

FROM THE CEO AND

Sixty-five years ago, the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa (YSB) was born from a simple yet powerful principle: when a need is identified, a service must be created to meet it. Today, as we celebrate this milestone anniversary, that founding philosophy continues to drive everything we do. Our work remains fundamentally about our clients and the supports they need to build their own better tomorrow.

This year has been one of remarkable discovery, learning, and growth. Since joining YSB in November of last year, I have witnessed firsthand the incredible dedication and resilience that defines this organization. Despite facing changes and growth that challenged us, our team has demonstrated the true commitment that lies at the heart of YSB's mission. We have learned that challenges bring opportunity—

THE BOARD CHAIR

opportunity to build for tomorrow's growth and to become who we want to be.

Our achievements this year speak to both our expanding capacity and our unwavering focus on our clients. In this report we'll be sharing a review of the year that was from all our service areas – a story of growth, connection, and service.



Our capacity at our Youth Justice facility, the William E. Hay Centre, has increased from 24 to 40 clients, and the Sherwood Youth Centre successfully moved to a new location. Our Employment Services (ES) team has doubled its staff team and opened our third ES location. These expansions lay the foundation for who YSB was, is, and will be.

YSB's Mental Health team once again achieved accreditation from the Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA). This recognition reflects YSB's commitment to excellence, accountability, and continuous improvement in the delivery of our services.

Youth-focused events in Community Services, including our vibrant Melodies and Melanin celebration and the empowering Kiki ball, serve as powerful reminders of why we do this work. They represent the trust our clients place in us—trust with their hearts and minds—and underscore our responsibility to be there for them.

Central to our growth this year has been embarking on a wide-reaching, renewal-boosting strategic planning process. This initiative represents an opportunity for collaboration, to think critically about the role we want to play in our community, and to foster cross-departmental collaboration so that we can work pan-agency to serve our clients. We are excited to have this north star guide our work when the strategic plan is completed this November.

Our Board of Directors has been instrumental in championing the idea of systems change, particularly for young people. Together, we are exploring how YSB can remain sustainable while providing ongoing solutions through bold support and meaningful collaboration with community partners. We recognize that we cannot be everything to everybody—instead, we must engage strategically to do our most meaningful work.

Nina Gorka CEO What sets Ottawa apart is a real desire to think differently and collaborate creatively. We are not afraid of challenging what we've previously done when it serves our clients better. This willingness to innovate, combined with our ability to lead with joy, positions us to build tomorrow in ways that truly matter.

As we look ahead, we see a YSB that honours its 65-year legacy while boldly stepping into the future. We see an organization that walks beside our clients, champions systemic change, and creates the conditions for clients to thrive. Most importantly, we see tomorrow being built today—one client, one program, one partnership at a time.

To our dedicated staff, Board of Directors, and volunteers—you are the heart of YSB. Your passion, expertise, and unwavering commitment to our mission inspire us daily and make our impact possible.

We remain committed to our role as collaborators, advocates, and allies. Together with the young people we serve, we will continue to build tomorrow—one partnership, one strengthened family, one client-led success at a time.

The future is bright, and we are building it together.



YSB BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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LEAD AGENCY REPORT

Expanding access, strengthening partnerships, improving outcomes for children: better futures ahead

As YSB enters its 12th year as the Lead Agency for Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) in Ottawa, we remain focused on strengthening system planning and service coordination with our Core Service Providers. Together, we continue to advance local priorities and build a more coordinated CYMH system for children, youth, and families.

This year, YSB and partners implemented a pilot project aiming to deliver timely intensive mental health services to children and youth supported by the Children's Aid Societies, Prescott Russell and Stormont Dundas and Glengarry. Through this partnership, more children are receiving the right services sooner, leading to improved stability and brighter futures.

We also worked with English Day Treatment providers and education partners to create an operating manual that strengthens the cross-sector partnership and operations. In addition, a Coordinated Access Review provided key recommendations, enabling families to find support more easily at the places they already turn to for help.

