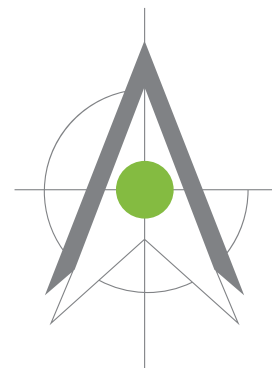


BREAKTHROUGH

2023–2024
Annual Report



COMPASS
REFUGEE CENTRE



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Chair Report

It was a challenging year for refugees coming to Canada. Government policies became more restrictive and public opinion more negative. The Internet offered refugees confusing information about how to prepare for entry to Canada and gave false promises about what they could expect when they arrived.

COMPASS and other agencies that welcome and serve refugees were more important than ever. This report tells the inspiring story of how COMPASS met these challenges.

Our most innovative response was to help create and to host the Canada-U.S. Border Clinic in collaboration with refugee lawyers and service agencies in Canada and the United States. This virtual legal clinic offers refugees anywhere in the world accurate information and advice about making a refugee claim in Canada. It has become recognized as a leading expert in refugee law at the Canadian border.

This year the Board updated and strengthened our governance. Like all other charitable organizations in Ontario, this was done to comply with the new Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA).

One practical result was that we now have more flexibility in how many board members we appoint to adapt to changing needs and priorities.

Several Directors completed their service on the Board this year. We thank them for their significant contributions. We are grateful for the commitment, experience, and skills of our current Directors. They are strong advocates for COMPASS and the refugees we serve.

The past year was financially very challenging. Since COMPASS is completely funded by donations and grants, we are deeply grateful to the supporters who sustained us and provided the resources for us to take new initiatives to increase our impact.

We express our appreciation and thanks to our Executive Director, Shelley Campagnola, and COMPASS staff. They fulfill our mission and embody our values every day.



In gratitude and hope,
Jim Pankratz
Chair, Board of Directors

Mission, Vision and Meditation

Breakthrough

My Lebanese friend asked me about the Cedars of Lebanon.

Did I know why they had such profound significance in the writings of prophets and sages?

It was a rhetorical question he was eager to answer so, I smiled and said, "Tell me."

"When you look up to the mountains,"

he said, "You will see massive cedars breaking through the hard rock and withstanding the harshest conditions.

This is a good image for those needing to press on."

Today I ponder this image ...

The cedars become giants of strength and purpose.

Their pleasing aroma drifts over vast distances only after they have struggled to exist at all.

A good image indeed for COMPASS as an organization and for the people we serve.



2023–2024 In Review

We are excited to share this year’s annual report themed, “Breakthrough.”

In the office, we were thankful for the many who joined us as short-term staff or interns, helping with different projects and opportunities. With this support we were able to do things like ensure 25 households received housing subsidies, getting them out of the emergency shelter system or inadequate housing to safe, acceptable and affordable housing. We added a GIVE WITH A FOCUS section on our website to give donors meaningful choices to make their impact. We took our Good Neighbour Team program from a great idea to a launch with well-trained volunteers.



We said goodbye to two of our caseworkers, Jenni and Daniel, each of whom went on to other opportunities. We are thrilled that they remain connected and cheering us on. We welcomed Marina as a caseworker, and Jenn and Kristen for the Canada-U.S. Border Clinic which was busy almost from day one. Together, our teams supported over 2,400 people from the border through to family reunification – amazing!!

Financially, it was a bit of a roller coaster ride, but we were spurred on by exceptional gifts given by individuals and organizations that believed in us, and who knew we just needed to get through this harder time. This, along with the regular and faithful generosity of donors, and funding from grant organizations and foundations, are why we can report a small, but precious surplus this year!

We are thankful to The Community Company for their good work helping us to explore various social enterprise possibilities. We look forward to launching a pilot in early 2025.

Finally, we are thankful to Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region, and SVP Teens, for their unwavering support throughout the year as we reimagined leadership and operational roles. Their mentoring and support were pivotal to keeping our eyes on what we are good at, and what we can be!

