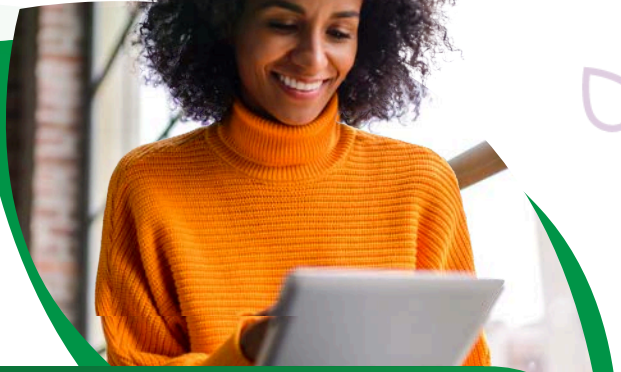




Mennonite
new life
centre



2024

ANNUAL REPORT



Message from the Executive Director

Continuing the Journey of Support and Inclusion

As we moved forward from our 40th year of serving newcomers, we were energized and inspired by the continued impact of our work on immigrants and refugee's lives. In 2023 we marked a milestone of reflection and celebration, and in 2024, we built on that strong foundation with renewed purpose and innovation.

We are proud to report that in 2024, we expanded our mental health and trauma-informed services, in response to the growing need for emotional and psychological support among the communities we serve. We also launched new community partnerships to address housing insecurity and are piloting a transitional housing program to help immigrant families find stability and rebuild their lives.

Our Settlement programming and Resource Centre continued to grow, and we refined our hybrid and online offerings for accessible, flexible, and culturally sensitive learning environments. These adjustments helped us remove barriers in meeting our clients' evolving needs.

Recognizing increased needs within our community, we strengthened our support for survivors of human trafficking and individuals experiencing homelessness. In 2024, we incorporated Aurora House – a transitional home for women fleeing trafficking, offering safe shelter, case management, and mental health support – into our services. Our wraparound model ensures that these courageous women not only have a place to stay, but also receive guidance, job coaching, and healing supports that empower them to rebuild their lives with dignity and independence. These additional services allowed us to focus more fully on what matters most – helping people.

Believing that every newcomer deserves dignity, opportunity, and community, we deepened our support for vulnerable newcomers facing complex challenges as they navigate their first years in Canada.

We look ahead to the future with optimism, confident that the next chapter will bring new opportunities to serve. Guided by our Strategic Plan, we remain committed to finding solutions to newcomers' most pressing challenges, ensuring that every individual we support can find a safe, dignified, and promising start in Canada.



DWAYNE'S PHOTO: MIRNA CHACIN

Dwayne O'Connor
Executive Director of
MNLCT

“Every newcomer deserves dignity, opportunity, and community.”

MNLCT at a Glance

Programs evolve to meet the needs of an ever- changing immigrant population.

As a community-based charity, the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto creates meaningful pathways for newcomers to contribute their skills, talents, and voices to their communities wherever they live, work, play, and learn. Newcomers of all ages, genders, and cultural identities can access the tools and resources needed for social and economic integration into Canadian life. With our deep expertise – developed over 40 years of grassroots community support – we provide caring and professional support that addresses short- and long-term needs and aspirations of clients. Services include settlement and immigration information and community connections; language training; community mental health counselling; employment, entrepreneurship, and career bridging supports; counter-human trafficking counselling, and now community health services too.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to facilitate newcomer settlement and integration through holistic services and community engagement, carried out within a gender justice and anti-oppression framework.

OUR VISION

We envision a society in which all people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds participate fully in all aspects of Canadian life. We have modelled an approach that brings together community engagement and community services, working together with newcomers to reduce insecurity and reach integration, strengthen voices, and increase social equality.

OUR VALUES

- Respect
- Community building
- Participation and voice
- Equity and integration
- Peace with social justice




"I became very inspired to learn how MNLCT enables entrepreneurs to turn their dreams into reality."


Swatee - EXL Program

Our Clients

7,496 TOTAL
Clients Served

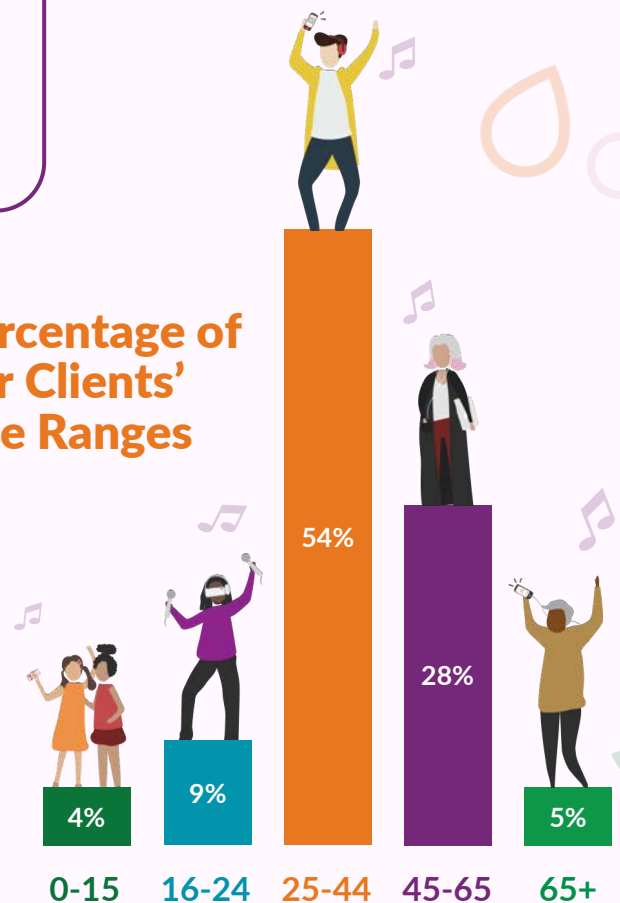


62%
Identified
As Women 

37%
Identified
As Men 

We also served clients who chose not to disclose their gender. As an inclusive organization, we support individuals in their diversities.

