



ANNUAL REPORT

2024/2025



HELPING PEOPLE. IMPROVING LIVES.

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - CAROLYN WARKENTIN & BOARD CHAIR - HARPREET SINGH

It's no secret that the world is facing unprecedented challenges. As of the end of 2024, the UNHCR reported that 42.7 million people worldwide are living as refugees. In Canada, nearly 1 in 4 people in the ten provinces—approximately 10 million individuals, including 2.5 million children—lived in food-insecure households. Ontario's unemployment rate sits at 7.8%, but for youth, it's a staggering 20.1%. Add to this economic uncertainty caused by tariffs and rising fiscal pressures at all levels of government, and the picture can feel overwhelming.

And yet—organizations like SECC continue to show up.

In the midst of this complexity, one thing remains constant: SECC's unwavering commitment to the people and communities we serve. We believe in the power of community. We believe in the possibility of change. And we see that change, every day.

“And that is how change happens. One gesture. One person. One moment at a time.” —Libba Bray

We see it in our language classrooms, where newcomers improve their English, find employment, or launch small businesses. We see it in clients accessing employment supports, gaining the confidence and skills they need to succeed. We see it in children and youth who grow in confidence, take initiative, and begin to lead.

These small, powerful moments of transformation are what drive our work.

While the road ahead may remain uncertain, SECC is well-prepared. We've built a strong foundation and a resilient team. We've embraced innovation—our new Client Records Management system is improving service delivery and outcomes. We are actively exploring sustainable models that reduce dependence on government funding. And we've invested in deep partnerships across sectors—businesses, municipalities, and fellow community organizations.

The world may feel precarious, but SECC has never been in a stronger position.

Our staff are extraordinary. Our Leadership Team is focused and future-ready. Our Board champions bold ideas. Our volunteers bring energy, compassion, and expertise. And most importantly, our community continues to recognize the value SECC brings.

Together, we are living our mission: Helping people. Improving lives.

And together, we are building a future rooted in hope, resilience, and possibility.

**7,146 VOLUNTEER HOURS
ACUMULATED**

**185 ACTIVE
VOLUNTEERS**

**821 TAX RETURNS
FILED**

OUR IMPACT

This year, we turned challenges into opportunities — driving growth, expanding access, and creating lasting impact.

RIDE FOR REFUGE

In 2024, SECC hosted our first annual Ride for Refuge, bringing together community members, local businesses, and volunteers to support vulnerable individuals and families in our region. Through the incredible energy and commitment of our riders, donors, and sponsors, we raised critical funds to sustain and strengthen SECC programs — from Meals on Wheels and transportation services to newcomer support and youth initiatives.

Ride for Refuge was not only a fundraising event but a celebration of compassion and community spirit, showing how collective action can make a lasting impact. Thanks to everyone who rode, walked, donated, and cheered, we continue to move closer to a future where everyone belongs and thrives.



CUSTOM CRM BOOSTS SERVICE AND EFFICIENCY ACROSS SECC

Launched in January 2024, SECC's custom-built CRM continues to develop streamlined operations and improved client supports. It allows staff to manage interactions, update records, and analyze data—reducing duplication, enhancing collaboration, and ensuring consistent, personalized service across programs to better respond to community needs.



323 STUDENTS ENROLLED

IN ENGLISH CLASSES LAST YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 53% IMPROVED AT LEAST ONE CLB LEVEL WITHIN 6 MONTHS.



NEW ENTREPRENEURS

In 2024, SECC launched its Entrepreneurs Program to support newcomers in starting or growing businesses in our community.

Through information sessions and workshops, participants gain practical knowledge in business planning, marketing, and accessing local resources—helping to build a stronger, more inclusive local economy.

LEAMINGTON OFFICE RENO

In 2024, SECC celebrated the grand opening of its newly renovated Leamington office, made possible by a \$111,000 Capital Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF).