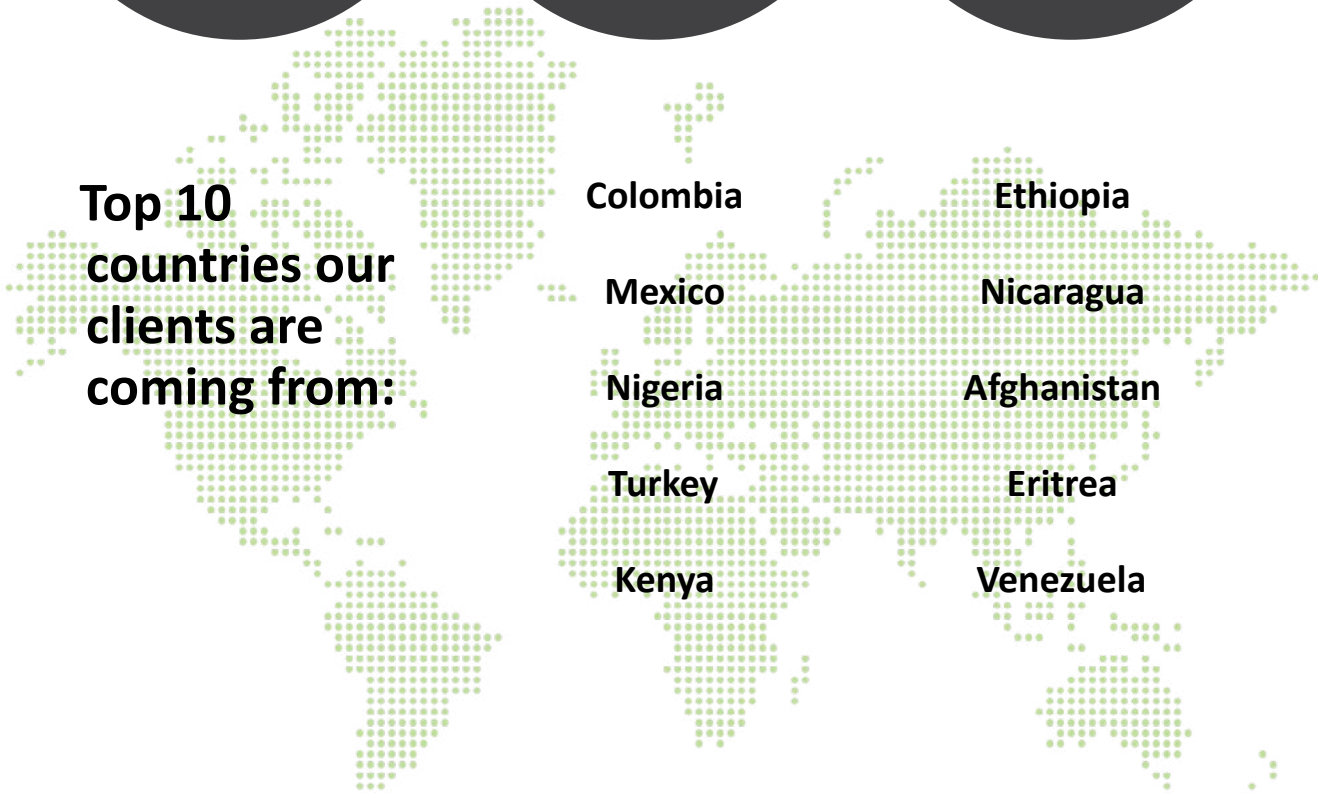
So, a breakthrough year! Thank you to all who supported us and more importantly, supported people seeking refuge as they came to us for help in their journey. As you read through the rest of the annual report, remember – you made this possible with generous financial support, prayers, time, and other resources. THANK YOU!