At the provincial level, YSB contributes to the design of the Ontario Intensive Treatment Pathway, which will transform intensive services for children and youth with the most complex mental health needs. We are helping shape a system that responds better to the realities of children, youth, and familiesdesigning better futures for children and youth.

Our Core Service Providers—CHEO, Crossroads, Le Cap, Rideauwood, Roberts-Smart, the Royal, Sandy Hill, Somerset West, Vanier CSC, and YSB—are at the heart of this work, along with valued partners in child protection, education, and community partners. Whether at the local, regional, or provincial level, our focus is the same: improving access to care, building collaboration, and creating better futures for children and youth in Ottawa.



OUR VISION:

OUR MISSION: We are committed to providing a safe, non-judgmental and accessible environment where individuals 12 years and older can pursue their life goals and be encouraged in making informed decisions.

OUR MANDATE: YSB is a multi-service agency that provides services in French and English in employment, health and housing, mental health, youth engagement and youth justice.

We work in partnership to develop, deliver and advocate for better conditions, services and opportunities for youth and families.



BUILDING TOMORROW TOGETHER WITH OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS

Our Team and Board remain deeply committed to raising both funds and awareness in support of YSB's meaningful and lasting impact on young people and their families. We are profoundly grateful to our corporate and foundation partners, donors, as well as community and youth groups whose continued generosity sustained our work this past year. Thanks to this support, the Foundation successfully reached its fundraising target, raising over \$1.5M for YSB programs.

This past year, our team continued its integrated fundraising approach that included corporate donations and grants, signature and third-party events, direct mail and email campaigns, and digital fundraising and marketing initiatives. At the heart of these efforts is our donor community, whose commitment ensures YSB's programs continue to support and empower youth.



Highlights from the year include:

- Funding for YSB's three-year Shelter Diversion Pilot Program, led by a private family foundation as well as the RBC Foundation and Ottawa Community Foundation
- Continued access to inclusive youth shelters and housing, made possible by partners such as The Home Depot Canada Foundation, CLV, Britton Smith Foundation, KPMG, Engel & Völkers Ottawa, Maverick Volleyball, Joan of Arc Academic Society, Blachford Tax Law Charity Game, CGI, Algonquin College, Co-Operators, BDO, Paramount Properties, Meridian, Desjardins, Tiree, IODE Laurentian Chapter, Smokin' R&R's, as well as major donor and individual gifts.
- The Room to Grow shelter sponsorship campaign, generously supported by the Taggart Parkes Foundation, TD Bank group, as well as dozens of community groups, families and individual donors.

- Vital mental health supports for youth, funded by generous contributions from valued partners, including the Senators Community Foundation, Bell Let's Talk, the Green Shield Canada Foundation, Saunders Farm, as well as private family foundations and individual donors.
- Expansion of the young men's hockey program at YSB's Youth Justice facility, with a grant made possible by the OSEG Foundation.
- Corporate and community partners volunteering their time through painting and landscaping projects, cleaning and baking days, and assembling holiday gift bags to ensure every youth in our housing buildings received a gift.
- In-kind donations from our community from new clothing, pajamas, and flip flops to toiletries, bedding, towels, and cleaning supplies – all helping youth in shelters, housing, mental health, employment, and youth justice programs.



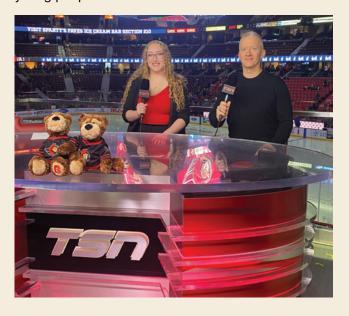


- The conclusion of our signature event Stay Up
 Ottawa, after 12 impactful years, while also
 taking part in the national Coldest Night of the
 Year event for the fifth year, raising \$30K for YSB
 shelters and housing.
- Our 2ND annual Rise & Thrive fundraising breakfast, which raised \$268K in support of YSB shelters and housing.
- Strong support through third-party fundraising events, including CLV's Mike McCann Charity Golf Tournament, Adam Marc Bignell Fundraising, the 4th annual On the Road to Mental Health, among other events.
- Mind Matters youth mental health speaker series, returned with an in-person event on the theme of Building Strong Foundation – The importance of parental engagement in youth mental wellness.
- A continued investment from the Ottawa Community Foundation, including donoradvised funds, that provided post-secondary scholarships for youth in both YSB's long-term housing and youth justice programs.
- Ongoing leadership from the Foundation's Youth Cabinet, a group of local high school students raising awareness and funds for shelters, housing, and youth mental health.



