



COMPASS

REFUGEE CENTRE

Assist • Accompany • Advocate

UNSTOPPABLE

ANNUAL REPORT 2020- 2021

UNSTOPPABLE

Unbending will
Pushing ever on
When life is a mess
And all you love
Now is gone
Through the pain and the sorrow
Of an up-ended plan
Still, you fight
With only the strength
Of those two words;
"I can."
An unyielding endeavour
An unsurpassed desire
The greatest power
In all the world
Is the human soul on fire.

Tenebris Rose



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01 GREETINGS FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Excerpts from a poem by Warsan Shire
(British Somali poet)

*no one leaves home unless home chases you...
you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land
no one burns their palms
under trains
beneath carriages
no one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck
feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled
means something more than journey*

These raw words pierce our sheltered living. These are the words that describe the experience of too many people around the world, fleeing for safety. This is the work of COMPASS Refugee Centre, to provide safe spaces, support lives needing rebuilding, and to welcome the stranger with compassion, out of the abundance of our own lives.

We are blessed with dedicated staff and executive leadership who pour their hearts and energy into this work. We are blessed with board members who are committed to building a strong, healthy organization to sustain the work.

COMPASS Refugee Centre is growing and changing. We are in transition, moving from a small to medium size organization. Over the past year, the Board has engaged with several issues that are inherent in change and growth.

Facilities: COMPASS is outgrowing its current facility space. As we think about space, we ask the question of what facility we need to best meet our program needs as we move into the future. We have expanded our space at the Queen St. office to give some breathing room as we tease out these questions.



No one leaves home unless home
chases you...

Program: In 2019, COMPASS expanded its program to include housing when we took over the lease for a guest house on Allen Street. Unfortunately, COVID created a situation where congregate living was not feasible, leaving the house under utilized. In reviewing this program area, we asked the questions of whether housing was part of our core business, and if facilitating partnerships with other organizations may be a better way to go. In Fall 2021 we discontinued our lease arrangement, crafted a sound framework for housing, and then committed to exploring in 2022 how best to fulfill that framework.

Another program area the Board and staff grappled with is a HUB concept and building collaborative networks/relationships with other like-minded organizations. As we grow into the future there are exciting possibilities to expand the reach and the efficiency of refugee work within our community.

Fundraising: COMPASS is blessed with many generous individuals and organizations within the community that support refugee work. Growing financial statements give evidence of the significant work the staff team has done in fundraising. Our reach into Foundation and Government grants has increased. Over the past year we expanded our ability to include donors in the U.S. through our Friends of COMPASS platform.

The work COMPASS Refugee Centre does is life changing for vulnerable people. The Board extends its deep gratitude to volunteers, donors, staff and to our Executive Director Shelley Campagnola. Together we make a difference.

Blessings to all,

Peggy Snyder
President and Board Chair



02 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In 2021 we changed our name from Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support to COMPASS Refugee Centre, reflecting our growth in influence, the broad scope of people served, and all the community members and organizations involved. The response has been amazing, as friends old and new have each found their place in our new brand!

With the development of our new strategic plan, we also ventured into new models of assessment and evaluation. Using David Grant's, *The Social Profit Handbook*, we began our journey into creative and qualitative ways of measuring our impact to improve future work and not just rely on past performance.

Our COVID Safety Plan for 2021 was our steady keel that ensured we could continue our work without interruption and without ever-changing rules. It brought stability especially to our staff who, though fatigued, still served more people in 2021 than we have served in any other year.

We are reaching refugee claimants, representing 71 countries around the world, even beyond the Waterloo Region (45 different towns and cities) who hear of the quality of program we bring. Currently, 87% of people we have worked with, or are working with, have received protected person status. The remaining active situations are still in process awaiting outcomes, but we anticipate that many of them will also receive a positive outcome to their refugee claim. That means that the people we work with are likely to be staying in Canada, having valid claims for protection. This is a strong argument for investing in people, removing barriers, and quickly engaging the best they have to bring, for their thriving and for the benefit of our community.

While we are not the largest or most influential organization in our community, with thanks to the support of many donors and organizations, we have big impact. Looking ahead to 2022, we still have much to do. We are growing and we believe that we are bringing something refreshing that inspires a prosperity built on all that refugee claimants need: access to justice, opportunities to thrive, and welcoming communities.





