

2019 - 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

SUPPORTING PROTECTING CARING TOGETHER

Peel
CAS 



SUPPORTING. PROTECTING. CARING. TOGETHER.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT AND CEO

SUPPORTING. PROTECTING. CARING. TOGETHER.

These are more than just words. These form the cornerstone of our service to the community. They are a philosophy and a promise that are imbedded in our organization – from our vision, mission and core values, to the work we do every single day with children, youth and families.

Supporting, protecting and caring are the “what” of Peel CAS, but *together* is the “how.” The success of our services, and ultimately the positive outcomes for the community we serve, is due to our compassionate and talented staff, Board and caregivers, and our dedicated community partners. We are proud of our high quality programs and our innovative service delivery. However, there can be no innovation without collaboration, and the 2019/20 fiscal year was a testament to the impact of these partnerships. A few highlights include:

- **Board to Board Connect** – On October 29, 2019, Peel CAS hosted the first ever “Board to Board Connect” session, bringing together more than 27 different service providers in Peel to discuss issues and challenges of common interest and opportunities to address them.
- **SAATH** – Peel CAS and Indus Community Services facilitated a community forum on January 17, 2020 regarding the new SAATH service approach. Meaning “together”, SAATH is an integrated service model to better support South Asian children, youth and families by providing culturally responsive services, including the use of a cultural facilitator.
- **National Child Welfare Dialogue** - Child welfare leaders from across Canada met in Ottawa on January 28, 2020 to discuss current and future trends and challenges intersecting child welfare and settlement issues. This first-of-its-kind event was organized by our Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence (CWICE).
- **Akoma Wraparound Program** – On February 6, 2020, Peel CAS launched the Akoma Wraparound Program in partnership with the Black Community Action Network, Roots Community Services and the Free For All Foundation. From the Akan word for “heart,” Akoma is a culturally based program that strives to increase the well-being of African-Caribbean-Black-Canadian families involved in the child welfare system in Peel.

We invite you to read more about these programs and discover their impact within this year’s report.

It is also important that we recognize one additional initiative involving our Ministry and the Information and Privacy Commission of Ontario. On January 1, 2020, Part X of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act came into effect. Part X outlines a more consistent practice for the collection, use, and sharing of personal information managed by ministry-funded organizations. We believe that Part X has provided our sector with an opportunity to achieve greater consistency of policy among child well-being agencies across the province.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not mention COVID-19, the pandemic that has made a profound impact on our daily lives, locally and across the world. It continues to cause significant strain on the child welfare system and has tested the limits of individuals, families, and our community. These are uniquely challenging times, however it is important that we also pay attention to the stories of hope, inspiration and innovation. We are extremely proud of the work of our staff, foster and kin caregivers, adoptive parents, Board and volunteers. Their willingness to adapt, to be innovative and to evolve, has truly been inspiring. They continue to uphold our “how can I help” philosophy, while embracing our commitment to equity practice, and keeping children and youth at home whenever possible.

We are also motivated by the resiliency of the children, youth and families we work with. Their strength is our strength, and forms the bedrock of our thriving community.

We have an opportunity to reshape society for the better, but in order to do that we must have the courage to be transformational in our thinking and actions. We must learn from the past, live in the present, and lead from the future. We have no doubt that together, we will chart a new course for a better tomorrow.

Juliet Jackson, President, Peel CAS Board of Directors
Rav Bains, CEO, Peel CAS

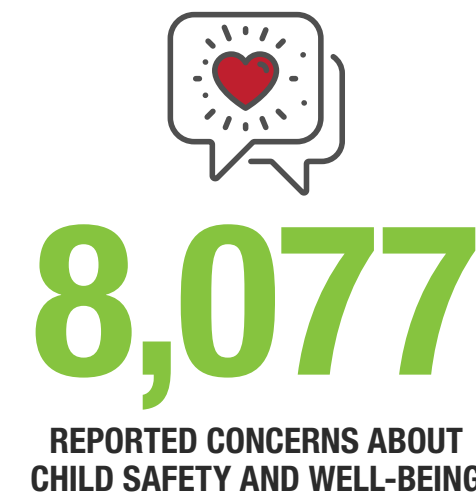
ABOUT THE NUMBERS



Peel CAS has the lowest number of children in care per capita of any CAS in Ontario



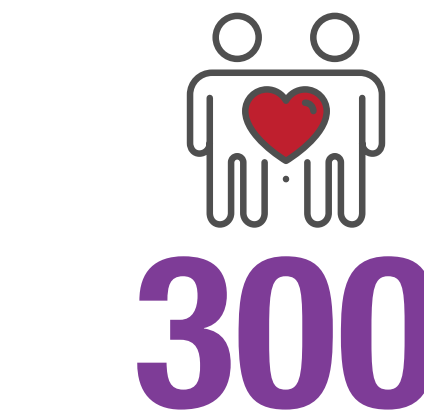
OF THE WORK WE DO IS WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES WITHIN THEIR OWN HOMES



