



2019-2020
Annual Report



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I am honoured to have been elected President of COSTI with its long and rich history of serving newcomers and the most vulnerable. Our commitment to help newcomers dates back to 1952 and is the foundation upon which COSTI has grown. Today we help over 39,000 people annually and plan to assist more in future.

Before looking to the future, it is important to acknowledge the past. There are many volunteers who have a significant impact and it is particularly important to remember the former President, Bruno M. Suppa who passed away in February 2020. His dedication to COSTI is unmatched and will forever be remembered for his commitment to assist the most vulnerable to improve their life opportunities through education and employment. In honour of his five decades of service, COSTI's 1710 Dufferin St. location was renamed the Bruno M. Suppa Corporate Office.

In addition, I want to acknowledge Frank Mendicino, Secretary of the Board who also stepped down after many years of service on the Board. Frank originally worked as a social worker at COSTI before going back to school and becoming a lawyer. With his extensive depth of knowledge of our clients' needs, he helped guide the organization through critical pivotal moments.

As a new President, I understand the importance of the past to navigate our future. Since becoming President last November, we have had significant change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am proud to let you know that the Board and staff have embraced the change and demonstrated their flexibility to adapt quickly. Board meetings transitioned permanently to an online platform and many programs launched online models. We are grateful for the flexibility demonstrated by our staff in quickly adapting to serving the community remotely.

While COSTI continues to believe that one-on-one in person services is the best model in serving the community, the global events of this past year required the organization to shift its services from a primarily in-person service delivery model to an online model.

During this time, the Board has initiated, Strategic Planning as we understand recent events require planning for a long-term recovery from the global pandemic. We need to develop innovative approaches in how we respond to the challenge of helping more people with less, while continuing to address the changing needs of our community. I look forward to working with both staff and Board members in finalizing a Strategic Plan that will be used as a guide and allows us to renew the organization's commitment to our clients' success in their new country.

Our Board and staff are committed to responding to changes in our health, social and economic environments and look to enhancing our partnerships with community organizations and funders in order to meet the needs of diverse communities, regardless of the necessitated changes in service delivery models. Our collective achievements, in turn, contribute to Canada's success, particularly as we recover from the effects of the global pandemic.

Change is important in ensuring COSTI's continued success. My thanks and appreciation to my fellow Board members and COSTI staff who have and continue to demonstrate their commitment to embracing change during this unprecedented time, both in their professional and personal lives.



Pina Alberelli-Arone
President

It is hard to talk about the 2019/20 fiscal year without focusing on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on our clients and on our services.

The experience that stays with me, is of our client who called her counsellor at COSTI when the lockdown was declared and our staff had moved to working from home. The woman called her counsellor to inquire about her health. She said encouragingly to the counsellor, "Don't worry, this is nothing. I spent two years in a refugee camp. It's now my turn to look after you." These moments of resilience and sense of community inspired and sustained our resolve to stay the course despite the considerable challenges.

The last quarter of the year was almost totally consumed by the challenges presented by the pandemic. On an operational level, it was surprising to see the extent to which information and communications technology has progressed, making it possible to quickly shift our in-person services to online. By mid-March 2020, when the lockdown was declared, we had 300 employees working from home and 70 employees working in shifts at our three refugee hostels. We sent 14,000 emails to clients to ensure they knew that we were still open for service and how to reach us. Our English language training Instructors trained on an online platform and quickly enrolled over 700 students. With the help of government and community donations, we stocked sufficient PPE and established safety protocols at our hostels to keep our staff and clients safe.

While we successfully pivoted to working remotely and safely, the circumstances for our clients were considerably more challenging. It quickly became clear that the pandemic was not equitable in how it was affecting people's lives. The poor, newcomers, racialized people and women seemed to be affected disproportionately. Some lost their jobs; others were working in low paying essential jobs and had to risk using public transit to get to work; and those on social assistance found that they lost opportunities to earn a little more money to get through the month, which was compounded by the fact that about twenty of sixty foodbanks in Toronto had to close. The United Way Greater Toronto came

through with funding for food support. Our staff ordered food online, picked it up and delivered it to families who indicated their need. We also distributed 400 Loblaws gift cards to those in need, provided by Community Food Centres of Canada. We managed computer donations to families who required them for accessing services or school. We connected people who were isolated with online programs. One of the popular programs for seniors was an exercise class on Zoom. These seniors had been frequenting our Seniors' Active Living Centre before the lockdown and were now finding the opportunity to reconnect through exercise. An Italian seniors group found it comforting to meet weekly on Zoom and pray the Holy Rosary.

There were more disturbing incidents of abuse exacerbated by the reality of living together full-time with little space for privacy. One woman who reached out to her counsellor had been assaulted by her partner and had her cell phone destroyed. After considering a number of options she decided to stay with her partner. We provided her with a new cell phone that she could keep hidden in case of emergency.

The pandemic is still upon us and COSTI continues to adapt to the needs of our clients, including limited access to office services when clients need a form signed or require special supports.

It has been inspiring to see how readily and creatively our employees adapted to working from home or working with strict safety protocols at our hostels. I want to commend them for their commitment and resilience in these difficult times.



Mario J. Calla
Executive Director

**COSTI's
work in the
community
continues to
be a high
priority**



COSTI's over-arching goal is to contribute to creating conditions that enable immigrants and vulnerable populations to contribute and engage in their communities.

Through active participation in local, provincial and national committees, advisory groups and ad hoc coalitions, we have represented the voice of immigrants and the immigrant-serving sector in planning, service development, coordination, research, public policy and education. COSTI's leadership team works to promote public policies that facilitate the integration of immigrants and support their communities to build internal leadership and capacity. In 2019/20, COSTI continued to foster a collaborative approach to service delivery by developing programming and partnerships that support new delivery models. Over 25 new partnerships were developed with community health organizations, grassroots community groups, faith-based organizations, settlement agencies and educational institutions.

COSTI's Stakeholder and Community Engagement Office continued to work with existing and new partners to deliver services to government-sponsored refugees and refugee claimants that support their integration: housing support services; activities, community events and workshops that engaged children and parents; help with introducing them to services available in their local community; and donations of food, clothing and household items.

Children, youth and adult newcomers participated in on-site activities: story-telling circles led by the Toronto Public Library; movie nights; English conversation circles; legal information sessions; positive parenting workshops conducted by Children Aid Society; the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) reading clubs; nutrition sessions and vaccine clinics administered by Toronto Public Health; and music and art therapy programming organized by several partners: CultureLink, Music for Hope and Muse Arts.

In addition, a family-matching initiative that saw Canadian host families paired with refugee families continued in 2019/20 with the Together Project. Host families provided invaluable support and assistance to refugee newcomers - from the day they move from temporary housing to their new home. They provide support in receiving furniture; setting up their households; shopping for essential items such as food, bedding, etc.; escorting families to local financial institutions, parks and community centres; exploring nearby public transportation routes, and help in registering children in school.

COSTI supported the continued development of local community groups, such as the South Asian Women's Rights Organization serving Bangladeshi women in Scarborough and the Syrian Canadian Foundation trusteeships. COSTI worked with hundreds of partner organizations throughout Ontario to coordinate the International Student Connect program, Problem Gambling and the Orientation to Ontario program as well as the Welcome Centre Immigrant Services network in York Region. Collaborative and innovative approaches to service delivery allows COSTI and key partners the opportunity to meet the needs of under-served communities and also develop internal capacity to build, enhance and sustain services.



Newcomer children put on skates for the first time and received skating lessons from world class coaches at the Inaugural *Right to Skate* event, organized by Montcrest School teachers, grade 8 students and their parents, and made possible by the NHL and MLSE Foundation.

Partnerships and Collaborations

COSTI is proud to have been a part of key organizations including the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), the Consortium of Agencies Serving Internationally-trained Persons (CASIP), Local Immigration Partnerships in Toronto and the Regions of Peel and York, Canadian Council for Refugees, the Peel Newcomer Strategy Group, the Peel Refugee Re-Settlement Working Group, Newcomer Employment Round Table, and the settlement Adaptation Program Working Group.

