

🔍 | **Subscribe to bold journalism that helps you take action. Just \$3.46/week.**

Subscribe N  
\$3.46+tax/we

 **The Star Edition**  
CHANGE LOCATION

# THE STAR

LOCAL CANADA POLITICS WORLD OPINION LIFE SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS STAR I

This copy is for your personal non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies of Toronto Star content for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, or inquire about permissions/licensing, please go to: [www.TorontoStarReprints.com](http://www.TorontoStarReprints.com)

IMMIGRATION 

## These Syrian newcomers say they 'no excuse' to miss their English class



By **Nicholas Keung** Immigration reporter  
Fri., May 19, 2017 | ⌚ 4 min. read



For a group of Syrian newcomers at a Mississauga apartment complex, English language training is delivered at their doorstep.

“You have no excuse not to show up for the classes,” said Fedaa Laflouf, a native from Homs, who was sponsored to Canada with her husband and four children by the federal government last October via Lebanon.

Since January, the 42-year-old woman has been attending English classes in the basement of her apartment building on Mississauga Valley Blvd., near Burnhamthorpe Rd., at the hub of the newly arrived Syrian refugee community.

ARTICLE CONTINUES BELOW

The classes have a total of 30 students, who all live in one of eight highrises in the area, within five minutes’ walk to the makeshift but fully equipped campus.

Unlike traditional English classes for newcomers delivered at a central location often in commercial or industrial areas, these classes are provided right in the backyard of the community of newcomers

These Syrian newcomers say they have 'no excuse' to miss their English classes | The Star  
are provided right in the backyard of the community of newcomers. Catholic Crosscultural Services decided to bring the classes here due to the high concentration of refugees in the neighbourhood.

“Many of these newcomers came with large families. They would need transportation and childcare,” said Michael Raymond, CCS’s regional director in Peel.

“By running the classes in the community, we can address all these issues, because no travel is required. Come rain, snow, sleet and sun, the newcomers are there.”

ARTICLE CONTINUES BELOW

Namat Rihan, 25, whose family fled Damascus to Egypt in 2012, said she and her husband take turn to attend the classes — she goes in the morning and he goes in the afternoon — so at least one of them can babysit their 2-year-old daughter and 7-year-old son when one of them is in school.

**YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN...**

---

---

---

“





## The struggles and successes of five Syrian refugee families

This is very



**Syrian refugees warned of resettlement 'for profit'** aid Rihan, whose family was sponsored to Canada in October. "This is so close to home. If something happens to my girl, I can be home right away."

With 15 years of teaching English as a second language under her belt, instructor Sana Alnajjar said her class is very unique because the students bring with them so many feelings.

"They had suffered a lot of pains and still have the pains in their heart. This is a homey environment. It makes them feel more comfortable," said Alnajjar, an immigrant from Dubai, who speaks fluent Arabic, but insists on "no Arabic" in the class.

"They have great attendance because they really appreciate the opportunity to be here."



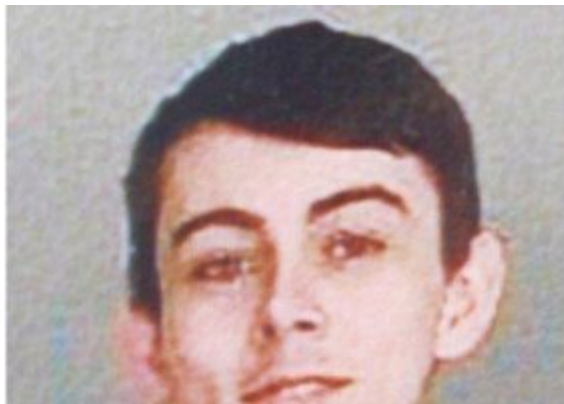
The classes run half-day, in the morning and afternoon, from Monday through Thursday. There is also an Arabic-speaking settlement worker onsite to help the students with their day-to-day problems. Often, the students, who range in age from 18 to 70, hang around and chat with Alnajjar to take every chancee to practise their English.

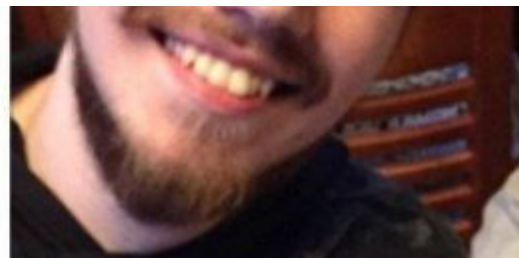
**YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN...**



**Fired deputy OPP commissioner launches \$15 million wrongful dismissal suit against Premier Doug Ford**

p  
i  
c  
k  
u  
p  
  
a  
n  
e





## B.C. manhunt suspects recorded final message on phone found with bodies, family says

w language is difficult for those who are illiterate (in their own language). To facilitate their learning, Alnajjar uses more pictures, and she is impressed with the determination and progress of these students.

“One of my female students went to the bank without an interpreter. She came to the class and was so happy to share her experience. Her husband was so proud of her. I was so proud of her. The joy came from her feeling of independence,” said Alnajjar.

“There was a guy from our class. He was at the mall and someone asked him where the washroom was. He never thought he could help other people in Canada.”

Returning to a classroom is not the easiest thing for some of the adult students.

“It is difficult because I left school such a long time ago,” said Hazem Alhajji, 33, a baker, who, along with his wife and their two sons, was sponsored by Ottawa via Lebanon in November.

