

# Immigration & Settlement Service

## Community Report 2021/22

EDMONTON & RED DEER



2021/2022 was a record setting year for human migration and refugee crises. Catholic Social Services' (CSS) Immigration and Settlement Service (ISS) has been at the forefront of response efforts in Edmonton and central Alberta. Read on to learn how our agency has been working with partners to welcome an influx of refugees and newcomers to our province.

Conducted **4,699** language assessments: **3,442** with the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Assessment Program and **1,257** with the Language and Vocational Assessment (LVA) and Counselling Program.

## Responding to Afghanistan's Humanitarian Crisis

In August 2021, when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, the Government of Canada introduced several programs and measures to respond to the evolving humanitarian crisis. This included a commitment from the federal government to resettle at least 40,000 Afghan refugees over two years. Within this, was the creation of Canada's human rights defenders immigration stream.

In 2021/2022, CSS assisted and resettled 674 Afghan refugees, including the 170 staff and family members of the Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization (AHRDO).

AHRDO is an independent, non-profit organization, which spent more than a decade documenting the Taliban's war crimes and preserving the memory of their victims. The staff, and their families, faced certain arrest, persecution, and even, death, once the Taliban took control of the country.

The group spent days at the Kabul airport, pleading for safe passage out of Afghanistan. When they could not secure a flight for all of their staff, they chartered buses and drove to the Pakistan border, where they continued on foot. All 170 members hid in a small community hall in Pakistan for 5 months, before they received word from the Canadian government that their refugee application had been approved.

On January 11, 2022, the group flew from Pakistan and arrived safely in Edmonton. ISS staff worked around the clock to welcome and support this large

arrival: from receiving the group at the airport and providing information and orientation in Dari and Pashto, to distributing tablets and arranging for local Afghan food, offering language assessments at the hotel where the group stayed, helping find permanent accommodations, registering kids in school, and much, much more.

*To better understand the group's harrowing journey, and the role CSS played in their resettlement in Edmonton, you can watch this short video through the QR Code:*



# Ukrainian response

On February 24, 2022, Russia began a military invasion of Ukraine, forcing millions of people to flee their home country. In response to this conflict, the Government of Canada committed to welcoming an unlimited number of Ukrainian evacuees under the special Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program.

CSS was tasked by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to coordinate the Ukrainian response for central and northern Alberta, while the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA), led the response in southern Alberta.

Together, CSS and AAISA developed and launched the [ukrainiansinalberta.ca](http://ukrainiansinalberta.ca) website and established a centralized phone line and email account to streamline and facilitate communication and information sharing among all stakeholders, including Ukrainian evacuees abroad and already in Alberta. These tools have been used to provide support and referrals to Ukrainian evacuees, and to address needs and concerns.

In addition, CSS has provided a myriad of settlement services and supports for Ukrainians arriving in Edmonton, Lloydminster, and Red Deer, including help finding housing, providing language assessments and referrals to English classes, offering orientation, referrals to employment services, help registering kids in school, assistance applying for Alberta Health Care, and more.

Served **11,604** newcomers in Edmonton and Red Deer, and **2,441** newcomers in Lloydminster.



## Welcome to Edmonton (W2YEG)

CSS's ISS prides itself on offering top-notch orientation services, often in a newcomers' first language. Our orientation sessions are geared towards providing all the information needed for newcomers to make informed decisions and to have a successful settlement journey in Canada.

In 2021/22, CSS delivered 342 orientation sessions for over 1,300 newcomers with interpretation support available in Amharic, Arabic, Dari, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Pashto, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tigrinya, and Ukrainian. We also facilitated 18 virtual orientation sessions for Afghan refugees in Calgary and Toronto.

One of our prominent achievements this year was the development of *"Welcome to Edmonton: An Orientation Guidebook for Newcomers to Canada,"* the culmination of more than 15 years of work, research, and experience offering newcomer orientation sessions for life in Canada. Topics covered in the guidebook include: Life in Edmonton; Money (Banking and Budgeting); Culture and Culture Shock; Law and Police; Education; Family Life in Edmonton; Health and Wellness; and Multiculturalism in Canada, among others. The guidebook is available in English and French and can be easily accessed from our website: [newcomers.cssalberta.ca](http://newcomers.cssalberta.ca)



ENGLISH



FRENCH

Resettled **674** refugees from Afghanistan, and an additional **880** refugees from **22** other countries.

[cssalberta.ca](http://cssalberta.ca)



Sign of Hope!