Active Engagement Integration Project

Led by Vancouver-based SUCCESS, the Active Engagement Integration Project (AEIP) provides pre-arrival services to support the settlement, adaptation and integration of individuals moving to Canada. COSTI promotes community and labour market engagement by providing settlement and employment information and referral and initial orientation online to overseas clients prior to their departure and arrival in Ontario.

International Student Connect

The International Student Connect program supports international students studying in Ontario. It represents an innovative collaboration between settlement service providers and post-secondary institutions. The program offers resources, information sessions and workshops on a variety of settlement topics.

Workshops and sessions address issues such as features of life in Ontario, accessing local services, consumer awareness, housing and health care. The

program is led by COSTI, in partnership with 16 settlement agencies and 21 colleges and universities in 15 Ontario communities: Barrie, Brampton, Brantford, Chatham, Hamilton, Leamington, London, Mississauga, Niagara Region, Oakville, Orillia, Ottawa, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Welland and Windsor.

Gambling, Gaming and Technology Use

COSTI provides advice and expertise on newcomer problem gambling issues to service providers who provide mental health and addiction services to ethno-cultural communities in need of culturally and linguistically appropriate treatment and services.

Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF)

NFF is a province-wide public education campaign that raises awareness of the signs of woman abuse so that those close to a woman at-risk can recognize the signs of abuse and know what actions to take in response.

Orientation to Ontario (O2O)

L' Ontario, C'est Chez Moi

A bilingual initiative, O2O is designed to ease the transition of newcomers by providing access to standardized information about settling in Ontario and connecting newcomers to community services upon arrival. O2O is delivered by 31 community agency partners in 8 Ontario communities across the province.

The program consists of three different resources catering to different learning styles: workshops that are delivered by 32 Service Delivery Agencies (SDAs) in 26 communities across Ontario;

print resources; and an interactive website featuring O2O online resources and on-demand webinars. COSTI administers the program in collaboration with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara and George Brown College (GBC). O2O has recently developed a chatbot (Conversation platform) in collaboration with Ryerson University and Gene Global, offering another way to access settlement information 24/7.

Planning For Canada

Led by Colleges and Institutes Canada, the Canadian Immigrant Integration Project (CIIP) aims to consolidate and expand the delivery model of online advisory services to individuals overseas through a coordinated model that fosters more effective partnerships among key stakeholders in the settlement sector, college partners across the provinces and employment support organizations.

COSTI provides pre-departure support to individuals overseas who are destined to arrive in Ontario. Services include referrals to community agencies, educational institutions and employment support organizations in communities across Ontario.

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services

The Welcome Centre Immigrant Services is a one-stop service in York Region, designed to guide and support immigrants through the maze of information and resources. Core services provided at each of the five Centres by a partnership of agencies include settlement and integration services; language training and enhanced language training; accreditation and qualifications assistance; and employment supports.

Welcome Group Model

In 2019/20 COSTI partnered with the Together Project in delivering a standardized model of volunteer engagement with government-sponsored refugees. The Together Project connects refugee newcomers and Canadians to build stronger, more integrated communities through three program areas: matching, community and research. The Together Project developed the "Welcome Group" model in close partnership with COSTI. The model builds on existing family matching programs and connects Canadians with government-sponsored refugees and refugee claimants from all countries of origin who arrive at COSTI's Ralph Chiodo Family Immigrant Reception Centre.

2019/20 Snapshot: A Breakdown of Various Partners

Partnership and collaboration amongst organizations is key to the successful integration of newcomers. COSTI is represented on many community planning networks, umbrella organizations and advisory committees. We work in partnership with organizations and service providers across Ontario in the planning and delivery of services to the community.

230

Community Agencies and Organizations

56

Inter-Agency Planning Groups And Local Service Planning Coordination Groups

16

Colleges and Universities

5

Hospitals

5

School Boards

Accelerating
Engagement
By Providing
Opportunities
For Success



COSTI believes that access to sustainable jobs puts people on the right track for success and enriches our communities. We work with over 2,000 employers who share the same belief. Last year, 7,949 individuals with international work experience, young adults, high school and university graduates came to COSTI looking for help to get them one step closer to finding the right job or career.

Newcomers come to Canada and bring with them new ideas, energy, skills, resources, and a strong desire to succeed and contribute to their new country. In order to contribute, they must first be given the opportunity to develop the tools and skills needed to secure employment and pursue a career in their new country. We want everyone who comes to Canada to be successful. That's why we have made it a priority to extend our work beyond bricks and mortar buildings by engaging with newcomers both virtually and in-person. Offering professional development, pre-employment training and employment opportunities at the local and provincial levels, and also providing pre-arrival information, referrals and consultations internationally, allows COSTI to connect with clients no matter where they happen to be living.

Our existing Online Services platform provided COSTI with an opportunity to quickly transition to providing virtual employment supports for our clients, enabling job seekers to participate in special events, training, job fairs and information sessions remotely. The ability to continue their job search, while receiving encouragement and support from staff, allowed many to stay motivated and secure employment while at home.

In preparing for the Employment Ontario transformation of the employment services system in the Region of Peel, led by WCG International Consultants Ltd., COSTI is reviewing its systems and business plans in an effort to be responsive to the client-centered and results-focused model. While the upcoming year will be a year of change, the opportunity allows us to evaluate our systems, adopt a more robust business approach and undergo a change management process that will ultimately lead to greater success for our clients in finding and retaining jobs.

Sponsored by the RBC Foundation in 2019/20, COSTI's Newcomer Employment program provides employment support services to highly-skilled newcomer professionals through a comprehensive and integrated workshop approach that allows participants to learn effective work search and interview techniques; understand the Canadian business culture in order to gain and retain employment; and access resources to additional educational training needs.

COSTI's Lifeskills Counselling program combines workshops with individual counselling for women to improve their self-confidence and increase their employment potential.



Maximilia Odibo (Left), with Mojgan Haghi, Team Lead for the Employment Pathways to Success program.

In 2018, Maximilliana Odibo and her three children left Nigeria for Canada. She did not know what the future looked like, but she knew one thing - she and her children were safe.

"I stayed at a shelter when I first arrived until I could find housing," says Maximilliana. "I have a Master of Business Administration and hoped to find employment in my field, but it was disheartening to hear stories from other newcomers who told me I would not be able to find a job in my profession and that it would be impossible to work or study with three children and with no Canadian experience."

Maximilliana didn't listen. Instead, she spent many nights looking for answers on the Internet. That's when she learned about COSTI Employment Services from COSTI staff and "everything changed."

Maximilliana enrolled in COSTI's Newcomer Employment program for skilled newcomers. She participated in customer service training, job search workshops, and signed up for COSTI's Women's Employment Lifeskills program. "I didn't want to waste any time," she says. "I also took assertiveness training, stress management, and self-esteem workshops."

Maximilliana was excited. "I was finally on the right track, confident and ready to find employment in my field." Shortly after training, she participated in a job fair hosted by COSTI. "It was an exciting experience and several employers were interested in hiring me, but there was one employer that stood out - TD Bank," she says. Maximilliana has been working at TD Bank ever since. She has been commended for excellent customer service and was recognized as one of the top ten performers

for the district for five weeks. "I believe the customer service training and workplace culture workshops helped me understand how the Canadian workplace functions and the difference between Canada and Nigeria," she says.

Maximilliana credits COSTI staff member Mojgan Haghi for encouraging her to participate in COSTI's Newcomer Employment program. "I was eager to attend the training but had challenges with childcare for my four-year old son. I put my resources together and found a way to be able to attend the program. Mojgan played a major role in encouraging me."

Mojgan says Maximilliana is an inspiration to newcomer professional women. "Her positivity, motivation and hard work speak for themselves. She is a role model for many women who are facing the challenges of finding employment in her field."

Today, Maximilliana volunteers and mentors COSTI clients who are interested in entering the customer service field. "Lack of Canadian work experience is a non-existent term for me. I work hard to dispel this myth and tell other newcomer women to not give up. They can do it too."

Maximilliana says she is grateful for connecting with COSTI. "It opened so many doors for me," she says. "Everyone I met has made a difference in my life, especially, when I needed to see a clear path in my new home, Canada."