The renovations included upgrades to common areas, appointment rooms, and new furniture and technology—improvements that will support SECC's mission of Helping people. Improving lives. for years to come. *"This grant allowed us to make meaningful updates that will benefit our clients for years to come," said Executive Director Carolyn Warkentin.* SECC remains committed to Helping people. Improving lives.—continuing the vision first set in 1973.

KINGSVILLE MOVE

In 2025, SECC relocated its Kingsville office to a new, centrally located space at 21 Mill Street West, Unit B.

Thanks to the support of the Town of Kingsville, the new facility improves accessibility and creates opportunities to expand programs and services that better respond to the needs of the local community.

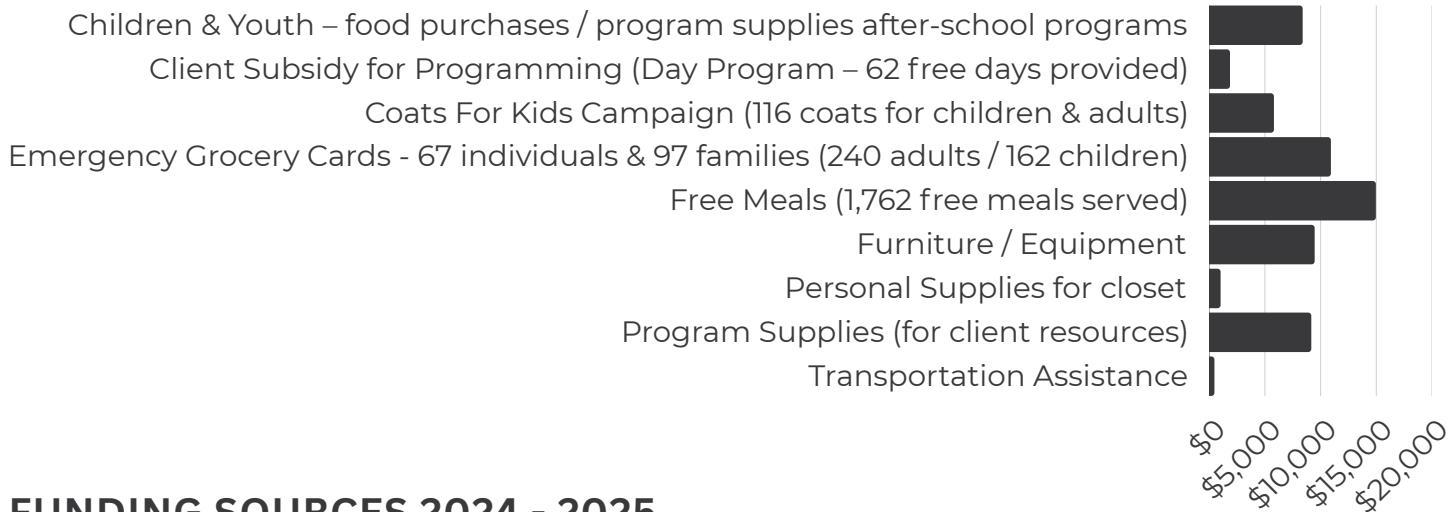


**916 UNIQUE
CLIENTS**
**WERE ASSISTED THROUGH
COMMUNITY HOME SUPPORT
SERVICES**

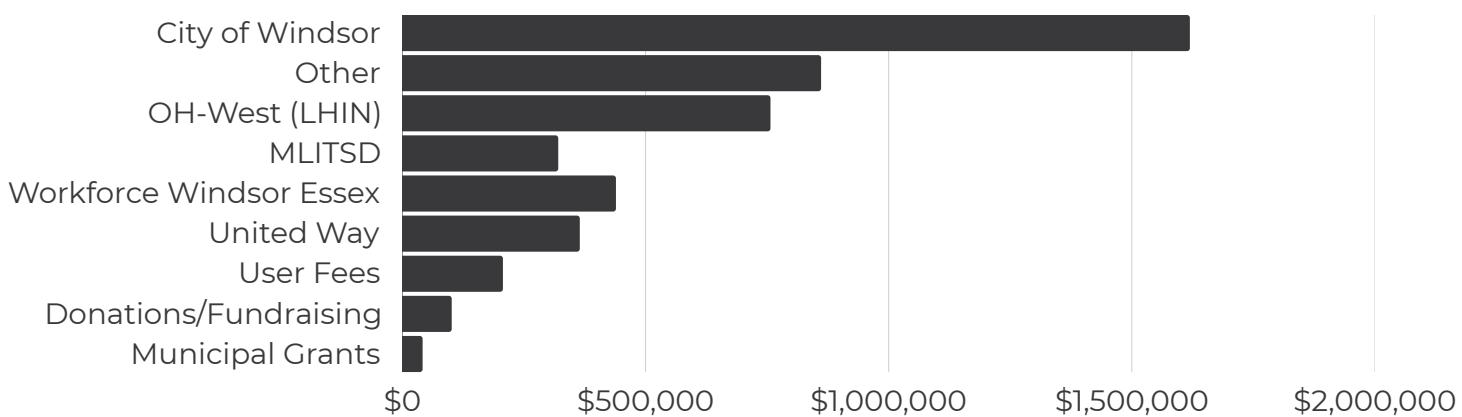
FINANCIALS

Behind every service delivered is a network of support – this overview highlights the funding and generosity that powered SECC's growth, adaptability, and community impact throughout 2023-2024.

DONATION EXPENDITURES 2024 - 2025



FUNDING SOURCES 2024 - 2025



46 FAMILIES WERE ABLE TO ACCESS SUMMER CAMP PROGRAMMING THROUGH SUBSIDIZED SPOTS

82 ENGLISH CLASS STUDENTS FOUND EMPLOYMENT OR STARTED THEIR OWN BUSINESSES.

IMPACT STORIES

This year, we shared powerful impact stories – celebrating resilience, inspiring connection, and showcasing the difference community support makes.

MEET SVITLANA ASADCHYKH

When Svitlana Asadchykh arrived in Canada in late 2023, she was determined to build a meaningful life. With two degrees in management and years of leadership experience in Ukraine, she found her purpose in helping fellow immigrants navigate the challenges of settling in a new country.

