

Renewed Hope for the Future

2023-2025 Strategic Plan for
Mennonite Collegiate Institute

April 2023





Summary

Mennonite Collegiate Institute of Gretna, Manitoba, was established in 1889, and is the longest-serving of some thirty Mennonite schools in Canada today. MCI is a provincially accredited independent Anabaptist Christian high school (grades 9 to 12), and a member of the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools and the Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools.

Our purpose is to educate young people in an Anabaptist Christian context, seeking to develop their God-given potential in terms of physical, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being; and to develop in them an appreciation of our Mennonite heritage. MCI welcomes students from many backgrounds to join our dynamic learning community, while keeping our core identity as a Christian high school rooted in Anabaptist values.

We are convinced of the enduring vision to offer a faith-based education within a caring community that models dialogue, listening, and learning and equips students as servant leaders in an ever-changing world.

This document outlines MCI's 2023 – 2025 Strategic Plan: **Renewed Hope for the Future**. Initiated in the fall of 2022, the plan renews MCI's commitment to its mission and core values, seeks to build on its historic strengths, and recognizes the need for changes to various aspects of MCI's operations.

The plan comprises five pillars:

- 1. Strategy toward financial sustainability:** MCI is in an unsustainable financial situation. We aim to restore MCI's financial viability by meeting our expense commitments for the current fiscal year, growing enrollment, diversifying our revenue streams, and reducing our debt burden.
- 2. Strategy to recruit and retain students:** Despite rising demand for independent schools in Canada, MCI has experienced a decline in enrollment over the past decade. Our goal is to grow enrollment to 65 students for the 2023-24 school year to facilitate stable operation. We aim to further increase enrollment to 80 students by September 2025.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”
– Jeremiah 29:11





3. **Strategy toward educational and program excellence:** MCI continues to offer an excellent, Christ-centred education for high school students, but declined enrollment limits opportunities. Our goal is to sustain and build MCI's historic strengths in the performing arts and to leverage MCI's ability to offer a well-rounded, co-curricular educational experience.



4. **Strategy to clarify MCI's identity:** MCI is a provincially accredited independent Anabaptist Christian high school that relies on relationships with a diverse group of Society Churches in southern Manitoba. Though differences arise, our goal is to rebuild trust with our supporting churches and stakeholders through open and respectful dialogue.



5. **Strategy to engage stakeholders:** MCI's ability to engage with its stakeholders is vital to its success. We seek to re-ignite long-standing relationships, learn new ways to maintain connections with our alumni, and broaden our stakeholder community.

We are excited to present our plan and to continue MCI's mission. Since January 2023, the Board, Leadership Team, and Staff have worked hard to pursue "Quick Wins" that support the five strategic pillars. However, we urgently need your help to continue meeting our goals! Join us!

- **Please give generously through donations.** We need to raise between \$480,000 and \$500,000 by June 30, 2023 to meet projected expenses this fiscal year. Financial commitments and pledges for next fiscal year and future years are also needed to help alleviate our debt burden and enable operational flexibility.
- **Please encourage students in your community to enroll at MCI.** Increased student enrollment provides more opportunities for all our students and is critical for meeting our financial goals.
- **Please engage with us.** Connecting with us—in person and via social media—helps us spread the word about MCI's mission to people in Manitoba and worldwide.
- **Pray for us.** We seek your prayers as we make difficult decisions and strengthen relationships with our stakeholders—Society Churches, our local community, and our alumni.



Impact Statements



I love my school, it's like a second home. The staff take their time to help and your education is valued. And I get to have Jesus in my day through school which is my favourite thing!

Whitney - Grade 11
MCI Student



Discover the Difference

Mennonite Collegiate Institute



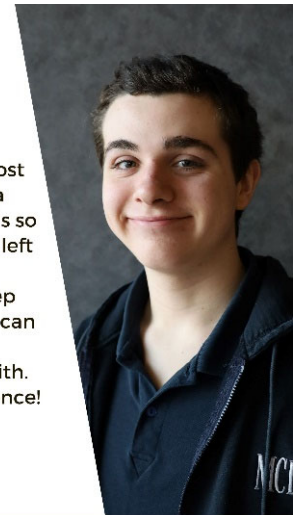
MCI has impacted the lives of over 5000 alumni over its 134-year history. Its relatively small student body enables unique opportunities for the growth and development of future church and community leaders.

