

Put your money where your mouth is for Syrian refugees, says local resident



By Brock Weir

People across Aurora probably share similar feelings to those felt by Ian MacEachern just about every time he watches the news or flips the page on a newspaper.

There is a mix of disappointment, sadness and anger that the situation in Syria is unfolding as it is, some disbelief over response to the refugee crisis around the world, and some bemusement as hundreds take to the streets in protest over stringent immigration policies.

But, rather than complain about it, Mr. MacEachern, 95, wants to do something about it ? and he wants you to do the same.

Although he might disagree, the years have not diminished his energy and from his assisted living residence, he is spearheading an initiative to raise up to \$250,000 ? funding for which will be doubled by the Federal Government ? for refugee camps being run by the Red Cross for displaced Syrians.

?I feel upset this whole thing is happening,? says Mr. MacEachern. ?It just felt so?impossible watching this whole thing going on. All I can do is give some money. I can't go over there and fight for them. It just upsets me to see these things on TV, such as people marching up and down the streets waving flags and things, and that's all they do. That is their contribution. That is okay to a point, but I don't think the government looks at or cares about it unless it is a political idea. It is non-effective. It is not putting money where their mouth is.?

Mr. MacEachern has always supported charities. A former business person in the trade of Canadian distribution for American companies and their products, he says he has a small estate left and half of that has already been earmarked for others, including to the Presbyterian Church supporting a hospital in Malawi, as well as charities for the homeless in Downtown Toronto.

Aurora residents can expect to receive flyers in the mail over the coming days outlining the best ways to support the Red Cross locally through this initiative. That is just the beginning. Over the next several weeks, Mr. MacEachern hopes to form a number of committees to keep the ball rolling, branching this initiative out to local schools so students can take ownership of the initiative as well.

?It has already taken a lot of work, and it will before it is over,? he says, noting the Red Cross will issue tax receipts to all donors. ?I want to set up a committee to go to the school boards and request to meet with each principal, take a flyer for each kid and each kid

can do something in the school, even if it is \$5 or \$10.?

In a municipality the size of Aurora, Mr. MacEachern says his \$250,000 isn't too ambitious. ?There is no point in asking for the moon,? he says, and if each resident chips in a few dollars, it should be a relatively easy target to hit.

?I hope people will be inspired to do something in this particular case, but also be inspired by the fact there is lots of poverty in their own country too that needs to be addressed,? says Mr. MacEachern. ?Hopefully they can become more involved with local politics as well so something can be done with food banks.?