



SASC STRATEGIC PLAN

JANUARY 1, 2022 TO MARCH 31, 2025



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Executive Summary

SASC is pleased to share our Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2025.

Since 1989 we have been leaders and change makers in Waterloo Region supporting survivors of sexual violence and working to transform systems which promote gender-based violence.

This Plan provides our Centre with a roadmap for support, services, and organizational development for the next three plus years. It was developed with broad involvement from staff members, clients, community partners, donors, funders, volunteers, and Board members.

The planning process helped us assess both the challenges and opportunities SASC is likely to face over the next few years.

Five strategic directions of equal importance emerged throughout this process to guide the organization.

- 1. We want to reduce waiting times for survivors seeking individual counselling and advocacy.**
- 2. We want to support the health, wellness, and morale of our staff and leadership team.**
- 3. We want our programs to be survivor-centered, trauma-informed, racially and culturally responsive, and grounded in intersectional feminism.**
- 4. We want to build our sustainable capacity to serve by investing in communications and fundraising.**
- 5. We want to balance our direct supports for survivors and their families with long-term solutions to gender-based violence.**

This Plan was approved by our Board of Directors on December 15, 2021. It will inform SASC's priorities from 2022 to 2025. The Board of Directors will review our progress on this plan quarterly and update the plan as needed.

The Executive Director, in collaboration with our Leadership Team, is responsible for the development of annual Operating Plans to move our strategic directions forward.



The Planning Process

Data for this plan was collected from June 2021 until October 2021 using a combination of online surveys and Zoom meetings. There were no in-person meetings or data collection due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The planning was divided into stages:

- In June and July, data was gathered from stakeholders including clients, community partners, donors, funders, volunteers, staff, and board members. Stakeholders were sent survey links via email. Questions focused on SASC's strengths, areas of improvement, and future directions.
- In September, compiled responses were shared with Board Members and SASC's Leadership Team to help inform the conversations that were to come.
- In October, Board members and SASC's Leadership Team met weekly via Zoom to discuss and plan. These sessions covered:
 - **A major revision of our Mission, Vision and Values, sparking important conversations about our founding essence, our growth and development over time, and our present situation.**
 - **A SWOT analysis to help flush out emerging themes and directions.**
 - **A Theory of Change, laying out a roadmap to reduce our waiting list for individual counselling.**
 - **Our funding, fundraising, and communication strategies, particularly in a post-#MeToo and COVID-19 eras.**
 - **A discussion on how SASC can best determine and measure success moving forward.**
- In November, using the data from the October sessions, the Executive Director drafted the Strategic Plan. This draft was sent to Board Members and SASC's Leadership team for feedback and final thoughts. Revisions were made.
- On December 15, 2021, the Board of Directors accepted this Plan.

SASC was pleased to collaborate with Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region (SVP) on the development of this strategic plan; we were grateful for the facilitation, expertise, time, and perspective provided by SVP partners including not limited to: Ginny Dybenko, Shannon MacTaggart, Mate Prgin, Glenn Smith, and Rose Greensides.



Our Previous Strategic Plan and Related Development

Our previous Strategic Plan ran from 2017 to 2020 and had four focus areas.

1. We wanted to structure our growth to support our continued health as an organization.
2. We wanted to continue to meet the needs of survivors of sexual violence by providing expert, innovative, effective and timely services.
3. We wanted to have a strong, stable funding base and financial resiliency.
4. We wanted to live out our values as an intersectional feminist agency committed to social action and social justice.

When drafting our last Plan, we couldn't have predicted the #MeToo Movement taking centre stage shortly thereafter; this was a watershed moment in the advancement of anti-sexual violence work.

We also couldn't have predicted the COVID-19 pandemic hitting us in March 2020 and the resulting shadow pandemic – an increase in gender-based violence locally and globally. The pandemic delayed our Strategic Planning Process for a year, as we focused on responding to immediate emergency needs.

Although the landscape changed dramatically since our last planning process, we had great success moving the majority of our focus areas forward. From 2017 to 2021, due to growth in programs, funders, and our fundraising efforts, our annual operating budget grew by 187%, and our staff team grew from 11 people to 30 people.

