

Message from the Chair

The 2019/2020 fiscal year was excellent for the RAFT. With the organization's focus on Innovation as a Strategic directive, the Management team has had its eyes open for new opportunities and programs that we could implement. Finding new programs to implement, or modifying existing programs is not always easy, but the RAFT has nonetheless managed to be quite successful.

Most notably, our Shelter Diversion initiative and the Fresh Paint Social Enterprise have shown remarkable success in the Niagara Region. I am confident that our efforts will continue to showcase the RAFT as a leader not only at the local level but provincially and nationally.

Speaking to the organization's position as a leader in the Homeless sector, the RAFT's involvement with the National Learning Community on Youth Homelessness has allowed us to stay at the cutting edge of the field and we continue to contribute to the National conversation on a meaningful level.

Additionally, our search for Strategic Partnerships in the region has fostered collaboration between organizations and put us on solid footing when we serve our clients.

As the RAFT headed into the last quarter of the 2019/2020 fiscal year, the world was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is my firm belief that the RAFT's strategic vision and the dedication of our team from top to bottom will see us through these troubled times allowing us to emerge from the other side of this pandemic as a stronger organization.



Above: A happy Family Reunion made possible by Eternal Routes

In closing, I am very proud of the accomplishments of Mike and the rest of the RAFT team and I am confident that the 2020 / 2021 fiscal year will illustrate our commitment to our clients in the region and beyond.

Kevin P. Kortekaas, Chair

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Executive Director's Report

In 2012, the RAFT implemented a new strategic plan that became our guiding document. One of the critical pillars is a focus on innovation. In 2019, we launched two innovative programs to reduce and end youth homelessness.

Fresh Paint builds on our growing expertise in Social Enterprise. When we consider reducing and ending homelessness it's important to factor income as part of that equation. Housing affordability is a major driver in young people's return to homelessness. Given that income supports are well below current market rents, the quality of housing is equally below our expectations. Housing is important in people's identity and self-worth; placing kids in sub-standard housing leads to poorer mental health and a loss of dignity. Canada is a rich nation but providing citizen's dignity seemingly costs too much. With Fresh Paint, the RAFT partnered with Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) to provide painting, dry-wall repair, and cleaning in preparation for new residents. The Niagara Prosperity Innovative and the RBC Future Launch provided funding to hire a contractor, provide safety attire, and cover initial training costs. With funding secured, we hired youth who have taken part in one of our services; they require no previous work experience. Youth employees are trained on the job by an experienced contractor and are provided with safety gear and tools to complete the job. Since its inception over 10 youth have benefited; some of our participants have utilized this experience to find work and all have benefited from a regular pay cheque. Beyond the increased income and learning valuable skills, our young employees have a sense of worth and a sense of place. I'll never forget a conversation I had while dropping a youth off at home after work. I asked him if he was enjoying the work and he bemusedly replied: "A year ago I was homeless and staying at the RAFT; now I'm working for the RAFT".

Our second project to launch is Shelter Diversion. Over the last few years we noticed the number of individual youth accessing our shelter has remained very constant. We examined our Youth Reconnect prevention program to determine if there was a gap that was allowing kids to slip through. That examination provided no obvious gaps. Then the search was on for a program intervention to address the kids still accessing the shelter. Ultimately, we settled on a program showing great success, developed by Argus House in Cambridge. Shelter Diversion is the last line of prevention before accessing

shelter. When a youth looks to access a shelter bed, our Shelter Diversion worker meets with them to determine if any other safe accommodation can be found. Only once all options have been exhausted does the youth begin an intake into our shelter. Argus House provided the model and the tools, and offered our workers job shadowing. Their support was invaluable. However, innovative programs require more than a good program model, it requires funding. Jessica Friesen, Owner of Gales Gas Bar Ltd is that rare type of donor; she's an investor. Jessica reviewed the pilot plan and background material that supported the launch of a shelter diversion program. Once satisfied she became our angel investor, providing funding to sustain our program while receiving monthly reports on the program's success. In time and as we started to see a measureable reduction in youth accessing shelter other funders including the Blukap Foundation and the Region of Niagara made additional investments in our Shelter Diversion program. The program launched in April 2019 and in our first year, we have been able to divert 40% of all young people seeking to access our shelter. In every case, a diverted youth found an appropriate and safe alternative to shelter.

Innovation isn't an easy process and this is doubly true in the not-for-profit sector where funding is largely allocated to support existing programs with little to nothing left to innovate. Many partners are required both with expertise and dollars to achieve success. I am very grateful to our community which supports us, to my staff that work diligently and passionately to ensure our youth have the best chance possible and my Board who have opened the space for innovation to occur.

Michael Lethby, Executive Director

Below, Executive Directors of the RAFT, Mike Lethby, Kathy Malloy and Larry Huibers.



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**BALANCE SHEET**

	2020	2019
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	455,790	387,759
Marketable Securities	105,229	116,612
Accounts receivable	49,348	48,180
Harmonized Sales Tax receivable	9,587	10,918
Prepaid Expenses	8,408	3,353
Subtotal	628,362	566,822
Property & Equipment	301,806	312,196
	930,168	879,018
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Accounts payable	99,070	87,812
Deferred revenue	168,939	105,450
	268,009	193,262
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted Fund	260,353	273,560
Investment in Capital Assets	301,806	312,196
Program Development Fund	50,000	50,000
Capital Reserve Fund	50,000	50,000
Subtotal	662,159	685,756
	930,168	879,018

STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES

	2020	2019
REVENUE		
Youth Reconnect	470,691	478,620
Crisis Housing per diems	376,499	401,492
Grants, Donations and Fundraising	487,207	330,208
After School Programs	291,371	308,201
Youth in Transition—Provincial Funding	150,000	150,000
Social Impact	100,350	100,952
Niagara Regional Housing and Prosperity	64,537	58,806
Investment income (Unrealized Loss)	(24,777)	3,850
Total Revenue	1,915,878	1,832,129
EXPENSES		
Salaries & benefits	1,298,472	1,123,407
Other expenses	641,003	689,214
Total Expenses	1,939,475	1,812,621
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES From Operations	(23,597)	19,508
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	\$ (23,597)	\$ 19,508

Our supporters are proof that working together, one step at a time, makes a difference.

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