Employment Services

Career Assessment and Planning, Job Search and Placement, Job Maintenance Support services are provided to adults (including internationally trained professionals/tradespeople) and youth through a comprehensive service model intended to address individual needs. Services include: individual assessment, counselling, pre-employment training, group workshops and employment and job maintenance placement. Individuals can also benefit from a range of on-the-job placement and training opportunities relevant to their specific career goals. Also available are opportunities for exploration of trades apprenticeships, customized job searches and mentoring.

The Canada-Ontario Job Grant (COJG) provides resources to employers to undertake training and professional development in their workforce. COSTI is a designated provider of the COJG.

Homeless Initiatives Fund - Employment

Supports individuals accessing COSTI's Housing Help programs. Participants undergo an employability assessment, individualized return-to-work action plan, pre-employment workshops and career exploration that lead to self-improvement and/or employment.

Life Skills Training

Employment preparation workshops to develop life and management skills and career exploration options. Services for residents of York Region social assistance recipients include career planning, résumé development, interview skills and creation of a personal job search plan.

Online Services

Using an interactive online platform e-facilitated by Employment Consultants, online services are available to unemployed and under-employed individuals who face multiple barriers and cannot otherwise access on-site services. An Employment Resource room is available for specific job search techniques and tools, and a Virtual Library listing key websites related to employment research and job search.

Ontario Works

The Internationally Trained Individuals program provides basic training on career planning, résumé development, interview skills and creation of a personal job search plan. Services for job-ready social assistance recipients include assessment, four weeks of group instruction, individual job placement and follow-up support.

Resource and Information

Individuals access information on careers and occupations, local job market, training opportunities and job search strategies to successfully find and maintain employment. Resources include: computerized job banks, internet access, fax/photocopier, video library, audio tapes and written materials.

The Federal Internship for Newcomers Program

Offers eligible newcomers a chance to gain valuable temporary work experience and training opportunities with Canadian federal, provincial and municipal organizations, in fields such as administration, project support/management, policy and research and computer science. Candidates are hired as temporary employees and are able to understand job application and hiring processes, learn about Canadian workplace culture, network with professionals, attend training sessions and be matched with a public service mentor.

The TRIEC Mentoring Partnership

The TRIEC Mentoring Partnership helps immigrants with a professional background to reconnect with their career with the support of a mentor who works in their field in Canada. COSTI is a partner with The TRIEC Mentoring Partnership - a program of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, delivered by twelve community partners across the greater Toronto area, including COSTI.

Locations

Bampton Employment Services

10 Gillingham Drive, Suite 300

Tel: 905-459-8855

Email: bramptonemployment@costi.org

Mississauga Employment Services

6750 Winston Churchill Blvd., Unit 8A

Tel: 905-567-0482

Email: mississaugaemployment@costi.org

Toronto Employment Services

2301 Keele Street, Unit 102

Tel: 416-789-7925

Email: torontoemployment@costi.org

Vaughan Employment Services

3100 Rutherford Road, Suite 102

Tel: 905-669-5627

Email: vaughanemployment@costi.org

Weston Employment Services

1885 Weston Road

Tel: 416-588-2240

Email: westonemployment@costi.org

7,949

adults accessed employment services online
and in person at five locations

69%

of adults and youth who were unemployed
and under-employed secured employment

75%

of individuals seeking employment have
Post-Graduate or Bachelor degrees

77%

of participants found a job in their professional
field within 6 months of completing The TRIEC
Mentoring Partnership program

Transforming Lives One Person at a Time



Joy is a single mother of four who stayed at one of our shelters. She made beautiful fabric masks for our staff as a thank you. "This is from my heart and my way of giving back, a token to appreciate what COSTI is doing for us, a thank you from me and my kids." The demand was so high for them that she is now making them for community members and staff who heard about her generosity and wanted to support her by purchasing the hand made masks.

Women of all races and ages face personal systemic barriers every day. Many immigrant women who come to Canada are well-educated and experienced professionals, but overlooked by employers because they are not able to communicate at a high level of English. Others need access to housing, mental health services, settlement and counselling services.

COSTI believes all women deserve a supportive environment in which they can feel empowered. Our goal is to offer specialized employment services, supportive counselling, workshops on financial matters, health, parenting, and much more to over 21,000 adult and young women who came to a COSTI location for help in 2019/20.

We continue to experience a year-over-year increase in the number of women accessing our services. COSTI's priority for 2020/21 is to explore corporate involvement and funding opportunities that will allow us to sustain successful programs for women such as Pathways to Success and provide supports to enable them to care for their children and themselves.

Many of our clients are the sole income earner and caregiver of their children. They need support from COSTI and the community in helping them to overcome potential hardships they may be facing over the next year and beyond. As an organization, we are concerned that the COVID-19 pandemic will disproportionately affect our female clients and their children. We will be devoting our energy to ensuring they have our support in helping to secure employment, financial resources and the essentials needed to maintain a standard of living above the poverty line.

66%

clients who accessed our online services were women

4,165

adult and young women participated in COSTI programs to secure employment and upgrade their skills

Women's Services

Operating with the shared objective of developing the full and equal participation of women in all facets of our communities, COSTI staff help women of diverse backgrounds and experiences in overcoming economic, health, legal and cultural barriers.

The goal of COSTI's programs and services for women is to address systemic and personal barriers that impact on immigrant women and provide a supportive environment that move women from a situation of dependency and isolation to a more empowered state.

Immigrant women have access to workshops on topics relevant to their well-being: health, parenting, domestic violence, etc. COSTI's Trauma Group for Spanish-speaking Women offers individual and group counselling for Spanish-speaking women and their children experiencing trauma.

The Lifeskills Counselling program provides workshops combined with individual counselling to women to improve their self-confidence and increase their employment potential. Located in the Region of Peel, Pathways to Success provides low-income women opportunities to explore self-employment and stabilize their personal and family situation. Digital and Media Literacy provides newcomer women with training and support to develop digital literacy and essential skills necessary for their employment search and daily life activities. Women in need of housing services receive child-minding and travel supports in order to access services.

Locations

Brampton Employment Services

10 Gillingham Drive

Tel: 905-459-8855

Email: bramptonemployment@costi.org

Corvetti Education Centre

760 College Street

Tel: 416-534-7400

Email: edu@costi.org

Family and Mental Health Services

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 105

Tel: 416-244-7714

Email: famcounselling@costi.org

Language and Skills Training Services, North York

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 206

Tel: 416-244-9980

Email: englishclassesnyc@costi.org

Toronto Employment Services

2301 Keele Street, Unit 102

Tel: 416-789-7925

Email: torontoemployment@costi.org

Responding To The Needs Of English Language Learners



COSTI's English language programs help newcomers to learn English, learn about Canadian life and culture and feel more engaged with their new communities. In 2019/20, 4,800 newcomers enrolled in English classes across Toronto, the Region of Peel and York Region, with more than half completing a minimum of one level within the year.

In the last quarter of the year, all classes transitioned successfully to online learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 700 students enrolled. Our priorities for the coming year are to explore new approaches in reaching out to individuals who are not able to attend English classes online. We will work on developing flexible language instruction responses and new delivery models to enhance our online classes and address the barriers and challenges preventing newcomers from learning English in the upcoming year.

77%

of Enhanced Language Training participants secured employment or moved on to further training or education opportunities

60%

of newcomers attending English language classes have a post-graduate degree, bachelor degree or community college diploma

Language & Skills Training Services

Language Training

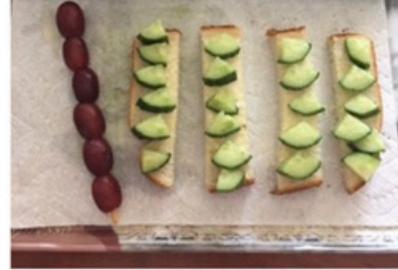
English language classes available at all levels, including language training in the workplace. Enhanced Language Training provides language development in specific occupational fields including language terminology, job search and placement. Occupational fields include office administration and customer service, health care, teaching and education, information technology and accounting and finance.

Skills Training

Skill and special courses, including computer courses, citizenship acquisition courses.

Care for Newcomer Children

Child-minding support for Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) students at the North York Centre and York Region Welcome Centres.