We launched a dedicated Anti-Human Trafficking Program, significantly grew our Groups and Workshops Program, launched a Sexual Violence Legal Advocate Program, doubled the size of our Public Education Program, hired a Development and Communications Coordinator and a Human Resources Coordinator, and grew our Leadership Team.

We launched a new client database and a donor database, and started offering virtual counselling sessions. We upgraded our technology, moving from a physical server to a cloud-based system, just in time to be able to work remotely effectively when the pandemic hit.

We did a great deal of community advocacy related to the criminal justice system, and successfully launched an Advocate Case Review Process with Waterloo Regional Police and a number of our key intersectional feminist community partners.

Despite our growth, the need in our community outpaced us. **The demand for individual counselling grew substantially with the #MeToo Movement, and then grew an additional 42% with the pandemic.** This is the reality that sets the stage for our new Strategic Plan.



Herstory

To plan for the future, we have to know where we came from.

Since 1989 SASC has been transforming lives in our community.

In 1978 the three-year-old Waterloo Rape Distress Centre was forced to close when its funding was cut; its final appeal for \$5000 had been denied. For the next eleven years, there were few community supports available to survivors of sexual violence. Waterloo Region became the largest area in Ontario without critical sexual assault services.

Local women began to strategize. Many of them survivors themselves, they were determined to build a strong grassroots centre that could truly respond to the community need.

In October 1989, with an anonymous \$1000 gift, and donated airtime from an answering service, our 24 Hour Support Line was launched. This was due to the efforts of about twenty-five volunteers, ten of whom worked endless shifts during those first months.

Two months later, a tragedy stunned the nation. A gunman roamed the corridors of Montreal's École Polytechnique killing fourteen women. This massacre became a galvanizing moment in which national mourning turned into outrage and action on violence against women.

In response, in June 1990 Sun Life Financial (then Mutual Life of Canada) donated \$30,000 to assist in the Centre's establishment. This gift, combined with community donations, allowed SASC to rent office space and hire a staff person. Shortly after, provincial funding was secured to provide a base for operations.

SASC has now grown to thirty staff members and about 60 volunteers working out of multiple locations across the Region. Today we rely on the support and generosity of our community, province, and nation to support our work.

We offer wrap-around services to survivors by providing individual and group counselling, a 24 Hour Support Line, and advocacy and accompaniments for those navigating court, police, and medical processes. We have a dedicated Anti-Human Trafficking Program. In addition to support services, we're committed to preventing sexual violence through education, collaboration, and social justice work in Waterloo Region and beyond.



Who We Are

In October 2021, we engaged in a process to overhaul our Mission, Vision and Values. Below you'll find the new versions; we believe these capture the essence of who we are and what we do as an organization, and expand on our commitment to intersectionality.

MISSION

We support survivors of sexual violence. We listen, facilitate healing, and celebrate resiliency. Using an anti-racist, intersectional feminist approach, we work to transform systems which promote gender-based violence.

VISION

A world free from gender-based violence and oppression.

VALUES

We believe in wrapping survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in community care. We seek to provide a safe place. We walk beside survivors. We listen. We bear witness. We offer practical supports. We recognize the complex systems impacting survivors' lives; we help navigate. We celebrate the resiliency of the survivors that use our services. We facilitate healing. We offer hope.

We believe each survivor has the right to control their own body, healing journey, and path to justice. We seek to be survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and racially and culturally responsive. We believe in reproductive justice. We recognize that the justice and medical systems are often sexist and racist; we advocate for survivors and work towards systemic change.

We use an intersectional approach. We respect how survivors' unique social locations impact their experiences, how people respond to them, and what resources they have access to. Sexism, a root cause of sexual violence, is but one of the oppressions used to violate and control. Other forms of oppression include, but are not limited to, racism, colonialism, classism, ableism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, and discrimination based on cultural, ethnic or religious background.

We particularly recognize the impact of racism and colonialism on Black, Indigenous, and racialized women, girls, gender-diverse, and two-spirit survivors. We seek to identify and remove barriers that exist for the communities we serve in accessing our Centre. We are committed to making our services accessible to all survivors, and centering the experiences of survivors facing oppression.

We balance our direct supports for survivors and their families with long-term solutions to gender-based violence. Systemic advocacy, collaboration, and education aimed at addressing the root causes of gendered violence and oppression makes our collective future brighter.

