



OMRA

Newsletter

Fall 2025

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A Successful AGM



As part of the required non-profit governance process as a registered charity, OMRA held its Annual General Meeting this June.

It was an highly popular event with 75 people attending and becoming members. We had delicious snacks and cold drinks for attendees – newcomers, volunteers, new and old board members and representatives from partner organizations – to enjoy while socializing before (and after!) the meeting.

We heard some of the highlights and changes from

2024-25 from Maria Rigby, OMRA.

One of the main changes was to hire Amena Khavari as a Client Services manager for a year. We made this momentous decision because the services to newcomers

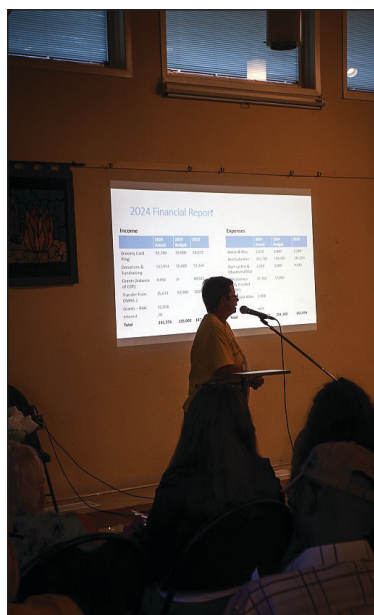
provided by schools, and all levels of government have been severely cut back. We found our OMRA clients were having an increasingly difficult time getting English classes, finding jobs and were depending on OMRA for larger subsidies and for longer times. OMRA has a small group of dedicated

volunteers who were burning out. Amena gave a wonderful presentation of her work and has been an amazing help to both the newcomers and the board.

Another highlight was that the first townhouse that OMRA purchased in 2001 for large families was sold so we could continue to assist more newcomers. *(See page 2 for more on this.)*

Retiring board members were thanked and new board members welcomed. Photos and bios of our new board members can be found on page 4.

Who knew a business meeting could be both fun and informative?



OMRA is entirely funded through the generosity of our donors and supporters. To make a tax-receivable gift, go to our CanadaHelps profile: www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/72150

2025 Tamarack Race Weekend

Thank you to all who helped Team OMRA this year!

Team OMRA had another successful year raising funds over the Tamarack Race Weekend. We had participants from 2 years young to 84 years old! OMRA had representation in the Marathon, Half Marathon, Children's Race, and the 10K run. Through your efforts (runners, walkers, strollers, and joggers) we raised over \$18,000.



Team OMRA ready to hit the road for the 2K walk



A FUNraiser for the Rent Assist Allies Project

Led by Janet Kreda, Rent Assist Allies (RAA) is a new initiative hosted by OMRA that offers rent subsidies to maintain stable housing for needy Ottawa families. Paired with community-driven relational support, this will enable pathways to self-sufficiency in order to prevent family homelessness. RAA will use many of the same principles that OMRA has successfully developed to help refugee families

Janet is also a very talented musician and had a milestone birthday, so she organized a fun event September 4 at the Legion in Westboro to raise money for RAA on her 60th birthday. The music was fantastic, and the band often had



the audience singing and dancing. Everyone had a great time, and over \$2,200 was raised to help get the RAA initiative off the ground.



SOLD!

This spring, OMRA sold one of the townhouses we had purchased in 2001. The amazing thing is, we sold it to a family that we had assisted in earlier years! It is truly a success story about how OMRA's subsidies can lead to financial independence. Rana, pictured here with her family in front of their new home, was also at our AGM in June. The joy she showed was amazing to see, and we are proud of their accomplishments.

2025 OMRA Potluck Picnic

On Aug 23rd, around 100 people enjoyed an afternoon together in Brantwood Park. It was complete with delicious foods from around the world, with canoe rides for all newcomers and most importantly, with lots of opportunity for newcomers and volunteers to chat and get to know one another.

The photos speak for themselves!



The OMRA Grocery Card Program Needs More Participants!