These are just three examples of how current students describe the impact of MCI on their lives.



I love MCI because the community here is the most loving one I've ever been a part of. The environment is so comforting. I've never felt left out or ignored. My faith continues to grow as I keep attending MCI. I feel like I can talk to anyone about anything, including my faith. It is truly a unique experience!

Ernest - Grade 10
MCI Student



Discover the Difference

Mennonite Collegiate Institute



As an International student, I found that being welcome and respected is important to a newcomer. MCI is like a small community, where the students and the staff are so friendly. Last year, I was encouraged to break through my comfort zone. Under the support and kindness of my schoolmates, I had enjoyed an unforgettable school year.

Samuel - Grade 12
MCI Student



Discover the Difference

Mennonite Collegiate Institute



Scan the QR code below to see our recent promotional video.





Motivation for this plan

MCI is at a pivotal point in its 134-year history. As a Board and Leadership Team, we have wrestled with many questions in the past year:

- Is MCI's mission still relevant and feasible?
- What role should our school play within our community?
- Where is MCI going, and how do we communicate this to our constituency?
- What is God leading us to become?

This is a living document. We anticipate building and communicating further details about our plan as we involve MCI's stakeholders.

In response to the questions and pressing challenges faced by MCI, the MCI Board and Leadership Team convened a Strategic Planning Task Force in the fall of 2022. The mandate for the Task Force was to bring forward actions that could effectively address these challenges within the next three years.

The initial phase of this work included ideation sessions with Task Force members, discussions with Staff, and broad engagement with the constituency at our 2022 Annual General Meeting. This led to the identification of several key strengths and critical challenges.



MCI's 2023 production of the musical *Little Women*.

Key strengths

- Affirmations from students and parents about the positive, Christ-centred influence of MCI
- Strong educational outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds
- Rich legacy of music skill development and performance
- High participation rates in athletics program
- World-class campus and facility



MCI students at the provincial track-and-field championship in 2022.

Critical challenges

- Declining enrollment, especially a decrease in the number of students living in the dormitory
- Concerns over financial viability and debt
- Numerous leadership transitions in recent years
- Loss of stakeholder engagement opportunities
- Need to nurture a caring school environment
- Disagreements amongst supporting churches

The Task Force developed an internal Strategic Action Plan, which was approved by the MCI Board in December 2022 and subsequently presented to Staff in early 2023.



Introducing our plan and leadership

This document outlines MCI's 2023 – 2025 Strategic Plan. Several Scripture passages have inspired the **Renewed Hope for the Future** theme for this plan.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." – Jeremiah 29:11

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. – Romans 12:2

But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. – Isaiah 40:31

The plan renews MCI's commitment to its mission and core values and seeks to build on its historic strengths. Simultaneously, the plan recognizes the need for changes to various aspects of MCI's operations.

Our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan comprises five pillars:

1. Strategy toward financial sustainability
2. Strategy to recruit and retain students
3. Strategy toward educational and program excellence
4. Strategy to clarify MCI's identity
5. Strategy to engage stakeholders

To succeed, the plan requires an engaged Board of Directors, strong leadership and Staff participation, and an actively supportive constituency. Additionally, the plan has established key performance indicators and relies on accountability and data to inform decisions.

MCI's Leadership Team, Staff, and the MCI Board have already been working hard to renew MCI's programs and build hope for its future. Currently, our Leadership Team includes the following:

5 Strategic Pillars





Jennifer Klippenstein, Interim Principal and Head of School

Jennifer has been an educator for over 20 years, gaining experience at various age levels. Her teaching career includes positions at Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg and several schools in the (former Rhineland) Border Land School Division. She has been a teacher at MCI since 2020. At MCI, she has demonstrated strong teaching skills in numerous subjects, including English, French, Bible, and Mennonite Studies. She has also been involved in post-secondary preparation guidance counselling, athletics, musical productions, and yearbook preparation.

Jennifer is passionate about building relationships with families, students, and MCI supporters. She is excited about enhancing the learning, service, and community-building opportunities for young people at MCI. Jennifer's connection to MCI has significant historical roots: her great-great-great grandfather was Elder Johann Funk, a bishop in the Bergthaler Church and a strong supporter of education who encouraged the establishment of MCI. Her children are MCI alumni.



