



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019 - 2024

*Here to  
Serve*





## OUR MISSION

As a Catholic social services agency, we are guided by faith to care for and bring hope to people in need with humility, compassion and respect.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2** A Legacy of Service to Others
- 3** Building on the Legacy
- 4** Goal 1: Lift People and Families in Lasting Ways
- 7** Goal 2: Strengthen Community Relationships
- 10** Goal 3: Sustain Our Efforts to Serve Well

# A LEGACY OF SERVICE TO OTHERS

Nearly 60 years ago, Father Bill Irwin and the Archdiocese of Edmonton started Catholic Social Services (CSS) with a vision of helping those most in need. The fledgling agency reached out and assisted disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community whose needs were not being met – often daring to go where others feared to tread.

Today, Father Bill's legacy lives on in a strong, vibrant and modern organization that reflects a growing and modern Alberta.



**Father Bill Irwin,**  
*Catholic Social Services Founder*

Driven by the principles of Catholic social teaching, we answer the call to aid our fellow citizens. Each day we provide a myriad of services to assist people in need – within Edmonton and across other communities in central Alberta.

A sample of our work includes:

- Providing counselling and other intervention services for families in crisis;
- Facilitating kinship and foster care for vulnerable children;
- Supporting people with developmental disabilities;
- Delivering residential care programs for vulnerable individuals, including youth, those with chronic illness, and those challenged by addictions;
- Providing shelter for women and children escaping family violence;
- Assisting newcomers to Canada with ongoing settlement supports.

We help individuals and families of all backgrounds, cultures and faiths – with a humble, welcoming, compassionate and professional spirit that respects people for who they are and where they are at in their lives.

CSS has always been, first and foremost, a social services agency that is *here to serve*.

# BUILDING ON THE LEGACY

As we look toward the future, we feel a renewed call to serve amidst a changing landscape.

New global and technological forces are impacting the lives and livelihoods of Albertans as never before. With growing and increasingly diverse populations, our communities are confronting social issues involving greater complexity. Vulnerable individuals and families face stressors that are tougher and more numerous.

Yet as community needs are increasing, public resources are getting tighter. This will challenge all social service organizations to work in new and different ways, demanding higher degrees of innovation, cooperation and collaboration.

Against this backdrop, CSS is committed to building on its long legacy of helping those in need. Drawing on our history, values, expertise and capacity, our work over the next five years will be guided by three goals:

## 1. **Lift People and Families in Lasting Ways**

While helping meet the immediate needs of today, we strive to make an enduring impact in the lives of those we serve.

## 2. **Strengthen Community Relationships**

We collaborate and communicate with allies, supporters, and colleagues in order to advance our mission, help address the root causes of social challenges, and strengthen communities.

## 3. **Sustain Our Efforts to Serve Well**

As a provider and caregiver on which many Albertans depend, we recognize our responsibility to be reliable, stable and professional in our operations.





## Goal 1

# LIFT PEOPLE AND FAMILIES IN LASTING WAYS



## Goal 1: Lift People and Families in Lasting Ways

### What It Means to Us

CSS is rooted in a pioneering spirit. From our earliest days, we have provided help to those in the community with unmet needs – often blazing untraveled paths and learning as we went. This mission has taken us into many different fields of service, in many different communities. Throughout this journey we have grown and learned, evolving as a provider of choice.

#### Today, our work is pioneering in new ways.

As we assist in meeting today's needs, we are also striving to bring about meaningful and enduring change in people's lives. Drawing on our expertise, our capacity and our values, we help lift individuals and families to greater heights of stability and self-reliance.

Our objective is to not only alleviate the symptoms of social challenges, but to help address the roots of those challenges and make lasting change. In doing so, we endeavour to significantly improve outcomes for people and families over the long-term and, in the process, help strengthen the overall community.

No matter the area or location of service, we always nurture human dignity. We welcome people and families for who they are and where they are at in their life journeys. We aim to assist the whole person, including their mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs. And we do so with humility, compassion and respect.

### Our Strategic Directions to Get There

**Be disciplined in how and where we serve those in need, so that we deploy our resources for optimum impact.**

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Over time CSS has grown considerably; we now help many people in many different ways and in many different communities. In order to lift individuals and families to greater heights, we need to be highly strategic about how our services will evolve.