Childcare Teachers from the Care for Newcomer Children program keep the children engaged while their parents attend their first online Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) classes.

Locations

Corvetti Education Centre

760 College Street
Tel: 416-534-7400
Email: edu@costi.org

Enhanced Language Training Services, Brampton

10 Gillingham Drive, Suite 109A
Tel: 905-451-7147
Email: peelskillstraining@costi.org

Language and Skills Training Services, North York

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 206
Tel: 416-244-9980
Email: englishclassesnyc@costi.org

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Markham North

8400 Woodbine Avenue, Suites 102-103
Tel: 289-846-3645
Email: esltmarkham@costi.org

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Markham South

7220 Kennedy Road, Unit 8
Tel: 905-479-7926
Email: esltyorkregion@costi.org

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Newmarket

16655 Yonge Street, Unit 26
Tel: 289-841-3032
Email: eslnewmarket@costi.org

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Richmond Hill

9325 Yonge Street, Unit 31A
Tel: 289-842-3124
Email: eslrichmond@costi.org

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services, Vaughan

9100 Jane Street, Building H, Units 56-67
Tel: 905-761-1155
Email: esltvaughan@costi.org

Making
Canada
Home



COSTI's Settlement Services from pre-arrival to initial assessment and interpretation services, advocacy and counselling, promote a greater sense of security and well-being, helping newcomers and their families engage in their communities faster. At COSTI, we believe that with support early on, we can help reduce the stress and anxiety experienced by newcomers when they first arrive to Canada.

COSTI's priority for 2019/20 was to continue to enhance and strengthen our settlement support services to settled immigrants and newcomers, both adults and young people, who live in the greater Toronto area, within the province, or overseas. Last year, over 12,500 people received settlement counselling and help including accessing government services, completing government forms, translation, interpretation and referral services to additional supports in their local communities.

In the coming year, we will look to undertake an evaluation of our settlement services and deliver enhanced ethno-specific orientation sessions to Spanish-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking students attending COSTI's English classes. However, finding solutions and eliminating barriers for newcomers who face significant hardship due to the global pandemic are a priority for our Settlement Services in 2020/21. Many of our clients do not speak English well, do not have computers, live in shared and small spaces, struggle to secure work, or have only recently found employment. Our staff have responded by securing donations to address some of the hardships magnified by the pandemic including food vouchers, helping many with navigating their children's education and with their health needs during this challenging time.

1,795

individuals participated in live webinars focused on settlement information and services

7,425

individuals learned how to navigate through the settlement process by attending webinars or in-person Orientation-to-Ontario workshops across the province

Settlement Services

Services include assessment, orientation, referral, information, interpretation, completing of government documents, advocacy, supportive counselling for new immigrants and settled immigrants.

Planning for Canada and the Active Engagement and Integration Project (AEIP) provide information and referral and initial orientation online to overseas clients to help them prepare for settlement and employment processes prior to arrival in Canada.

Locations

Corvetti Education Centre
760 College Street
Tel: 416-534-7400
Email: edu@costi.org

North York Centre
1700 Wilson Avenue,
Suite 114
Tel: 416-244-0480
Email: nyork@costi.org

Investing in the Future



The goals of COSTI's youth and children's programs are to inspire confidence in youth, ensuring they stay in school, secure employment and settle on a path to success.

One of the priorities in 2019/20 was to strengthen our employment and settlement support to young people living in the greater Toronto area. Over 3,100 young adults received social support, stayed in school or secured employment.

Youth living in Scarborough and York, continue to be relatively under-served. Our youth and settlement programs are designed to meet the unique needs of immigrant and minority youth through a broad and holistic perspective. We will continue to provide leadership and programming specific to the needs of newcomer and low-income youth in the coming year.

220

refugee children and youth participated in art therapy sessions, allowing them to express their fears in a creative and safe space

250+

youth participated in the netWORKS program— a youth networking and mentoring program

Children And Youth Services

Canada Summer Jobs

Provides funding to help employers create summer job opportunities for full-time students (aged 15 to 30 years) who are intending to return to their studies in the next school year. It is designed to focus on local priorities, while helping both students and their communities.

Newcomer Art Group for Youth Who Experienced Trauma

Offers a trauma informed therapeutic approach and supports the positive development of female newcomer youth. It is designed to help female youth who are facing barriers to develop strong emotional and social skills.

Youth Employment Pathways for Success Program

Assists newcomer youth between the ages of 17 to 25, four-week online workshops to help youth network with professionals in STEM occupations on career assessment and exploration, Canadian Workplace Business Etiquette and communications, soft skills certification, job search strategies and techniques, and employment standards and human rights.

Youth Job Connection

Assists young people between the ages of 15 to 29 facing multiple and/or complex barriers to employment build better futures. Participants receive a minimum of 60 hours of paid training to prepare them for the workplace; a job for up to 6 months and mentorship; job-coaching and help with the transition from school to work; or to ongoing employment.

Youth Job Connection–Summer

Offers high school students planning to stay in or return to school, or to move on to post-secondary education; provides at least 20 hours of paid training to prepare them for the workforce including mentorship, job coaching and help in securing summer jobs and part-time and after school jobs. This service is available at our Keele Street location only.

Youth Health and Recreation

Empowers youth by encouraging and building leadership skills through positive engagement in physical activities and sports, healthy eating, and dialogue on issues such as risky personal behaviours for youth between the ages of 13 and 24. Youth and seniors come together around a community garden to grow, cultivate and cook vegetables. This exciting initiative engages participants in a dialogue and activity where they will gain a better understanding of their similarities and differences and come to value the contributions of both generations.

Youth netWORKS

An employment focused youth networking and mentoring program. The program includes wrap around supports to assist youth facing multiple barriers to access and utilize the program including the online netWORKS hub.

Locations

Family and Mental Health Services

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 105
Tel: 416-244-7714
Email: famcounselling@costi.org

Toronto Employment Services

2301 Keele Street, Unit 102
Tel: 416-789-7925
Email: torontoemployment@costi.org

Vaughan Employment Services

3100 Rutherford Road, Suite 102
Tel: 905-669-5627
Email: vaughanemployment@costi.org

Weston Employment Services

1885 Weston Road
Tel: 416-588-2240
Email: westonemployment@costi.org

From
Hope to
Opportunity

Yaseen Al Shedadat together with Mirna El Sabbagh, General Manager of COSTI's Stakeholder and Community Engagement Office.

COSTI's ongoing priority for our refugee services is to ensure that anyone that comes through our doors is able to have their medical needs addressed, access mental health counselling, housing and employment opportunities, as soon as they arrive. This necessitates a constant review and modification of existing programming, development of new programming, and flexibility in adapting to the diverse service needs of our clients.

In 2019/20, the priority to further develop our wrap-around service delivery model for refugees after they leave temporary shelter, resulted in the establishment of new partnerships, strengthening of existing partnerships and expansion of our Volunteer, Community and Stakeholder Engagement Office.

Together with our community partners, we collaborated in developing programming, recreational and community activities that help alleviate some of the uncertainty and anxiety experienced by refugees when they first arrive in Canada. English conversation circles, reading clubs, information sessions on housing and employment opportunities help equip our clients with some of the tools they need to succeed when they leave us to start their new life in their own home in Canada.

The pandemic placed more pressure on the shelter system and COSTI continued to support the City of Toronto with two hotel sites for refugees. The health and safety of our clients and essential services staff working out of our two sites, as well as the Ralph Chiodo Family Immigrant Reception Centre became a priority. The outpouring of support and generosity from individuals, corporate donors and the community in providing PPE at the start of the pandemic, ensured that everyone was protected and safe.

Yaseen Al Shedadat left Syria because of the war. He travelled to Jordan but fled in 2016 to come to Canada and achieve his dreams.

"I visited many countries while travelling as a chef for an international company. There was no country as beautiful as Canada," he says. "Canada is a multicultural country that welcomes refugees from all over the world. Once you arrive in Canada, you do not feel like a refugee. You feel you are a new Canadian. In Canada, I am safe. I have a future and I have hope."

Yaseen says as soon as he left Jordan, he knew there was a better future waiting for him and his children. "Arriving in Canada was an amazing feeling. Everyone welcomed us. It is one of the greatest moments in my life that I will always remember."