Finally, Audre Lorde said "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare." Building on this principle as foundational, **we promote the self-care and wellness of those working at our Centre;** this is a political tool that sustains us in our work.



Our Main Program Areas

24 HOUR SUPPORT LINE

Our 24 Hour Support Line is available to anyone who has experienced sexual violence, and their friends and families. With support available in more than fifty languages, this telephone line is supplemented by accompaniments to the hospital, police station, and courthouse.

COUNSELLING, ADVOCACY & SUPPORT GROUPS

Our counselling program includes individual counselling for people of all genders, sixteen and older, who have been sexually assaulted recently or historically, as well as support for friends and family. We also offer practical assistance and advocacy.

GROUPS & WORKSHOPS PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

We offer a broad range of workshops to individuals of all genders, and open and closed groups for female, trans and non-binary survivors, ages sixteen and older, who have been sexually assaulted at any point in their lives.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE LEGAL ADVOCACY PROGRAM

This program supports survivors of sexual violence as they seek to fully understand their legal rights and options – from criminal justice options, to civil options, and beyond. This includes information, individual advocacy, system navigation, case management, referrals, assistance with documents, and court accompaniments.

FAMILY COURT SUPPORT PROGRAM

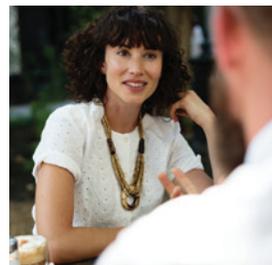
This program provides practical and emotional support to women who have experienced violence in their relationship as they navigate the Family Court System.

ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROGRAM

This program provides wrap-around services to those experiencing sexual exploitation and those who are at risk within Waterloo Region. This program is accessible to all genders ages twelve and up.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Our public education program educates for social change. We provide workshops and resource materials to schools, professionals, and the broader community, and beyond. This program also houses our Male Allies Program which invites and trains men to be allies in the work to prevent gendered violence..



Summary of Important Points

The following is a high-level summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats highlighted by our stakeholders. This represents only a portion of the data collected as part of our overall strategic planning process.

STRENGTHS

- Passionate team with deep expertise
- Visionary and experienced leadership
- Culture of precedent-setting innovation aimed at social change (Sexual Violence Legal Advocacy, Male Allies, Advocate Case Review, etc.)
- Breadth of programming related to sexual/gender-based violence, which is focused both downstream and upstream
- Exceptional, holistic client-centered programs and services
- One of the strongest Public Education Programs in our sector
- Growing organization due to successful grant applications and fundraising
- Successful partnerships (with post-secondary institutions, etc.)

WEAKNESSES

- Wait times for individual counselling
- Admin and tech infrastructure due to rapid growth
- Role/skill gaps due to growth, and succession challenges in key roles
- Staff and leadership burnout, which has only increased in the COVID-19 era
- Physical space constraints in our office related to our growth
- Community awareness of our critical needs and breadth of services
- Funding environment discourages growth
- Low ROI fundraising strategy
- Change adverse organization

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expand our fundraising strategy to access a broader set of donors
- Review our organizational design to address admin and tech gaps
- Review role/skill gaps internally to sustain growth and continue to build
- Raise awareness through increased messaging and outreach to the community
- Review staff and leadership compensation to improve retention
- Increased opportunities to focus on anti-racism work and intersectionality
- Recruit volunteers with key skills to fill expertise gaps
- Grow Public Education Program to increase awareness and revenue
- Advocacy at all levels of government.

THREATS

- Loss of one-time grants, especially once COVID-19 funds no longer exist
- Balancing systemic advocacy/systems change with collaboration in the community
- Staff and leadership mental health and wellness, particularly while navigating the impact of COVID-19
- Staff retention as our salaries in our sector can't compete with large institutions
- Financial constraints in the not-for-profit sector
- Competition for funding locally
- Unpredictable increases in the demand for services
- Shifts in various levels of government and their funding priorities.

OVERARCHING THEMES

We have gone through a period of rapid growth, however the increase in the demand for our services has outpaced us. We need to strengthen our infrastructure to sustain and further expand our core services. We need to prioritize reducing our wait times for individual counselling. To do these things, we need to invest in communications and fundraising, and advocate for sustainable funding with all levels of government.



