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NEWS RELEASE

To: Assignment Editors, Reporters and Producers

Ottawa opens 2016 Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW) on World Refugee Day to show solidarity with refugees; over 65 events are scheduled to take place in various locations across the city during Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW), June 20-27

OTTAWA (June 16, 2016)—The City of Ottawa’s strength as a leader in showing hospitality to newcomers is celebrated with the launch of the [2016 Welcoming Ottawa Week \(WOW\)](#). Coinciding with World Refugee Day on June 20 this year—and at a time of an unprecedented movement of refugees worldwide—the WOW launch is an opportunity for all citizens of Ottawa to express our genuine welcome to newcomers, take part in dialogues, and simply have fun while learning new things.

Thus, as the world unites to mark World Refugee Day on June 20th, 2016, Ottawa residents, elected officials, government executives, service providers, newcomers, and refugees will gather at City Hall at 8:00 a.m. to show solidarity with refugees, to reflect on the warmth of Ottawa’s welcome, and to kick-start 2016 Welcoming Ottawa Week (WOW).

“Welcoming Ottawa Week is a wonderful platform for us to reflect on Ottawa’s current and historic welcome to refugees and newcomers, while showcasing our genuine respect for the courage and strength newcomers demonstrate in overcoming tremendous obstacles to join our community,” says Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson.

After renewing his proclamation of World Refugee Day, Mayor Watson will be joined by Michael Casasola, officer in charge of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Canada, Alex Munter, OLIP council chair and president and CEO of the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario, and Charles Bordeleau, chief of police, Ottawa Police Service, to raise the UNHCR flag at Marion Dewar Plaza in front of Ottawa City Hall.

City Councillor Michael Qaqish will present the Welcoming Ottawa Awards, to recognize three Ottawans nominated by immigrants and refugees as being kind and supportive in their journeys of making Ottawa their new home. As well, CBC Radio’s Alan Neal will lead a public conversation animated by expert speakers and refugees, both new and long-integrated, on the warmth of our welcome.

Initiated by the [Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership](#) (OLIP) and championed by the mayor of Ottawa, WOW is becoming a mainstay in Ottawa’s summer calendar. In just four short years, this annual series of events—unique to Ottawa—has grown to nearly 10 times the size it was in its inaugural year.

“We are very proud to welcome so many new contributors to the WOW calendar of events this year: museums, embassies and immigrant association,” says Hindia Mohamoud, OLIP director.

“We are also happy that this year, international organizations such as the UNHCR, UNESCO, Médecins Sans Frontières, and Amnesty International are joining forces with us. It’s going to be a fantastic week.”

#WOW16 coincides with the release of [History and Legacy of Refugee Resettlement in Ottawa](#), a primer on refugee resettlement in our city over the past years.

LAUNCH EVENT: The Warmth of Ottawa’s Welcome: Celebration of World Refugee Day and A Public Conversation on Ottawa’s Welcome to Refugees

OLIP, the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Police Service, Local Agencies Serving Immigrants (LASI) and Refugee613, together with the UNHCR and the Refugee Network of Ottawa (RENO) will present a breakfast event, flag raising, poetry contest and entertainment on June 20. The highlight of the launch event is the public dialogue: 20 round-tables of eight people each will host one refugee along with a resettlement service person, who will talk for 10 minutes about their refugee experiences. Each table will get a chance to hear each refugee and a summary conversation will follow.

[Full agenda for the WOW launch event](#)

WHERE: Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Avenue;
Council Chambers, Jean Pigott Hall and Main Corridor

WHEN: Monday, June 20, 2016
8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Over 65 free events take place all week from June 20-27, 2016:

- Pledge support to stand #WithRefugees as part of UNHCR's [World Refugee Day campaign](#) (June 20, Ottawa City Hall)
- Take a walk through a mock refugee camp at *The Refugee Journey Exhibit* by Médecins Sans Frontières (June 20, Ottawa City Hall)
- Watch a panel discussion on *Settlement of LGBTQ Refugees in Canada* (June 22, Ottawa Public Library Auditorium, Main Branch)
- Celebrate how Ottawa welcomed Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees in the *Boat People Photo Exhibit*, and the *Marion and Us Exhibit* (All week long, Plant Recreation Centre)
- Discover Ottawa's neighbourhood heritage in [Chinatown and Little Italy Guided Walking Tours](#) (All week long, see website for details)
- Be a part of the opening of *Faces and Stories of a Welcoming City Exhibit*, photos by OLIP's Nyamulola Kambanji, curated by OLIP and Louisa Taylor, WOW co-chair (All week long, Jean Pigott Hall, Ottawa City Hall)

[Full Welcoming Ottawa Week activity calendar](#)

Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership

The Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) was founded in October 2009 by the City of Ottawa and LASI (Local Agencies Serving Immigrants). The partnership is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada with the mandate of improving local capacity to attract, settle and integrate immigrants. Visit OLIP online at www.olip-plio.ca.

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SOCIAL MEDIA

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