

Refugees in Winnipeg opening their homes to help recent wave of asylum seekers

Sitti Ali is a refugee from Djibouti who is taking in refugee claimants who arrived in Winnipeg last week

By Nelly Gonzalez, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 28, 2017 5:00 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 28, 2017 2:15 PM CT

Some refugees in Winnipeg, living on social assistance themselves, are opening their homes to help other refugee claimants who need temporary housing.

Sitti Ali, 28, is a refugee who has been living in Winnipeg for just over three months after leaving Djibouti, East Africa.

Ali and two other women live in a four-bedroom home in the North End. They recently took in three refugee claimants from Djibouti who were staying at Salvation Army Booth Centre last weekend.

"I like helping people, because I've been helped so why not help people?" she said.

The refugee claimants are from her home country in East Africa, who crossed the Emerson border on foot last week.

"These are families with babies that do not have any place."

"It's just for a short period until they can get welfare," Ali said.

Ali said she was visiting the shelter at the Salvation Army Booth Centre last Friday night when she noticed a woman who looked upset and scared.

"I saw a lady and two other men and they were all staying in the singles side, the family side is OK but the single side is scary," Ali said.

"So the lady was like 'I can't stay here' so ... I said why not? Let's go, come to my house."

Ali said she wanted to help the woman and the two men because she didn't want them to go through what she went through when she first arrived in Winnipeg from the Emerson border in November.

She said she was put in a hotel in Winnipeg for seven hours until she was picked up from officials from Welcome Place, a settlement agency that helps refugees.

"The first time I came here I didn't know anyone, we were staying in hotel and it took time for me to get to Welcome Place."

RCMP said at least 143 asylum seekers have crossed the Emerson border by foot into Manitoba this year, including at least a dozen this past weekend.

- [Border services sets up emergency trailer to make space for refugee seekers](#)
- [22 refugees entered Manitoba near Emerson border over the weekend](#)
- [Record number of refugees checking in at Welcome Place](#)

The Salvation Army Booth Centre recently added 30 beds in its homeless shelter to help refugee claimants seeking shelter in Winnipeg.

Last week the Manitoba government announced funding to add 14 emergency units to help settlement agency Welcome Place deal with the influx of refugees.

Abdikheir Ahmed helps refugee claimants in the Somali community in Winnipeg, and he too has taken in refugee claimants in his home.

"The Salvation Army is taking in a few people, Welcome Place is taking in a few people but the bulk of this number of refugees fall within the community also," Ahmed said.

Ahmed said the Somali community is opening their homes too.

"People have stepped up to provide support to refugees, they understand what it means to be a refugee."

"My only concern is that if we have 500 people show up in a weekend, that may be a difficult thing to handle for communities here."

Ali says she now gets by on social assistance with the help of donations from friends in the Somali community, to buy food and bus transportation. But Ali believes more help is needed as more asylum seekers cross into Manitoba every week.

"People are coming to Canada because they think Canada is heaven," she said.

"We need your help, we need to be helping each other because the only thing we have is each other," she said.

- [Read full coverage of refugees crossing the U.S. border into Manitoba](#)

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