Kieran Reynolds, Director of Student Life and Recruitment

Kieran has over 10 years of experience in the independent education sector as a curriculum designer, program coordinator, and administrator. In his most recent position as the Deputy Director: Boarding at Bodwell High School, Kieran redeveloped a boarding program looking at a holistic approach to developing and mentoring students. Kieran was responsible for administering the Life Skills Curriculum and the Activities Program. This was done while establishing a Mentorship Program and professional development for Youth Advisors.

Kieran's passion for youth work began in youth ministries in Ireland. He believes the dorm is the unique experience that can set MCI apart. He recognizes it as a stepping stone toward independence. Mentoring students through their time in dorm and seeing them grow spiritually and emotionally during their dorm experiences keeps that passion for youth work burning.



We are prayerfully discerning the future composition and structure of our Leadership Team. We are also seeking qualified applicants to help with financial administration and donor development tasks, which are essential aspects of effective school leadership.

MCI Board of Directors

MCI's Board acts as the school's governance body. Its primary responsibility is to develop goals and objectives that move the organization forward in attaining the vision, mission, and values of MCI. The Board is accountable to the Society Churches that own the MCI Corporation. The Board comprises 11 members, including seven Society Church representatives and four at-large members. MCI's Board members have diverse backgrounds: elementary, secondary, and post-secondary education; organizational administration; pastoral ministry; business and entrepreneurship; agriculture; and engineering.

Remainder of this Document

This document begins by renewing our commitment to MCI's mission and core values. The subsequent sections describe each of the five strategic pillars by providing context, listing the actions that contribute to each pillar, and outlining "quick wins" already achieved in 2023. The internal version of this plan contains more detailed sub-actions, allocates responsibilities, and proposes timelines to accomplish each action.



MCI's mission and core values

Who we are

Mennonite Collegiate Institute of Gretna, Manitoba, was established in 1889, and is the longest-serving of some thirty Mennonite schools in Canada today. MCI is a provincially accredited independent Anabaptist Christian high school (grades 9 to 12), and a member of the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools and the Canadian Association of Mennonite Schools.

MCI emphasizes a strong academic program, excellence in the performing arts, diverse athletic opportunities, and a dormitory program that seeks to build community. The rich legacy of developing young people's God-given gifts in an Anabaptist Christian setting continues to live on in the halls of MCI today.

Focus Areas



PEACE BUILDING

Promoting authentic relationships through forgiveness and reconciliation.



SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Preparing students for a life of service and discipleship.



COMMUNITY & BELONGING

Providing a safe space for students to develop their God-given gifts.



SERVICE LEARNING

Practicing living out our faith in tangible ways.

Our mission and focus

Our purpose is to educate young people in an Anabaptist Christian context, seeking to develop their God-given potential in terms of physical, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being; and to develop in them an appreciation of our Mennonite heritage.

Our aim is that our students accept Christ as Lord and that they be disciples who express Christian hope by serving others, promoting peace, and providing Christ-like leadership within the church community and secular world.

Our core values

MCI welcomes students from many backgrounds to join our dynamic learning community, while keeping our core identity as a Christian high school rooted in Anabaptist values. Our identity as a Mennonite institution influences all areas of MCI, from academics, to faith building, to community life. In carrying out MCI's mission, we rely on the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as a unifying and interpretive guide to life and faith.



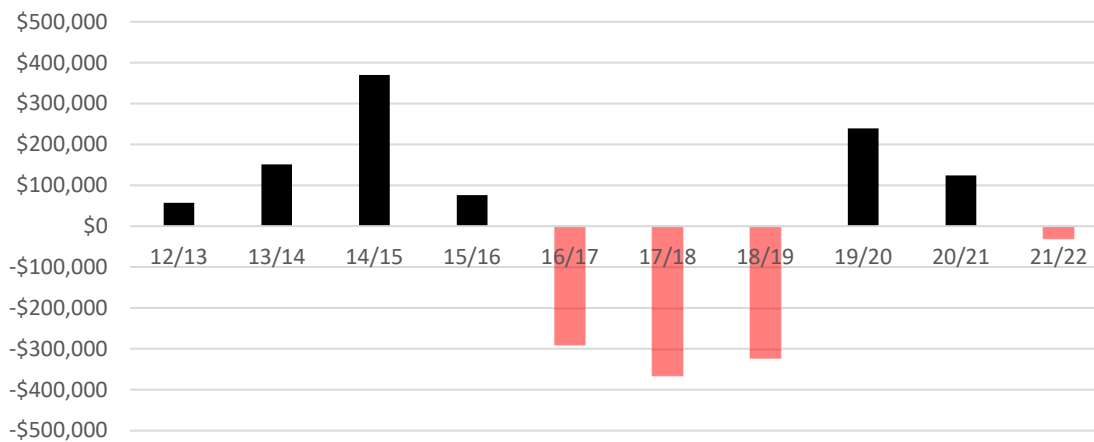
Strategy toward financial sustainability