Yaseen's settlement process went smoothly. He says he is amazed at how the government prepares and supports newcomers, and how agencies like COSTI are assigned to help facilitate the integration of refugee families after they have left temporary accommodations.

"COSTI staff have never made me feel like a refugee," he says. "They have treated me with full respect from the first day I arrived at the temporary housing shelter. At that time, I came with hundreds and hundreds of other refugee families. COSTI staff were working so hard to support each individual and family by providing support with housing, settlement services, and on-site interpretation. They also organized many orientation sessions to help us understand the general government and health care systems and how everything works. COSTI helped us all feel we are welcome in our new home, Canada."

Now Yaseen is learning and developing his skills, particularly his English. "I have already achieved some success in Canada. Everyone is happy and so proud of my small achievements – my neighbours and my community," he says. "It is scary to think about how life would have been if I was not in Canada. I am so thankful that I am in this country. I always tell my friends that every human being deserves to live in a country like Canada, where everyone is equal under the law. There is so much support for anyone in Canada who needs help."

Yaseen's dream is to have his own restaurant chain all over Canada. "I want to provide support and job opportunities to other Canadians too. This is my small way of paying back for what Canada has done for me," he says. "I am also teaching my son the principles of giving back and how we can create job opportunities for the young generation."

If there's one thing Yaseen has learned it's that Canada "gives newcomers happiness, hope and a better life."

Yaseen and his family came to Canada as part of the federal government's Operation Syrian Refugees. The year 2016 marked the largest refugee resettlement initiative in Canadian history, with over 46,000 refugees. COSTI was responsible for the resettlement of 2,200 government-sponsored Syrian refugees to Toronto.

3,126

(869 families and singles) individuals were helped through our Hostel Services where they temporarily stayed until they secured permanent accommodation

3,384

(1,642 cases) government-sponsored refugees received intensive case management services through COSTI's Resettlement and Client Support Services in 2019/20

The resettlement process does not end when they leave COSTI. Our Client Support Services and Settlement Services provide information and referral to programs and services, interpretation, help with completing documents, and supportive counselling using a case management approach.

Newcomers who arrive in Canada as refugees, come with renewed hope to create better lives for themselves and their families. They bring with them valuable skills and knowledge that contribute to the social fabric of our country. Whether they are government-sponsored, privately-sponsored, or refugee claimants, our role is to welcome them, make them feel secure, and connect them with housing and local communities.

Newcomers want to give back to the country that welcomed them. They want to have the ability to communicate in English and want to secure employment as soon as possible, allowing them to independently support their children and families. COSTI is working with donors and community partners to further develop programming that addresses the employment, language, settlement and mental health needs of our clients. Enhancing services and partnerships ensures that we are doing all we can to help in the adjustment, settlement and engagement of newcomers.

Refugee Services

Government-sponsored refugees receive temporary accommodation and a range of initial settlement services, including orientation, completing applications for essential documents (OHIP, SIN), medical referrals, housing acquisition, life skills support and trauma counselling. Refugee Claimants are provided with temporary accommodation, settlement services and housing assistance.

Art Therapy Program

Directed at the psycho-emotional needs of refugee children and youth and offers traumatized refugee children the opportunity to express themselves through art.

Client Support Services

Government-sponsored refugees receive life skills, assessment, information and referral, mental health support, group orientation, interpretation, advocacy, completion of government documents, and supportive counselling through a case management approach.

Language Training

Delivered by the Syrian Canadian Foundation, Arabic-speaking newcomers receive English language training delivered in-home, or in community settings.

Locations

Corvetti Education Centre

760 College Street
Tel: 416-534-7400
Email: clientsupportservice@costi.org

Family and Mental Health Services

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 105
Tel: 416-244-7714
Email: famcounselling@costi.org

Ralph Chiodo Family Immigrant Reception Centre

100 Lippincott Street
Tel: 416-922-6688
Email: reception@costi.org



**Increasing
Independence
and Reducing
Isolation**

At COSTI, we believe that older adult immigrants deserve to continue to live enriched lives. Many came to Canada as young adults dreaming of a better life for their children.

They helped build and contribute to Canada's growing and successful economy. They have witnessed their hard work through the achievements of their children who now have successful and prominent careers, and are leaders in their community.

COSTI's Seniors' Services effectively engage and involve this fast growing segment of our community through recreational, educational and cultural activities, as well as supportive counselling. Our goal is to ensure that the needs of seniors are met by providing them, their families and caregivers, with resources and safe spaces that support active and healthy aging in the community. Our programming is designed to address their physical and mental health needs, emotional well-being and social supports.

We look to addressing new and emerging trends in the coming year, particularly in the integration of technology in seniors' services. Our work in a research project that evaluates the efficacy of cultural supports in the delivery of services to seniors and the evaluation of our Seniors Day program will inform our work. As this demographic continues to grow, so must our ability to respond.

In our efforts to reduce social isolation, at the start of the pandemic in March, we modified programming and significantly shifted our services to a virtual platform. We also stayed connected with our clients via a free interactive telephone-based group activity program Seniors' Centre Without Walls. In addition to receiving telephone re-assurance calls and monthly bulletins, seniors actively participated in online interactive activities, such as home gardening tips; fun and fitness; health and well-being; recipe and cooking tips; discovering other countries by taking virtual tours; and also praying together.

Francesca Mediatì with her mother, Adalgisa Di Scola (Previous Page)

Francesca Mediatì's mother Adalgisa Di Scola passed away in the spring of 2020. Francesca shares her mother's experience in hopes that other immigrant seniors with early-stage dementia and/or Alzheimer's disease will find support through programs like the Calabrian Benevolent Association of Ontario (CBAO) Seniors Day program.

Adalgisa was born in 1928 in Salerno, Italy. At 27, she and her two small children boarded the ocean liner M.S. Vulcania to join her husband of six years in Canada. Landing at Pier 21 in Halifax, she travelled by train to Toronto. She and her husband Giuseppe stood among thousands of other Italian immigrants who arrived in Canada in the 1950s through to the early 1970s in search of a better life. The years were good to Adalgisa and Giuseppe; they welcomed a third child, a son, in 1960.

"My mom was a strong and dynamic woman," says Francesca, Adalgisa and Giuseppe's middle child and only daughter. "She came to Canada not knowing the language and was unfamiliar with the culture." Francesca explains her mother only completed grade two at school because, like many girls her age in rural Italy, she was needed to work on the farm. "My mom would help work the land and bring the goods to market." Yet despite her lack of formal education, Adalgisa found work as a seamstress in a lingerie factory soon after she arrived in Canada. "She eventually became a respected floor supervisor to more than 200 sewing machine operators at a major T-shirt manufacturer," says Francesca. "She worked hard and people just couldn't keep up with her."

Francesca's father began to notice how forgetful Adalgisa was becoming before he died four years ago. "He used to watch my mom in the kitchen and saw that she would leave the burner on, or the fridge door open, or the lights on when all was done." After he died, Francesca and her two brothers saw other troubling changes to their mother's personality. "When my dad was alive, she would force him to go for walks around the block with her. After he died, she abandoned the treadmill and didn't want to go for walks at all."

In 2019, a story about the CBAO Seniors Day program aired on the weekly CHIN TV broadcast Festival Italiano that brought some hope. After some research, Francesca and her brothers initially registered their mother in the program a few days a week and then eventually five days a week because she loved it so much.

"She looked forward to going to the centre every day. She would talk to her new friends about their families and their grandkids," says Francesca. "Program staff said she was the life of the party and was so enthusiastic about participating in singing or whatever they were doing."

Francesca says the program is not clinical, but participants do activities to stimulate the mind and muscles that made all the difference for her mother. "My mom was very comfortable. All of the program activities are linked to their Italian heritage, which is very special. Whether it is the songs they sing or the conversations they have as a group about travel, it all links back." And, she adds fondly, "they all eat very well."