SASC's Strategic Directions 2022 - 2025

DIRECTION 1:

We want to reduce waiting times for survivors seeking individual counselling and advocacy.

1. Hire a dedicated Counselling Manager.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness/efficiency of systems in our Counselling and Frontline Programs (intake, scheduling appointments, tech, etc.) and implement new strategies.
3. Grow our student and intake programs to support short-term/crisis counselling availability.
4. Work to maintain/stabilize our Sexual Violence Legal Advocate pilot program.
5. Enhance and utilize our groups and workshop program.
6. Collaborate with key partners to ensure referrals are made as appropriate.

DIRECTION 2:

We want to support the health, wellness, and morale of our staff and leadership team.

1. Continue to prioritize the development of Human Resources as a dedicated program.
2. Establish a task force related to staff health and wellness, establish a staff engagement survey process, and implement new strategies.
3. Increase our focus on minimizing the risk of vicarious trauma and burnout in our sector.
4. Seek out ways of acknowledging the successes of our staff and leadership team.
5. Implement an updated compensation structure to reflect our growth.



DIRECTION 3:

We want our programs to be survivor-centered, trauma-informed, racially and culturally responsive, and grounded in intersectional feminism.

1. Continue to prioritize support for Black, Indigenous, racialized, and 2SLGBTQIA+ survivors, young survivors, recent survivors, and survivors in crisis or requiring immediate advocacy.
2. Collaborate with community-based organizations, especially those serving communities with lived experiences of oppression and violence.
3. Commit to ongoing staff and volunteer training with a focus on learning and growing together.
4. Explore and integrate cultural healing practices.
5. Support AR/AO Committee input into service delivery.



DIRECTION 4:

We want to build our sustainable capacity to serve by investing in communications and fundraising.

1. Create and launch a community-wide campaign, highlighting our programs and our needs.
2. Enhance our infrastructure to support maintenance and growth in our fundraising and communications program.
3. Advocate with all levels of government to secure essential services funding.
4. Widen our fundraising strategy to access a broader set of donors.
5. Capitalize on grant opportunities as they arise.

DIRECTION 5:

We want to balance our direct supports for survivors and their families with long-term solutions to gender-based violence.

1. Expand the reach of our Male Allies Program provincially and nationally, engaging men and boys as accomplices in ending gender-based violence.
2. Grow the revenue generating capacity of our Public Education Program including examining fee-for-service opportunities and curriculum development.
3. Collaborate with community-based organizations, especially those serving communities with lived experiences of oppression and violence.
4. Strengthen relationships with school boards and post-secondary partners to dismantle rape culture, build a culture of consent, and provide comprehensive gender-based violence prevention programming.
5. Expand our capacity to offer effective and engaging digital/online trainings and curriculum.



Vision of Success

We envision a future in which survivors in Waterloo Region in all their diversity have access to counselling and advocacy when they reach out, without having to navigate waiting lists. In this future, support is survivor-centred, individualized, culturally and racially responsive, and grounded in community-based, intersectional feminism.