Context

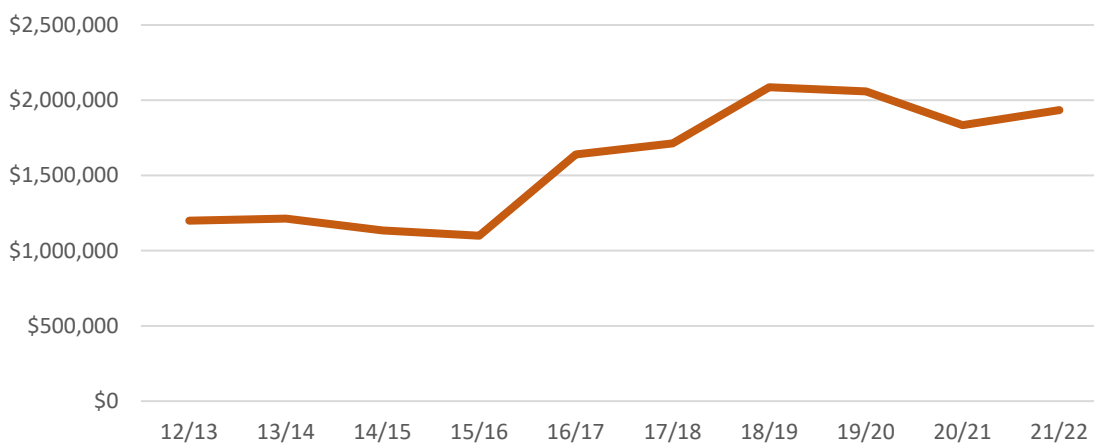
MCI is in an unsustainable financial position. As shown in the figures below, we have operated in a deficit position for four of the past six years. This has added to our debt, which currently totals approximately \$2 million. In addition, rising interest rates increase the school's debt burden. While our donor base has remained strong, we cannot continue to rely so heavily on donors to sustain the school's operations.



**MCI Net Income
2012-2022**



**MCI Debt
2012-2022**

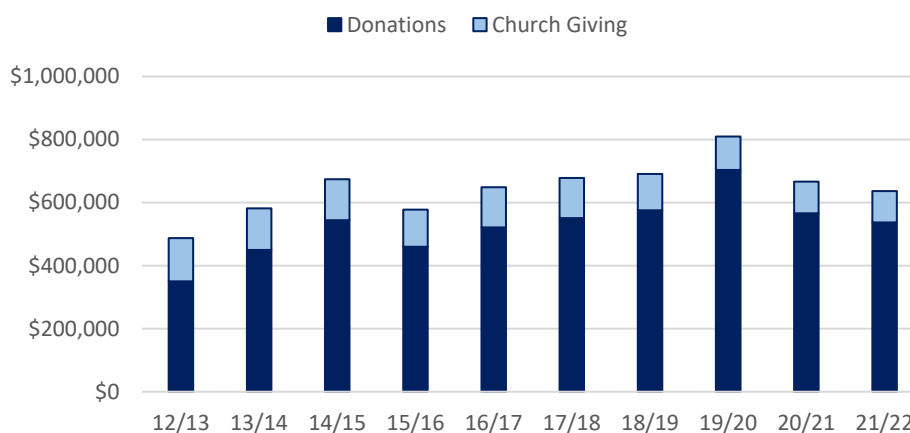




The last page of this document provides a detailed 3-year budget projection.

Given our low enrollment, this year's budget (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023) presents particular challenges. We have accessed available financial reserves and credit to help meet operating expenses. Staff have taken on additional teaching assignments at reduced salaries. Our cash flow situation is unsustainable, and we are at risk of financial insolvency.