Svitlana now volunteers with immigration lawyer Inna Kogan, assisting with client communications, organizing consultations, and supporting administrative tasks. Fluent in Ukrainian and Russian, she helps clients feel more at ease by providing support in their native language.

In addition to volunteering, Svitlana is studying English at South Essex Community Council and taking an Immigration and Refugee Law course at George Brown College. Her goal is to one day start her own company supporting newcomers with legal and settlement services, working alongside licensed professionals.



Svitlana's journey is also a family success story—her daughter now plays on a local girls' hockey team and is thriving in the community. Meanwhile, Svitlana continues to grow professionally, gaining experience and making a difference in the lives of others.

Her story reflects the power of perseverance, purpose, and giving back—an inspiring example of building a new life through service to others. It also reflects the values and mission SECC holds in the community: empowering people, supporting newcomers, and creating opportunities for everyone to thrive.

61 CHILDREN FROM OUR
COMMUNITY CAME TO
MARCH BREAK CAMP

2400

HOT MEALS PROVIDED TO AFTER
SCHOOL PROGRAM STUDENTS ON
MONDAYS



MEET LUIS AGUILAR

Luis Aguilar, one of SECC's Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) students, took an exciting step forward by opening his own small business in downtown Leamington.

His new venture, Mexicanique Convenience, is a Mexican convenience store located on Talbot Street East near Erie Street, offering a taste of home and culture to the local community.

Luis participated in SECC's Entrepreneurship Workshop series—an initiative designed to support aspiring entrepreneurs in developing business skills, understanding the local market, and turning their ideas into reality.

"I'm proud to bring a little piece of my culture to Leamington and create something for the community," said Luis. "SECC's workshops gave me the confidence and tools to make this dream come true."