Shelley Campagnola
Executive Director

Our Impact in 2024



Top 10 countries our clients are coming from:



Perspectives and Experiences in Mission

ASSIST

Amrita Shrestha

ASSIST Team Lead, Intern Supervisor

Over the past year, the ASSIST team launched a new case management system to better support people seeking safety and justice. Clients like Maria, who was fleeing domestic violence, received quicker support from her caseworker, reducing wait times. We also held regular orientation sessions to help clients like Ahmed understand the refugee claim process, its implications, and the services available to them, enabling them to make informed decisions about what's best for them. Additionally, through our referral process to Canadian Council for Refugees, we successfully reunited several families, like the Donaldsons, with their separated children (as young as 6 years old) in a short period of time.

Below: Staff serving food at the Summer Picnic, co-hosted with MCC. From left to right; Tony, Juan, Daniel and Josi



ACCOMPANY

Josi Pape

Program Assistant

In 2024 we saw a breakthrough as community members came together in new ways to accompany our clients to settle and begin to THRIVE in our community.

We trained 15 volunteers for our Good Neighbour Team. They have helped clients with job searches, become walking partners, and showed them how to access resources to meet basic needs, and more.

On Refugee Rights Day clients, volunteers, and community members came to our Open House to celebrate and learn more about the work we do. It was beautiful to see a previous client reconnect with a community volunteer who helped his family settle in their new home 15 years earlier. There were tears of joy and gratitude in both their eyes. The client was immensely proud to share that his children are now in university, and he and his family have opened an ethnic grocery store in town.

In June, a Google Serve team came for a morning to help our clients refine their resumes, improve their interview skills, and learn more about the Canadian job market. It was such a success that we plan to run two more of these events in 2025, adding PointClickCare as a second partner.

Our Summer Picnic, co-hosted with MCC, had the biggest crowds we have seen in years. Creekside Church volunteers organized and ran the games.



Left: Google Serve team assisting COMPASS clients with resume building, interview skills and info about the Canadian job market

They also generously sent all the kids home with a new basketball or soccer ball. For many of the families, this small gesture had an enormous impact. We enjoyed delicacies from cultures all around the world and had food to spare! You will not want to miss our Summer Picnic in 2025.

Throughout the year, we have had many community organizations, businesses, and individuals donate gifts and supplies for our clients. Go to our Gratitude page to see all the difference-makers that make up the COMPASS community. Together, we genuinely care about the people we serve, the community we are in, and we create a lifelong impact in the lives of people seeking refuge.

ADVOCATE

Jenn McIntyre

Canada-U.S. Border Clinic Coordinator

The Canada-US Border Rights Clinic was thrilled to launch client services in July 2024. Between July and September, we responded to 42 inquiries from migrants seeking access to protection at the border, providing support to 108 individuals, including 65 adults and 43 children. Many of these cases were complex, requiring navigation of the intricate U.S. immigration and asylum systems.

Right top: Volunteers from our Good Neighbour Team

Right bottom: Team photo at the summer picnic

To provide comprehensive support, the Clinic has worked diligently to build strong relationships with partners across the United States. These partnerships allow us to access expert information, advice, and referrals, ensuring that the individuals who come to us receive the help they need. We are not only establishing a clinic but also cultivating a vast network of cross-border advocates collaborating to uphold access to protection at the border.

Our collaboration extends beyond North-South partnerships. Referrals come from across Canada, making us a leading resource for education and information on border rights for Canadian refugee-serving organizations. We have provided training to frontline workers in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. By fostering a sector that is better informed on border rights, we are advancing access to protection for those seeking safety in Canada.



Operations and Program Manager Report

At COMPASS, we have the privilege of working with hundreds of unique individuals each month. Every person who walks through our doors comes with a story shaped by their culture, language and experiences. Despite their differences they are united by their strength, their determination to overcome adversity, and their need for a safe place to call home.

COMPASS has always reflected this same spirit of perseverance. We face challenges, yet we celebrate the successes and the meaningful progress that is achieved along the way. Over this past year we've had the opportunity to celebrate several new programs and initiatives. We rolled out our Good Neighbour Teams program to help individuals integrate and THRIVE in their communities. We also celebrated the launch of the Border Rights Clinic, providing education, legal consultations and improving access to justice for all. Our refugee claim assistance program was also reimagined to expand our capacity and meet the rising demand for service.

