

CCSAC Annual Report - 2025

Active for over fifty years, the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC) comprises 22 central Ottawa churches and focuses on collective ways to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable in our community. It also ensures the voice of central Ottawa churches is heard on various social justice and poverty-related issues.

CCSAC is a registered charity under the Income Tax Act. Over the years, CCSAC has undertaken a wide range of social justice projects. Since 1978, its main project has been the Centretown Community Food Centre, the food bank for those living in a large central Ottawa catchment area.

Centretown Community Food Centre in 2025

In 2025, the Food Centre saw continued demand, providing for around 1435 people monthly. It has seen an increase of 210 % in visits since 2021 which underscores the stark changes in recent years.

The Food Centre operates four days a week: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday afternoons and Friday mornings. It still provides clients with nutritious food supplies once per month for up to five days, depending on family size. With careful purchasing, operating cost increases were kept to only 5 % in 2025.

The Food Centre no longer receives an operating grant from the city of Ottawa and faces higher rental costs for its accessible space on Catherine Street than it paid in its previous location. In 2025 CCSAC and the Food Centre chairs and the Food Centre Manager met with city councillors to explore ways the city could assist the Food Centre, either with rent relief or grants for operations. We were encouraged to apply for new municipal grant opportunities in 2026. CCSAC and the Food Centre Management Committee worked hard in 2025 to raise additional resources and continue to search for multi-year funding to increase the Food Centre's revenues.

The Food Centre's Manager, Dennis Hansen, has worked to streamline and improve operations at the Food Centre as well as attending fundraising events

and community activities to highlight the Food Centre as an important service to the community.

CCSAC in 2025

Member churches generously contributed a total of \$70,277 to CCSAC-related activities, including \$14,125 donated to CCSAC and \$56,152 donated directly to the Food Centre. As well, the Food Centre is grateful to the many individual congregation members who donated independently throughout the year.

In addition to the above support, CCSAC undertook its annual fundraiser for the Food Centre, the Walk for the Centre on October 5th. We were delighted to raise a further \$55,000 and we remain grateful for the continuing generosity of our member churches and friends within the community.

CCSAC was very pleased to receive several grants from local foundations in 2025. This enabled us to help the Food Centre respond to client needs that it is hard-pressed to routinely supply, including extra fresh fruit and vegetables and a large quantity of cooking oil delivered just in time for the holiday season. CCSAC purchased an additional fridge and freezer for the Food Centre in order to maintain perishable food supplies in optimal condition. Extra capacity also enabled purchases in greater quantity, thereby reducing costs at a time when the operating budget is challenged.

CCSAC also undertook Summer Health and Hygiene and Winter Warmth projects in 2025. With the generous support of a local business, CCSAC delivered a large collection of warm winter coats and boots for clients of two partner agencies, Ottawa Innerscity Ministries and Centre 507.

A very successful Annual General Meeting was hosted by First Baptist Church in June 2025. Guest speaker Shemi Adeoye, spoke to the assembled audience about the work Matthew House is doing on behalf of refugees.

Community Partnerships and Advocacy

Increasing CCSAC's reach with other organizations engaged in poverty mitigation remains a priority, but we were less active in this area in 2025. CCSAC remained a member of a Centretown planning table which brings together a number of agencies providing services to the vulnerable population of the downtown core. CCSAC continues to invite guest speakers to some monthly meetings and this has proved an invaluable connection to new and longstanding partners.

Three member churches (Glebe St. James, First Baptist and St. Andrew's) continued to offer community kitchens that provide space for families living in temporary shelters without access to cooking facilities. Public Foods Community Fridge and Pantry, a project started by Glebe St. James, continued to operate well, with the Food Centre supporting it with surplus perishable and non-perishable food donations weekly.

Communication

CCSAC held a successful annual general meeting in June at First Baptist Church. Five issues of the CCSAC newsletter highlighting the outreach activities of CCSAC and member churches were distributed electronically to more than 80 recipients. In addition, the CCSAC Facebook page, now with more than 270 followers, actively promoted CCSAC and member church activities.

The Year Ahead

The financial challenges facing the Food Centre will continue to be a preoccupation in 2026, as we look for ways to address pressures arising from inflation and high demand. As of December 2025, the Ottawa Food Bank stopped home delivery to shut-ins, a program started during the pandemic. It has asked local food banks to take this on. Home delivery service started in January to a small number of clients who cannot visit the Food Centre in person. This important new responsibility will need to be integrated into existing services.

A review of CCSAC's governance structure and bylaws will be undertaken in 2026.

CCSAC will hold the Walk for the Centre, its major fundraiser, again in 2026. It is hoped that all CCSAC churches and many members of the community will again join us on October 4, 2026.

Recognition CCSAC is a Collective Enterprise

I would like to thank our member churches and clergy for their generous support and encouragement throughout the year. A special thanks to Allison Dingle and members of the Food Centre Management Committee, the Food Centre's small part-time staff, manager Dennis Hansen and assistants David Beck-MacNeil and Daphne Wohnan, as well as its dedicated volunteers, all of whom contributed to keeping it operating well again this year.

Finally, sincere thanks to the CCSAC representatives who so ably represent their churches. A special thanks to the CCSAC executive, Emmy Verdun, CCSAC vice-chair and treasurer; and Mary Mussell and Elizabeth Demaray, CCSAC co-secretaries. In addition, thank you to Elizabeth Kent, Walkathon Committee chair; Susan Palmai, outgoing Community Outreach Committee chair and founder of Public Foods; Mary Mussell and Lorna Kingston, CCSAC Newsletter co-editors; and Anisha Eipe, Facebook editor.

January 2026