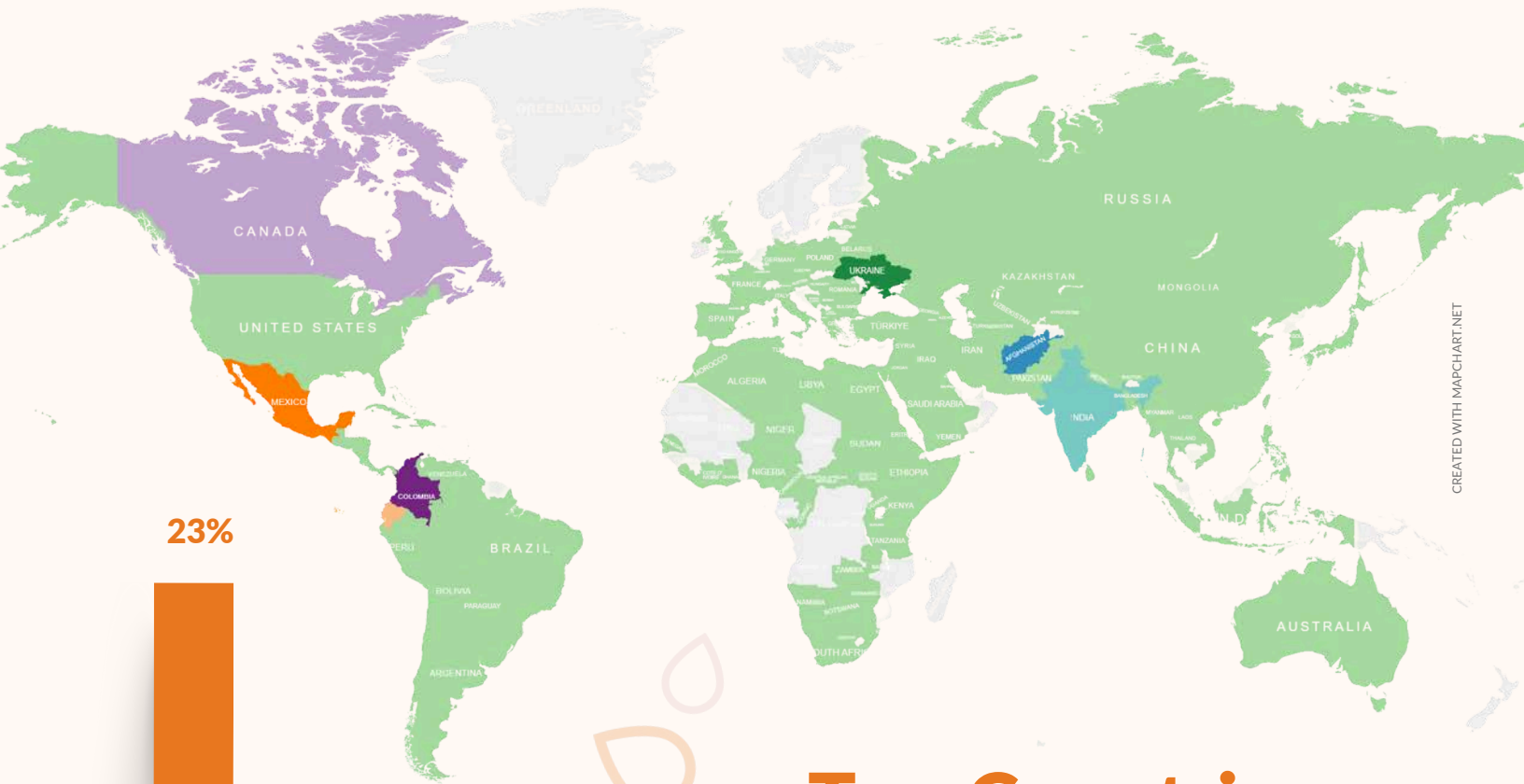
Percentage of our Clients' Age Ranges



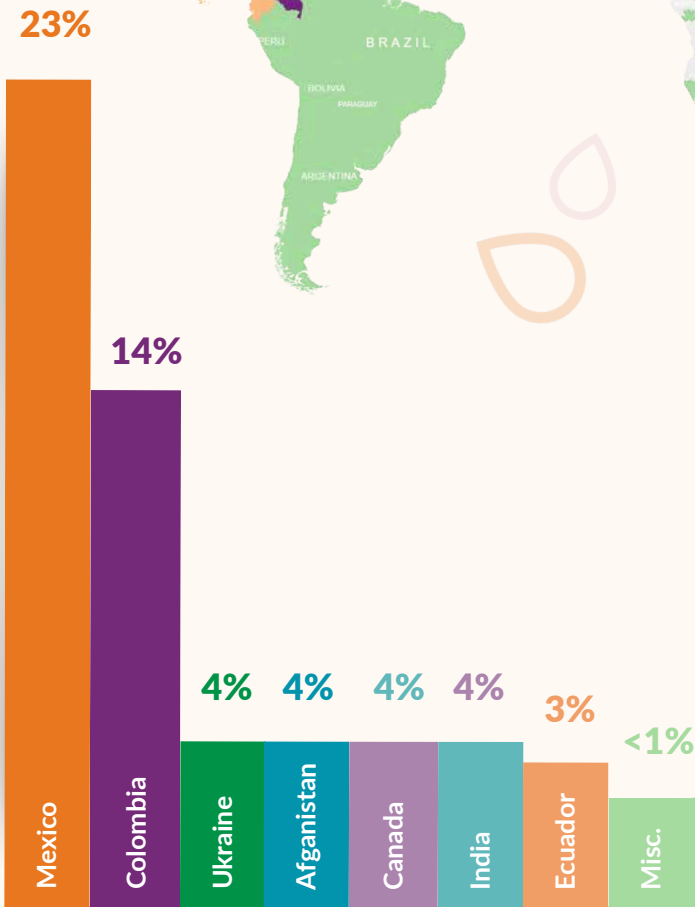
**In-person
& online**



35,690
TOTAL Client Visits



CREATED WITH MAPCHART.NET



Top Countries of Origin

Our clients have diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and bring a wide range of education, skills, and talents to Canada. In 2024, we served almost 7,500 people from 129 countries around the world.

