CICS
Centre for Immigrant and Community Services

ANNUAL REPORT

Good things happen when humans connect













2023-2024

MESSAGE from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As an Ironman triathlete, I was recently involved in a scary accident in which I was hit by a car while riding my bicycle. I was fortunate to escape without more severe injuries as it could have been a lot worse. After the accident, I had to deal with the insurance company to replace my bicycle and all the onboard equipment and accessories. As part of that process, I had to demonstrate the value of everything by showing what I had paid for them.

Most organizations have what they call their "Core Values". They are usually displayed prominently in their publications, in their buildings, sometimes even on their business cards and letterheads. When you ask someone what exactly a "Core Value" is, typically they will say something like: "These are the things that we deeply believe in as an organization."

That is a common misunderstanding. "Values" are not determined by "beliefs". As much as I want to "believe" my bicycle is worth $100,000 and asked for that in replacement, the insurance company will say, "No, your bicycle is worth what you paid for." I could even put a fancy "$100,000" sticker on my bike. It wouldn't change its true value. Values are not determined by beliefs, or sentiment, or even conviction. The value of something is determined by one thing and one thing only: how much you paid for it. That is true for our lives as individuals, and that is true for our organizations.

CICS' Core Values are **"Compassion", "Inclusion" and "Collaboration"**. These words are displayed proudly in every one of our buildings. But just because we posted them up in our lobbies does not make them our "values". As we reflect on 2023-2024, we must ask ourselves: what have we "paid", what sacrifices







have we made, what choices have we committed to that demonstrate these three values?

The words **"Compassion", "Inclusion" and "Collaboration"** have one thing in common: they only have meaning in the context of human connections, which is the focus of our current 5-year Strategic Plan. **"Compassion"** is about honouring the dignity of every human being, especially those who are most vulnerable. This year we continued to invest in our Community Food Program despite still not having a core funder, and we had to subsidize its operation from our other revenue streams. We do it not because it is convenient or profitable, but to hold true to our core value even if it means paying the price.

"Inclusion" is about building communities where everyone has a place, and no one is left behind. For years, CICS has gone above and beyond our capacity to help everyone who comes through our doors, even when we don't get recognized for that work because the individuals fall outside the eligibility criteria of funders. International students and asylum seekers are such examples. This year, for the first time, our provincial government introduced funding specifically geared towards serving asylum seekers, and I am proud to say that CICS is among the funding recipients and our staff is already fully engaged by the needs from those communities.

"Collaboration" is about the simple truth that as a sector, we do more and go further if we work together, and none of the issues we face can be tackled by one agency alone. In the face of a severe housing crisis that is affecting the entire nation, I am proud to report that CICS is the only newcomer serving organization funded by the City of Toronto to offer our Toronto Tennant Support Program. With that small pocket of funding we served over 5,700 clients and have developed a website that offers up to date housing related resources and information. We have opened that resource for all organizations to use, at no cost, in serving their clients. We don't do it for financial gain, but to truly demonstrate our commitment to collaboration as a "core value".

In this annual report you will see further illustrations of these values that we hold true to. I want to thank our Board of Directors, especially our outgoing board chair, Julie Scott, for their leadership that keeps us moving towards our "North Star" as an organization. My gratitude also goes to our staff family and our volunteers. You are what enables us to be who we are: an unstoppable force for good in our community.

Alfred Lam
Executive Director, CICS



MESSAGE from the BOARD CHAIR

Dear CICS Community,

I am filled with immense gratitude for the last six years to have served an organization that holds such a profound mission as CICS: to enable newcomers to settle and integrate in Toronto and become contributing members of Canadian society.

Coincidentally, six years ago, I also embarked on a quest to learn to garden. In getting my hands dirty in the garden I have learnt a key lesson from a gardening guru I follow: when we take care of the earth, the earth takes care of us and our plants. By nurturing the soil, enhancing it with compost and other nutrients, plants can grow their roots to stand upright and grow. Similarly, at CICS, we strive to create a nurturing environment for newcomers, ensuring they have access to the resources, support, and opportunities they need to grow and thrive.