87%

OF PEOPLE
HAVE RECEIVED
PROTECTED
PERSON STATUS

PEOPLE HAVE
COME FROM

71

COUNTRIES

PEOPLE
ARE LIVING IN

45

TOWNS & CITIES
EXTENDING OUR
SERVICE BEYOND
WATERLOO REGION

03 REFUGEE CLAIM ASSISTANCE UNHINDERED

Assist is the first of the three pillars of our mission. It focuses on unhindered access to justice.

Our lives have changed so much this past year and the obstacles faced by claimants have only become more complex. Our ASSIST team has grown as we worked to ensure these obstacles did not stop us from meeting our vision that all claimants experience unhindered access to justice.

We worked with 786 files representing over 1904 individuals and 71 countries around the world. This number includes 118 files opened in just the past year as border restrictions have been gradually lifted.

The ASSIST team has continued to bring guidance and support to the claim process. We have ensured claimants have access to legal advice, aided with complicated paperwork, translated evidence for hearings and remained a source of stability and comfort in challenging times.

Hearings continued and we have celebrated 117 positive decisions representing 300 people, some of which happened right in our office. Our Virtual Hearing Program has provided access to reliable Internet and equipment for claimants to use when attending their hearings has made a significant difference to many over the year.

Most meaningfully we have been able to assist in the reunification of over 30 families. Helping to bring families together is a truly rewarding experience and each and every reunification is worth celebrating.

IN FY 2021,
COMPASS
WAS ABLE TO ASSIST
IN THE REUNIFICATION
OF OVER
30
FAMILIES

FY=Fiscal Year



JUST A SMALL WORD THAT CHANGES LIVES - YES!

Life was good for the newlyweds, filled with dreams and goals, like that of any young, professional couple. Sadly, things changed quickly after that first phone call, "Pay or be sorry..."

Frightened, Ale spoke to Talia. She wondered if the men she had noticed the day before walking around their neighbourhood had something to do with this. Confused, they packed their bags, locked up their house and drove to a friend's place, far from the city. Knowing that their families would be in danger if told, they chose to keep it to themselves for as long as they could.

Calls kept coming in. Jobs had to be forgone. Life was a nightmare as they moved from place to place, unsuccessfully. Their lives were in real danger! Something drastic had to be done!

Painful and tearful goodbyes were exchanged with family some weeks later. Talia's little sister was inconsolable. It broke her heart to leave, but soon they would wake up from the nightmare.

Canada was a cold place in the middle of February and their loved ones were so far away! But there was hope in this country! They knew where they would go to the place first thing the next day. "COMPASS Refugee Centre" some friends had said. "They will help you there. You can trust them."

After months of a lengthy claim process, they were successful in their hearing. "Hearing a YES, was like being in a dream! We were so happy. We cried for joy!"

Since arriving in Canada Ale and Talia have worked hard at upgrading their English to a more proficient level and have taken jobs to become financially independent. They miss their families dearly, but their caseworker has already helped them with their permanent resident application, and it is just a matter of time before they can see their family here in Canada!

"We could not have done it without COMPASS and their amazing help! Everyone was so friendly and kind! We will be forever grateful."

“ HEARING A
YES!
WAS LIKE BEING
IN A
DREAM! ”



04 ACCOMPANY IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Accompany is the second pillar of our mission that focuses on helping people to thrive. We know that “thriving” looks different for each person, but we can create pathways to opportunities that are meaningful. We also know that thriving includes belonging and feeling welcome. If COVID has taught us anything, it is that no one thrives when isolated or alone for extended periods of time.

With these thoughts in mind, we developed a framework using the acronym T.H.R.I.V.E. that we can use to bring people together for real solutions and opportunities, and for inspiring outcomes.

- Training and Skills Development and Acceptance
- Housing and Food Security
- Referrals and Relationships
- Information and Resources
- Visual and Creative Arts
- Employment Readiness

The support of over 1,000 donations, 23 churches, 7 businesses, along with generous gifts from several Family Foundations and grants from MCC Ontario, United Way Waterloo Region Communities, Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, Shantz Mennonite Church Bequest Fund, Kindred Charitable Foundation, The Meeting House Compassion Fund, Ross-Shire Family Foundation, and Mersynergy Foundation ensured refugee claimants had opportunities to thrive while navigating the refugee claim process.