MCI Charitable Revenue 2012-2022



We need to raise between \$480,000 and \$500,000 by June 30, 2023 to meet projected expenses this fiscal year. Financial commitments and pledges for next fiscal year and future years are also needed. Support will be sought in six layers:

1. Sustainers (small monthly donations)
2. Student supporters (\$6000 gifts to support enrollment)
3. Program specific gifts (e.g., arts, athletics)
4. Endowments
5. Multi-year commitments to operations
6. Grants

Our goal is to restore MCI's financial viability by meeting our expense commitments for the current fiscal year, growing enrollment to help balance future budgets, diversifying our revenue streams, and eliminating our debt within the next decade.

Actions

The Strategic Plan includes six actions within this pillar:

1. Develop a model that enables transparent financial projections as a function of enrollment and key financial performance indicators
2. Improve utilization of existing facilities through revenue generation opportunities (Buhler Hall, gym, dormitory, food services)
3. Approach major prospective donors to raise funds for operations, debt recovery, capital projects, and student scholarships
4. Identify and execute actions to reduce MCI's operating deficit in the current fiscal year
5. Conduct a market study of independent high schools in Manitoba
6. Investigate opportunities to restructure MCI's educational offering to reduce costs



Quick wins in 2023

- Actively recruiting for the roles of Business Administrator and Donor Development Coordinator
- Secured one significant donation of \$50,000
- Engaged in ongoing discussions about debt re-financing
- Sought personal donation commitments from Board members
- Investigated a revised pricing structure aimed at growing enrollment
- Evaluated and tracked key financial performance metrics monthly
- Pursued payment plans for MCI families
- Considered hiring of a commission-based events coordinator

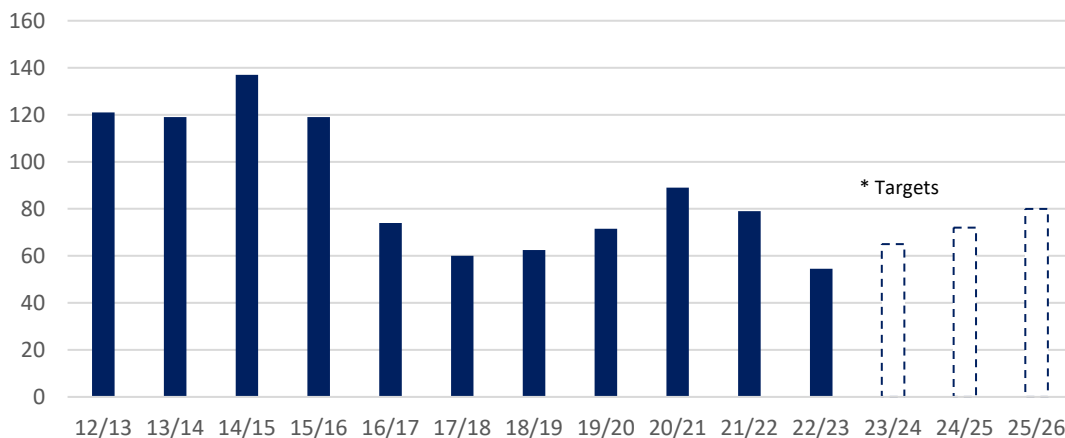
Strategy to recruit and retain students



Context

MCI's enrollment has declined considerably since a decade ago when it reached a high of approximately 140 students in 2014-15. MCI's 2022-23 school year enrollment started at 57 students. Approximately 60% of students live in the dormitory, including five international students. This year, nine students come from MCI's Society Churches.

MCI Enrollment
2012-2025



Reasons for the decline in enrollment vary. Some parents are hesitant to send their children to a dormitory setting. International study visas have become more difficult to obtain, so there is a need to rebuild MCI's international recruitment processes. Some student-athletes have opted



Recent data from Statistics Canada indicate that enrollment in private and independent schools has increased at a higher rate than public school enrollment every year since 2015-16.

for premium athletics opportunities through community clubs or larger high schools.

Nevertheless, there appears to be strong demand for other independent Christian high schools in Manitoba, with several currently operating at capacity. Moreover, an increasing number of families opt to home-school their children. More broadly, many communities in southern Manitoba are experiencing population growth.

Our goal is to grow enrollment to 65 students for the 2023-24 school year to facilitate stable operation. We aim to further increase enrollment to 80 students by September 2025.

Actions

The Strategic Plan includes six actions within this pillar:

1. Identify and prioritize target recruitment markets
2. Establish partnerships with potential feeder schools
3. Emphasize MCI as a caring community for all students
4. Bring prospective students to MCI campus in new ways
5. Re-fresh MCI's website to serve as a clear recruitment tool
6. Partner with other independent high schools with current wait lists

Youth Orbit attracted more than 100 students, filling both the girls' and boys' dormitories to capacity.

