



Sign of
Hope!

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23



Together... our favourite place to be

OUR WALKING TOGETHER

A DRUM SONG RANG THROUGH EDMONTON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AS POPE FRANCIS BEGAN HIS PILGRIMAGE TO CANADA IN JULY 2022.

He was here to beg forgiveness and to say sorry. Like the drum, his words have echoed in the ongoing work to advance Truth and Reconciliation between settlers and the First Peoples of this land.

As part of making meaningful steps along the path of understanding and healing, CSS recently developed its own Truth & Reconciliation plan, to help foster the mending of wounded memories in this sad and tragic chapter of our country's history. The plan includes commitments to:

- Commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
- Offer staff education opportunities, including our Indigenous-themed Sophia Talks series, and developing mandatory training on "Indigenous World Views".
- Represent Indigenous people and themes across all major Agency publications and communications, such as this annual report.
- Commission a piece of Indigenous art which was developed into special Treaty 6 & 7 Welcome Plaques posted in every office.
- More intentionally focus our recruitment efforts on Indigenous people.
- Continue the work of the Anti-Racism Advisory Council.
- Grow more connections with Indigenous communities and with Indigenous partners.

As an Agency we are on a journey of walking together with Indigenous people - and indeed all individuals - to build a better world in which human dignity is protected and the spirit of community is nourished and cherished. We humbly offer the diverse stories* contained in these pages as glimpses into the work we are honoured to do among those we are called to serve.

With Gratitude,



Sett Policicchio,
Board Chair



Dr. Troy Davies,
CEO



ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA

THE LILY OF THE MOHAWKS AND PROTECTRESS OF CANADA

Kateri Tekakwitha was the first North American Indigenous person to be elevated to sainthood. The name *Tekakwitha* translates as "she who bumps into things". This name was bestowed upon her after a smallpox epidemic left her scarred and vision-impaired.

Though her vision was damaged and health weakened, Kateri was able to see beyond her own disabilities, and chose a life dedicated to caring for those in need.

When Kateri passed away near Montreal at the young age of 24, it was said that her face exhibited a soft glow and the blemishing smallpox scars marking her face disappeared. Many still believe the soil surrounding her grave has healing qualities.

More than 300 books, in 20 different languages, have been written about the life of St. Kateri. This remarkable Indigenous woman is a model of the same light and spirit of service that has guided Catholic Social Services and its outreach to those on the margins for the past 62 years. We continue to be blessed by her example and inspired by her love and goodness.

**Names have been changed throughout this report, where necessary, to protect individual identities.*



“...serve one another humbly in love.”

Galatians 5:13

FINDING KINDNESS

SHE WAS SO YOUNG, STILL IN HER TEENS, NEW TO CANADA... AND UNEXPECTEDLY PREGNANT.

Betty took on the role of motherhood early in life, becoming pregnant not long after arriving in Canada and still in her mid-teens. She loved being a mom and soon after, she and her then boyfriend had a second child. However, cracks began forming in the relationship and the mom of two decided it would be best to end their time together and go their separate ways.

She thought he was ‘the one’

Within months of leaving her previous relationship, single mom, Betty, thought she may have found ‘the one’ when she met Joe. With Joe, she went on to have three more children during their decade-long relationship, but as time went on, the relationship began to take on an alarming pattern of physical and psychological abuse.

Betty had tried to leave at one point, taking her children to seek refuge at a family friend’s home. But Joe sought her out and relentlessly continued to harass Betty, pleading with her to return to him with the promise of change.

Time to go

Betty took Joe at his word and she and the kids returned to the family home. Unfortunately, it wasn’t long before the abuse started again and became much more extreme. Joe escalated his torment and abuse by isolating Betty and her children while at the same time becoming more physically violent.

In the past, Betty had been unwilling to seek medical treatment for these assaults, as this would be an embarrassing admittance of her being in an abusive relationship. Joe would often ruthlessly attack her in front of the kids, sometimes cutting off her air supply until she fell unconscious. Seeing her children witness this brutal behavior was the motivation she needed to leave.