Peru, Iran, Venezuela, Nigeria, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, China, Cuba, Syria, Chile, Uganda, Nicaragua, Honduras, Pakistan, Brazil, Ethiopia, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Turkey, Bangladesh, Argentina, Kenya, Guatemala, Philippines, Eritrea, Ghana, United States of America, Spain, Lebanon, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Russia, Hong Kong, Egypt, Angola, Bolivia, Palestine, Cameroon, Korea South, Panama, St Vincent & Grenadines, Sudan, Trinidad & Tobago, Vietnam, Somalia, Uruguay, Italy, Bahamas, Barbados, Guyana, Morocco, Romania, Algeria, Jordan, Congo, Hungary, Japan, Paraguay, Tanzania, Albania, Gambia, Georgia, Haiti, Libya, Sierra Leone, St Lucia, France, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Yemen, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Dominica, Germany, Great Britain, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Portugal, Rwanda, Thailand, Tiawan, Antigua & Barbuda, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Greece, Grenada, Israel, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mayotte, Namibia, Niger, Poland, South Africa, Anguilla, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Czech Republic, Ivory Coast, Kazakhstan, Laos, Latvia, Macedonia, Mongolia, Senegal, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Zambia.

Ordered by greatest percentage under 1%



Yarlin's Story

By Trudy Tumusime

This clinic is more than a clinic,
it's a family

Yarlin, her husband and two children made a tough but necessary move from Dominican Republic, deserting stable lives, arriving in Canada in November 2023. They hoped for freedom. Instead, it was "the beginning of a very painful experience."

The family had neither knowledge of the Canadian healthcare system nor basic health coverage. At a church medical outreach event, nurses from the Health for All Partnership (HAP) Clinic - a student-led initiative run by the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT) and Humber Polytechnic's Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellness - gave them information on children's immunization and invited them to the clinic for more services.

"They didn't just help us with healthcare," Yarlin recalls "the nurses were interested in understanding our general situation, our basic and immediate needs."

"Coming from a different country, in the middle of the desperation, you find hope, there are no words to describe that."

The family also got food, clothing, diapers, and guidance on immigration, social assistance application, finding English classes, and enrolling children in school, feeling supported through uncertain times. The clinic referred them for complimentary services and supported the family until they got Interim Health Coverage.

"It's despicable being alone in a new country," Yarlin says. "We found a friend, and that was a lot of help. It was our motivation to keep going."

Staff shared job search resources with the couple, helping Yarlin's husband secure his first Canadian job. The family is grateful for the support rendered to them.

Now, life is "very good". Yarlin attends English classes, the kids are in school, and her husband works and supports the family. "Coming from a different country, in the middle of the desperation, you find hope, there are no words to describe that." Yarlin expresses.

The HAP Clinic provides free health services to people without proper documentation, offering not just care but community, compassion and hope.

Read Yarlin's full story on our website.

mnlct.org/yarlins-story

Our Programs

We are dedicated to creating programs and services that empower newcomers to fully participate in every aspect of Canadian life.



LINC students working together

SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION

Supportive counselling and case management to help newcomers identify immediate needs and work towards long-term goals. These services connect clients with government and community resources, building the networks and social connections essential for success in Canada.

INTEGRATED MENTAL HEALTH

Inclusive, trauma-informed psychotherapy and counselling help newcomers navigate challenges related to settlement, language barriers, and cultural adjustment.

- Language Instruction Giving Hope to Trauma Survivors (LIGHTS) combines alternative English-language learning with mental health supports for vulnerable newcomers.
- Aurora House offers transitional housing and wraparound support for newcomer women and children facing violence and exploitation.
- Psychotherapy and counselling supports embedded in programs throughout the Centre create safe spaces for healing, connection, and learning.

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Partnerships with local health organizations ensure access to culturally safe, primary healthcare services for newcomers.

- Health for All Partnership (HAP) Clinic, in collaboration with Humber Polytechnic, delivers free primary care, patient education, and advocacy for uninsured newcomers.
- Collaborations with Black Creek Community Health Centre and other community partners expand healthcare access and address systemic health inequities for marginalized newcomer communities.

LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR NEWCOMERS TO CANADA (LINC)

English classes help adults build language skills and confidence for social, educational, and work situations. The Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program offers engaging activities for children while parents attend classes.

EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION

Life and career coaching and training programs help newcomers build the skills and confidence needed for meaningful careers and thriving lives in Canada.

- She-Covery supports newcomer women transitioning from unemployment or underemployment to meaningful jobs.
- Employment Readiness offers individual coaching and group workshops to strengthen job readiness and confidence.
- Helping Our Newcomers Prepare for Employment Success (HOPES) combines career coaching with psychotherapy and counselling to support job seekers navigating resettlement stress.
- Entrepreneurial Excellence and Leadership (EXL) provides resources and guidance for entrepreneurial newcomers to launch and grow their businesses.

RESOURCE CENTRE

Equipped with computers and tablets, the Resource Centre at our Keele office provides digital and print resources to support newcomers in navigating systems and finding help, guided by staff and volunteers.

BRIDGING PROGRAMS

Comprehensive training, support, and hands-on employment and placement experiences help internationally trained professionals bridge their experience to the Canadian labour market:

- BEMC – Bridge to Employment in Media, Marketing, and Communications
- BESIP – Bridge to Employment in Services for Immigrant Populations
- BREM – Bridge to Registration and Employment in Mental Health
- C-Women – Bridge for Immigrant Women Reskilling into IT and Coding Professions

Strategic goals and impact



In 2024, the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT) entered a new era of committed service to newcomers.

The year began with our 40th anniversary celebration – an inspiring event that brought together community members, partners, and clients to honour four decades of impactful newcomer support.

Throughout the year, we reinforced our reputation as a trusted leader in the sector. Despite significant challenges, including sudden shifts in immigration and funding pressures—we remained steadfast in our mission to help newcomers make Canada home. Guided by our strategic plan, we turned challenges into opportunities, continuing to offer holistic services grounded in community, justice, and anti-oppression frameworks.

MNLCT's 2024 key impact priorities



ALIGN

Align our programs and services to realize socially just newcomer integration



LEVERAGE

Leverage experience and expertise to lead for impact



INVEST

Invest in ourselves today to ensure a bold future tomorrow



ALIGN

Align our programs and services to realize socially just newcomer integration

Adopt a clear and actionable approach to advocacy within a social justice and anti-poverty framework.

