



2023/2024
Annual Impact Report
ONTARIO



*See the impact of your
generosity in Ontario.*

We are so glad you are part of the MCC story.

These pages are just a glimpse into how your gifts are impacting people's lives in Ontario and around the world.

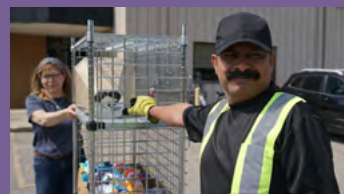
Thank you for joining us in this work.



Russell Ferguson is one of the dedicated cooks stewing up delicious batches of artisanal soup as part of the Raw Carrot, a social enterprise that provides meaningful work for those who face barriers to traditional employment. (MCC Photo/Ken Ogasawara)



Aurora Voll and other youth from Shantz Mennonite Church helped to process kit bags at the Material Resources Centre in New Hamburg, Ontario. (MCC Photo/Ken Ogasawara)



Celal Amar and Karen Davis of MCC New Hamburg Thrift Centre transport freshly sorted and tagged treasures from the warehouse to the shop floor, giving these items a second chance at a new home while raising vital funds for MCC's global programs. (MCC Photo/Ken Ogasawara)

MCC
ONTARIO
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MCEC – Mennonite Church Eastern Canada
MB – Mennonite Brethren
BIC – Be in Christ Church of Canada
EMC – Evangelical Mennonite Conference

**THANK YOU FROM OUR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Friends,

As I complete my first year as the Executive Director of MCC Ontario, I am deeply moved by the unwavering support and generosity that you have shown. In a world increasingly marked by conflict, polarization and the relentless challenges of climate change, your commitment to the work of MCC Ontario stands as a testament to compassion and hope.


Thanks to your incredible support, we have been able to continue our work of meeting basic human needs and working for peace and justice. Your contributions have directly impacted countless lives, providing essential resources and support to those who need it most.

Our volunteers, supporters, partnering churches and donors all play an invaluable role in our efforts. Your dedication, hard work and financial support have enabled us to reach communities in crisis and offer them a lifeline. We are continually inspired by the collective strength and resilience of our MCC community, and it is with deep gratitude that we recognize the vital part each of you plays in it.

In these challenging times, we are guided by our Christian faith and assurance that we are not alone in our efforts. Your belief in our work and your continued support empower us to keep moving forward, finding innovative solutions and fostering peace where it is most needed.

Thank you for standing with us, for believing in our vision and for being a crucial part of the MCC Ontario community. Together, we are making a profound impact, creating ripples of change that reach far and wide.

With heartfelt gratitude,




MICHELLE BRENNEMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MCC ONTARIO
MICHELLEBRENNEMAN@MCCO.CA

“The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands: ‘See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern and humbly obey your God.’”

— MICAH 6:8 CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION (CEV)

ABOUT MCC ONTARIO

At Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), we are deeply grateful for the incredible support of our donors, volunteers and community partners. Your generosity enables us to make a meaningful impact locally and globally, with over 500 projects worldwide.

Here in Ontario, MCC is committed to building safer, more resilient environments for all.

We achieve these goals through our local initiatives:

- **MCC Thrift Shops:** A network dedicated to supporting local and international relief, development and peace projects while promoting sustainability and preserving resources.
- **Migration and Resettlement:** Across Ontario, we assist groups such as churches and municipalities in welcoming newcomers through Canada’s Private Sponsorship of Refugees program. We liaise with service providers to deliver culturally sensitive services to Low German-speaking Mennonites.
- **Indigenous Neighbours:** We facilitate reconciliation through relationship-building, art and advocacy. We share culture by supporting Indigenous artists and addressing systemic poverty issues by responding to disasters, advocating for justice and promoting sustainable livelihoods.
- **Material Resources:** From disaster relief supplies sent to fly-in Indigenous communities to kits and comforters sent to people displaced in countries like Ukraine, MCC Ontario connects our communities with those in need worldwide.
- **Restorative Justice:** We offer creative training opportunities for individuals, churches and community groups to tear down stereotypes and teach peacebuilding and active intervention skills.
- **Walking with People in Poverty:** We respond to poverty by walking alongside marginalized people with compassion and care. We provide meaningful employment, promote sustainable livelihoods and create awareness through advocacy.

LEADERSHIP TEAM



**MCC ONTARIO WORKS
ON TREATY LAND**

MCC Ontario respectfully acknowledges and honours the Original Peoples from all the Nations who are the original stewards of the land we now call Ontario. We recognize colonialism’s profound impact on Indigenous lands, languages, cultures and knowledge. We also deeply appreciate Indigenous Peoples’ invaluable contributions to shaping and enriching our communities.

With gratitude, we reaffirm our commitment to the ongoing journey of Truth and Reconciliation, striving to make its promise and challenge a reality in our lives and work.