As a community we are no strangers to adversity. In those challenges our commitment to creating welcoming and supportive programs and services remains. With the growth we've experienced this year, we are ready to face future challenges, drawing strength from the incredible individuals we serve.

Tony Van Giessen

Operations and Program Manager



Top: United Way — Walk of 1,000 umbrellas

Middle: Waterloo County Quilting Guild — Quilt donations

Below: SVP Teens, Waterloo Region with COMPASS staff



Gratitude

17 Businesses

with special thanks to Google, Manulife, Sun Life Financial, Rockwell Automation, and Menno S. Martin for their employee donation matching program!

248 Individual Donors

21 Churches and Other Charities

Bloomington Mennonite Church
Breslau Mennonite Church
Calvary Memorial United Church
Creekside Church
Elevation Church
Elmira Mennonite Church
First Mennonite Church
Floradale Mennonite Church
Hanover Mennonite Church
Hillcrest Mennonite Church
Preston Mennonite Church
Shantz Mennonite Church
St. Agatha Mennonite Church
Stirling Ave Mennonite Church
Tavistock Mennonite Church
Waterloo North Mennonite Church
Waterloo Pentecostal Assembly
Wellesley Mennonite Church
W-K United Mennonite Church
WMB Church
Mennonite Central Committee Ontario

14 Foundations and Granting Agencies

Bauman Family Foundation
Blue Sea Foundation Inc.
Carrot Social Justice Fund
Law Foundation of Ontario
Redekop Family Endowment
Ross-Shire Foundation
The Bill and Margaret Fast Family Foundation
The Jim & Lorna Blair Charitable Foundation
The Mark and Jenny Guibert Foundation
The Preis Family Foundation
United Way Centraide East Ontario
United Way Waterloo Region Communities
Veitch Family Foundation
Waterloo Region Community Foundation

7990+ Volunteer Hours Including:

15 Interns giving 3469 hours
1463 hours of interpretation
1273 hours of translation
910 hours by micro-volunteers
422 hours of reception and admin
271 hours at the Summer Picnic
190 hours by Good Neighbour Teams
182 hours RIDE preparation

19 Community Partners and Champions

Providing holiday kits, training, quilts, winter kits, employment readiness support, event support, snacks, fundraising and promotional support, hygiene kits, backpacks, and so much more! The COMPASS community is growing! There is room for you and your workplace, too!

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
Bill Bean of Safe City Cycling
Caring Connection Quilters
Comforting the Cold
The Community Company
Dare Foods
FaithFM
Just Working Inc.
Muslim Social Service of KW
570 News Radio
Open Text
Shuh Apple Orchard
SVP Teens Waterloo Region
SVP Partners Waterloo Region
The Goodness Project
The Homework Hub
The Working Centre
Waterloo County Quilters Guild
Waterloo Region Police Service