Our experiences over the year showed us the T.H.R.I.V.E. framework was not only going to work, but that it could grow into something that brought refugee claimants and welcoming communities together in amazing ways! We wish we could name them all, but here are a few highlights:

- Lincoln Road Summer Children's Program was transformative
- Community Music School of Waterloo Region providing virtual music lessons. The Button Factory Art classes
- Charlene Le Duc and the Goodness Project providing our families with meals, toiletries, and school supplies
- Comforting the Cold knitting hats and mittens. Pauline Hennig and her team donating school kits and blankets, The Waterloo County Quilting Guild making quilts that have brought some of our families to tears, and so many others
- Sitting with families in the warm sun over refreshments and great conversation.
- Virtual ESL groups
- Driver Training Support Resources
- University of Waterloo students providing Christmas hampers for families
- HomeworkHub tutoring and providing backpacks for our client's children
- Michelle from the GAP in Cambridge ensuring new families have warm winter coats
- KW Redeemer Church provided everything that was needed for a family being reunited and set up their new home, Slate Church went all out when a family finally had a place of their own but had nothing to put in it
- The extraordinary work that was done to get and/or keep people housed
- The mentors and coaches who helped people get ready to work and find employment
- The discussions started with Strong Start, Safe Families, Fraser Lake Camp, Waterloo Minor Soccer, and post-secondary schools - all eager to work with us to see the bar for collaboration and impact raised in 2022





“On behalf of our family, we thank the kindness in the hearts of the COMPASS Refugee Centre Team for bringing us joy on Mother’s Day with the gifts for my wife and the gifts for our baby girl.

I was very sad and worried as I have no income now and for the first time in all the years my wife would not receive a gift on this special day. But a miracle happened!

God bless you and your families!”

Client

Kindness begins with the understanding
that we all struggle.

Charles Glassman

05 BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS THROUGH ADVOCACY

Advocacy is the third pillar of our mission. It focuses on encouraging welcoming communities for people seeking safety.

There are many social and economic challenges that refugee claimants face in Canada. These may cause barriers to justice that can loom large in every aspect of their lives, especially in areas such as employment, housing, and family reunification rights. Our efforts this year to break down those barriers have been UNSTOPPABLE. From public speaking and promoting policy change to staff members making phone calls to protect the rights and dignity of individual refugee claimants, advocacy can be found in the heart of everything we do.

Some of our more notable initiatives this past year included:

- Collaborating with Wilfrid Laurier University's 'Humanitarianism: Gift and Power' class to host an exclusive event for Refugee Rights Day. We focused on bringing awareness to the refugee claim process and promoting integration and social cohesion.

- Utilizing our online platforms to bring awareness to the continued abuses happening at the border under the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) and sharing the individual experiences of refugees.

- Our Executive Director, Shelley Campagnola, wrote a chapter in the book *Finding Refuge in Canada: Narratives of Dislocation*. She focused on how the day-to-day challenges of being a refugee claimant in Canada are impacted by government policy.

- Continuing our partnership in advocacy with local organizations such as Immigration Partnership, CCORIC, the Coalition of Refugee Claimants in Ontario, and the Canadian Council for Refugees to enhance our quality of services and best practices.

- Collaborating with organizations such as Homework Hub and The Button Factory to connect clients with educational opportunities in the community. Unbound and Unstoppable, COMPASS continues its advocacy towards welcoming communities for refugee claimants.

- Taking part in various public speaking forums and events with MP's, MPP's, and community leaders to shed light on the needs of claimants we serve and influence real change for them.

“ Without advocacy vulnerable people cannot be heard or given credence... They cannot be supported, protected or defended and their rights will be lost. Without Advocacy vulnerable people have no power and will be invisible. ”

Michelle O'Flynn



The ability of a group of people to do remarkable things hinges on how well those people can pull together.

Simon Sinek



06 OUR VOLUNTEERS ARE CHAMPIONS!

One of the most important teams at COMPASS is our volunteer team. We have deeply missed the dozens of volunteers who have remained ready to help as soon as we can safely run programs consistently again. Even so, 96 volunteers contributed over 5,100 hours to support the work that needed to be done!