Pictured left to right
Kim Lester, Associate executive director
Wendy Adema, Director of people and programs
Michelle Brenneman, Executive director
Lynda Lynch, Thrift director
Sean East, Director of finance and operations
(MCC photo/Shoua Vang)

“Water is life”



Dive into the transformative journey of the All Nations Grand River Water Walk with Mary Anne Caibaiosai, an Ojibwe Anishinaabe Water Walker. This episode of *Undercurrents* illuminates Mary Anne’s mission to

honour and protect ‘Nibi,’ seen as the lifeblood of Mother Earth. Joining Mary Anne on this 200-kilometre journey are Indigenous and settler community members, including MCC’s Indigenous Neighbours staff, who embark on a week-long pilgrimage along the Grand River. They participate in the sacred rituals of water walking—a ceremony of prayer, song and reverence for water.

Mary Anne’s gentle but strong teachings urge us to see water not as a resource to be extracted but as a relative deserving respect and care. Her inclusive approach bridges Indigenous teachings with broader communities, fostering understanding and solidarity.

Settler Mennonite participants like Phil Martin testify to the profound impact of this experience. Phil reflected that “Participating in the Water Walk made me a better Mennonite!”

Scan to listen 



Undercurrents is produced with support from Kindred Credit Union.

Program highlights:

1031

individuals gained a deeper understanding of Indigenous issues, justice and the path to reconciliation

490

Residential school Survivors received MCC comforters, offering a tangible sign that they are not forgotten

22

Indigenous artisans earned vital supplemental income from selling their hand crafted products

INDIGENOUS NEIGHBOURS



Your support empowers the Indigenous Neighbours program to partner with Indigenous communities, fostering food sovereignty and sustainable livelihoods and addressing systemic poverty to create lasting change.

Photo: 

Members of Peawanuck First Nation pick up their brand-new Meechum a Wat bundles which include a snare, a hatchet, snowshoes and other equipment to harvest food off the land. (MCC photo/Micheline Hunter)



For Indigenous peoples, food doesn’t just fill the belly—it is a connection to the land that gives life to culture, to identity, to history and to sovereignty as nations. As food prices in the North continue to skyrocket, the Meechum a Wat (Cree for “food bundle”) initiative by Weenusk First Nation exemplifies the importance of self-sustaining food practices. Each Meechum a Wat bundle contains practical tools for gathering food on the land, including a tarp, fishing gear, a snare and a hatchet among other supplies.

With your support, 25 Meechum a Wat bundles were sent to equip 25 youth and young adults in Peawanuck First Nation, one of Ontario’s northernmost communities. The remaining 15 bundles were requested by Mattagami First Nation who are also interested in experimenting with land-based food solutions.

Through partnerships and collaborative efforts, including with the Anti-Hunger Coalition of

Timmins and local community leaders like Shannon,* who runs a self-sustaining garden startup business in Matachewan, progress is being made in enhancing food security and sustainability.

In-person connections have proven invaluable, fostering deeper relationships and sharing practical ideas for collective action. Michelin Hunter’s visit to Timmins all the way from Peawanuck and the involvement of Amber Nakogee and Amy Cloutier from Mushkegowuk Council at MCC’s Peace Conference in the fall highlight the significance of these exchanges.

Thanks to your support, partnerships are growing and innovative solutions are taking root, offering tangible support for Indigenous food sovereignty.

**names have been changed for privacy purposes*

“Imperfect, but so worth it”



Inspired by the Blended Visa Office Referral (BVOR) refugee sponsorship program’s potential to expedite resettlement for vulnerable refugees, Katie Nolan co-founded Open Arms, a refugee sponsorship group, in 2019. With camaraderie and commitment, Nolan and members of her community came together and, with support from MCC, welcomed Massih Khiery, an Iranian refugee, to Kemptville in late 2019.

Navigating resettlement challenges from cultural adjustments to pandemic disruptions, Open Arms discovered profound community enrichment in their efforts. “People commented that they felt like being a part of the [sponsorship] had made their life better in their own community,” recalls Nolan.

Despite hardships, sponsoring Khiery not only changed his life but also strengthened local bonds. Now, nearly four years later, Khiery has married a local woman, deepening his roots in Kemptville and his new community.

Scan to listen



Your generosity helps MCC support sponsors like Open Arms to welcome those who have lost so much.

*Blended Visa Office Referred whereby the federal government covers a portion of the year’s sponsorship costs

Program highlights:

300

newcomers were supported in their first year in Canada

541

people learned how to better engage and support individuals from Low German-speaking communities

1,176

individuals gained awareness of the many benefits newcomers bring to our communities

MIGRATION AND RESETTLEMENT



Your support has made it possible for families to reunite, build new lives and contribute to their communities, fostering hope and resilience.