The help she needed

Betty rounded up her children and left while Joe was out. The six of them fled to the Catholic Social Services Lurana Shelter in search of safety and support. Once admitted to the shelter, a tsunami of emotions hit Betty all at once. She was relieved she and her children were safe, heart-broken and embarrassed of her history of abuse, scared and unsure of her future and overwhelmed by the thought of Joe’s reaction to their escape. With no income of her own, Betty feared for her family’s future safety.

The Lurana team assured Betty she and her children would receive the help and support needed to keep them safe and



begin a new chapter in their lives. The shelter personnel immediately began the process of helping Betty create a safety plan and the connections needed to find permanent housing for the family.

CSS’ Lurana Shelter was there for her

It took some time and a few emotionally therapeutic conversations, but once Betty was secure in the knowledge she had the supports to make a new life for her family, she openly shared her lived experience of abuse. The Lurana staff reassured her and explained that many women, just like her, have experienced the same struggles and similar situations. Their words gave Betty comfort and hope, “you are not alone”.

Before long, Betty and her children found a home where they could start again, free of fear, physical violence, and abuse. Betty kept in touch with the Lurana staff who had given her such comfort and assistance throughout her time of need, and she expressed her unwavering appreciation for the love and support of the shelter and its team. Betty says she believes Catholic Social Services saved her life.

CSS is honoured to be there for people like Betty and her children in their time of greatest need.

SERVING VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS, CHILDREN & FAMILIES

- CSS has operated Lurana, a 1st stage women’s shelter, since April, 2021.
- Last year, Lurana served 144 women and 158 children.
- Funding for Lurana comes from the Government of Alberta and Catholic Social Services’ fundraising arm, known as the Sign of Hope.
- CSS also operates a 2nd stage women’s shelter known as La Salle.

SERVING PEOPLE WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

- In 2022/23 with funding from the Government of Alberta, CSS served 246 individuals with developmental disabilities in 33 residences in Edmonton and 414 individuals in the Central Region which includes the communities of Red Deer, Lacombe, Innisfail, Wetaskiwin, Camrose and Wainwright.

A PLACE OF BELONGING

PHILIPPE HAS CALLED VERONICA VILLA HOME FOR THE PAST 17 YEARS.

He is a sharp-minded sports enthusiast who loves participating in Special Olympics and attending Elks games! He also enjoys hockey and enjoyed an event at West Edmonton Mall where he had his photo taken with the Stanley Cup!

Philippe also very much values relationships with his friends and one way he connects with them in a spirit of togetherness is at the monthly 'Caring & Sharing' gatherings, where about 100 people with developmental disabilities served by CSS connect to celebrate birthdays, share food, swap stories and dance to the music in whatever way brings them joy. His one complaint? Philippe says there is never enough pop!



"We have all known the long loneliness and know that the only solution is the love that comes with community."

Dorothy Day, Servant of God & Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement

TOGETHER IN INNISFAIL

THE HOME BASE CLUB DAY PROGRAM IN INNISFAIL HAS BEEN IN OPERATION FOR 15 YEARS, OFFERING ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES A PLACE FOR LEARNING, SHARING, ENGAGING AND SOCIALIZING IN A COMMUNITY SETTING.

The group of 15 regular attendees assemble to take part in each day's activities, which might cover anything from crafts to games to events and dance parties. The program's location and space were upgraded three years ago and their new spot now provides participants access to a kitchen area which is often used to help work on life-skills. "It provides a safe and supportive space dedicated to the individuals we serve," says Program Manager, Angela Hutton.

The club continues to collaborate on creating eye-catching submissions for different events and festivals during the year, such as the local Festival of Trees and the Scarecrow Festival – a three-day event that includes a quarter mile of designer scarecrows on display.

In Innisfail, the Home Base Club truly is the favorite place to gather... together!



"All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle."

St. Francis of Assisi

NEW BEGINNINGS

NATALIA WAS A SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR IN KHERSON IN EASTERN UKRAINE WHEN RUSSIA INVADED IN THE WINTER OF 2022. BOMBS TARGETED HOSPITALS, SCHOOLS AND HOMES.

