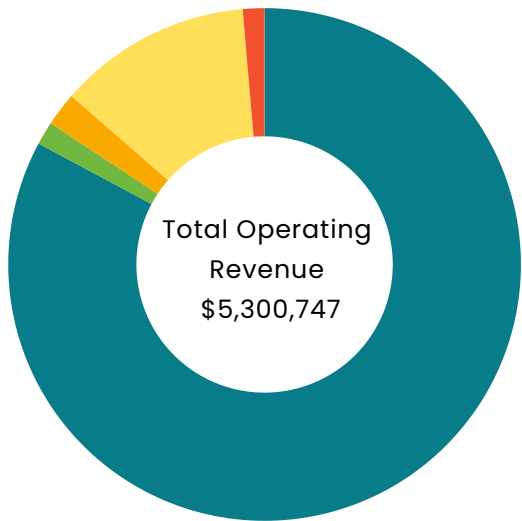
We are committed to working together with our community to create a future where everyone has the opportunity to **belong**, **contribute** and **succeed**

Financial Insights

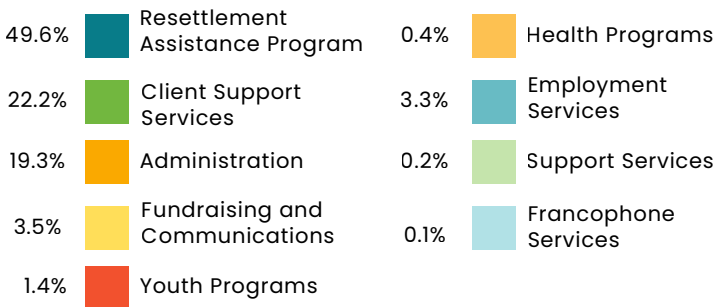
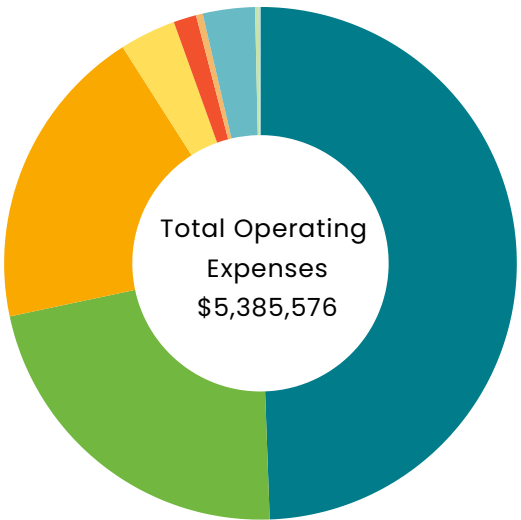
2025-2026



Our Funding Comes From



How We Invest Your Support



Your support helps fund programs & services that connect newcomers to housing, employment, language supports and stronger community connections

Volunteer with us

The work of Reception House is strengthened by the commitment of our incredible volunteers



Our volunteers help give every client a warm welcome to Canada

As a volunteer with Reception House, you can make a difference by:



Practicing English

Support clients through English Conversation Circle



Navigating the Community

Help clients learn and practice taking public transit



Bridging Communication Gaps

Provide informal interpretation



Sharing a Meal

Engage with and share meal times with clients



Supporting Children & Youth

Help with or facilitate children and youth activities



Representing Reception House

Represent Reception House at fundraisers and community events

Be Part of the Welcome

If you want to become part of a kind, supportive and welcoming community, join the Reception House volunteer team!



INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Scan the QR code or visit

receptionhouse.ca/volunteer

From Support to Impact

Across RAP, CSS, community initiatives, and employment, a consistent pattern emerges: **When newcomers are supported holistically, they move from stability to participation**

- Housing creates safety
- Services build capacity
- Community fosters belonging
- Employment enables contribution

Together, these outcomes define our impact and are made possible through the support of our community. Want to be part of the impact? Scan the QR codes at right to learn more



Donate
Monthly



Upcoming
Events



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada
Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Ontario



Ontario
Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium
de l'Ontario



Region of Waterloo



KITCHENER



WATERLOO REGION
Community
Foundation

EmployNext
powered by serco



Kitchener Rangers Community Fund



LYLE S. HALLMAN
FOUNDATION



FAIRMOUNT FOUNDATION

To our funders, donors, community partners, and supporters, thank you for making this work possible. Your continued support helps create a more welcoming Waterloo Region where newcomers can build safe, stable and fulfilling lives



Thank you to over 200 organizations and individuals who contributed to supporting Reception House Waterloo Region



Reception House
Waterloo Region

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Reception House Waterloo Region is a registered
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