Last year, we remained committed to advancing just and inclusive integration for newcomers in Canada. We expanded our case management approach to address urgent needs like homelessness and mental health, launching a pilot project in youth mental health. Through three targeted surveys with immigrant teens, parents, and frontline workers, we created safe spaces to share experiences and shape future programming.

Our holistic programs, including Helping Our Newcomers Prepare for Employment Success (HOPES), Language Instruction Giving Hope to Trauma Survivors (LIGHTS), and She-Covery, supported marginalized newcomers, while the Entrepreneurial Excellence and Leadership (EXL) program provided grants to four women entrepreneurs.

"BESIP has given me hope and confidence. It has shown me that there is a path forward, that my skills are valuable, and that I can build a meaningful career here in Canada."



Reem - Bridge to Employment in Services for Immigrant Populations (BESIP) Graduate

We amplified newcomer voices at advocacy forums such as Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Pathway to Prosperity, and Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP). Our Bridging Programs - Bridge to Registration and Employment in Mental Health (BREM), Bridge to Employment in Serving Immigrant Populations (BESIP), Bridge to Employment in Media, Marketing, and Communications (BEMC), and Bridge for Immigrant Women Reskilling into IT Coding Professions (C-Women) helped internationally trained newcomers re-enter their fields.

"The purpose of Bridging Programs is to utilize clients' background, experience, and education to help better integrate them into society and get sustainable employment in their field," shares Bridging Program Manager Viviana Tirado. "With every cohort we run, we are helping to reduce poverty."

In a major advocacy success, our Bridging team and partners across the sector helped change Employment Ontario policy that previously blocked clients from accessing bridging and employment services simultaneously.



Our Mental Health staff at the OCASI Mental Health Promotion Knowledge Exchange Event



ALIGN

Another key milestone was integrating Aurora House, a transitional home for women and gender-diverse survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence, into MNLCT operations. “Our clients at Aurora House often express a strong desire to move forward,” says Mental Health Coordinator Judith Herrera. “But trauma and mental health challenges can create barriers that require sustained, individualized support.”

In our advocacy work, challenges persisted, especially heightened systemic barriers such as housing instability, food insecurity, and unemployment. “Newcomers often came to us with hopes of finding employment support and a fresh start,” says Settlement Coordinator Natalia Rodriguez. “While we couldn’t offer jobs directly, we worked tirelessly to connect them with resources, training, and pathways that could help them build toward their goals.”

Despite the hurdles, our commitment remained unwavering. Last year MNLCT provided services in English, Arabic, Dari, Mandarin, Pashto, Spanish, and Ukrainian, with an especially long waitlist for Spanish-speaking clients for settlement services

Strengthen capacity for individual/group leadership and civic engagement, to support community development and advocacy, with a focus on anti-poverty work.

In 2024, we empowered newcomers to navigate services independently, using functions like screen sharing on Teams during client appointments. Our Resource Centre, launched in 2023, helped clients complete their own applications with minimal guidance, reducing waitlists. “Clients keep reaching their goals, sometimes with just a bit of support from us,” says Natalia Rodriguez.

Recognizing that some clients, especially seniors, needed more support, staff offered extra help at a pace that worked for them. Services like Citizenship Classes in Spanish and Arabic, alongside settlement services grounded

Strategic goals and impact



in a social justice framework, supported clients’ smooth integration “not only meeting clients wherever they are but also understanding our own unique positions in society, as staff,” highlights Martha Granados, Settlement Program Director.

Volunteers and placement students, often newcomers themselves, were crucial to our success. They co-designed and delivered workshops like Emotional Regulation for Teens and supported the continuity of programs like the Revive and Thrive Peer Support Group in partnership with Barbra Schleifer Commemorative Clinic. “Not every place can support placement students the way we do,” says Bitu Hedayati, Mental Health Placement Supervisor, emphasizing MNLCT’s deep understanding of newcomer experiences.

Other highlights included our Job Connect Cafe, which connected job seekers to employers, and innovative emotional support groups offered in Arabic, Farsi, Spanish, and Ukrainian, which were inclusive platforms for community engagement.



LIGHTS staff and students posing for a group photo after class.



ALIGN

Strategic goals and impact



HAP clinic nursing students bringing donated items to the Finch office.

Health For All Partnership Clinic

Our Health for All Partnership (HAP) Clinic — a collaboration between MNLCT and Humber Polytechnic’s Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellness — solidified its role as an essential community resource, providing free healthcare to newcomers without status and uninsured individuals. Operating three days a week from September to April, the HAP served 186 clients and with a growing waitlist, referring clients to partners during the summer.

The nursing-student-led, faculty-supervised clinic created a welcoming space for vulnerable clients. "It reflects our grassroots approach, just like MNLCT's early days," shares Tracy Docheff, the Bridging Program, Communications, and Community Health Services Director. Tracy further explains that this flexible, community-driven model was key to addressing urgent health needs and building trust with clients.

HAP nurses assessed client needs, delivered workshops, and created educational materials, referring clients internally and externally for supplementary support in mental health, employment, or settlement services.

Despite various challenges, staff continuously stepped up and found creative ways to assist clients; relying on their own multilingual skills, collaborating with community volunteers, and even using translation apps when necessary. This commitment to going above and beyond ensured that no one was left out, and every client received the care they deserved.

Bridging and Community Health Services Coordinator Sandra Acuna Ramirez shared that beyond receiving essential healthcare, clients also received support like food, clothing, and help with their immigration journeys. "People left with a smile," she says. "Seeing pregnant women return months later with their babies, just to say thank you, was unforgettable."

Innovation in language learning that reaches the most marginalized communities.

Our unique (LIGHTS) program tailored to English learners with mental health challenges continued to evolve. Delivered in a hybrid format, it provided flexibility to participants. We noticed a shift in participant preference to in-person sessions in 2024—an organization-wide trend post-pandemic.

Last year, LIGHTS offered three cohorts running weekly in small classes, ensuring personalized instruction leading to quicker improvement. "The successes are not only that they improved in their English level, that's the main goal, but at the same time, they were more confident," says Judith Herrera, the program facilitator.