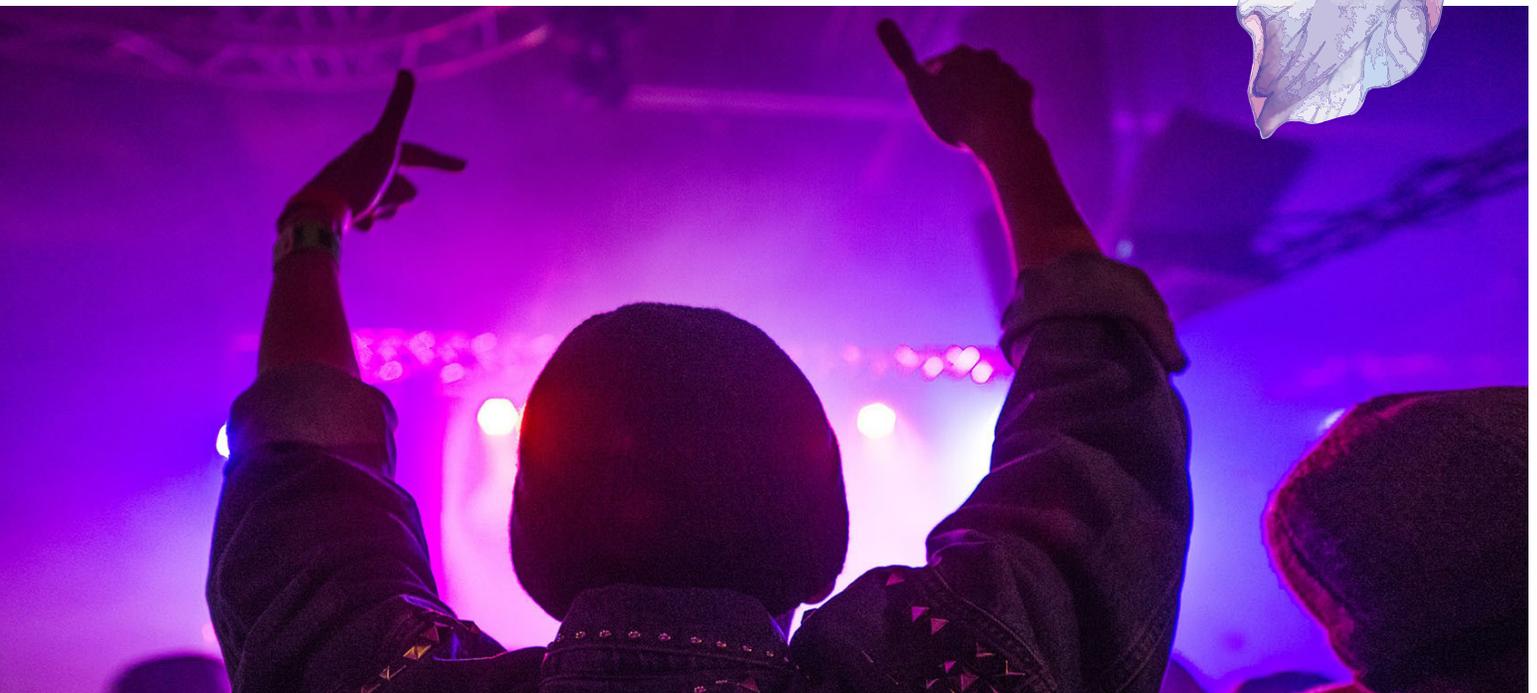
Future SASC will continue to advocate at the individual level and the systematic level to create change – for survivors, for our Centre, and for our sector. We'll balance our downstream, direct supports for survivors with upstream, long-term solutions to gender-based violence and oppression.

Our Public Education Program will be a powerful influencer in our community and beyond, facilitating change by empowering people with knowledge and resources, rather than through fear. With our partners, we'll seek to dismantle rape culture and to build a culture of consent through comprehensive gender-based violence prevention programming. We'll continue to be leaders in engaging men and boys as accomplices in ending gender-based violence.

In the years ahead, we envision our work being acknowledged as an essential service, supported by all levels of government. Our communications and fundraising programs will be increasingly robust, supporting our capacity to fully wrap survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in community care. Our infrastructure – including administration and technology – won't be impacted by a culture of scarcity; we'll have the resources we need to support our programs effectively.

In this future, much of the time and energy we spend seeking funds for our essential services can be redirected; we can focus on supporting survivors and working towards social change.

Ultimately, we envision a world free from sexual violence and oppression.



Evaluation

The Executive Director, in collaboration with our staff team, is responsible for the development of an annual Operational Plan to move our five strategic directions forward.

Activities in the Operational Plan will use the SMART goal method; they will be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and have a time period attached to them. Each activity will include at least one indicator of success, be it a milestone or a quantifiable performance measure.

Directions, goals, and activities laid out in our Strategic and Operational Plans will be reflected in the work plan component of individual Staff Performance Appraisals, as appropriate.

No less than once per quarter, the Executive Director will update the Operational Plan and provide a copy to the Board of Directors. The Executive Director will modify the Operational Plan throughout the year as needed.

At least once per year, the Board will review our overall progress on the Strategic Plan. If environmental factors have changed, and new opportunities or threats have emerged, the Board working collaboratively with the Executive Director will make updates to our Strategic Plan.