One group of volunteers behind the scenes is a deeply committed volunteer Board of Directors. We offer our deepest gratitude to Peggy Snyder (Chair), Thom Dixon (Treasurer), Jim Pankratz (Secretary), and members Fabienne Prior, Victoria Turner Shoemaker, Tim Fox and Rafael Vallejo. We also thank David Valle who was able to join for a short season that included a pivotal decision to grow our caseworker team in response to the record numbers of people our staff were helping.

Another, equally important group is our translators and interpreters. Without their incredible contribution over the past year, there is simply no way we could have supported so many individuals and families as they prepared for hearings and met with caseworkers. Thank you Wilma, Lisa, Manuela, Kiera, Karla, Paula, Fatah, Adizde, Ekram, Monica, Josi, and Daniel.

Finally, Interns make up a unique group of volunteers. Iga, Nisha, Alex, Jenni, and Faye came to us as part of their academic programs and contributed so much. Working mostly remotely was a challenging experience for everyone but they were such a dynamic and talented group that we were stronger for it and had more fun than we could have imagined possible.

Volunteers don't necessarily have the time; they have the heart.

Elizabeth Andrew



A special shout out to:

- Rochelle and Krysanne for their insight and valuable contribution as they worked with some of our staff to craft our Charter of Inclusion, giving us greater clarity on living fully into our values and our commitment to anti-oppression, anti-racism, and anti-discrimination.
- Leticia whose presence in video monologues captured refugee claimant stories, grabbing hearts!
- Suzanne (and the whole Kitchener Aud group) for such a generous contribution of time, enthusiasm, and passion in everything from answering phones to strengthening programs and promoting fundraising events.



5 INTERNS

8 BOARD MEMBERS

96 VOLUNTEERS

5,100+ HOURS

THANK YOU!

07 FINANCIALS

Generosity of donors

The troubles prevailing in many parts of the world mean COMPASS's role in serving new arrivals is needed more than ever, and it is a more demanding calling than ever, given the complexities of the work.

COMPASS achieved much in 2020 - 2021.

Due to the generosity of donors and the support from the government on wage and rent, COMPASS's Management team has yet again provided positive financial results. Our budget structure is becoming more mission driven as revenues and costs are linked to delivering on COMPASS's three pillars: Assist, Accompany, and Advocate.