We encountered a unique challenge where participants who secured employment, a clear indicator of success, dropped out of the program. To meet growing demand and improve access, we partnered with local organizations, like Catholic Cross-Cultural Services and COSTI, to deliver LIGHTS sessions in their spaces bringing the program to more community members.

"I really loved these classes because it wasn't like an English class, it was like a whole world community."

Yuliia - LINC student



ALIGN

Similarly, our Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program thrived with seven full classes running both online and in-person. The program enrolled around 400 learners, with 120 students successfully completing at least one level in any of the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Waitlists, especially for beginner classes, at one point reached as high as 60 students. "There were times when the waitlist dropped to zero, thanks to government efforts that constantly pushed us to reduce them," says Jorge Silvestri, LINC Program Director. "Those efforts did help, but it was still a challenge for us to keep up with the high demand."

Women comprised 75% of LINC learners, a consistent trend since the beginning of the program. Last year was also the final year we offered the program to Ukrainian students with work permits under a temporary immigration stream. Meanwhile, we saw increased participation from three linguistic communities: Amharic, Tigrinya, and Turkish.

Deepen education, training, bridging, and social enterprise work.

We saw high enrolment and performance in our Bridging Programs, BEMC, BESIP, BREM, and C-Women. Nearly all BREM participants completed the program and secured registration with the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO) and BESIP participants secured placements and job opportunities, some within our own Centre! C-Women participants had high completion rates too, demonstrating their commitment to their goals.

BEMC participants faced challenges meeting placement requirements, as many opted to move directly into employment, which affected program performance metrics. To address this, we revised the requirement, allowing students to complete either 200 hours of placement or employment. Thanks to this revision, there was a notable increase in full-completion rates by the final cohort of 2024. nities.

Strategic goals and impact



100% of newcomers self-report that as a result of an MNLCT program, they are working and/or seeking a promotion, or a better job

Last year, we placed a deeper focus on strategic alignment and collaborative management across all four programs, creating greater coordination and impact by pairing BREM with BESIP and BEMC with C-Women for program management. Tracy Docheff, Bridging Program Director, says this created cohesion and easier management for programs to operate off each other, thus better performance. "Collaboration between staff created new placement opportunities, particularly for BEMC."

Beyond employment, these programs helped newcomers build confidence, enhance language skills, and develop stronger ties to their peers and communities.



ALIGN

Strategic goals and impact



Newcomer outdoor enthusiasts and staff on their way to a BEAR hike.

Embed improved mental health as a key social determinant of health into all the work we do.

Mental health support has been central to MNLCT’s work since its founding, recognizing how settlement challenges shape mental well-being. In 2024, we deepened this integration across employment services, language learning, and community health initiatives.

Through trauma-informed support in programs, like LIGHTS and Aurora House, and counselling in HOPES and She-Covery, we met clients’ growing emotional needs. “It’s different working with clients who aren’t just stressed but exhausted,” explains Mental Health Program Director Leticia Esquivel, reflecting the impact of ongoing crises on newcomers.

A new mental well-being initiative was the Building Empowerment and Resilience (BEAR) Hikes initiative, in collaboration with ParkBus, which took nearly 200 newcomers on guided hikes to some of Ontario’s scenic parks.

Like in previous years, the demand for mental health services outpaced our capacity. We are grateful to the placement students and volunteers who helped bridge the gap and even supported us expanding into youth mental health with surveys and workshops, ensuring young people felt supported.

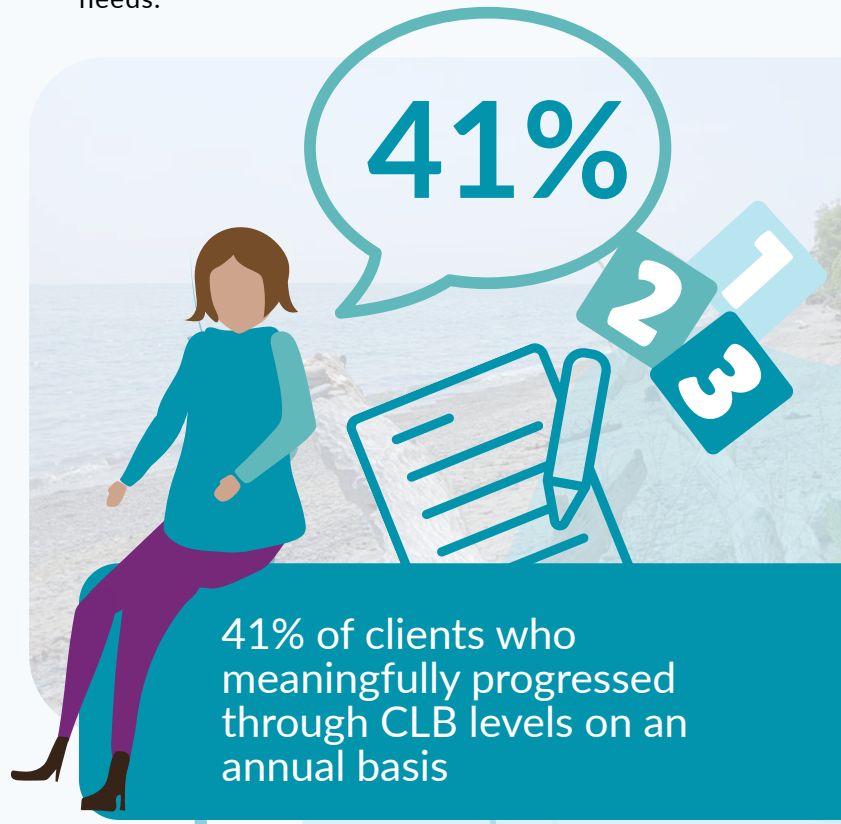
Our greatest impact was seen in the sense of belonging and human connection our mental health programming created for clients.

Build on tech-forward approach to innovate on service delivery in a hybrid space.

We used enhanced digital tools and automation to improve client experiences and staff efficiency. A key highlight was upgrading our client management system, Apricot, which boosted our ability to track program outcomes and measure impact across departments.

More programs adopted our Learning Management Systems (LMS), making classes like Citizenship, Employment Readiness, and LINC more accessible. “Our instructors, some of whom hadn’t taught in-person for years, are now also mastering LMS,” says LINC Program Director Jorge Silvestri.