Just as a gardener tends to each plant's unique needs, CICS is committed to understanding and addressing the diverse needs of our community members. Each year we look at the new challenges and opportunities facing newcomers and adapt our educational programs, social services, and community activities to ensure we continue to serve our newcomer clients. This year we have focused on connecting people with compassion at a time when it's so easy to feel isolated. We have measured our progress with the number of clients served (up 6% year over year to more than 140,000 clients) and client satisfaction surveys where 99% report they are very satisfied with CICS services. One measure of compassion at CICS is the growing number of active volunteers (up 54% this year to 636 active volunteers) who provide vital hands-on-support to our clients. By learning and adapting we can continually foster a supportive and inclusive environment to help newcomers build strong roots in their new home.

In the last six years I've seen how caring for the soil yields bountiful harvests. At CICS I've seen how the leadership of our Executive Director Alfred Lam, our dedicated, talented CICS teams and tireless volunteers, have provided a nourishing community to support newcomers as they become vibrant and resilient members of the community.

As we move forward, let us continue to care for our community of newcomers. Together, we can create a flourishing community where everyone has the opportunity to grow and thrive.

With warm regards,

Julie Scott
Board Chair, CICS

BOARD of DIRECTORS



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Abrar Huq



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Katina Hunter Sutcliffe

140,780
Client Interactions

636
Active Volunteers

18,106.5
Volunteer Hours

com·pas·sion

/kəmˈpaSH(ə)n/
noun

A COMMITMENT to honour and protect the dignity that is inherent to all human beings



Our youth leaders (Settlement Workers in School program) always help us see things from a different perspective! CICS' SEPT program serves over 70 schools in Toronto!



Who's ready to see what Canada has to offer?



Making sure everyone is looked after at our Annual Fall Harvest Festival!



Don't worry, I got you covered!

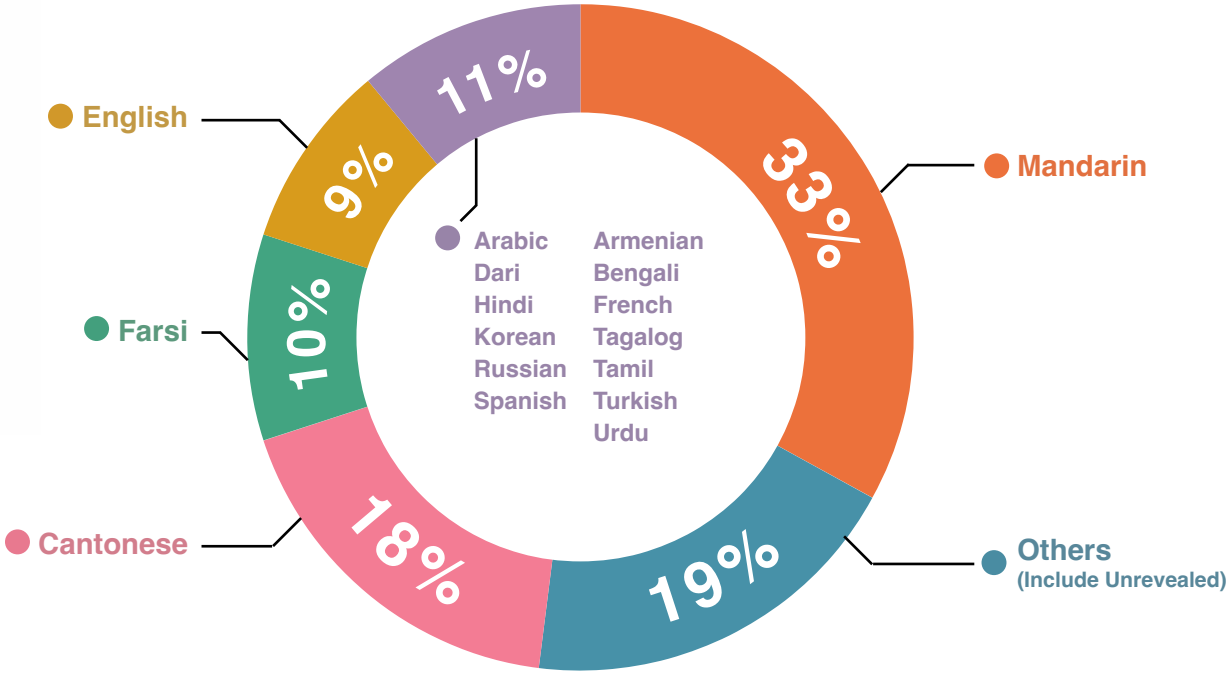






Our foodbank volunteers are trained to make sure all clients have a respectful and dignifying experience. On average our foodbank serves over 200 families each week.