This means being disciplined about what services we deliver, where we deliver them, and how we fund them. While we will always be proud to be a provider of publicly-funded social services, not every opportunity will be right for us. And while there is no shortage of needs in our communities, realistically CSS cannot be all things to all people.

New tools and policies will be developed to guide our decision-making as our services evolve – including decisions about the types of services we provide and the geographic locations in which we provide them. This will help ensure that wherever and however we assist those in need, we will do so effectively, further our mission and make a meaningful difference in people's lives.

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## **Leverage our expertise to make lasting change for vulnerable populations.**

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CSS has developed expertise over time in numerous, diverse fields of service. We know we can leverage this expertise to bring about lasting, positive change in the lives of vulnerable individuals and families.

For example, assisting the youth of today is an investment in our society's future. By helping strengthen their resilience, we can better position young people for adulthood – and help head off complex challenges that might otherwise emerge.

With their wisdom and experience, our society's seniors can and should be meaningful participants in our communities. By helping address the challenges faced by vulnerable seniors, we can better enable them to age with grace and dignity.

Indigenous peoples are disproportionately represented among those in need, with many facing the impacts of personal and intergenerational trauma. With a spirit of providing meaningful reconciliation, we can help improve outcomes for Indigenous peoples in ways that recognize and respect their unique cultural and historical realities.

Through an analysis across the organization, we will identify opportunities to complement or adjust our existing work, to help bring about more lasting, positive outcomes for clients. Where practical, we will engage other community organizations, including those from faith communities, to address these opportunities.

## **Enhance research and evaluation across our services, to inform and continuously improve our work.**

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To realize success in achieving our mission, we need to be constantly learning from and evaluating our work. Is an approach having the anticipated impacts? What changes in practice might work better? Are we actually improving an individual's outcomes? Asking more of these types of questions will help build our knowledge about our work and enable us to be evermore data-informed so as to continuously improve our efforts to help those in need.

This means going beyond the anecdotal and putting in place a research and evaluation agenda across our services. To do this we'll explore and engage in partnerships with others, including the research and academic communities, in a way that is proportionate to our capacity for such partnerships. The results of these efforts will better position us to deliver today's needs and lift people and families in enduring ways.



## Goal 2

# STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS



## Goal 2: Strengthen Community Relationships

### What It Means to Us

It takes a lot of people to build a community. Likewise, it takes many organizations working together to address issues such as poverty, homelessness, addictions, mental health issues, family violence, newcomer settlement and other social matters.

#### CSS plays a key part in these efforts.

Drawing on our experience, capacity and longstanding presence in the community, we help lead the way in the social services sector. We are an active participant in relevant sector organizations and community-based initiatives. Where appropriate, we partner with others in strategic ways to achieve shared outcomes that align with our mission and direction.

With an active presence in the communities we serve, we foster and nurture productive relationships with our funders, supporters, allies and colleagues – including those in the Archdiocese, and in the public, private and non-profit sectors. Our stakeholders and benefactors understand what we do and the value we bring to the people and communities we serve.

We are proud to be considered a service provider of choice. We are known for welcoming and assisting individuals and families from all backgrounds, faiths and cultures. We are seen as a social service sector leader and a trusted source of knowledge and insight regarding our areas of work and the people we serve.

### Our Strategic Directions to Get There

#### Renew, build and strengthen our external relationships.

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As social challenges in our communities have grown more complex, society has come to better understand how the roots of those challenges are complicated and interconnected. Truly lifting an individual or family to greater stability can require collaboration among many parts of the community, including governments and non-profit organizations. This makes it essential for CSS to have productive relationships in the communities we serve.

Our relationships with our public and private funders are also crucial. As supporters of our work, they should know and understand our organization, the services we provide, and the knowledge we have. This way, we have the benefit of their

perspectives to inform our work, and we have the standing to offer them our learnings and insight. Through the development and implementation of a public and government relations plan, we will renew, build and strengthen CSS' relationships with others. This objective-driven plan will involve deliberate efforts at all levels of the organization, including efforts by board members, the CEO and senior management.

### **Raise awareness about CSS, the services it provides and the values it brings to individuals, families and communities.**

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CSS has been a fixture in Edmonton for decades and has grown to have a presence in many other communities in Alberta. Members of these communities should be familiar with our brand, knowing that CSS is "here to serve". Community leaders, other non-profit organizations, the corporate sector, and public-at-large should be aware about CSS, the services we provide, and the ways in which we assist individuals and families in need.