1,900

older adults attended English classes, received help with accessing government income maintenance programs, or community and health services, while others engaged in activities that helped them stay active and independent

340+

special events and information sessions conducted on: government benefits extensions due to COVID; Service Ontario programs and services; safety and fire prevention, tax benefits for seniors; hypertension; vitamins and well-being; preventing and protecting yourself against the flu; hot weather safety tips; scams targeting seniors; physical fitness; heart alert and stroke; heart valve disease, Parkinson's disease; vision care; dental care for low income seniors; and understanding mental illness

Operated by COSTI and funded by the CBAO, the Seniors Day program provides supports for Italian-speaking elderly who have been diagnosed with early-stage dementia and/or Alzheimer's disease, as well as for their families and care partners. Culturally specific programming helps with mental stimulation, physical exercise and respite.

The CBAO Seniors Day program has successfully evolved from a traditional care-based support program into an education-based care support program that focuses on learning and enhancing the short-term memory of seniors. The emphasis on learning, not only helps seniors to improve the meaningfulness and value of their activities, it enables them to activate and exercise their short-term memory more frequently.

Seniors' Services

Organizational support provided to the Canadian Italian Family Assistance Association (CIFAA) and to seniors of the Caravelle Club and the Association of Spanish-speaking Seniors to assist them in their social, educational, and recreational activities.

Seniors Active Living Centre allows Italian seniors the opportunity to take part in daily social, cultural, recreational and educational activities; Encuentro Latino, a group for Spanish-speaking seniors is designed to provide socialization, reduction of social isolation and mutual support in the settlement process. In addition, workshops and information sessions are offered to Chinese and South Asian communities.

Operated by COSTI and funded by the Calabrian Benevolent Association of Ontario (CBAO), the Seniors Day program supports Italian-speaking seniors diagnosed with early-stage dementia and/or Alzheimer's disease as well as their families and care partners.

Locations

CBAO Seniors Day Program

7730 Islington Avenue, Unit 7

Tel: 905-605-3622

Email: seniorsdayprogramcentre@costi.org

Corvetti Education Centre

760 College Street

Tel: 416-534-7400

Email: edu@costi.org

North York Centre

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 114

Tel: 416-244-0480

Email: nyork@costi.org

Providing
Access to
Appropriate
Care
Engaging
Individuals &
Families



We believe that the mental health of newcomers impacts an individual's ability to integrate into the community. We also believe that everyone deserves access to appropriate care.

In keeping with this philosophy, in 2019/20 COSTI expanded services offered to refugees by securing additional staffing, as many have severe and complex trauma issues, requiring intensive counselling by our social workers. The increased anxiety and stress experienced by this vulnerable population due to the pandemic, resulted in an increase in calls for services by 35% in March alone.

We continued to make the mental health needs of newcomers a priority in 2019/20. Our psychiatric care model changed to a model stressing intensive psychotherapeutic interventions. In addition, we engaged an Arabic-speaking psychiatrist to help in managing the long wait-list of individuals needing our help.

In response to requests from community partners, COSTI's Mental Health Services expanded its services by supporting the clients of other settlement and employment services organizations by providing workshops on coping with COVID anxiety, the uncertainty of employment, and reducing the risk of developing maladaptive behaviours including online gaming/gambling and digital dependency.

In addition, COSTI is engaged in a research project that will produce an evidence-based, client informed service delivery model to respond to abuse survivors of domestic violence from diverse communities that may be replicated across Canada. Its focus is on individuals who return to unsafe situations because of barriers in accessing services such as childcare, safety planning, housing, etc.

The pandemic necessitated the temporary suspension of in-person counselling, crisis intervention and referral services to women and children experiencing relations-based abuse. Service requests increased by 53% as we temporarily shifted to telephone and virtual support in late February and early March. However, recognizing that in-person counselling support is the preferred method of our clients, our psychiatric services moved to in-person services as soon as it was safe to do so.

In the coming year, as the pandemic continues, we are working to shift our treatment plans to accommodate the growing numbers of individuals who are struggling with the effects of the pandemic and finding it difficult to cope. We hope to secure additional support to broaden the scope of our work and the availability of mental health services to community partners and all COSTI clients.

1,500

individuals received couples, family and individual counselling and accessed psychiatric services in Arabic, English, Italian and Spanish

1,700

women received individual and supportive counselling

20%

increase in calls from parents concerned about excessive gaming because of increased isolation



Family and Mental Health Services

Counselling

Individual, couples and family counselling; groups for female victims of violence and for men who abuse their partners; psychiatric assessment and follow-up services for individuals of Hispanic and Italian background.

Gambling, Gaming and Technology Use Services

Culturally and linguistically appropriate counselling for individuals experiencing gambling problems. Services are available to individuals and family members of Hispanic, Italian and Portuguese background.

Locations

Family and Mental Health Services

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 105

Tel: 416-244-7714

Email: famcounselling@costi.org

Email: gamblingservices@costi.org

Vaughan Centre

3100 Rutherford Road, Suite 102

Tel: 905-669-5627

Breaking Down Barriers To Sustainable Housing



COSTI believes in breaking down barriers to sustainable housing. We accelerate access to housing by helping adults and young people search for homes; we work with landlords to understand how we can address their needs and prevent evictions and we provide workplace training for those who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless.

New relationships with landlords and community partners enhanced our services, allowing us to further expand our reach in an effort to secure housing more quickly and permanently for our clients.

We will continue to provide services in line with the Housing First Model of Service that focuses on assisting clients with housing access and follow-up activities to support housing stabilization. However, the impact to our clients due to the pandemic has resulted in many who are already living below the poverty line experiencing a further deterioration in their living conditions. Through donations and government supports, staff have responded to ensure that families are not left without basic necessities.

3,750

people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness were helped to secure permanent housing

2,284

hostel services clients secured permanent accommodation

Housing Services

Housing search assistance, eviction prevention, housing stabilization, crisis intervention, information, referral, education workshops for tenants and landlords, Rent Bank and Low-Income Energy Assistance Program and an Identification clinic.

The Housing program provides meaningful volunteer work experience, mentoring and workplace training to people who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless in an effort to increase their housing and employment opportunities.

Locations

North York Centre

1700 Wilson Avenue, Suite 114

Tel: 416-244-0480

Email: nyork@costi.org

Housing Services are also provided at various satellite locations across Toronto that temporarily house government-sponsored refugees and refugee claimants.

Donors and Contributors

Bringing Smiles Back

Shivvon Hayles

Owner, Sparkling Smiles



In 2012, Shivvon Hayles and her four-year-old daughter moved to Toronto from Winnipeg. Shivvon was studying dental hygiene and decided to stay.

But after graduating, she could not find employment and needed to find work as soon as possible to care for herself and her daughter. Shivvon visited COSTI's Weston Employment Services and, with the help of an Employment Consultant, found a full-time job as a Dental Assistant almost immediately. Today, Shivvon works at that same dental office twice a week.

When she is not working there, Shivvon is busy at Sparkling Smiles, a mobile dental hygiene service she founded in 2015. Sparkling Smiles aims to break down barriers to quality oral health care by increasing access to dental hygiene services. As part of the Healthy Smiles program, Shivvon helps bring a smile to hundreds of children and adults receiving social assistance.

"When I was growing up, there were limited resources for my family," she says. "But I remember the community being so supportive and many helping in any way they could. I would often say that I could not wait until the day I could give back to others."

Research studies on child development report that the quality of one's early childhood can have a lasting impact on their future success. Many parents can't afford expensive dental work for their children. Shivvon says she wanted to give back to contribute in some small way towards having a positive impact on young children.

"I began working with COSTI in January 2020 to offer oral health services to families living temporarily at the shelter at no cost." Before the pandemic, the on-site clinic ran twice a month and was always full, with close to 90 children receiving free dental cleanings and demonstrations on how to take care of their teeth. Shivvon also offered oral hygiene demonstrations for parents and other interested families staying at the shelter. "I hope to re-open the clinic as soon as it is safe to do so."

Shivvon gives back in many ways. Last year, she filled 100 purses with personal care items and delivered them to shelters across the city. This year, she wanted to help families experiencing hardship during the pandemic so she prepared backpacks for children who returned to school in the fall.

"My dream is to travel the world and help disadvantaged children everywhere," she says. "But for now, I try and give back in any way I can. I want to contribute in helping to create happy, healthy and better-adjusted adults with the capacity to contribute to a better future for all of us."