“I have peace now, I didn’t have it back home.”

PERUSI NYAGAZURA

Top right: Nyashema Nyarakirindo (left) and friend Liisa Farrugia have enjoyed going to MCC’s Material Resources warehouse to knot comforters and create relationships with fellow volunteers. (MCC photo/Ken Ogasawara)



In 2018, violence forced Perusi’s family to flee the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Burundi. For five long years, separated from loved ones, they sought refuge in a camp. While her husband and sons found sanctuary in Canada, Perusi and her daughter, Nyashema, had to stay behind.

Thanks to your incredible generosity and sponsorship from Erb Street Mennonite Church and Avon Mennonite Church, Perusi and Nyashema were reunited with their family in Canada in June 2023. Your support made this heartwarming reunion possible and began their journey toward healing and stability.

In January, Perusi and Nyashema joined MCC Ontario’s Great Winter Warmup, volunteering to knot comforters for disaster-affected areas.

Inspired to give back, they became regular volunteers at MCC’s Material Resources (MR) centre in New Hamburg. Liisa Farrugia from Avon Mennonite Church, who bonded with them through the sponsorship process, accompanied them to bridge language gaps and foster friendship. Break times turned into moments of laughter and cultural exchange, strengthening their bond.

For Perusi, volunteering at the MR centre is a testament to her resilience and a way to pay forward the kindness she’s received. Through her son Sibomana’s translation, she shared: “When I got here, I loved it. When I learned that MCC is working for peace, I love that because although I have peace now, I didn’t have it back home.”

(Un)affordable housing



We sit down with MCC's Ontario advocacy guru Greg deGroot-Maggetti as he breaks down our affordable housing crisis: where we are, how we got here and three (of many) solutions.

Greg, who has been working at public policy and poverty reduction for decades, reveals how his own neighbourhood has been rocked by rising rents and disappearing homes. He unpacks how policy shifts over the last 30 years have favoured investors over residents, leaving thousands without stable housing. Those living and working near these changing neighbourhoods, like Stephen Soucie working at MCC Thrift on Kent in downtown Kitchener, have seen a marked increase in the struggles of those who are housing insecure.

Yet, amid challenges, there is hope. From grassroots movements demanding fair rents to calls for renewed federal investment in affordable housing, the solutions are there. Listen to the full episode at mcc.org/undercurrents to learn more about how you can help.

Scan to listen



Program highlights:

685

people gained essential skills to become effective peacebuilders

108

partners and individuals addressed systemic barriers to peace and justice

105

people received support to avoid reoffending after incarceration, contributing to safer communities

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE



Thanks to you, folks who are re-entering community after incarceration were well supported, creating safer communities for all.

"I'm a work in progress. Now I know there's help out there and I'm not ashamed to go and ask for it."

RON*, FORMERLY INCARCERATED FOR SEXUAL OFFENCE

**NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED FOR PRIVACY PURPOSES*

Photo:

Ron is pictured at a church where he meets with other former inmates and community members for meals, fellowship and friendship.

(MCC photo/Ken Ogasawara)



Ron* does not take his community for granted. A survivor of sexual abuse as a child, and then serving time for sexually offending against others, Ron is deeply grateful for those who continue to support him, including his parents and aunt and uncle. "Without their support, I probably wouldn't be here today," he says. But he laments how much their support cost them. "They lost just as many people as I did just for supporting me. That's the hard part."

Fortunately, Ron also had the support of the Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) staff and volunteers who welcomed him back to community after he was released from prison. "It's like I've known them for years. And to me, they were nonjudgmental," Ron reflects. "They

welcomed me with open arms. And I was like, yeah, this is what I need."

Unfortunately, we had to close our CoSA program in June 2024 due to ongoing funding challenges. While we deeply appreciate our incredible donors, we could not secure the necessary federal and provincial funding. We are grateful for the dedicated staff, volunteers and donors who supported these programs for many years and who continue to support Ron and others through new community partnerships. Our Restorative Justice work continues in a different way, including creative peacebuilding training opportunities.

**names have been changed for privacy purposes*

SOFTER AND SAFER

Using conflict resolution and de-escalation training, Stephen Soucie helps to foster safety and belonging for all customers, volunteers and staff at MCC Thrift on Kent in Kitchener. (MCC photo/Ken Ogasawara)



Thanks to you, compassionate care for folks who have been marginalized can help ensure that all can belong in our communities.

“A lot of street-involved people feel a sense of community here. MCC wants to make sure that they feel welcome here, but in a way that is safe for everyone—other customers, staff and volunteers.”

