

June 20, 2025 – World Refugee Day

## **Hamilton Organizations serving Immigrants and Refugees: Bill C-2 Strengthens Barriers, Not Safety.**

As organizations in Hamilton working with refugees, immigrants and survivors of gender-based violence, we are deeply concerned about Bill C-2, the *Strong Borders Act*.

We are also members of the Hamilton Coalition for Refugee Claimants which is made up of organizations serving thousands of claimants annually. We work collaboratively to support claimants to find safety and to build meaningful lives integrated into our communities in Hamilton. We are deeply concerned about Bill C-2, the Strong Borders Act.

This Bill, introduced in early June, could seriously impact the most vulnerable people who come to Canada to seek safety, including refugee claimants, women fleeing abuse, Two-Spirit LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people without permanent status.

If passed, Bill C-2 would:

- Block people who have been in Canada for more than a year from accessing the Immigration and Refugee Board for a hearing, retroactive to June 2020.
- Increase this and future federal governments' power to cancel/end status for whole groups of people;
- Eliminate the 14 day window for people crossing the border to make a refugee claim;

The title of this bill suggests that it will 'strengthen' Canada's border system. Yet it does not strengthen safety, justice or human rights. Instead, it would strengthen mechanisms to exclude, detain and deport people who need support.

Just two months ago on Refugee Rights Day (April 4), we gathered with community members to celebrate the historic 1985 Singh Decision by the Canadian Supreme Court, and Canada's commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of people fleeing hardship, violence and many forms of human rights abuses. We also celebrated our pride to live and operate agencies in a country where people fleeing these circumstances could find safety, stability and opportunities to contribute to our communities.

In Hamilton, our coalition is ready to welcome people fleeing danger and to connect them to the supports they need to find safety, belonging and ways to contribute their skills here.

Bill C-2 narrows and further undermines the pathway to safety, leaving more people at risk.

We call on the Government of Canada to:

- Withdraw Bill C-2;
- End the Safe Third Country Agreement;
- Ensure no one is denied protection due to how or when they arrive;

We strongly recommend that the Government of Canada works with frontline organizations and those with lived experience to strengthen access to refugee protection and supports for newcomers rather than putting up policy walls that risk keeping people in unsafe situations.

Signed,

<i>Emergency Support Committee for Refugees</i>	<i>Good Shepherd</i>	
<i>Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council</i>	<i>Micah House</i>	<i>Open Homes Hamilton</i>
<i>Refuge Newcomer Health</i>	<i>Wesley</i>	<i>YWCA Hamilton</i>



EMERGENCY SUPPORT COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES



E.S.C.R.