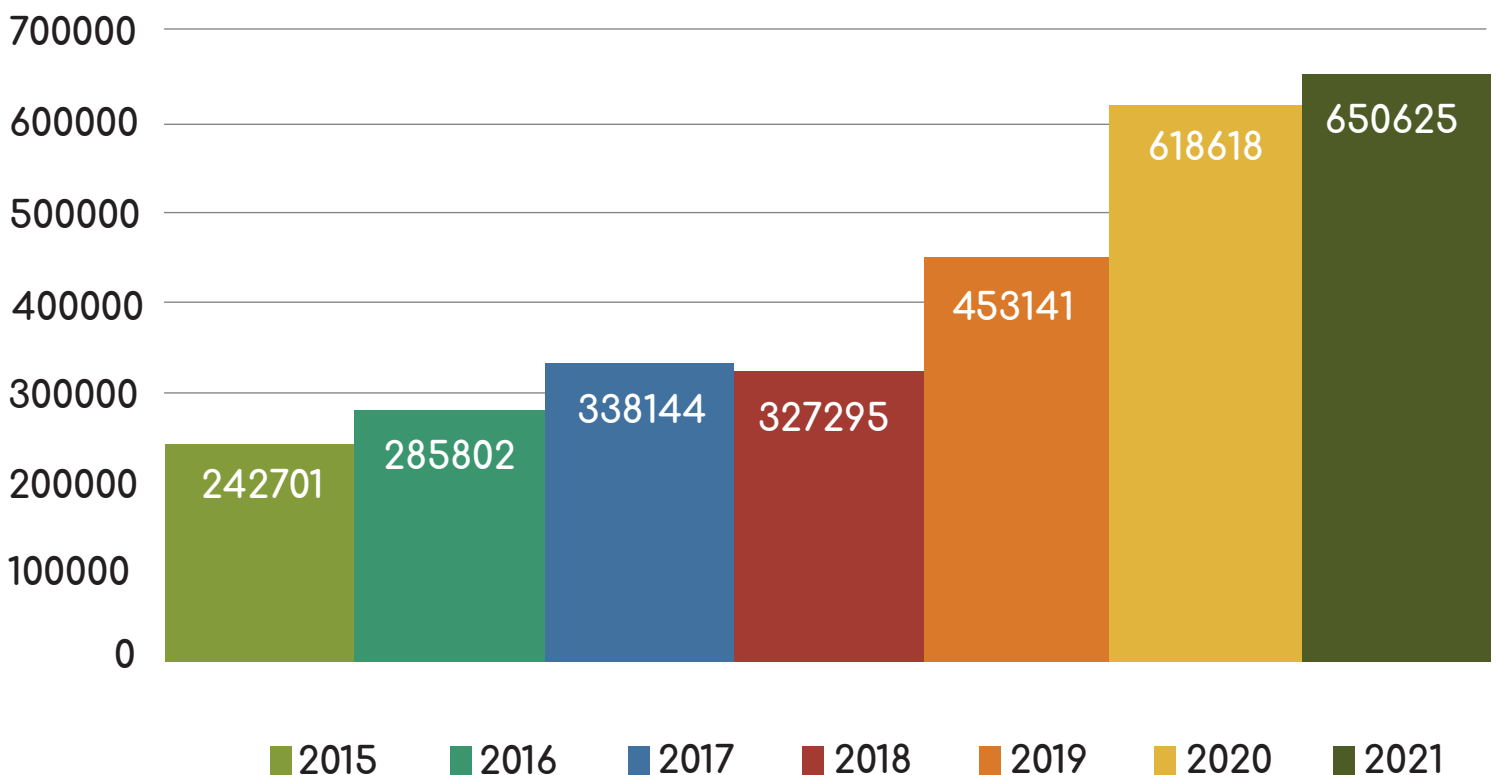
As Canada's economy emerges from COVID restrictions, and as government wage and rent subsidies are discontinued, COMPASS reaffirms its faith in its traditional supporters, complimented by a search for new avenues of support, to ensure its good work continues expanding in 2022.

Thom Dixon
Treasurer

"We are excited by the life-changing work that COMPASS continues to do assisting refugees in Canada. There are so many stories of hope, of people finding a new home that is safe from the violence and threats they have faced abroad. It is with thankful hearts that we contribute in our small way to this very special and necessary organization."