We also strengthened our hybrid work model by equipping offices with desktops, improving remote connectivity, and adding more virtual communication tools, enabling more flexible and collaborative work for staff. Our hybrid model allowed us to adapt and meet client needs.





LEVERAGE

Leverage experience and expertise to lead for impact

Promote our expertise at cross-sectoral programming, funding, and policy tables, particularly in the areas of mental health, adult education, leadership, social justice, and community-building.

In 2024, we strengthened our influence as thought leaders in the newcomer sector by sharing expertise and supporting sector-wide collaboration. Our teams represented MNLCT as an exceptional service provider and a key contributor to the newcomer support system.

The Mental Health team delivered workshops on trauma-informed care, culturally responsive counselling, and the social determinants of health to partners like YMCA, Working Women Community Centre, CultureLink, and Toronto Metropolitan University. LIGHTS instructors offered a “train-the-trainer” session through TUTELA, empowering other English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors to integrate mental health in their teaching.

As active members of OCASI, the Mental Health team shared findings from our concluded Compassion in the Workplace project and with the Bridging Programs team delivered workshops at COSTI, Catholic Cross-Cultural Services, and the Golden Miles Trades Institute.

Our Bridging, Communications, and Settlement teams engaged in several community events, job fairs, and outreach events such as the Toronto Newcomer Day, while the HAP Clinic presented preliminary results of this unique initiative at the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) at the bi-annual Canadian Nursing Education Conference in Calgary.

MNLCT staff also shared expertise at events like the Immigration Partnership Conference and newcomer focused gatherings, raising our profile and enriching experiences for staff and clients alike.

Strategic goals and impact



Sharing about our services with an attendee at Mental Wellness Day.

Build strategic partnerships with research and evaluation groups to contribute to the body of evidence-based practices in newcomer integration.

For a long time, strategic partnerships have enabled us to offer holistic services to clients. In 2024, we strengthened existing collaborations and built new ones to extend our reach and impact.

“It was very important to build relationships with different organizations,” says Natalia Rodriguez, Settlement Program Coordinator, noting a partnership with Unison that provided free onsite fitness classes.



LEVERAGE

We deepened research ties with Humber Polytechnic through student-led community needs assessments and tailored interventions and strengthened our collaboration with Seneca College to co-design employment-focused training in the BEMC program. Similarly, we collaborated with University of Toronto medical students on developing a community cookbook with clients.

We also launched our first partnership with an Indigenous organization, The Feather Carriers, which will bring indigenous teachings to staff

Strategic goals and impact



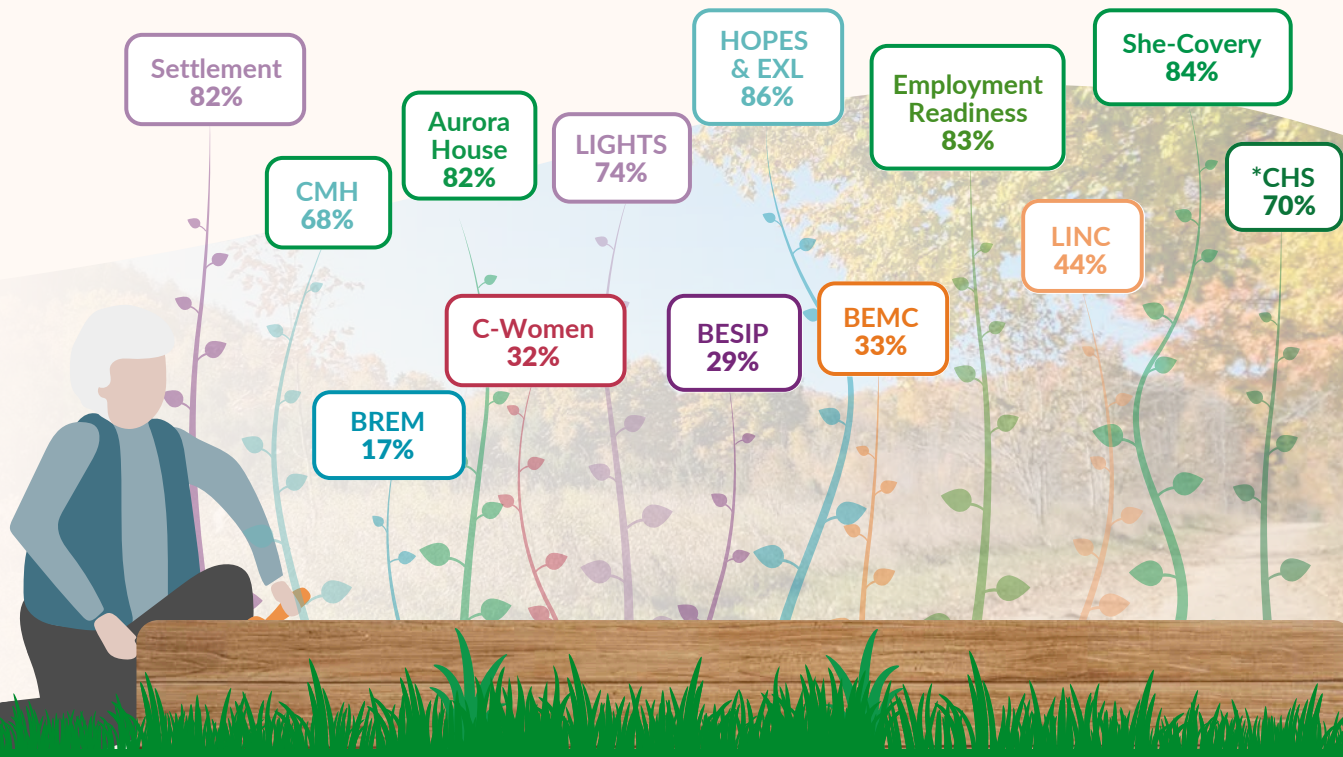
and clients in 2025. Other key collaborations included York University on newcomer social isolation and youth mental health research, and YMCA and Achev to streamline Language Assessments for clients.

Partnerships promoted our programs, linked clients to resources like microloans, and expanded our reach. We engaged in key coalitions and are planning to extend mental health and settlement services to Simcoe County.