A couple months later Natalia, her husband Glib and their fourteen-year-old son, Boryosko said a tearful goodbye to their family and followed millions of others to Poland. People there welcomed them offering food, shelter and support. They stayed for ten months before deciding to take the leap and move across the ocean to Canada. They applied for visas under the federal government's Canadian-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) programme. On a snowy February day, they landed in Calgary, where their 26-year-old son, Illia, met them and took them to their new home in Red Deer.

Natalia cried as she recounted how hard it had been to begin again "at the bottom". The only thing she knew about Canada was from movies she had seen in Ukraine! Glib is working in an entry-level job and they are both working hard to improve their English. But she begins to laugh as she describes how well her son has adjusted to life in a local school. "I have new friends, Mom" he tells her, saying he never wants to go back to the bombs. Catholic Social Services supported the family with medical appointments, completing government documentation, finding English lessons, counselling, employment services and help to find a place to call home. Natalia says that her new neighbourhood is a friendly and open one where there are "no fences separating people".



But even with all this support, there are days when loneliness rips open her heart, so she sits on the balcony and watches the deer. She dreams that "with the assistance of Catholic Social Services, I can teach other women to cook." She adds, "One day, here in Red Deer, we will open a store that specializes in home-cooked Ukrainian food. In our store we will have a party to celebrate that our family has become permanent residents of Canada. *Dyakuyu*. (Thank you)!"

SERVING NEWCOMERS

- CSS is the coordinating agency for all Ukraine relief efforts in Edmonton and Red Deer, working closely with Ukrainian churches, other settlement agencies and many volunteers.
- In 2022/23 funding from the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta and Catholic Social Services' 'Refugee Relief Fund' enabled CSS to help 760 individuals in Edmonton and 459 in Red Deer, while also assisting 1989 family units in Edmonton and another 1408 families in Red Deer.

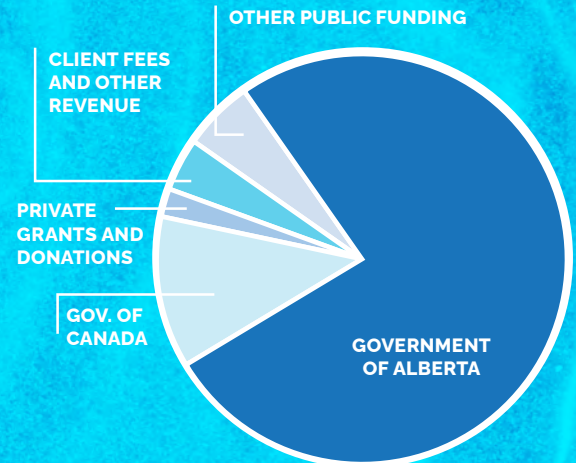


FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS 2022/23

For complete financial statements, visit www.cssalberta.ca.