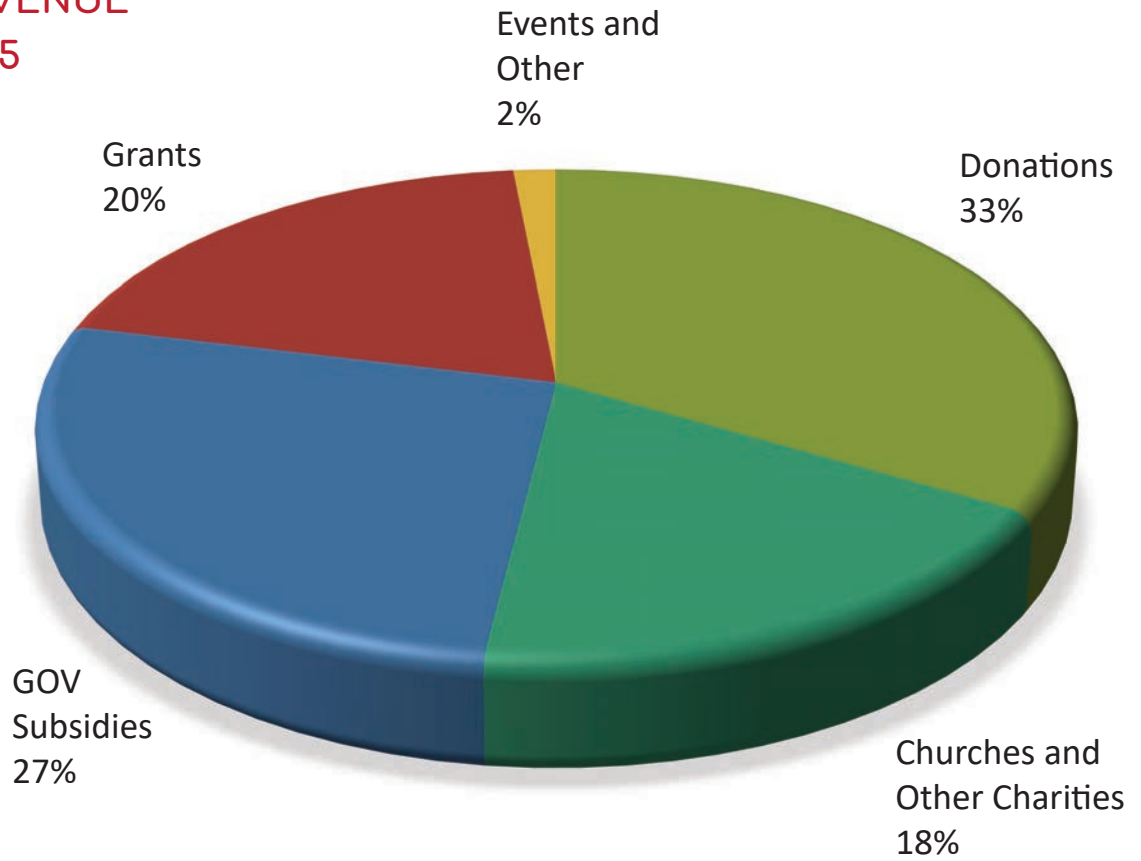
The Preis Family Foundation

REVENUE FY 2020-2021



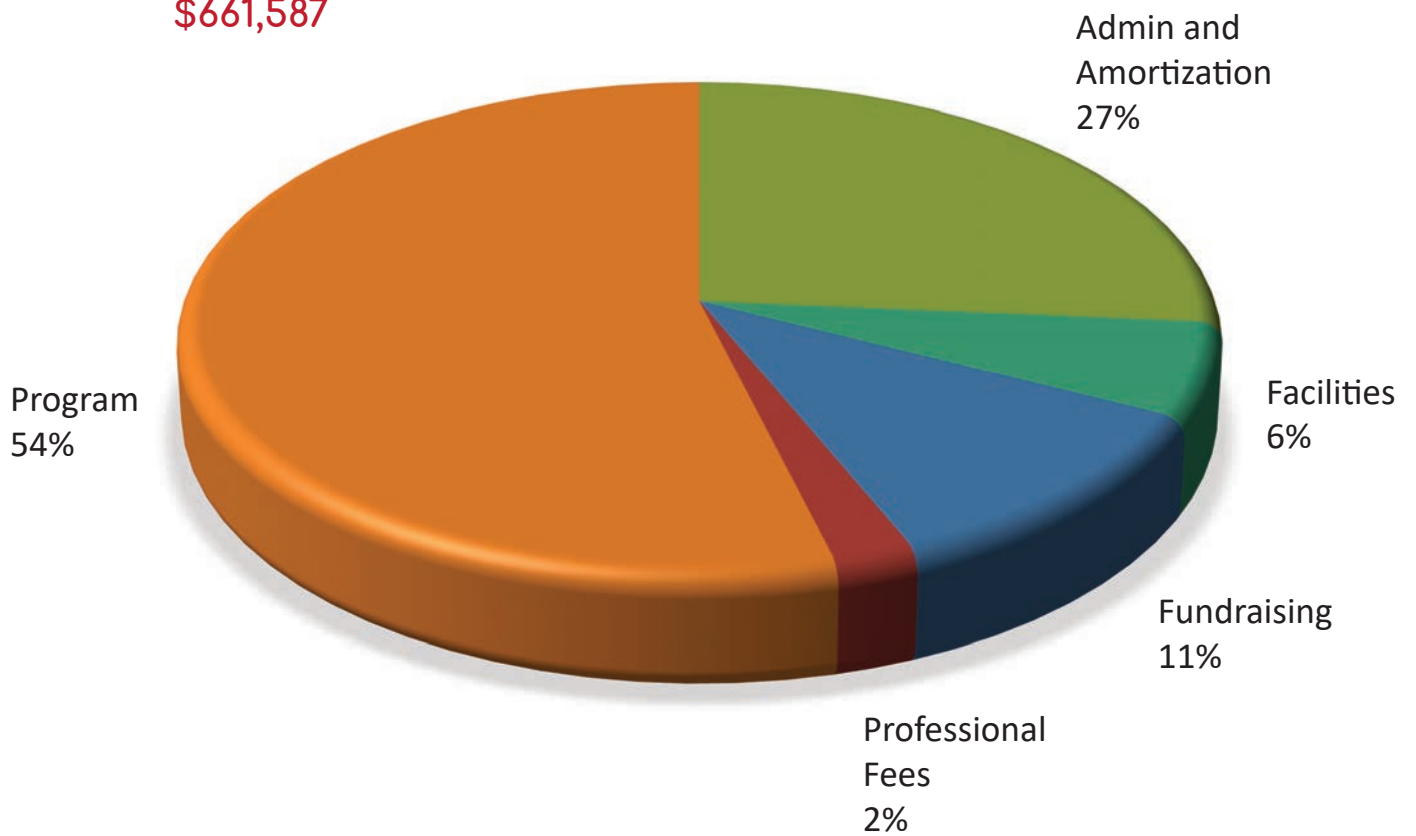
2020-2021 REVENUE

\$650,625



2020-2021 EXPENSES

\$661,587



09 OUR WORD FOR THIS PAST YEAR: UNSTOPPABLE



When we looked back at all that happened, the word that stood out for us was UNSTOPPABLE. That does not mean we were without challenges. But when we were wondering what more could happen and how we would make it through, we pulled out the stops, dug a little deeper, and kept pressing on. Through it all, God was ahead of us, unstoppable in his provision, and generous in the outcomes.

We finished the year with the highest number of people served – 1,904; the highest revenue ever in our books – 650,625; and the greatest scope of reach ever experienced – 45 cities from Windsor to Ottawa. In many ways, the year was a flurry of activity often at a pace that left much of it a blur in our recollections.

As we look ahead to 2022, we do not imagine that it will be easy. For all that we are looking forward to, we hold it with care knowing how quickly things can change, and knowing the financial support we will need. We saw this in the suspension of our Guest House program as occupancy levels dropped, and expenses far exceeded financial support. In October 2019, we had a plan for this program, and in October 2021 we saw that plan come to an end. Yet the experience taught us much, and we are committed more than ever to finding a sustainable solution to the housing needs of refugee claimants.

With that said, we also know that while housing is a critical need, it is not the only need. The T.H.R.I.V.E. framework we developed this year identifies six pathways to thriving, each letter in the word representing a pathway. Building on our strategic plan and a collaborative orientation, we envision a HUB of activity that draws together community members with those needing refuge for a shared outcome of thriving.