Appendices

SASC's Theory of Change

Addressing our Waiting List for Individual Counselling and Advocacy

Wrapping survivors of sexual violence in community-based care

By April 1, 2024, we want to ensure that timely, accessible, effective support, counselling, and advocacy are available to survivors within three months of the time they reach out.

STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
<p>Offer an increased range of counselling and advocacy options</p>	<p>Establish a Crisis Support Program for short-term support, including growing our student program and expanding our intake program</p> <p>Develop and sustain our Sexual Violence Legal Advocacy Program</p> <p>Ensure entry-level groups are available at regular intervals</p> <p>Ensure strong fundraising plan to sustain and grow our frontline team</p> <p>Offer a hybrid model of in-person and virtual support options</p> <p>Drop-in/walk in options?</p>	<p>Survivors are not languishing on waitlists; the waiting list is reduced</p> <p>The community is confident they can refer survivors to us (without a long wait)</p>	<p>Survivors get the support they need to heal and thrive</p>
<p>Ensure survivors have access to intersectional feminist, culturally-, ethnically-, and trauma-informed services</p>	<p>Commit to ongoing staff/volunteer training to ensure our team is knowledgeable and effective</p> <p>Continue to prioritize support for Black, First Nations, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+ survivors and other oppressed communities</p> <p>Continue to prioritize support for young survivors, recent survivors, and survivors in crisis</p> <p>Nurture partnerships with community-based organizations serving marginalized communities</p> <p>Ensure AR/AO Committee input into service delivery</p> <p>Continue to offer practical supports to survivors</p>	<p>Survivors' unique needs are met</p> <p>Survivors are empowered</p>	<p>Survivors get the support they need to heal and thrive</p>



CONTINUED

STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
<p>External evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency of systems in our Counselling and Frontline Programs, without compromising the quality of service we provide</p>	<p>Hire knowledgeable Evaluator to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing systems such as intake, process for booking/cancelling appointments, statistics collection, management support, communication/accountability, etc.), Speak with and/or survey staff, management, and admin in frontline programs. Examine best practices, collect data, and make concrete recommendations for systems improvements, and support their implementation 	<p>New ideas are being explored/implemented in frontline services</p> <p>Systems in place are effective/efficient</p>	<p>We are better able to serve more survivors effectively</p>
<p>Individual and Systemic Advocacy & Community Coordination</p>	<p>Actively engage with Waterloo Region's Gender-Based Violence Community Coordination Strategy</p> <p>Refer survivors to other services if appropriate</p> <p>Sit at community and provincial tables</p>	<p>Survivors are served collaboratively by community partners</p>	<p>Survivors in Waterloo Region have greater access to justice and support (whatever that looks like to them)</p>
<p>Provide care for our team doing the work, so they in turn can support survivors</p>	<p>Ensure the necessary administrative infrastructure to support our growth</p> <p>Ensure competitive compensation/benefits</p> <p>Continue to develop our HR program to support employee satisfaction and wellness</p>	<p>We have a stable, supported team of frontline workers</p> <p>Reduced burn-out/stress</p> <p>Staff retention</p>	<p>Survivors get the support they need to heal and thrive</p>
<p>Public Education & Social Change</p>	<p>Offer Responding to Disclosures training, etc.</p> <p>Partnerships with school boards and post-secondary institutions</p> <p>Continue to grow our Public Education Program (including our Male Allies Program) to be national leaders in GBV public education and curriculum</p>	<p>Community response to survivors is improved</p> <p>Revenue is generated to support our frontline services</p> <p>Our profile is raised in the community and beyond</p>	<p>Sexual and gender-based violence is reduced</p> <p>Revenue is generated to support our frontline services</p>
<p>Grow and diversify our funding sources to support our frontline services</p>	<p>Annual fundraising plan, including new ways to seek out funding in the COVID and post-COVID era</p> <p>Infrastructure to support fundraising/communications program</p> <p>Ensure donor stewardship</p> <p>Seek out grant funding</p>	<p>We have the funding we need to sustain our expanded staff team</p>	<p>Our capacity to generate our own funds to support our Centre's key priorities has grown</p>





you
are
not
alone!



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