Shivvon was the recipient of the 2019 Canadian Dental Hygiene Super Hero Award. The award recognizes individuals who work hard, take pride in what they do and make our communities better places in which to live, work, and play.

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Government of Canada

Department of Women and Gender Equality

- Gender-Based Violence

Employment and Social Development Canada

- Canada Summer Jobs

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

- Client Support Services
- Community Connections
- Information and Orientation
- Labour Market Access
- Language Training
- Orientation to Ontario
- Resettlement Assistance Program
- Support Services

Public Health Agency of Canada

- Dementia Community Investment

Government of Ontario

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

- Canada-Ontario Job Grant
- Employment Services
- Youth Job Connection
- Youth Job Connection – Summer

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World Skills Employment Centre

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Calabrian Benevolent Association Of Ontario

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Toronto Catholic District School Board

United Way Greater Toronto

- Anchor Agency
- COVID-19 Emergency Response
- netWORKS

York Catholic District School Board

Foundations

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- RBC Foundation
- The Bennett Family Foundation
- Toronto Foundation
- Western Union Foundation

In February 2020 our former President passed away. While his work with COSTI is well known, we would like to share more about the man, who he was and what he accomplished.

Bruno began his association with COSTI as a volunteer in the mid 1960s and joined COSTI's Board of Directors in 1968. He became President of the organization in 1993. Over the years, he led the effort to broaden the organization's focus from an Italian immigrant client base to a multicultural one, leading to COSTI becoming one of Canada's largest immigrant service organizations.

Bruno left his hometown of Vallelonga, in Calabria, Italy at fourteen years of age, together with his mother and came to Canada to join his father in 1948. As a young man, Bruno remembered the lack of services for immigrants and how he hired a nurse in his neighbourhood to teach him English at a cost of 50 cents per lesson. Working after school cleaning floors at \$0.50 an hour, he earned enough money to take the classes. He then went on to teach English to other newcomers on a volunteer basis, so that they would not have to struggle, as he did to learn English.

A good education was important to Bruno and he worked hard at self-improvement. While maintaining a full-time job at the Ontario Ministry of Labour and later at the Toronto Board of Education, he attended evening classes and completed degrees in Sociology at York University and a Masters Degree in Philosophy in Education at the University of Toronto.

Bruno sought positions throughout his professional life that would allow him to support the settlement and advancement of newcomers. In 1972 Bruno successfully ran for election as a Trustee in Canada's largest school board, the Metropolitan Separate School Board (now known as the Toronto Catholic District School Board), where he served for the next eight years including two as its Chair. For ten years, from 1980 to 1990, he served as a Judge of the Immigration Appeal Board, as well as a Judge of the Court of Canadian Citizenship from 1977 to 1980 where he bestowed Canadian citizenship to over 7,000 newcomers.

The demands of his work prevented Bruno from back from contributing to COSTI's work.

The demands of his work did not hold Bruno back from contributing in a volunteer capacity to the advancement of the Italian community. Bruno was co-founder and President of the National Congress of Italian Canadians and in the late 60s co-founded the Federation of Italian-Canadian Associations and Clubs. At that time he also became involved with COSTI, which was helping Italian immigrants to learn English, train for specific occupations and find employment. COSTI transformed from an Italian agency to a multicultural agency and during Bruno's tenure as President became one of Canada's largest immigrant service organizations, annually serving close to 40,000 immigrants. It was for this work that at a ceremony at Toronto's Casa Loma on June 3, 2018, Italian Consul General Giuseppe Pastorelli presented Bruno with the title of Commendatore on behalf of Italian President Sergio Mattarella.

This most recent award by the Italian President is the culmination of numerous awards presented to Bruno for a lifelong commitment to making his community a better place for everyone "Bruno has been the longest serving and most active volunteer and board member, and I believe the single individual most responsible for the COSTI success story," comments Dr. Michael Yealland, Member of the COSTI Board and Treasurer. "His unwavering belief in the innate dignity of all human beings kept him a humble man and his feet solidly on the ground, even after achieving lofty positions as Chair of Canada's largest school board, and Judge of the Immigration Appeal Board."

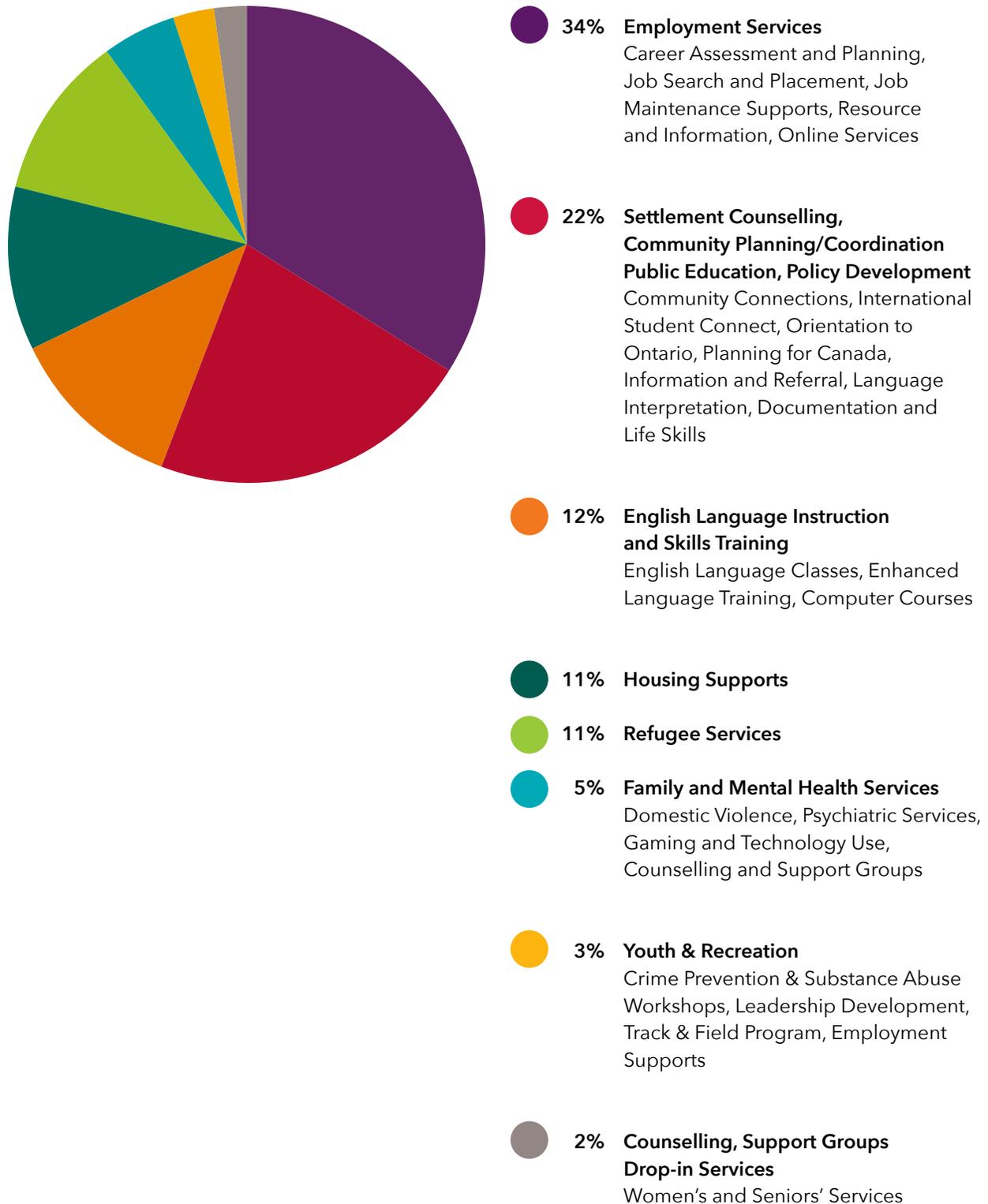
Concurrent with his volunteer work, Bruno also put his energy as a founding member of the Italian Canadian Benevolent corporation, Villa Charities and as a Special Advisor to the Carmelite Missionary Sisters to name a few. One of his lasting legacies was his forty-year association with the Precious Blood Fathers and Brothers Mission Projects for whom he raised thousands of dollars to support schools and water supply in Tanzania. Brother Anthony Canterucci, founder of the Missions Projects, worked with Bruno since the beginning of this initiative. "Bruno held my hand in difficult times on many occasions. When he promises something, he comes through, you can depend on that. It comes straight from the heart and there are no strings attached."