Building also on the invitations given to us by community leaders, we look to establish a clear and sustained presence in Cambridge and in Guelph as donors in these communities support us. There are already more people in each of these two cities relying on our support than there were people we supported when we began in 1987.

Finally, the foundations of the things we launched in 2021 set the stage for what is to come, and we are excited about the possibilities:

- our newsletter **DIRECTIONS**,
- our monthly donation program **Northern Stars**, and
- our U.S. donor platform **Friends of COMPASS**

Adding to these great initiatives, as we begin to live into the T.H.R.I.V.E. framework, we are pleased to announce the 2022 launch of two new dedicated funds that donors can contribute to:

- The **COMPASS Scholarship Fund**, supporting eligible refugee claimants to access post-secondary education.
- The **COMPASS Family Camp Fund**, subsidizing access to camping opportunities. This will give refugee claimant families the opportunity to be together away from the stresses of their journey, and enjoying what many families raised in Canada have grown up with.

Yes, UNSTOPPABLE seems like a very good word to summarize the good things God is leading us into, and what every donor who wants to make a clear impact with their generosity can count on!

1904
HIGHEST
NUMBER
OF PEOPLE
SERVED

650,625
HIGHEST
REVENUE
EVER
IN OUR BOOKS

45
CITIES
REPRESENTED
FROM OTTAWA
TO WINDSOR.



God does not tolerate a relationship with himself that excludes your neighbour.

Bishop Desmond Tutu



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COMPASS

REFUGEE CENTRE

Assist • Accompany • Advocate

TO DONATE: www.compassrefugee.ca/donate