 Continued collaboration with our Young Professional Network (YPN), a dedicated group of young leaders helping to amplify YSB's mission through events, awareness campaigns, and community engagement.

Our Foundation Team and Board remain inspired every day by the YSB team's work with young people and their families. We are honoured to help raise awareness and funds in support of the thousands of young people who turn to YSB in a time of need.







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THROUGH OUR SERVICES, WE:

Value
accountability
for our clients &
ourselves

Value our clients' strengths

Believe in meaningful youth engagement as core to our practice

Believe in empowering youth and families

Value the continuous review of the quality of our work

Value diversity

Believe in collaboration



Our youth housing programs, including shelters, transitional, and long-term housing, continue to serve as a critical foundation for supporting vulnerable young people in our community. Occupancy rates across our emergency shelter facilities remain consistently strong, confirming the ongoing and urgent need for these services as essential first points of contact for youth experiencing homelessness.

Our supportive housing initiatives have demonstrated measurably positive stabilization outcomes, particularly for youth presenting with complex mental health, substance use, and trauma-related needs.

Despite significant systemic barriers and resource constraints, our housing-based case management (HBCM) teams have maintained exceptionally strong levels of service intensity and meaningful client engagement, ensuring that young people receive comprehensive, individualized support throughout their housing journey. Over the past year in our transitional, long term and rental supplement housing programs we have housed and supported a total of 224 youth. These programs collectively represent our commitment to providing a continuum of care that meets youth where they are and supports their progression toward stable, independent living.

Shelter Diversion Program

In June of this year we proudly launched our Shelter Diversion Program, a major step forward in how we support youth at risk of homelessness. This proactive model helps young people avoid shelter stays by connecting them with family mediation, short-term supports, and community resources before entering the shelter system.

All youth seeking shelter are now first connected with a diversion case worker to explore safe, alternative options. This program was co-developed with frontline staff, youth with lived experience, and researchers from the University of Ottawa, ensuring it's both practical and youth centred. We also learned from The RAFT in St. Catharines, whose expertise helped shape our approach.

As of September 2025, nineteen youth have been successfully diverted from shelter, with 44% of clients new to seeking shelter diverted to family and friends. This success represents the equivalent of an entire youth shelter!



As we continue to build on the success of our Shelter Diversion Program, we're exploring ways to deepen our impact by focusing on family and natural supports. These relationships—whether with parents, extended family, mentors, or trusted adults—can

play a vital role in helping youth avoid homelessness and find safe, stable housing alternatives.

By investing in strategies that reconnect youth with their support networks, we can create housing solutions that are more personal, sustainable, and less reliant on institutional responses like social housing or emergency shelters.



Downtown Services and Drop-in

- 418 unique clients
- 9415 contacts

Youth Engagement

The Ethno-cultural Youth Advisory Committee (EYAC) hosted 16 events, representing a 220 percent increase from 2023. The year included more than 500 participants, five community partnerships, and 18 peer-to-peer activities within YSB.

Key highlights include:

- Workshops with the World University Service of Canada (WUSC U of Ottawa): EYAC delivered two trainings for the Student Refugee Program, reaching 26 participants, including mentors and student refugees.
- Collaboration with Food Packages
 Hargeisa: EYAC raised funds to provide food packages for 60 families.
- Pathways to Success Panel: The panel featured four speakers and inspired approximately 30 youth. The event was hosted at a Black-owned venue with food from Black-owned businesses.