Why? Housing costs are escalating. A single room is about \$900 a month and government support has not increased. A single person receives just \$733/month to cover rent, food, and any other needs. OMRA subsidies are now up to \$1,000 a month per household. OMRA supports about 35 households per year, so this program provides much of the money needed to provide subsidies. Simply put, OMRA is a small organization with big commitments. **The more people who buy grocery cards, the more money we have to provide much needed rent subsidies.**

What are the benefits for participants? A participant buys a grocery card and gets the full value of that card. **The stores then give us 5% on the total purchases.** It's an amazing help for newcomers without putting any financial strain on the participant. We all need to buy food.

How? Once a month, participants decide how many grocery cards they would like to purchase. OMRA sells Farm Boy and Shoppers Drug Mart cards in \$50 denominations, or Metro, Food Basics and Loblaws, Independent Grocers, or No Frills in either \$50 or \$100 denominations. The participant sends an e-transfer to OMRA and then picks up the cards from an OMRA distributor. Voila! OMRA can provide more and higher rent subsidies.

Please consider joining as an individual or as a community, church, work or friend group.

Contact Maria Rigby at:
mariarigby@omraottawa.org
for more information or to set up a group.

Meet the newest OMRA Directors

At the OMRA AGM on June 9, 2025, we had four new directors of the board confirmed. They are adding a wealth of experience in non-profit governance, immigration and refugee issues, and a wide range of other skills. We are pleased to have them on the OMRA team.

Keely Davison

I am a retired software professional. For several years I have been involved informally with refugees and newcomers to Canada, including sharing my home with some. Inspired to help in more ways by the amazing OMRA board members that I know, I am excited to have the opportunity to join the board.



Omid Noori

Omid Noori holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Public Administration from Osmania University in India, as well as an Advanced Diploma in Project Management. He brings over 16 years of professional experience in project management, humanitarian assistance, and community development, having worked with international non-profit organizations in both Afghanistan and Canada. Currently, Omid serves as Employment Case Manager with the Employment Ontario Program at the YMCA in of the National Capital Region.



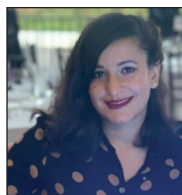
Sheila Riordon

Sheila worked for the Government of Canada for 36 years holding a number of senior executive positions. She has extensive experience in governance matters, policy development and international negotiations. She has served Canada abroad as a diplomat— in Geneva and Washington DC. Sheila is a member of several non-profits including the Lions Club, the Catholic Women's League and the Canadian Irish Cultural Association. She has a passion for choral music and sings in three choirs. She enjoys cycling, skating and cross-country skiing. Sheila has a BA in Political Science and an MBA.



Roya Sham

Roya joins OMRA bringing an extensive resume of experience as an activist and volunteer. She was born



in Kandahar and came to Canada when she was 13. A strong feminist, she also brings her very real lived experience as a refugee to our board, as well as her strategic planning and fundraising expertise. She has worked at the Aga Khan Foundation, volunteered with Journalists for Human Rights, and offered her translation and tutoring skills at a number of settlement and refugee rights agencies in Ottawa.

OMRA and fundraising

OMRA has been very blessed over the years having wonderful donors and supportive partners. In 2025, as rent costs skyrocket and the needs of our clients are becoming more complex, we need your support more than ever.

To all our monthly donors, **thank you**. And to those who contribute regularly, **thank you as well**. Your financial contributions not only help us help our clients, but also tell us that the “community approves”! And to our fantastic grocery card team, **you are nothing short of amazing**.

But did you know that there are other ways to help OMRA's finances?

For instance, if you are part of a workplace **United Way** campaign, you can direct some or all of your contributions to OMRA. All you need to do is, within your workplace campaign site, find the “Other Registered Charities” portal and search for OMRA. Simple as that!

OMRA also has an account with CanadaHelps (CH) and many of you make donations this way. But here is another great option: **donating securities** through a certified agents such as CH or **Abundance Canada**. You will save even more on taxes by this method than cashing in your securities and donating the proceeds. Contact OMRA for more information.

Some of our supporters are planning “**mini-fundraisers**” like coffee klatches or music events with OMRA as the beneficiary. This is a marvelous idea, and not only raises money, but **spreads the word about the critical work OMRA does** and the challenges refugees are facing. If you would like to organize something, just let us know and we can supply you with information about OMRA and our work. In the past, OMRA has been the charity of choice for golf tournaments, which is another way to help.

OMRA will be looking at ways to increase our fundraising with grants and institutional supports, and together we can **keep our rent assistance going strong**.