Organizational Outcome

Newcomers are aware of the benefits of holistic settlement services, and access them.

*2024 was the first full year that we offered our Community Health Services (CHS), including the HAP clinic, in partnership with Humber Polytechnic. The percentage is approximate since this was created as its own service to our client management system in our fourth quarter.



Percentage of clients who received at least two different MNLCT services that met their various needs.



LEVERAGE

Develop and implement a leading-edge marketing, communication, and brand strategy grounded in the voices of newcomers that showcases our work across sectors and audiences.

With an improved communications and marketing strategy, we gave newcomers a voice and aligned messaging with organizational goals, improving audience engagement, and reach.

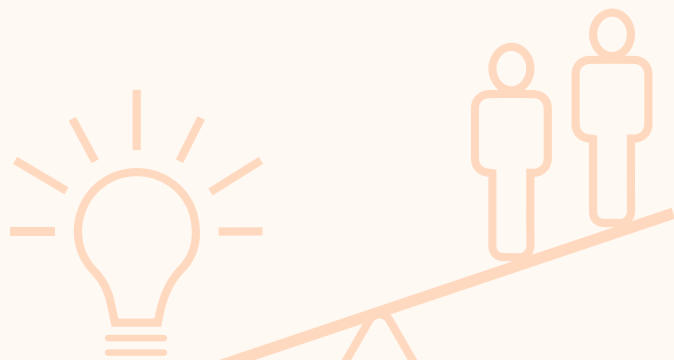
We created more videos highlighting newcomer experiences and increased social media engagement. A notable highlight was media coverage by Omni Television of our Bridging Program graduation—the first such spotlight in years.

The Communications team also supported major events like our 40th anniversary, Bridging Program graduation. “We promoted the events and helped with planning some of the logistics,” says Nicole Chung, Digital Outreach and Communications Coordinator.

We improved our website with a clearer “Contact Us” page and eligibility quizzes to enhance user experience and intake for Bridging Programs. Our TTC ad campaigns also boosted visibility and registrations.

The Communications Team, as a shared service, continuously supported departments with a range of needs, including running social media fundraising campaigns for our newly acquired Aurora House program and other vital initiatives.

Despite limited staffing, volunteers and placement students brought new skills to the team. “Our team works well together, and our improved social media calendar reflects strength and growth,” says Nicole Chung, Digital Outreach and Communications Coordinator.



Strategic goals and impact



Leverage MNLCT’s story and impact to strengthen work in resource development and building cases of support.

Last year, the Settlement Sector faced sudden funding cuts from both provincial and federal governments. With 85% of our funding coming from government the impact was immediate, threatening the continuity of some programs and limiting our ability to register new clients.

“We couldn’t open new cohorts because we didn’t know if funding would be available,” explains Loida Lopez, Director of Administration.

Recognizing the urgency, Executive Director Dwayne O’Connor acknowledges, “We needed a contingency plan to keep serving clients who needed us.” Teams responded by collaboratively submitting more than 20 new grant applications focused on newcomer women, youth, and seniors.

Despite the uncertainty, this became a learning opportunity. “We used our success stories of newcomer integration to build strong funding cases,” says Leticia Esquivel.

We reached out to more funders than ever before. Though funding secured was modest, every dollar helped support clients outside of IRCC programming. We also launched the Giving with Love Fundraiser, featuring tamale and donated goods sales, demonstrating our commitment to resource development even during challenging times.



OMNI TV coverage of our Bridging Programs graduation ceremony.



INVEST

Strategic goals and impact



Invest in ourselves today to ensure a bold future tomorrow

"I volunteer because it gives me the chance to improve someone's life while developing both professionally and personally. I've seen the tenacity and fortitude of newcomers at MNLCT, and the atmosphere of camaraderie, empathy, and support that the organization cultivates never ceases to inspire me."

Kolades - settlement volunteer

Strengthen commitment to social justice and anti-oppression at all levels of our organization.

Throughout 2024, we strengthened our equity and inclusion efforts for both clients and staff. The Mental Health Department held monthly supervision and training meetings where staff reviewed standards, policies, and ethical practices.

Mental Health Program Director Leticia Esquivel says that these opportunities created "spaces for reflection and discussion about equity, inclusion, and diversity in our services," allowing staff to share their challenges in supporting clients.

New in-person programs like the Conversation Circle and Fitness Classes offered inclusive spaces for even non-IRCC eligible clients who are often excluded due to lack of immigration status.

Peer-learning and team-building activities strengthened staff relationships, ensuring that no one is left behind. "We got to know every single member of the team not just what they do, but who they are," shared Natalia Rodriguez, Settlement Program Coordinator. "We are investing in ourselves, putting ourselves in the client's shoes, because we are immigrants too. We speak their language not just linguistically, but emotionally and experientially."

Create a talent management plan that addresses the evolving realities of non-profit work.

The continuity of our services depends on staff, volunteers, and placement students who remained committed amidst sector-wide uncertainty, evolving hybrid models, and rising client demands. So, we invested in our people to keep up with these shifts.



Celebrating cross department collaborations between the Settlement team and shared services (IT and Communications).



INVEST

We implemented a new database called Bright HR to guide employees and develop a high-quality Human Resource handbook so employees can have transparency on what our policies, procedures, and mandates are. We also created Program Coordinator positions, delegating and allowing Directors to “think broadly, and bring ideas into reality,” shared Dwayne O’Connor.



LINC instructors learned hybrid ways of teaching, enhancing their social connections with their students.

Invest in staff with continuous training and development so as to allow the realization of high-quality hybrid service delivery models.

We prioritized staff professional development, satisfaction, and empowerment to meet the demands and evolving nature of our work. Across MNLCT, staff actively engaged in workshops, certification programs, and peer-led training. And, staff continuously trained in self-paced courses through LMS, tailored to their needs.

We saw growth in staff mentorship and coaching with team leaders supporting new or promoted team members to settle into their roles by offering practical hands-on guidance to aid them perform and lead new projects.

Strategic goals and impact



Deepen development of tech-forward infrastructure, systems, and processes to support new models of service delivery.