Over the years, a number of institutions and organizations have recognized Bruno for his commitment and contributions to the community. Bruno was the first Italian Canadian to receive the Outstanding Achievement Award by the Government of Ontario. In addition, in recognition for his contribution to Catholic education, he was presented with the Award of Merit from the Toronto Catholic District School Board. The National Congress of Italian Canadians presented Bruno with the Ordine al Merito in 1996 for his work with the Italian Canadian community and Canadian society. That same year, Bruno was honoured to receive the Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice from His Holiness, John Paul II. Bruno's devotion and commitment to newcomers has been recognized in Canada and abroad.

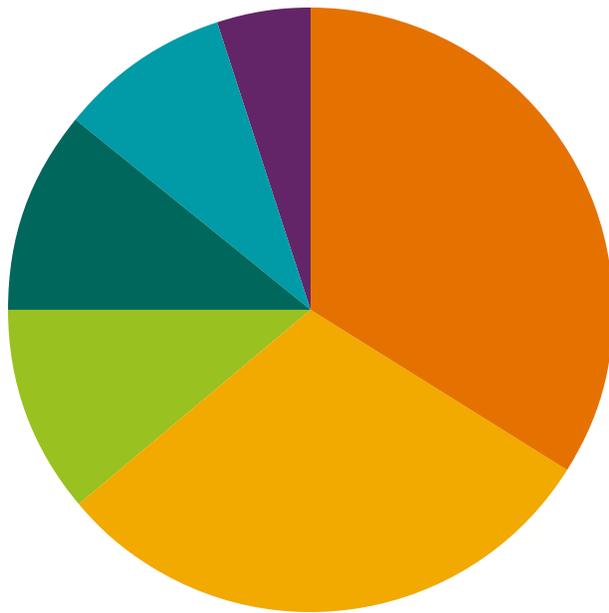
While grateful for the acknowledgment and recognition over the years, Bruno often cited his three daughters as his greatest accomplishment in life. "To be recognized by the Pope and political leaders in my adopted home and my home country, is most humbling, but it is the personal and professional achievements of my daughters that I am most proud of. Their commitment to the community and the values that they continue to uphold and now share with my grandchildren, are what matters most to me and were extremely valued by their mother Matilde."

Bruno's experience as an Italian immigrant drove his passion to help others. He is an example of how the hopes and dreams of newcomers to Canada can be fulfilled. "Throughout my life, I have faced many obstacles and hope that my hard work and determination is an example for newcomers arriving to Canada today. Never give up, dream big and you will succeed," is Bruno's advice to newcomers. "I could never have imagined when I first arrived as a young boy to Canada, that one day I would be having lunch with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau! Canada is a land of opportunity and newcomers play a key role in its success. Work hard, give back to the community, make a difference and your dreams will come true."

Service Provided



Professional Skills Our Clients Bring to Canada



- 34% Professional Positions**
Art, Business, Education, Finance, Health, Information Technology, Legal, Natural and Applied Sciences, Nursing, Recreation and Sports, Safety and Protection Services, Social and Community Services
- 30% General Labour**
Agriculture, Assembler, Equipment Maintenance, Harvesting, Landscaping, Machine Operator, Manufacturing, Material Handler, Natural Resources Transportation, Utilities
- 11% Middle Management/Supervisory Positions**
Administration, Customer Service, Finance, Natural Resources, Retail and Specialized Sales, Specialized Services, Utilities Support, Wholesale
- 11% Service Representative**
Customer and Personal Services, Sales Support, Wholesale and Retail
- 9% Office Support**
- 5% Trades**
Construction, Electrical, Industrial

Age



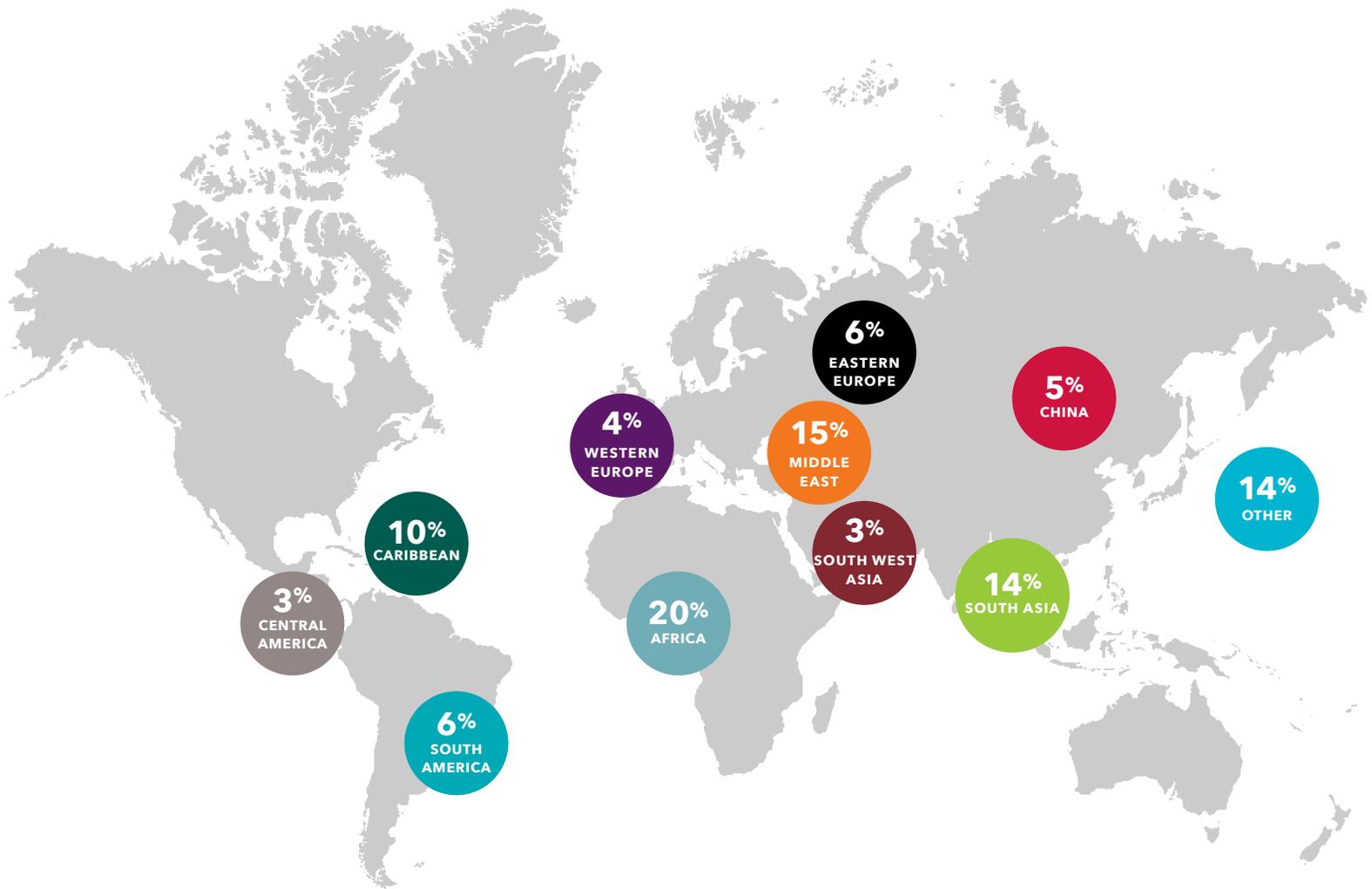
- 77% Adults (25 to 64)**
- 17% Children & Youth (Up to age 24)**
- 6% Seniors (65+)**

Gender



- 58% Female**
- 42% Male**

Our Clients' Country of Origin





Mission

To empower people from diverse communities to succeed and achieve their full potential by providing educational, employment and social services.

Vision

A prosperous and inclusive Canada built on the success of every individual.

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