Purple Sisters & Queer Youth Action Committee (QYAC)

10 Community Events- hosted or partnered in delivering

- Slutwalk 2024
- Crafting & Cocoa: Trans Day of Remembrance Nov 2024
- Trans Game Night: Trans Day of Visibility March 2025
- International Day Against Homophobia with CASO May 2025
- Rainbow Youth Forum OCDSB May 2025
- Melodies & Melanin July 2025
- Pride is Political August 2025
- KiKi Couture August 2025
- CASO Pride BBQ August 2025
- Ottawa Dyke March August 2025

16 peer-to-peer monthly activities delivered at Riverside & McEwen

- September Photo Frames x 2
- October Halloween Movie Night x 2
- November Fibre Crafts (McEwen), Painting & Cocoa (Riverside)
- January Palentine Card Making (McEwen), Jewelry Making (Riverside)
- March Bingo Night (McEwen), Clay Molding (Riverside)
- April Plant Pot Painting (McEwen), Rock Painting (Riverside)
- May Friendship Bracelets (McEwen), BBQ (Riverside)
- July Tie Dying (McEwen), Carnival Fun Day (Riverside)

8 Peer to Peer Workshops Delivered

- "Doom Scroll Detox" at Fisher Park Alternative School (4 Workshops)
- "Finding Youth Voice" at OCDSB Rainbow Forum (3 Workshops)
- "Feminism is for EVERYONE" YSB Drop-In partnership with OCTEVAW

High school at the Drop-in: YSB-Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)

(Statistics, Sept 3, 2024 to June 20, 2025)

About 92 students were officially enrolled for the 2024-25 school year, 47 of whom were new students. On average, 11 students per day accessed the school program.

Year-at-a-glance

- Total of 13 graduates
- 102 credits total granted
- 122.5 PLAR and PLE1N credits granted
- 230 community service hours logged
- 8 OSSLT requirements completed

Long-term housing: tenant associations

Our Tenant Associations will soon be renamed Long-Term Housing Engagement Groups, to better reflect their work. These groups foster community, positive outcomes, youth leadership, and safety. They are generally broken down into three categories: community building (BBQs, gardening groups, arts and crafts, cooking meals, attending museums, movies), planning meetings (agenda for coming months, meeting ideas, maintenance issues, security, community concerns, pest treatments) and information sessions (budgeting, naloxone training, cooking groups, 2SLGBTQ+ trainings, Indigenous awareness discussions, special guests, Black History Month events, harm reduction).

We are always pleased to welcome a very high percentage of tenants at the meetings.

We've created partnerships with other community agencies. The Youth Engagement Team has worked and created partnership with the Ajashki Learning Centre (placement of 3 Indigenous and Inuk RS tenants), the Ottawa Art Gallery (4-part zine workshop), and Ottawa Senior Pride Network (DragonBoat 2025). The Youth Engagement Team is also central in supporting YAC members, YEGs and other YSB involved youth to lead and run large Community Services events such as Melodies & Melanin and Kiki Couture.







At Youth Justice, our commitment to serving youth led to significant facility expansions throughout the year. The William E. Hay Centre grew from 24 to 32 beds in August 2024, and further expanded to accommodate 40 beds by March 2025. Additionally, we successfully relocated the Sherwood Youth Centre to a new facility in Ottawa's east end.

Academic achievement remained a cornerstone of our approach to building life skills. Youth Justice clients collectively earned an impressive 221.5 academic credits during the past school year, reflecting their commitment to personal growth and future success.

Mental health support continued as a vital component of our comprehensive services, with our team facilitating 586 psychotherapy appointments throughout the year. This substantial investment in therapeutic care underscores our approach to youth rehabilitation and wellbeing.

The demand for our services remained exceptionally high, with the William E. Hay Centre operating at 98% capacity and the Sherwood Youth Centre maintaining 94% occupancy rates.

Innovations with our staff team

Our dedicated staff at the Tamarack Trades
Training Centre have successfully developed
and implemented a comprehensive automotive
program, while also pioneering our Virtual Reality
trades initiative in partnership with CareerLab. This
innovative approach brings cutting-edge technology
to traditional trades education, creating immersive
learning experiences for our clients.

