



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Over 2,000 backpacks prepared for Ottawa children from families in need  
Ottawa Mayor, city officials, and volunteers provide support for back-to-school**

**Ottawa, ON** – Earlier today, a host of city officials including Mayor Jim Watson, dedicated volunteers including employees from Bell Canada, and individuals from the community joined *the Caring and Sharing Exchange* as they packed **over 2,000 backpacks for children in need across Ottawa.**

The event was generously hosted by Westgate Shopping Centre to support the Exchange's Sharing in Student Success (SISS) program, which has been providing backpacks filled with grade-appropriate school supplies to thousands of children across the city every year since 2011. **The program has seen tremendous growth over the last two years,** and while demand for SISS is increasing, the Exchange is determined to meet the need year after year.

"We have been very fortunate to have received so much support from individuals as well as many businesses in the community," said Cindy Smith, Executive Director of the Caring and Sharing Exchange.

With September just days away, the Exchange is seeking support from the community to help eliminate their waiting list for the *fourth year in a row.*

"While we saw a substantial 31% increase in registration last year for SISS, **we received an outpouring of love and support from the community that helped us assist all 2,065 children registered,**" said Cindy. "We want to see every child start the school year with their heads held high, and we hope Ottawa will come together once again so we achieve that goal this year."

**About the Caring and Sharing Exchange**

*The Caring and Sharing Exchange* helps Ottawa families facing economic hardship during the Christmas and back-to-school seasons. The Coordination Service verifies the names of clients registered by hundreds of local agencies to eliminate duplicate applications, redistributing funds to help as many families as possible.

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