STEPHEN, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND OUTREACH ASSOCIATE

HOW AN OUTREACH WORKER IS MAKING EVERYONE FEEL WELCOME

The rising cost of living, the urgent lack of affordable housing, the influx of hard street drugs and the resulting strain on marginalized folks have led to unique challenges for retail spaces in downtown neighbourhoods like MCC Thrift on Kent in Kitchener. As incidences of theft and altercations increased, MCC decided that simply hiring a security guard was not the appropriate response.

“My official job title is Community Safety and Outreach Associate,” says Stephen Soucie. “It is a role that is trying to marry MCC’s values, in terms of community building, relationship building and restorative justice, with the realities of running a retail business [at MCC Thrift on Kent].”

Stephen says that unlike many public retail spaces such as malls or big box stores, where street-involved people might be asked to leave, MCC Thrift on Kent is a place where folks can escape that feeling of exclusion.

MCC Thrift on Kent retail associate Eun Kyoung Park affirms the increased feeling of safety with Stephen’s presence and gives credit for his “soft and friendly” approach. “He tries to understand them rather than controlling them with power,” she says.

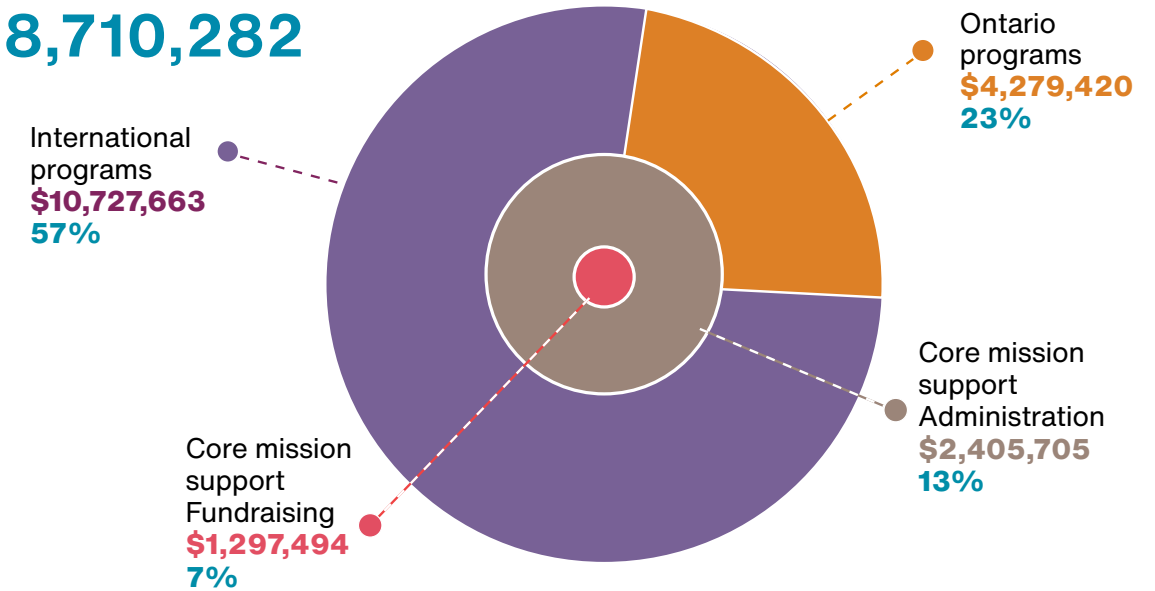
Stephen’s role has been such a resounding success that other MCC thrift shops in Ontario are planning to incorporate a similar position to ensure the safety and belonging of everyone who enters their doors.

Financial highlights

The financial information on this page represents the operations of MCC Ontario for the year ending March 31, 2024 and has been prepared from the audited financial statements. Complete audited financial statements are available upon request or at mcc.org/accountability.

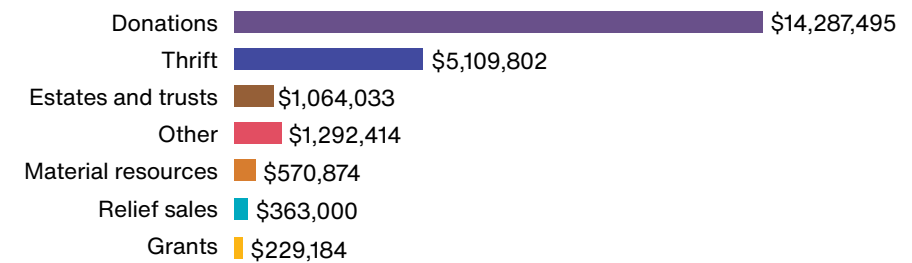
MCC ONTARIO DOLLARS AT WORK:

\$18,710,282



MCC ONTARIO FUNDING SOURCES:

\$22,916,802



MCC ONTARIO PROGRAM DOLLARS AT WORK:

\$4,279,420