The launch of our music program has empowered youth to express themselves creatively. Participants write their own lyrics, craft unique beats, and record professional-quality tracks, fostering both artistic development and technical skills in music production.

In our commitment to cultural understanding and healing, we hosted a meaningful Truth and Reconciliation event featuring an elder who shared wisdom and insights with our youth. This gathering provided valuable opportunities for learning and reflection.

Through our collaborative partnership with Community Services, young people have taken on construction projects, building picnic benches that will enhance youth buildings. This initiative combines practical skills development with tangible contributions to shared spaces.

Working with partners

An important part of our work to help build youth skills includes special programming, including with external partners. We were pleased this year to invite back the "social work through hip hop" group, Blueprint for life. About half of our residents were able to participate in this fantastic program of dance, discussion, and music.

We welcomed many partners into our facilities to work with our clients. Ontario Justice Education Network ran "together 180," providing legal education on housing, education, mental health, and the justice system. We continued the Blue Jays Foundation partnership, which focused on building a championship team program. This "5 Cs" program is based on competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring.

The Centre of Resilience and Social Development joined us to run the RAJO Project—RAJO means "hope" in Somali—which supports youth who have experienced trauma.

We worked with the University of Ottawa to develop Canada's first Youth Justice Walls to Bridges program. Through this partnership, youth were able to register as official university students and earn two university credits. We've entered into preliminary conversations with Algonquin College to begin a dual credit program for college-level credits to support high school graduates. This builds on the high school courses run by our partners at the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB).

We're working with the Ottawa-Carleton Association of Persons with Disabilities on a complex needs unit and training. Youth are able to attend spiritual programs with Ottawa Muslim Community Services, the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board bible studies. We've partnered with BGC Ottawa to support a bike program, which teaches participants how to maintain and fix bicycles.

The work of our Youth Justice team is all about preparing youth for successful re-entry into their communities by addressing educational gaps and equipping them with essential life skills. This dual approach aims to break cycles of recidivism by providing youth with concrete tools and opportunities for building stable, productive lives.







ENERGISS SIERVICES

YSB's Employment Services (ES) have experienced significant growth and expansion over the past year, which has enhanced our capacity to serve diverse client populations across the National Capital Region. Through strategic partnerships, infrastructure development, and innovative programming, we have strengthened our ability to connect job seekers with meaningful employment opportunities.

The ES department has grown from 22 to 47 team members over the past 18 months. This increase in staffing has directly enhanced our service delivery capacity and client support capabilities.

A major milestone was achieved with the grand opening of our third YSB ES Centre at Beacon Hill Mall, Gloucester, which serves as our first designated francophone service centre. This expansion addresses the rising demand for employment services, ensuring equitable access to employment supports across linguistic communities.

In April 2025, we successfully launched "Strengthening Families & Natural Supports to Increase Education & Employment Outcomes for Youth," the newest component of the Making the Shift Youth Homelessness Social Innovation Lab. This initiative operates under the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS) through the Government of Canada, demonstrating our commitment to addressing complex social challenges through innovative approaches.

We secured five-year funding for all three ES sites through College Boréal to deliver the Francophone Navigator program. This program develops targeted opportunities and resources for Francophone job seekers across Ottawa, ensuring sustainable support for this growing client demographic.

Through in-year funding increases, we invested \$1.1 million in workforce development through the Canada Ontario Job Grant contract, directly assisting employers in training initiatives that benefit both businesses and their workforce.

Led by WCG, we established a partnership with Mathew House to provide onsite employment services to newcomer clients, supporting their pathway to independence in Canada. This collaboration targets 30-40 clients quarterly, providing intensive, culturally responsive employment support.

We hosted the 2025 National Job Developer Networking Day in partnership with the Canadian Job Development Network. This in person event brought together 65+ professionals from the National Capital Region and hundreds of virtual attendees from across Canada to share trends, concerns, and collaborative opportunities for improving employment services delivery.