“I was shy and afraid. My children would make fun of me and ask about my marks in school. But I am getting better. I feel more comfortable and confident now. I’m not afraid to go anywhere.” Given all students only have an English ability of between zero and level 2 in Canadian language benchmarks, the class focuses on practical conversational English they would need when shopping at a store, seeing a family doctor, asking for directions and talking to a bank teller, for example.

# Get more of the Star in your inbox

Never miss the latest news from the Star. Sign up for our newsletters to get today's top stories, your favourite columnists and lots more in your inbox

[Sign Up Now](#)

Mazen Hannuora only knew the letters of the alphabet and did not speak a word of English when he, his wife and four daughters arrived in September from Turkey under the Canadian government refugee sponsorship program.

“I felt I was too old to learn English, but I need to learn the language when I am in Canada,” said the 38-year-old stone-cutter. “My wife and I help each other with our English. My girls also correct me, but they also make fun of me and say, ‘Daddy, do your homework!’”

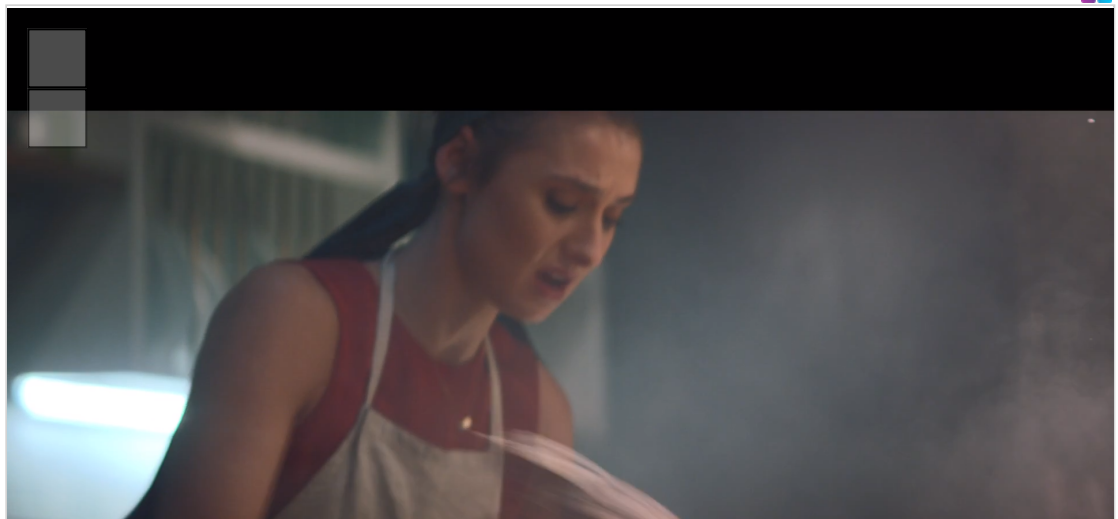
The program, which started as a pilot in January and has just had its funding renewed by the federal immigration department, now has a waiting list.

SHARE:   

 [REPORT AN ERROR](#)

 [JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS](#)

 [ABOUT THE STAR](#)





---

**MORE NEWS**

---



**New immigration rules boost family reunification, protect abused migrants**

---



## **Americans top the list of 'inadmissible' migrants to Canada**

---

## **For transgender Indians hoping to join police force, a dream is denied**

---

---

## Opioid crackdown forces pain patients to taper off drugs they say they need

---

### Juanita Abernathy, civil rights icon, dies at 89



---

### Johnson, Juncker to meet in Brexit breakthrough bid



---

#### TOP STORIES

---

### Five take-aways from eight days of hearings on Airbnb-style rentals

---

### Mitch Marner and Maple Leafs reach six-year deal worth \$65.4 million



---

### RCMP employee charged with stealing secrets



---

### Hijabi Ballers inspire Raptors to sell branded sports hijab, the first of its



# kind in NBA



# Ontario's deficit last year was \$7.4B – half what Ford claimed



Copyright owned or licensed by Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. All rights reserved. Republication or distribution of this content is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited and/or its licensors. To order copies of Toronto Star articles, please go to: [www.TorontoStarReprints.com](http://www.TorontoStarReprints.com)

## LOCAL GUIDE ([HTTP://TORONTO.THESTAR.COM/](http://toronto.thestar.com/))

(H)

**FEATURED BUSINESSES**    **RECENT ADS**



### thestar.com

- [Subscribe to the Star](#)
- [Manage Star Subscription](#)
- [Feedback](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- [Homefinder.ca](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [Today's News](#)
- [Flyers](#)
- [Insurance Hotline](#)
- [CanadaStays](#)
- [Contests](#)

### Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd.

- [Subscribe to Home Delivery](#)
- [Manage Home Delivery Subscription](#)
- [About](#)
- [Torstar Journalistic Standards](#)
- [Atkinson Principles](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [Trust Project](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Contact Webmaster](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [News Releases](#)
- [Star Internships](#)

### Advertising

- [Advertise with Us](#)
- [Advertising Terms](#)
- [Special Features](#)
- [Election Ads Regis](#)

- [Careers @ the Star](#)
- [Star Advisers](#)
- [Star ePaper Edition](#)
- [Reprint and License](#)



[Privacy Policy](#)   [Terms and Conditions](#)

© Copyright Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. 1996 - 2019

The Toronto Star and thestar.com, each property of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited, One Yonge Street, 4th floor, T M5E 1E6