

Review of OMRA - 2024

OMRA was able to help 47 families and individuals from 19 different countries in 2024, but had an average of 27 families in any one month, spending a total of ~\$162K in rent subsidies. Some individuals need a subsidy only for a couple of months, while others need it for up to four or five years. In the latter half of the year, OMRA increased the number of asylum seekers that we were helping; they receive less financial help than government-assisted and privately-sponsored refugees. Combined with the increase in cost of housing, our average rent subsidy in Dec 2024 increased to a high of \$533.

Through the grocery card program, OMRA raised ~\$56K in 2024. Seven faith-based organizations participate in the grocery card program (OMC, GSJ United, Emmanuel United, St. Thomas the Apostle, Quakers, St Joe's RC, Temple Israel), as well as a couple of community-based groups (such as neighbours, friends, sports club, work-place). OMRA estimates about 350 people purchase grocery cards each month.

Donations are now our largest source of income, totalling ~\$153K in 2024. While most of these are from individuals, the largest donation was from the Walls and Ceilings Contractors Association (WACCA), which contributed \$80K from their annual charity Golf Tournament. Participation in the annual Tamarack Race in May has quickly become an annual tradition for OMRA, and raised ~\$25K in 2024.

In 2025, we are planning to increase the average number of subsidies at any time to 35 and estimate that we will spend ~\$220K. The extra funds will come from the generous donation OMRA received in 2024 from WACCA.

In 2024, OMRA started a pilot project entitled Rent Assist Allies, under the leadership of Janet Kredo. This project is aimed at helping non-immigrant low-income Ottawa families with their rent to help them become self-sufficient, using many of the same principles developed by OMRA in helping refugee families. Small grants have been received from the Ottawa Community Foundation and the Catherine Donnelly Foundation to start this work.

The evaluation study was completed by researchers at the University of Ottawa, funded by a grant from the Catherine Donnelly Foundation. The study involved the independent analysis of many interviews and a survey of current and previous OMRA clients, as well as partners; the conclusion confirmed that OMRA is making a positive impact in the lives of many of our clients.

OMRA is always looking for new volunteers to help with the many tasks associated with operating a charity, but especially to help with tutoring newcomers. If anyone is interested, please contact Maria at Rigby.OMRA@gmail.com.