The ES Team continued to navigate through the transformation this past year, demonstrating incredible dedication and resilience while always keeping our clients front of mind, prioritizing and advocating for their needs. Our team has activated 3397 new client files this past year, secured employment for 697 clients, and referred 157 clients to employment-focused training. Our client demographics continue to shift towards a significant number of newcomers and Francophone clients, challenging our team to source tools and partnerships to better support these motivated job seekers.

Our client demographics reflect the changing needs of our community, with significant representation from diverse populations. Of the 3397 new client files, there were:

2,650 racialized clients (78% of new files)

1,628 newcomers (48% of new files)

1,161 Francophone clients (34% of new files)

This demographic shift has prompted our team to source specialized tools and develop targeted partnerships to better support these motivated job seekers, ensuring culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery.

The Employment Services department's growth and evolution position us well to meet the diverse and complex needs of job seekers in our region. Our expanded infrastructure, strengthened partnerships, and dedicated team ensure continued success in connecting clients with meaningful employment opportunities while supporting economic growth in our community.









YSB Mental Health Services continues to serve as a cornerstone of support for youth and families navigating mental health challenges in our community. This year has been marked by sustained high demand for mental health support, accompanied by meaningful efforts to improve accessibility and service delivery.

Crisis Response

Our 24/7 Crisis Line & Chat services remained a vital resource for children and youth ages 17 and under, as well as their support networks. Over the fiscal year, we responded to 4,416 calls and chats from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, providing immediate support during critical moments. The most common concerns brought to our crisis teams included anxiety, depression, trauma, eating disorders, emotional dysregulation, ADHD, and OCD. We also provided crucial intervention for family and youth conflicts stemming from divorce and separation, grief and loss, parenting challenges, and family health issues. Our crisis teams addressed urgent concerns related to suicide ideation, including self-harm incidents, postattempt support, suicide interventions in progress, and requests for information and resources.

Accessing mental health services

YSB's Mental Health services follow the Choice and Partnership Approach (CAPA). This model ensures that first-time clients, whether arriving through scheduled appointments or walk-ins, begin their journey with a Choice session that provides rapid assessment and connection to appropriate services. The results speak to the effectiveness of this approach: Choice appointments maintain quick entry with an average wait of just four days, enabling strong early intervention when families need it most. Significantly, 35% of clients required no further services after their initial Choice appointment, demonstrating the power of timely, targeted intervention.

Improvements in wait times

This year brought substantial improvements in accessibility across our core programs. Youth and Family Counselling services, which address critical issues including family conflict, relationships, anxiety, depression, violence, sexual orientation concerns, and loss and bereavement, achieved a 21% decrease in wait times compared to 2023-2024. Our Intensive Family Support (IFS) program, which provides crucial home-based intervention for families managing significant behavioural challenges, saw a 66% reduction in wait times. Similarly, our Wraparound services, which use a comprehensive youth and family-based planning process, decreased wait times by 51% compared to the previous year.

Depth of service

Our Step Up Step Down program has reached an important milestone in its development, achieving stability with occupancy levels approaching optimal capacity. This maturation has enabled longer program stays that allow for deeper, more comprehensive interventions with youth and families facing complex challenges.

Community collaboration: the Ottawa Youth Wellbeing Response

YSB recently embarked on an exciting partnership with the Ottawa Paramedic Service through the Ottawa Youth Wellbeing Response initiative. This collaborative effort aims to ensure that youth aged 12-17 and their families and caregivers in Ottawa receive high-quality, connected care following

9-1-1 calls related to mental health or substance use crises. Since June 2025, Ottawa Paramedics have been connecting with YSB's Crisis team when responding to calls from youth and families in crisis who meet YSB's mandate. When a client's situation is assessed as being safe, YSB crisis workers can offer same-day YSB Mobile Intervention services to conduct further crisis assessment and establish relationships with the YSB crisis team. This initiative also enables YSB crisis workers to inform youth and families about 1Call1Click services, creating a clear pathway for connected care and ensuring comprehensive support during critical moments.