A new strategic communications plan will help guide the efforts of board members, management, and front-line staff in heralding the good works of CSS. Though we strive to serve with humility, we recognize that being vocal and visible is necessary so that people know we are available to help and eager to play a part in strengthening the community.

### **Further develop resources to support and expand our ability to help others in need.**

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CSS is fortunate to benefit from the contributions of private individuals and organizations. These resources enable us to complement and supplement the services we provide on behalf of public institutions. They help fuel our efforts to go beyond meeting today's needs, empowering us to lift the lives of individuals and families in more enduring ways.

By further developing these resources, we can expand our capacity to be a "Sign of Hope" to those in need. Maintaining direct and ongoing linkages between CSS and the community-at-large will be essential, so that we can build relationships effectively. As supporters of our work, those who give generously should understand how their contributions translate into advancing CSS and making meaningful, lasting impacts in the lives of those we serve.





## Goal 3

# SUSTAIN OUR EFFORTS TO SERVE WELL



## Goal 3: Sustain Our Efforts to Serve Well

### What It Means to Us

We have had the privilege to serve hundreds of thousands of people since our organization's inception. Sometimes our involvement in people's lives is discrete and temporary in nature. At other times, we serve as a continuing source of support. In those instances, it's even more important that people have confidence that they can count on us for the long term.

**CSS is committed to remaining a reliable, stable and professional provider of social services.**

With growing size and reach has come an even deeper responsibility to bring quality and professionalism to our work. We are proud to be an accredited social services organization that is knowledgeable about its areas of service and strives to incorporate best practices and new learnings into our service delivery. We are excellent stewards of the assets and resources with which we have been entrusted.

Our organization benefits from the hard work of its caring, compassionate, skilled and diverse employees and volunteers. Drawing on Catholic social teachings, we foster honesty, openness, love, understanding and respect across our operations. We strive to create a culture of learning, in which our

staff have the freedom, discretion and permission to test new approaches, learn new skills and use their considered judgment to make meaningful and lasting impacts in the lives of those we help.

### Our Strategic Directions to Get There

**Ensure the organization is led through steady, capable and robust governance.**

Today, CSS has approximately 1800 employees and an annual budget of close to \$100 million. With this many lives and assets under our stewardship, it is more important than ever that the organization benefits from steady, capable and robust governance. This means having a high-performing and visible board of directors that has the right mix of skills and competencies, understands and owns its role, and has an appropriate and productive working relationship with its CEO.

Ongoing board development efforts, including the implementation of a renewed governance framework, will help ensure CSS is effectively positioned to continue advancing its mission.

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## Place a renewed focus on strengthening administrative supports.

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As our capable and talented employees strive to assist those in need, it's important they are supported in their work. The right administrative tools need to be available. Infrastructure needs to be safe and suitable for the persons served by it. Financial and other resources need to be managed strategically and capably. And we must always be working to develop our staff and ensure CSS offers a work environment that is respectful, engaging, professional, inclusive, and diverse.

Strengthening administrative supports will better position us to make meaningful and lasting impacts in the lives of individuals and families. This will include renewed planning for information technology (IT) supports, cyber security, and the long-term management of residences and other facilities. It also means ensuring a workable and responsive policy and procedures substructure. With a modern human resource plan, we will undertake efforts to be and remain an employer of choice, with high levels of staff engagement and a commitment to recruit, retain and develop talented people.

## Infuse our operations with an innovative spirit.

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Today, non-profits in almost every sector are confronting a landscape of greater complexity, higher needs and tighter resources. This will challenge all organizations to think differently and explore innovative, perhaps even socially entrepreneurial, ways of delivering services. As a provider with considerable experience and capacity, we are well positioned to help lead the way in Alberta's social services sector.

Drawing on our roots, we will renew the pioneering spirit that led CSS to create new services to address unmet needs in the community. By creating the permission space to try new things and test alternative approaches, we can find ways of better assisting individuals and families while optimizing our financial resources. We will learn along the way; and we will share our learnings with others to help enhance the ability of the overall sector to help Albertans in need, address social challenges and strengthen Alberta communities.







## A LEGACY THAT LIVES ON...

Guided by the Catholic social teachings that have sustained our work over the past 60 years, Catholic Social Services is committed to building on our legacy of bringing hope to those in need – with humility, compassion and respect.

We are here to serve.



**CATHOLIC  
SOCIAL  
SERVICES**