Quick wins in 2023

- Re-invigorated Youth Orbit, a long-standing MCI event that historically served as a critical recruitment tool
- Organized Day-in-the-Life events for prospective MCI students
- Developed and released a new MCI promotional video
- Organized a youth worship night led by current MCI students
- Hosted a group of home-school families at MCI's musical
- Engaged with students in local elementary schools
- Actively promoted MCI events on MCI's website and through social media
- Highlighted student and parent testimonials on various media channels



Strategy toward educational and program excellence



Context

MCI continues to offer an excellent, Christ-centred education for high school students. There are significant opportunities for students to excel in the performing arts, including the musical, Chamber Choir, Resonate, Illuminate, concert band, and worship band. MCI's athletics program offers diverse opportunities. While it saw several notable successes in 2021-22 (e.g., zone champions in soccer, provincial qualifications in volleyball and track), reduced enrollment has limited these successes in 2022-23. The dormitory is a welcoming community, but the facility operates at less than half its capacity. Significant resources are needed to address mental health concerns for students.

Our goal is to sustain and build MCI's historic strengths in the performing arts and to leverage MCI's ability to offer a well-rounded, co-curricular educational experience that equips students for the future.

Actions

The Strategic Plan includes five actions within this pillar:

1. Leverage MCI's ability to offer an excellent and flexible educational experience
2. Sustain MCI's music and performing arts program
3. Grow MCI's athletic program by focusing on selected team and individual sports
4. Revitalize the dormitory program by converting day students to dormitory students in their senior years and attracting international students
5. Reaffirm MCI Staff as a core strength of the school and invest in this strength

Quick wins in 2023

- Initiated planning to introduce new co-curricular learning streams during "Day 3" (Wednesdays)
- Learned from two other independent high schools about how they differentiate their programs
- Successfully produced and performed MCI's annual musical
- Initiated discussions about offering volleyball as a focus sport
- Re-engaged in programs for student and Staff mental health awareness and response

We envision launching MCI's co-curricular program in 2023, building on current focus areas. Potential programming includes:

- Performing arts
- Career exposure (e.g., agriculture, accounting)
- Sports training
- Service-based education
- Outdoor pursuits
- Special interests



Strategy to clarify MCI's identity

Context

MCI is a provincially accredited independent Anabaptist Christian high school, offering a Christ-centred education within a caring community enriched by global perspectives. Rooted in southern Manitoba's Mennonite community, the corporation of MCI is owned by a group of Society Churches. Historically, these churches have represented a diversity of Mennonite traditions, which have worked together to deliver MCI's mission by agreeing to a common faith stance articulated in the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

In recent years, questions about MCI's position on divisive societal issues have arisen, leading to the departure of several churches from the Society. This and other demographic trends seem to be hindering student recruitment and donations. It has been difficult to meaningfully engage with our Society Churches about these issues, and we sense that relationships have suffered. The Board and Leadership Team recognize the need for open, respectful dialogue to rebuild trust.

Actions

The Strategic Plan includes four actions within this pillar:

1. Emphasize MCI's identity as a high school founded on an Anabaptist faith stance
2. Regularly communicate with Society Churches in respectful dialogue
3. Reaffirm MCI's faith stance and the need to respect human dignity and diversity
4. Define ways to sensitively celebrate MCI's history and tradition

Quick wins in 2023

- Imagined MCI's mission as a rural community-builder, existing within the diversity of Mennonite and non-Mennonite communities
- Reaffirmed the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* as the expression of faith characteristic of MCI
- Reaffirmed MCI's *Policy on Human Dignity and Diversity*, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring MCI is a welcoming, safe, and inclusive place for all students and Staff
- Considered opportunities to engage with professionals to assist with healing relationships amongst the Staff, Board, and Society Churches
- Developed and approved guidelines on dealing with issues of sensitive topics in the classroom setting

Clause 13 of MCI's *Policy on Human Dignity and Diversity* states that the "MCI Board will not accept any form of discrimination or bullying by its students, staff, volunteers, as well as parents/guardians or visitors who are on school premises or participating in school-sponsored activities."