Native Language



in·clu·sion

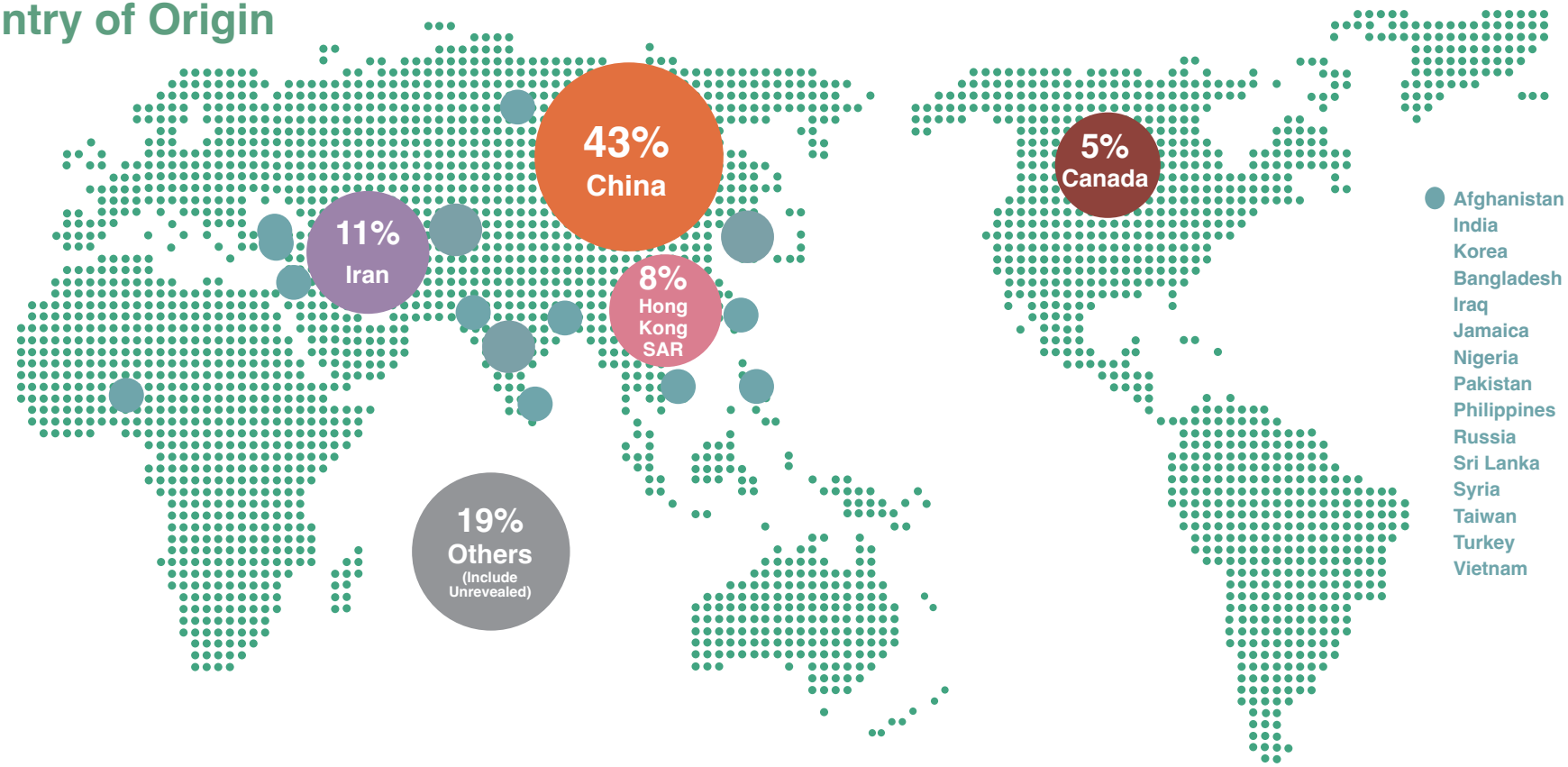
/ɪnˈkluːʒn/
noun

A BELIEF that a community is a grand story that we are all a part of, and it happens only when we recognize ourselves in each other's stories.



Introducing newcomers in Newmarket to their community library.

Country of Origin





Showing children and youth from war-torn Ukraine their new home in Canada!



Our English classes serve clients from all around the world! Last year CICS offered 31 English classes serving almost 1000 students!



Introducing the resources in a community centre to over 40 newcomers from Ukraine and their children. Last year alone we served over 300 Ukranian new-comers!



