



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

May 17, 2024

Announcement of Change to Newcomer Serving Organization's Name

Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) Changes its Name to Edmonton Newcomer Centre

Edmonton, Alberta

The Board of Directors for the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN) is excited to announce that the organization has changed its name to the Edmonton Newcomer Centre.

Harman Singh Kandola, Board Chair, recognizes the important legacy of the Founding Churches while also emphasizing the need to continue evolving to meet the needs and expectations of today's community. "As Board Chair, I am proud to announce the transition from the name Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers to the Newcomer Centre, a change that reflects our inclusivity. We will honour the legacy of our founding Mennonite churches, whose vision and values continue to guide our mission of supporting newcomers to thrive in Edmonton."

The new name was chosen to create clarity of purpose and be more inclusive so the organization's identity resonates with the diverse communities served.

"It was a big decision to change our name and we consulted extensively with our stakeholders," says Meghan Klein, Executive Director. "However, we knew there was a need for greater clarity. Clients would often say they had heard of us when they got to Edmonton but didn't think we were 'for them' since they were not Mennonite or Christian." The organization was finding that many people eligible for supports stayed away until someone deliberately advised them this was a place they could find help. "We want everyone to know without a doubt, if you're new to Canada or need support at any stage of your settlement journey, we are here for you," says Klein.

From its inception, the Newcomer Centre has been non-denominational and offered support to all immigrants and refugees. The organization was founded in 1980 by volunteers in response to high numbers of South Asian refugees arriving in the city. While intended to be a short-term outreach project, the community's need for ongoing support to help immigrants and refugees get set up for

success did not stop. The organization was incorporated under the Societies Act as the Edmonton Mennonite Society for the Assistance of Newcomers in 1983 under the direction of a board consisting of appointees from First Mennonite Church, Holyrood Mennonite Church and Lendrum Mennonite Brethren Church. In 1996, the organization changed its name to the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, which by the early 2000s became shortened to the acronym EMCN.

The Newcomer Centre is funded through government investment and community donations. The organization works closely with all orders of government, educational institutions, and businesses to achieve positive outcomes for clients and for the community at large.

Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, on behalf of City Council, emphasized the importance of the Newcomer Centre's role in creating a welcoming city. "The Newcomer Centre is an important resource in our community to ensure that all people who choose Edmonton as their home, as either an immigrant or refugee, are given the tools to succeed. Their work is deeply important and is aligned with Council's goals to build a city that is welcoming to all."

"The renaming of the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers to the Edmonton Newcomer Centre reflects our commitment to inclusivity and reflects the evolving needs of newcomers in our community," said Muhammed Yaseen, Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism for the Government of Alberta. "We applaud the organization's dedication to providing vital services and support to newcomers, and we look forward to continued collaboration in building a welcoming and prosperous Alberta for all."

Randy Boissonnault, Minister for Employment, Workforce Development, and Official Languages and Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Centre has worked closely with the Newcomer Centre over the years in support of his constituents. "The Edmonton Newcomer Centre is a pillar of support and acceptance for newcomers looking to call Edmonton home, providing important services that help make a smooth transition to Canadian life. This change in title tells all Edmontonians that the Edmonton Newcomer Centre is a safe space for them to start the journey of finding home here in Canada."

There is a planned increase in the number of immigrants to Canada, both to address critical labour market needs and in response to humanitarian crises resulting from ongoing conflicts and crises in countries like Syria, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. The Newcomer Centre is poised to play an integral part in building a vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous Edmonton by supporting newcomers on their journey to self-reliance and community integration.

Company Description

The Newcomer Centre serves up to 17,000 newcomers every year and offers almost 30 programs and services to support the entire settlement journey. These include English language learning, specialized care for newcomer children, mental health and therapeutic supports, in-school liaisons for children and

youth, job search support and employment training, cultural awareness training for employers, and community development.

The Newcomer Centre also hosts the annual RISE Awards to recognize individuals and businesses who are making the city a more welcoming and inclusive place to live and work. Nominations are now open and this year's event takes place on October 26, 2024 (www.newcomercentre.com/RISE-awards).

To learn more about how the Newcomer Centre supports people to thrive here in Edmonton and how community members can become involved, all are welcome to attend one of the free, monthly Community Information Sessions (registration at www.newcomercentre.com or by calling 780-424-7709).

For more information, please contact Ehis Nzewuji at 780-423-9506 or enzewuji@newcomercentre.com.

###