SECC celebrates Luis's success and continues to support newcomers in building strong futures through learning, community connection, and economic opportunity.

MEET ABDIEL LARA

Abdiel Lara, founder of LAAR HATS, is making strides in his entrepreneurial journey after participating in SECC's Global Tastes and Treasures Market in 2024. Since then, Abdiel has worked with a settlement worker, Community Futures, and the Small Business & Entrepreneurial Centre to develop a business plan and launch an online store.

Abdiel's dedication has earned him a spot in the Bridge Youth Resource Centre's "Take Your Shot" competition, where he'll learn from industry experts and grow his brand. His story highlights the impact of local support and determination in helping newcomers pursue their dreams and succeed in the business world.



RECOGNITION

This year, we celebrated the dedication behind the mission — recognizing the passion, resilience, and excellence our staff bring to every challenge and every success.

STAFF YEARS OF SERVICE

Adriana Arango	5 years
Heidi Omstead	5 years
Olivia Morrison	5 years
Tammy Burleigh	5 years
Vicki Noland	10 years

STAFF AWARDS

- Cecily Zhong **Values Award for People**
- Paulina Martinez Morales **Inclusivity Award**
- Mariana Harrietha **Integrity Award**
- Joscelyn Bilous **Compassion Award**
- Karen Marchand **Community Builder Award**
- Adriana Arango **Mission Award**
- Devon Edh **Executive Director's Choice**

BOARD MEMBERS

- Harpreet Singh (**Chair**)
- Heather MacPherson (**Vice-Chair**)
- Ann-Marie Unis (**Treasurer**)
- Shelley Beaudoin
- Helen Hiebert-Bergen
- Anna Kozub
- Arthur Krueger
- Jill Nicholson
- Marie Pepin
- Diane Quadros



134
HOUSEHOLDS
ACCESSED THE COATS FOR KIDS
PROGRAM FOR THE FIRST TIME
THIS YEAR

**470 WINTER COATS WERE
DISTRIBUTED TO THIS COMMUNITY**

HOW TO GET INVLOVED



Donate



Volunteer



Talk about SECC

SECC IS A NON-PROFIT, COMMUNITY SERVICES ORGANIZATION SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH ESSEX.

MISSION

HELPING PEOPLE IMPROVING LIVES

VISION

Building a stronger community one person at a time.

VALUES



PEOPLE

We put them first.



INTEGRITY

We do the right thing.



COMPASSION

We care.



INCLUSIVITY

We welcome everyone.

SECC IS GRATEFUL FOR THE MANY COMMUNITY PARTNERS WITH WHOM WE WORK. SPECIAL THANKS TO: Canadian Mental Health Association, Community Futures Essex County, Employment and Education Centre Brockville, Essex County Homeless Hub, Faith Mennonite Church, Family Services Windsor-Essex, First Work, Green Heart Kitchen, Hiatus House, Karis Disability Services, Kingsville BIA, Leamington Chamber of Commerce, Leamington Community Hope Centre, Leamington THRIVE Network, Leamington United Mennonite Church, Meadow Brook Church, Mucci Farms Ltd., Municipality of Leamington, ProsperUs, Queen Elizabeth Public School, Salvation Army Food Bank, St. Louis Catholic Elementary School, TeamWork, The Bridge Youth Resource Centre, Town of Kingsville, Windsor Essex Community Health Centre, Windsor Essex County Health Unit, Windsor Regional Employment Network, Workforce WindsorEssex, United Way—On Track to Success.

Funded in part by
the Government of
Canada

Canada

TeamWork
Project

workforce
WindsorEssex

SOLCZ FAMILY
FOUNDATION

Funded by the
Government of Canada's
Age Well at Home Initiative

Canada

EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO

Ontario

Canada



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

United Way
Centraide
Windsor-Essex County

Ontario
Health

Municipality of
Leamington
live | play | work

Kingsville
ONTARIO

Chatham-Kent
Cultivating Growth, Shore to Shore

WindsorEssex
Community
Foundation