Celebrating Lunar New Year with folks from all over the world!

127
community partners with ongoing collaboration



Working with the Town of Aurora to welcome and serve newcomers.

col·la·bo·ra·tion

/kəˌlabəˈreɪʃn/
noun

A CONVICTION that we can do more, go farther and reach higher by working together



Employers are the backbone to our Employment Support Programs! Last year we worked with over 30 employers to successfully help 150 clients secure jobs!



The Mayor, Olivia Chow, participated in our Fall Harvest Festival!





CICS honoured CICS donors and stakeholders turned up at our 55th Anniversary celebration.



With the help of volunteer accountants, CICS' tax clinic serves over 900 people every year.



Thanking our donors for nurturing the growth of CICS.

CLIENT STORIES and TESTIMONIALS

Employment Support Programs

Carol, a mother of three from Kenya with a background in Business Management and 13 years as a senior accountant, felt a profound sense of isolation upon her arrival in Toronto. *"My one-on-one supportive counseling session with the SMART coordinator, Jane, made me feel safe to share my thoughts, and I gained a lot in terms of information and knowledge. I got an interview invitation for an accounting position and was set for the second phase and finally emerged as the top for the position! Thank you, CICS, employers, and community partners who work with CICS to make this program possible for the benefit of women and newcomers at large!"*

Tonny, a hospitality professional from Kenya with over a decade of experience, arrived in Canada as a refugee claimant. The CICS Transition to Career Advancement program provided the platform he needed, offering training in restaurant and food services. *"The program I can say is a game changer for anyone who has experience or without experience in the food services industry can undertake and become successful just like me. From the guest speakers to the facilitator, thank you for the good job you are doing. I now have a full-time job as a Restaurant Manager!"*



Youth Leaders in Training Program

K.C., after serving as a volunteer camp counselor at the Youth Leaders in Training Program: *"I had a lot of kids asking me to come back next year to be their counsellor and I think that was one of the most rewarding feelings. At basketball, we often had special needs kids and we learned about them throughout the week and how to take care of them. One of the basketball campers with autism ran back after camp yesterday because he was crying, saying he was going to miss his "older sisters" (the counsellors and supervisors), so there really were heartwarming moments. In comparison to the other programs which cost hundreds of dollars, I thought your program was far more beneficial. I strongly encourage you to continue organizing the Youth Leaders in Training program as so many of my friends and relatives want to participate in it as well. I am eternally grateful for the Youth Leaders in Training Program you hosted!"*



Workplace English for PSW

Sylvia: student from Workplace English for PSW: *"By focusing on these key words and phrases, the Workplace English for PSW provide the capabilities of any a PSW who can improve the patient care and more cohesive work environment. Nowadays, I am a full-time PSW working at a long-term care, I do my routine job four or five days every week. I use the words and phrases in the textbook and the most frequent listed in Workplace English program almost every day. I appreciate all the staff in Workplace English for PSW and our wonderful teacher!"*

Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)

Hanah: *"I have been learning English at CICS for over a year. I have two sons. Thanks to the daycare service, I can focus on my learning while the childminders take care of one of my sons. It is quite amazing that my child likes the daycare so much that he looks forward to coming to school every day. In my class, I learn more than just a second language. I also learn about the culture, living, values, beliefs and many other things about Canada. My other son has participated in many activities offered by the centre, such as tutorial, computer drawing, and summer camp. Overall, the learning experience at the Welcome Center is very encouraging and satisfying. Now I feel more confident and enjoy living in Canada."*

Settlement Services

From an Iranian Client: *"Hundreds of kissing angels are tying a knot from the work of creating a bond. With greetings and respect, I felt it necessary to express my gratitude to the staff*



at CICS with whom I had a very positive experience. They sincerely, honestly, and patiently answer all the questions of friends and help make the difficult path of immigration smoother for the Iranian community with their assistance and companionship. I sincerely thank them and wish them health, pride, and happiness from God."

Housing and Tenant Support Services

Sunny: *"I have heard about CICS before. This time I really needed their help. Their staff patiently answered my questions with regards to my rights. I was impressed by their patience, the timeliness and accuracy of their information, and their professionalism. I was also referred to their mental health team. The staff there was caring and their professional service helped me with my mental wellness. True to their reputation, CICS' staff is talented and professional. Their services gave me warmth in a new country away from my home. Thank you all so much! I wish you all the best as CICS continues to grow!"*



55th ANNIVERSARY



Happy Birthday!!