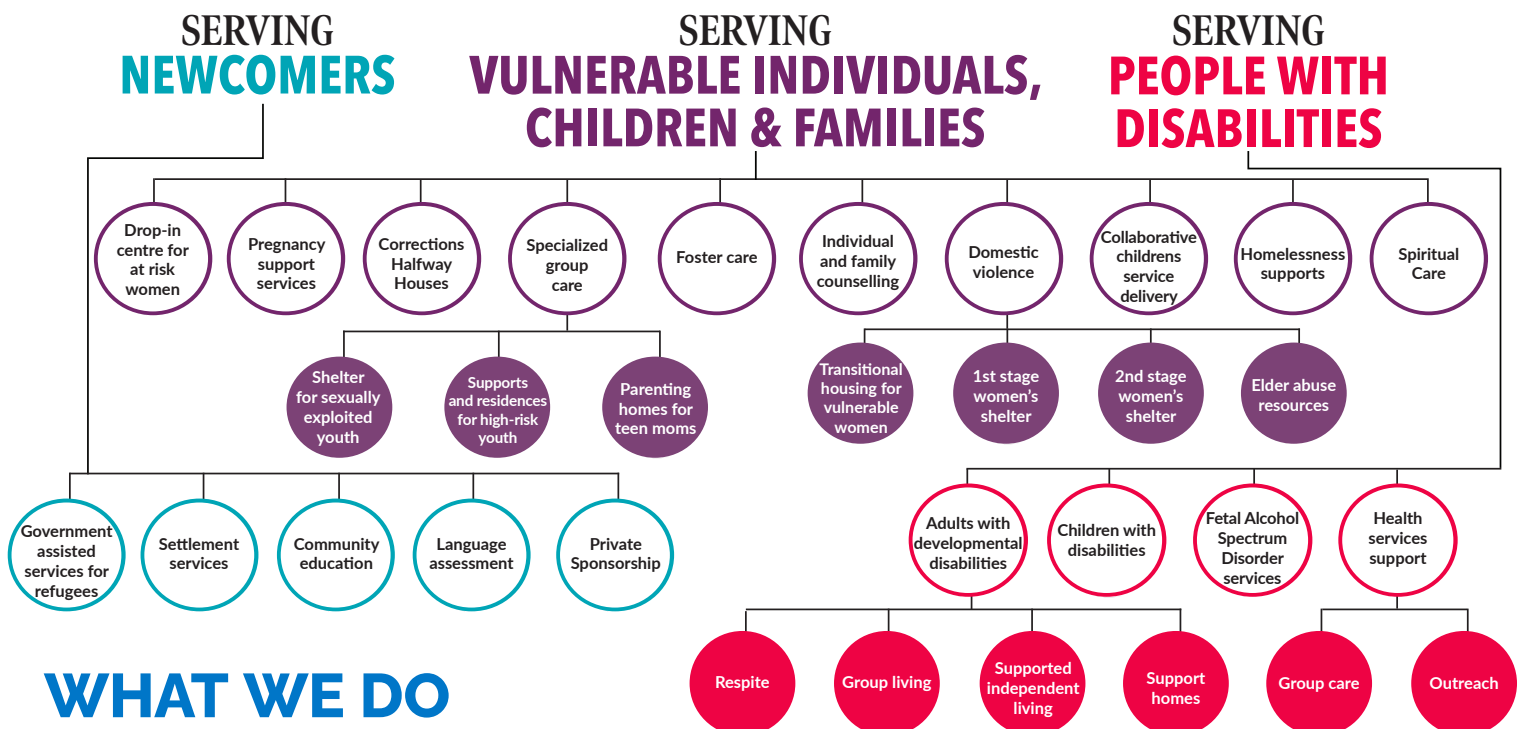
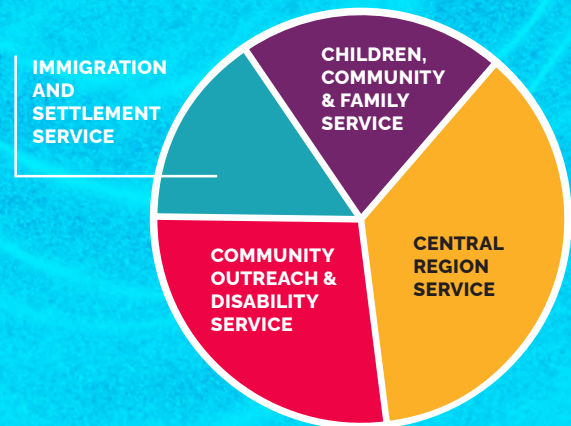
REVENUE

Government of Alberta	\$85,706,459	[76.8%]
Government of Canada	\$19,097,760	[11.9%]
Private grants and donations	\$2,741,003	[2.4%]
Client fees and other revenue	\$3,533,489	[3.5%]
Other public funding	\$5,832,906	[5.4%]
Total	\$116,911,617	



EXPENDITURES

Immigration and Settlement Service	\$18,160,113	[15.5%]
Community Outreach and Disability Service	\$24,166,802	[20.7%]
Central Region Service	\$43,048,414	[36.8%]
Children, Community and Family Service	\$31,643,807	[27.0%]
Total	\$117,019,136	



WHAT WE DO

SERVING 11 COMMUNITIES ON
TREATY 6 & 7 TERRITORIES
WITHIN CENTRAL ALBERTA

• 2000 STAFF • 400 VOLUNTEERS • 20,000 PEOPLE SERVED