Recognition of excellence

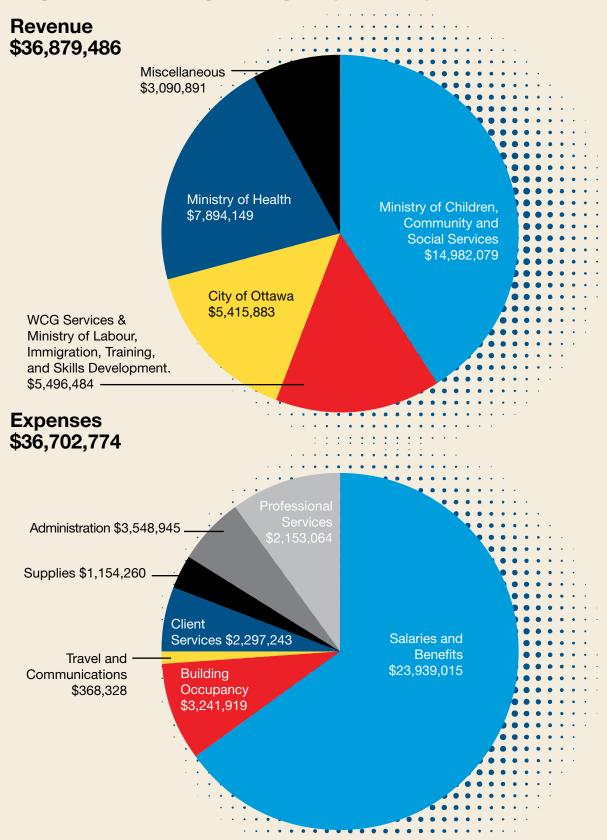
YSB's commitment to quality and continuous improvement was formally recognized this year through our successful reaccreditation by the Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA). This recognition, which must be renewed every four years, validates our dedication to excellence, accountability, and ongoing enhancement of service delivery. The rigorous accreditation process included comprehensive review of organizational processes and policies, extensive interviews with staff, community partners, board members, and stakeholders, as well as detailed site visits, and assessments conducted by trained CCA review team.

As we reflect on this year's achievements, we recognize both the strengths of our mental health services system and the ongoing pressure points created by sustained high demand. The improvements in wait times across our programs represent meaningful progress in ensuring that young people and families can access the support they need when they need it. Our continued focus on evidence-based practices, innovative service delivery models, and quality improvement positions us well to meet the evolving mental health needs of our community while maintaining the highest standards of care.



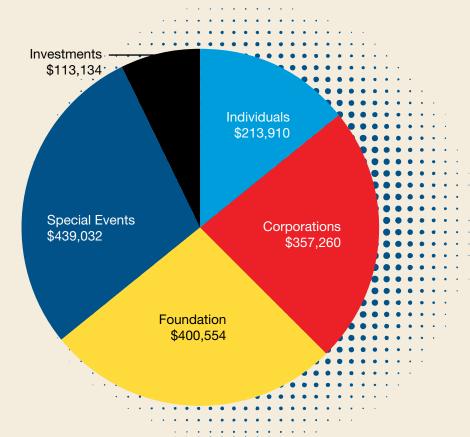


YSB FINANCIALS 2024-25

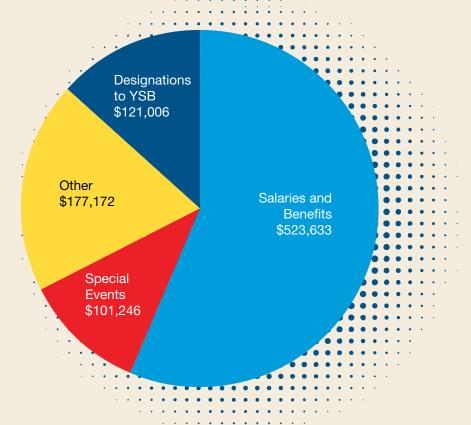


FOUNDATION FINANCIALS 2024-25

Funds Raised \$1,523,890



Expenditures \$923,057





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