Program Highlights



Top Right: Staff Akshara and Josi creating newsletter

Below: AGM January 2024, Q&A



Top Left: Volunteer Hashir at COMPASS front desk

Top Right: Kristy, COMPASS Caseworker

Bottom: Creekside Big Serve team at Summer Picnic



Top left: COMPASS refugee claimant info display

Top right: COMPASS staff group photo

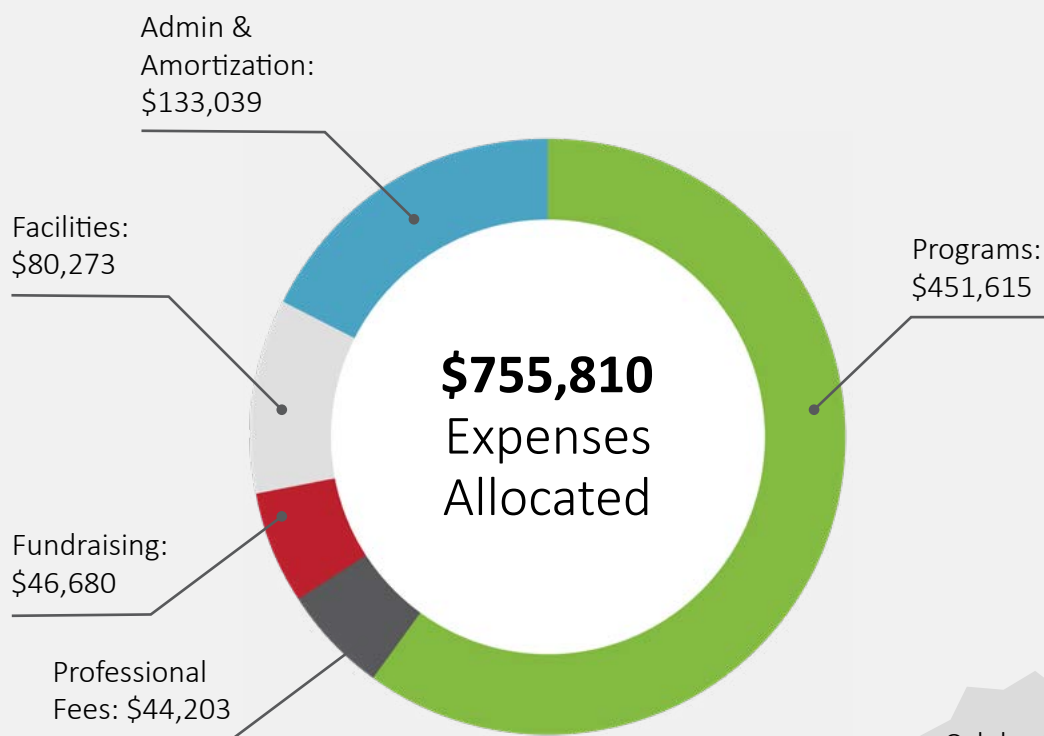
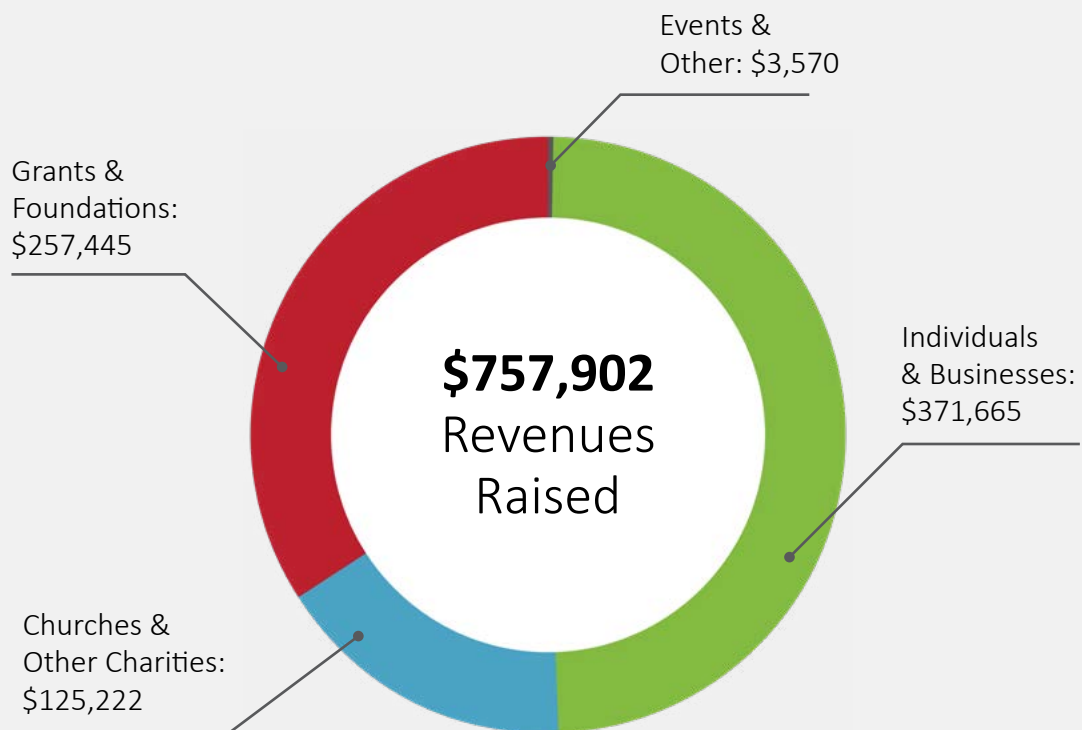
Middle Left: Food donation from Muslim Social Services of KW



Middle Right: Volunteer Interpreter, Juan

Bottom: Volunteer, Astrid

Financials



Celebrating a
\$2,092
Surplus!