Strategy to engage stakeholders

Context

MCI has faced challenges engaging meaningfully with its broad stakeholder groups. From 2020 through 2022, public health restrictions limited face-to-face gatherings, and we can see how that has caused relationships to suffer. MCI's ability to engage with its stakeholders is vital to its success, but we need to continuously re-think how best to reach out. In-person events are critical, but so is a dynamic and engaging online presence. We seek to re-kindle long-standing relationships, learn new ways to maintain connections with our alumni, and broaden our network as our stakeholder community evolves.



Actions

The Strategic Plan includes five actions within this pillar:

1. Engage meaningfully with Society Churches
2. Communicate MCI's vision and identity to churches and/or organizations who might be interested in joining the Society
3. Re-envision the composition and nature of MCI's Board of Directors
4. Develop an alumni re-engagement strategy
5. Open MCI's facilities to community programs

Quick wins in 2023

- Developed a stackable MCI promotional package for delivery to churches within and beyond our Society
- Initiated a campaign to reconnect with churches within MCI's stakeholder community in the coming year
- Increased the frequency of news announcements provided to Society Churches
- Activated existing Board committees to support the governance and operation of MCI
- Worked actively to develop MCI's Strategic Plan
- Hosted community-based performances at Buhler Hall

Join us!

Thank you for being so interested in supporting MCI! We firmly and passionately believe in the relevance and timeliness of MCI's mission. As has been the case for 134 years, we know that our students benefit from a high school that offers a caring community to develop their God-given potential. Please join us in our efforts to renew our school so that MCI remains an excellent choice for a Christ-centred education.



Current and 3-year budget projection

	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Actual (April 22)	Estimated total enrollment		
			65	72	80
INCOME	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Actual (April 22)	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Budget
Donations	\$ 735,000	\$ 521,411	\$ 550,000	\$ 550,000	\$ 550,000
Church donations	\$ 100,000	\$ 67,488	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 80,000
Government grants	\$ 350,000	\$ 310,017	\$ 420,745	\$ 420,000	\$ 465,000
Tuition	\$ 350,000	\$ 321,266	\$ 442,000	\$ 570,000	\$ 638,000
Room & Board	\$ 150,300	\$ 145,375	\$ 233,220	\$ 330,000	\$ 370,000
Meals	\$ 13,500	\$ 14,955	\$ 11,700	\$ 11,700	\$ 13,000
Transportation	\$ 35,000	\$ 28,425	\$ 40,040	\$ 40,000	\$ 45,000
Graduation	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,280	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,500
Food Services	\$ -	\$ 8,904	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Buhler Hall	\$ 25,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 54,333	\$ 55,000	\$ 55,000
Campus Rental	\$ 7,620	\$ 5,945	\$ 7,620	\$ 8,000	\$ 8,000
Other income	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 1,767,920	\$ 1,428,066	\$ 1,846,158	\$ 2,071,200	\$ 2,230,500
EXPENSES					
Total payroll	\$ 1,269,000	\$ 996,530	\$ 1,109,771	\$ 1,209,771	\$ 1,309,771
Supplies	\$ 62,500	\$ 72,251	\$ 65,938	\$ 70,000	\$ 75,000
Groceries/kitchen	\$ 80,000	\$ 73,387	\$ 84,400	\$ 90,000	\$ 100,000
Buhler Hall	\$ 51,500	\$ 37,242	\$ 54,333	\$ 57,321	\$ 60,473
Utilities, school & dorm	\$ 108,800	\$ 86,977	\$ 114,784	\$ 121,097	\$ 127,757
Maintenance and taxes	\$ 89,450	\$ 48,496	\$ 104,000	\$ 125,000	\$ 132,000
Recruitment and promotion	\$ 80,000	\$ 84,299	\$ 84,400	\$ 89,042	\$ 93,939
Transportation	\$ 35,000	\$ 31,193	\$ 50,000	\$ 52,750	\$ 55,651
Financial service	\$ 84,400	\$ 115,279	\$ 130,000	\$ 130,000	\$ 130,000
Professional service	\$ 45,500	\$ 38,351	\$ 48,003	\$ 50,643	\$ 53,428
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 1,906,150	\$ 1,584,005	\$ 1,845,627	\$ 1,995,624	\$ 2,138,020
Surplus/Deficit	-\$ 138,230	-\$ 155,939	\$ 530	\$ 75,576	\$ 92,480

Projections are based on school fees currently set for the 2023-24 year.