In 2024, our small but mighty IT team enhanced our digital infrastructure. They upgraded the Resource Centre with faster laptops, secured wiring, and new Zoom licenses for smoother communication. Smart boards installed at our Keele and Finch offices boosted teaching and presentation capabilities, improving learner engagement while saving staff setup time.

We also integrated AI tools, like Microsoft Copilot, for document summaries, drafts, and presentations. “It really saved staff much time and effort,” says Vidit Vyas, IT Cloud Developer and Software Support Specialist. Ongoing training is planned to support staff with these new tools.

Grammarly licenses were also purchased for leadership teams to support staff working in multiple languages, completed the migration of our IT systems to the cloud, including transitioning our 3CX phone system to a cloud-based version. Finance also moved to QuickBooks, enabling real-time budget tracking and faster report analysis. Our technology-first approach helped us work smarter and more efficiently.



Clients using upgraded equipment at the Resource Centre.



The Future

As we closed 2024, we committed to unifying our services under one roof and fostering deeper collaboration across programs.

In his first full year as the organization's Executive Director, Dwayne O'Connor took a close look at MNLCT's operations. He recognized that, while the organization has long delivered essential services to newcomers, the infrastructure to support our expanding team and programs hadn't kept pace. Departments had grown independently over time, and the need for greater alignment and coordination was clear.

Throughout 2024, we committed to unifying our services under one roof and fostering deeper collaboration across programs. Our priority became clear—build a strong foundation for the future through a new Strategic Plan for 2025-2030.

This plan sets the stage for MNLCT's next chapter. It emphasizes amplifying marginalized voices, expanding hybrid and trauma-informed services, and integrating mental health support as a core component of newcomer settlement. The plan also calls for the launch of revenue-generating social enterprises and private mental health services to support long-term sustainability.

Our unwavering commitment to building a strong, diverse workforce and strengthening our organizational systems will ensure that MNLCT remains a place of hope and belonging — a trusted partner in meeting the evolving needs of newcomers and creating a brighter future for generations to come.



New citizens from our Citizenship classes



Our BREM class gathers for a fun holiday potluck



Doris's Story

By Trudy Tumusime

LINC has given me much more than english skills

Doris, an immigrant from China, first discovered the Mennonite New Life Centre of Toronto (MNLCT) at the Toronto Newcomer Day in May 2023. At the time, she had paused English classes from another agency due to unavailability of suitable higher-level classes.

When she learnt about MNLCT's Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) flexible classes, Doris immediately enrolled to improve her English and adapt her professional experience to the Canadian job market.

"In my first year," Doris recalls "I applied for several jobs, and while I didn't pass the interviews, I always received replies."

Doris had found settling in Canada "manageable" when she arrived in 2021. With a strong background in computer science and support from her sister, she navigated much of the transition using online resources. But Doris soon realised that her English wasn't as workplace ready as she had believed.

"LINC has given me a platform where I can access local information, engage with the community, and make new friends from diverse backgrounds," she explains, crediting the classes for making her feel connected to Canadian life.

Since joining the MNLCT program, Doris progressed quickly from Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) level 5 to 7. She says the biggest benefit of the program was not the improvement but the sense of belonging and the friendships made.

She appreciates her teachers, "They shared so much local knowledge - how festivals began, how different cultures celebrate, and how society is structured here." She especially praised their energy and organization. Doris urges newcomers to take LINC classes noting, "It's not just a language class - it's so much more than that."

Doris also participated in MNLCT's She-Covery program, which helped newcomer women transition from unemployment or underemployment to meaningful career opportunities.

"LINC has given me a platform where I can access local information, engage with the community, and make new friends from diverse backgrounds,"

Read Doris's full story on our website.

mnlct.org/doris-story

Our People

Our people are the heart of everything we do. Many of our team members have been with us for decades, some for more than 30 years, demonstrating a deep commitment to the communities we serve. We take pride in reflecting the populations we serve, with staff who bring lived experience, shared languages, and cultural understanding that help us deliver inclusive, responsive services to newcomers.

MNLCT Board of Directors

Board Chair

Rochelle Fine

Vice Chair

Edgardo Romero

Treasurer

Maria Martinez

Secretary

Wendy Martin

Board Members

Brad Lepp

Amy Cheung

Maria McCormick

MNLCT Executive Team

Executive Director

Dwayne O'Connor

Settlement Program Director

Martha Granados

Director of Administration

Loida Lopez

Mental Health Program Director

Leticia Esquivel

Bridging Program Director

Tracy Docheff

LINC Program Director

Jorge Silvestri

IT Director

Nancy Sanchez



Summary of Audit Financials

MNLCT's total revenue in 2024 was \$5,675,375, up from \$5,215,035 in 2023. This increase came from strengthened government support and ongoing donations from foundations and other organizations. Expenses were managed closely to budget, resulting in a modest surplus of \$72,253 for the year.

REVENUE	2023	2024	2025 Estimate
Government	4,881,233	5,291,642	3,302,847
Foundations + Other	303,844	358,474	242,964
Donations (Individuals + Churches)	29,958	25,259	16,900
TOTAL	5,215,035	5,675,375	3,562,711
EXPENSES			
Staff	3,794,352	4,118,519	2,716,857
Building	509,482	509,093	506,093
Program	589,696	826,449	315,851
Office + Other	159,023	149,061	21,443
TOTAL	5,052,553	5,603,122	3,560,244
Excess of revenue over expenses	\$162,482	\$72,253	\$2,467

Funding Partners & Donors

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our clients, staff, volunteers, placement students, donors, funders, community partners, and other supporters for engaging with us in 2024. Your generosity of time, talent, passion, and resources makes our communities stronger. We look forward to continuing our work together to build responsive programs and meaningful partnerships that drive greater community impact and social change.



Employment and
Social Development Canada

Emploi et
Développement social Canada



Ministry of Labour, Immigration,
Training and Skills Development



Employment & Social Services



Mennonite
Central
Committee



Toronto
United
Mennonite
Church



Catholic
Children's Aid
Society of Toronto



AuroraHouse



COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA



CELP^{IP}



WALLENSTEIN FEED & SUPPLY LTD.



CONGRÉGATION DE
NOTRE-DAME



Mennonite
new life
centre

www.mnlct.org

(647) 812-1332

info@mnlct.org

Download our reports here:
mnlct.org/reports