Treasurer Report

I am pleased to report that our auditors delivered another clean audit report, a statement of confidence in COMPASS policies, practices, and controls. Thank you to the staff for their excellent stewardship of COMPASS financial resources.

The largest change financially was due to the launch of the Virtual Border Clinic. Expenses related to the Border Clinic are fully funded by designated grants for the clinic. Outside of the Border Clinic, revenue and expenses remained similar to the prior year. We are grateful for additional donations from churches and businesses, as well as generous responses to our summer appeal, which compensated for a decline in donations from individuals and several anticipated grants not being received.

Our world continues to experience conflict and increased political polarization leading to ever-growing numbers of refugees around the world. COMPASS continues to welcome those seeking a new life in Canada. The demand for services provided by COMPASS continues to grow every year — with more refugees joining our community and the legal processes they face growing more complex and lengthier as well.

COMPASS continues to depend on the faithful support of friends new and old to fund the work of welcoming some of our most vulnerable new neighbours in our community. We are committed to working efficiently to maximize the impact of every donor dollar. Thank you to those who have supported and enabled the work of COMPASS over the past year, you truly have changed lives.

Karen Martin Schiedel

Treasurer, Board of Directors



Top: Josi on a call

Middle: Shelley giving a presentation

Bottom: Ride for Refuge lead team

The Next Chapter



Serving in Collaboration

In 2025, COMPASS, along with several other agencies and grassroots organizations, will be collaborating to try to establish a dedicated shelter and transitional housing program for refugee claimants (aka asylum seekers). We are working to create a model of shared expertise, strong partnership, and dignifying service provision that highlights this Region's deep legacy of welcoming people who need protection and an opportunity to live life beyond refuge.

Right and below: COMPASS clients — A family reunified after 5 years and now living a life beyond refuge



Looking Ahead to 2025



Pilot Launch of Social Enterprise

We continue to work with The Community Company and have identified a social enterprise to diversify our revenue streams and sustain our social impact. A planning and steering team has been formed, and a generous donor has provided the funds needed to support a pilot launch in 2025. We will be offering fee-for-service immigration services to people who are not refugee claimants and need professional, ethical, and economical support. Thanks to many donors, churches, businesses, grant organizations and event participants, refugee claimants will continue to receive our services at no cost to them.



Growing Togetherness

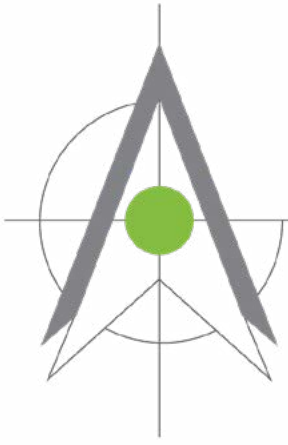
We plan to grow our Good Neighbour Teams which bring together newly arrived refugees and refugee claimants with community members who can help them settle into new ways of living. This will be especially significant for ensuring the success of the dedicated shelter, and the long-term wellbeing of those who have come to us for protection. Both the people who have been forcibly displaced far away from all they have known, and the communities they come to, have better outcomes when we grow in togetherness. #TheyAreJustLikeUs #CompassIsAllOfUs



Top: Newcomers Beilul and Priyanki welcoming newcomers

Middle: Ride for Refuge

Bottom: Daniel and Ron



COMPASS

REFUGEE CENTRE

Assist • Accompany • Advocate

[Donate Now](#)

compassrefugee.ca/donate



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