1968 was a history defining year, with events that rocked and rattled the world stage for the next decades. Pierre Elliot Trudeau was elected as Prime Minister of Canada for the first time. Richard Nixon was elected President of the United States of America. Prominent civil rights leader Martin Luthur King Jr. was killed. US Senator Robert Kennedy was assassinated, only three years after his brother President John F Kennedy suffered the same fate.

Nestled in between these earth-shattering events, in 1968 a group of young students quietly began volunteering in Toronto's Chinatown. They saw the needs of immigrants who couldn't speak or read English and started providing translation services to help them.

They could not have dreamed the seed of selfless service they planted 55 years ago would grow to become today's CICS. On October 27, 2023 we celebrated our 55th birthday with 600 guests as we reflected on our journey with the theme "A Story We All Belong To." It was a celebration of what we have accomplished and a reminder for us that the story must continue!



The Family!!

CICS in the MEDIA

As the work of CICS reaches deeper and further into the different populations in our communities, we are recognized as a sector leader on issues of immigration, poverty and food insecurity, and community services and development. Over the past year we have appeared in all forms of ethnic and mainstream media: in print, on air, and online giving voice to those who are often voiceless and to bring their concerns and struggles into the conscience of our communities.







FINANCIAL STATEMENT

	2024	2023
REVENUE		
Grants and contributions (notes 8 and 10)	$ 11,645,143	$ 10,150,172
Amortization of deferred capital contributions (note 9)	364,556	328,961
Fees for use of space	185,151	168,857
Donations	122,160	130,732
Fees for services rendered	258,453	185,681
Amortization of leasehold inducement	16,000	16,000
Interest income	99,617	46,235
Membership fees	6,768	4,610
Productive enterprises	8,810	650
	12,706,658	11,031,898
EXPENSES		
Wages and benefits	8,501,809	7,411,498
Building occupancy and realty tax	1,963,475	1,876,994
Program	422,144	358,626
Office and general	353,954	259,478
HST	89,732	84,192
Purchased services	168,437	116,050
Term loan interest	16,907	33,098
Equipment maintenance and rental	32,254	34,881
Staff development and travel	45,111	25,720
Advertising and promotion	65,628	16,170
Amortization (note 5)	580,861	546,026
	12,240,312	10,762,733
Excess of revenue over expenses	**$ 466,346**	**$ 269,165**

FUNDER LIST

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

Ontario Ministry of Health

Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility

Ontario Trillium Foundation

City of Toronto

Regional Municipality of York

United Way Greater Toronto

Daily Bread Food Bank

MAZON Canada

Rotary Club of North Scarborough

RBC

CICS LOCATIONS and CONTACT INFORMATION

Immigrant Resource Centre (CICS HEAD OFFICE)
2330 Midland Ave,
Toronto, Ontario M1S 5G5
(North of Highway 401)
416-292-7510
www.cicscanada.com

Toronto Integrated Service Centre
3850 Finch Ave E., Suite 402,
Toronto, Ontario M1T 3T6
(West of Kennedy Rd.)
416-293-4565

Sheppard LINC Centre
4002 Sheppard Ave. E., Suite 501,
Toronto, Ontario M1S 4RS
(at Kennedy Rd.)
416-299-8118

Woodside Square LINC Centre
1571 Sandhurst Cir., Unit 414, G/F.,
Toronto, Ontario M1V 1V2
(McCowan Rd./Finch Ave. Next to TD Bank)
416-292-6558

North York Centre
1761 Sheppard Ave E., G/F
Toronto, Ontario M2J 0A5
416-292-7510

Markham South Welcome Centre
7220 Kennedy Rd., Unit 8
Markham, Ontario L3R 7P2
(South of Denison St.)
905-479-7926
www.welcomecentre.ca

Immigrant Youth Centre
5284 Highway 7 E. Unit 2,
Markham, Ontario L3P 1B9
(East of McCowan Rd.)
905-294-8868
www.cicsiyc.org

Newmarket Centre
130 Mulock Dr., Unit 2,
Newmarket, Ontario, L3Y 7C5
(Yonge St./Mulock Dr.)
905-895-3789

Centre for Learning
Langham Square, 8333 Kennedy Rd., Unit 39,
Markham, Ontario L3R 4P8
(South of Highway 7)
416-797-2353 / 647-882-0439
cfl@cicscanada.com



www.cicscanada.com