



# CCSAC NEWSLETTER

## CENTRETOWN CHURCHES SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

April 2022

### Anglican Day Programs' Rapid Response

By *Martha Musgrove*

When the Covid pandemic hit Ottawa early in 2020, public health guidelines effectively closed all drop-in centres run by social services agencies in the downtown core, including the Anglican day programs Centre 454, the Well and St. Luke's Table.

Speaking to the March meeting of Centretown Churches Social Action Committee, Executive Director Rachel Robinson described how quickly she and her staff were able to re-orient their services so that they could continue to fulfill their mandate of connecting people, creating community, addressing basic needs, and fostering dignity, wellness, and hope.



*Rachel Robinson and staff*

The lockdown resulted in new difficulties for vulnerable people. The temporary closure of all public spaces meant social isolation, a lack of access to basic hygiene facilities, and the suspension of meal programs. Rachel described how her staff from all three centres came together to transition to a new model of mobile service delivery, providing packed lunches and hot meals, phone support and "street outreach" to sustain connections.

With the partial reopening of their day programs and the establishment of municipal respite centres, service was extended to weekends, hot meals were delivered, laundry and shower facilities were made available, and respite cots were set up for those who needed a quiet place to rest during the day. Stocked community refrigerators in all three Anglican day program sites ensured food was always available.

Having worked flat out for over two years, Rachel admitted that she and her staff have had little time to consider how they might transition their programs back to a pre-pandemic status. However, she noted that one lesson they have learned is just how harmful social isolation can be: people want to be in a community, and they want to be productive members of that community. Going forward, Rachel hopes that the three day programs will be able to offer skills training and support for small scale enterprise, as well as continuing to work toward their vision of creating an inclusive community where no one is marginalized, and everyone is valued and supported.

A copy of Rachel Robinson's presentation will be available on the CCSAC website.

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#### Our Mission:

To unite Christians of all denominations through joint participation in social projects and prayer.

#### Get in Touch!

We would love to hear from you!  
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# Canadian Martyrs Parish Sandwich Club

The Canadian Martyrs Parish Sandwich Club is hard at work serving up nutritious sandwiches (both meat and vegetarian) for Centre 507. The parish club, composed of about a dozen committed volunteers, provides about 150 sandwiches to the Centre as part of their meal service. Overall, the Centre serves approximately 1000 meals weekly to those in need.

The Sandwich Club has been in operation since December 2020. One volunteer does the shopping and delivers sandwich kits to the homes of the sandwich makers on Thursday afternoons. On Friday morning, another volunteer picks up the prepared and wrapped sandwiches from each of the volunteers and delivers them to Centre 507.



## CCSAC Joins National Consultations on Poverty Reduction

*By the Community Outreach Committee*

Early in 2022, members of the CCSAC board and Food Centre Management Committee joined representatives from volunteer organizations, academics, community leaders and people with lived experience of low income from across Canada in virtual meetings to discuss ways to achieve further success in reducing poverty in Canada. The consultations were initiated by the National Advisory Council on Poverty (the Council).

The Council was created in 2019 as part of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that set out specific goals and called for annual progress reports. CCSAC submitted a brief to the original consultations on creating such a strategy, noting the distinctive needs of those living on limited incomes in urban areas.

Council reports issued in 2020 and 2021 reported that significant reductions in the overall level of poverty have been achieved, as measured by the Market-Basket Measure. In fact, the interim goal of a 20% reduction in poverty relative to 2015 levels has been achieved. However, this overall reduction has not been realized among all Canadians in all areas. Many groups continue to struggle with poverty, and their situation has worsened because of the Covid pandemic.

The first phase of the 2022 consultations was organized around seven themes. Each virtual session included over 100 participants offering a wide range of experience and views, and thus, encapsulating everything we heard is difficult. However, several common themes emerged, for example:

- Social policy planners need to recognize the intersection between poverty and other problems such as a lack of deeply affordable housing, accessible childcare and support for mental health and addictions;
- The need for comprehensive and timely data;
- The benefit of sustainable funding for non profit agencies so that programs can be developed and sustained; and
- The necessity of including all stakeholders when developing policy and program responses to poverty.

Reflections from these national consultations will be included in the 2022 report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty that will be issued early in 2023.

## Erratum

In the February issue of the CCSAC Newsletter, there was an error in the percentage of homeless families in Ottawa cited in the the Alliance to End Homelessness article. The sentence should have read, “The main focus of her [Kaite Burkholder's] presentation was the present situation in Ottawa where 15% of those facing homelessness are families.” Our apologies.