REPORTED CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD SAFETY AND WELL-BEING



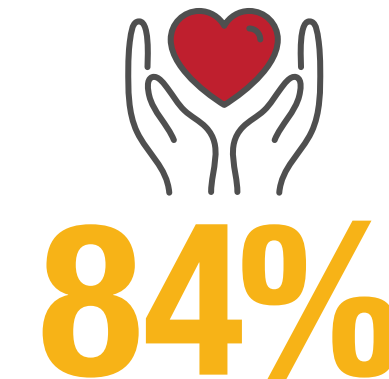
REFERRALS RECEIVED



HOMES FOR CHILDREN PROVIDED BY KINSHIP & FOSTER FAMILIES



FAMILIES SERVED IN OUR COMMUNITY



OVERALL CLIENT SATISFACTION RATING



The panel at the National Child Welfare Dialogue, (L-R) Liz Okai, Rav Bains, and Danielle Ungara (Peel CAS); Sarah Filotas and Giuseppe Basile (Global Affairs Canada); Senator Victor Oh; James Martin and John Helsdon (Canada Border Service Agency); Sylvie J. Lapointe (International Social Service Canada); Mary Beth Moellenkamp (Peel CAS); Gurpreet Malhotra (Indus Community Services); and Henry Parada (Ryerson University).

CWICE

leads first ever National Child Welfare Dialogue

On January 28, 2020, the Child Welfare Immigration Centre of Excellence (CWICE) invited child welfare representatives from across Canada to take part in an important discussion about the impacts of immigration issues on children and youth receiving child protection services. The event featured presentations from Global Affairs Canada, Canada Border Services, International Social Services, and Ryerson University, as well as in-depth discussions about the challenges and innovative practices in each province and territory.

“The discussion identified opportunities for collaboration and partnerships on a national scale,” said Rav Bains, CEO of Peel Children’s Aid. “Those involved with child welfare with unresolved immigration status and/or Canadian citizenship face unique challenges. Provincial and Federal coordination is critical to ensuring equitable outcomes for all children and youth.”

Immigration concerns increase the complexity of child welfare cases, and create additional disadvantages to affected youth, by introducing barriers to health care, education and employment, and can increase stress about the uncertainty of the individual’s status in Canada.

Peel CAS is a leader in supporting children and youth in the child welfare system who are also dealing with unresolved immigration issues. With Canada’s busiest airport being located in the region, Peel CAS has developed considerable expertise over the years and is often called to assist children and families who have just arrived in the country, in some cases fleeing poverty, war, genocide, abuse and neglect, or as victims of human trafficking.

Recognizing the need for an integrated approach to better serve families, in 2018, Peel CAS partnered with the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies to launch CWICE, the first of its kind in Canada. Navigating the immigration system can be a lengthy and complicated process. CWICE provides consultation, research, resource development, and direct clinical services for children and youth receiving child protection services in Ontario.

The National Child Welfare Dialogue created new connections with child welfare organizations across the country, and has led to further discussions about implementing the CWICE model in other provinces and territories. Peel CAS is proud to have developed this innovative service model, and looks forward to seeing these services expand to other jurisdictions.

“Children in care with unresolved immigration issues are some of the most vulnerable people in our society,” said Juliet Jackson, President, Peel CAS Board of Directors. “I am proud that Peel CAS has stepped up to address a gap that wasn’t being addressed elsewhere, and share our expertise with child welfare organizations across Canada. We are prepared to mentor, coach and support other agencies, because we believe in the importance of this work.”



Inset from left: Sara Goff, Daria Allan-Ebron, Rav Bains, Chima Nsitem, Kuldeep Kanda

PROMOTING PEACE

with care

This January we were honoured to receive The International Peace Award for Children’s Rights as presented by the Gandhian Initiative for Development of Support Services (GIDSS). The award is a testament to the incredible work of our staff and valued partners to building stronger communities linked through generosity, empathy and peace.

Established in 2011, GIDSS believes in practising the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi by serving those less fortunate and by spreading love and peace throughout the world. The

organization and its many volunteers work hard to make a positive and lasting effect with marginalized and vulnerable groups. Our shared interests, values and priorities at Peel CAS are equally linked by a shared understanding and appreciation for peace and compassion.

As we celebrate this achievement we are called with caring hearts to strengthen our resolve in making our region an inclusive and vibrant community for all.



Our Wellness Committee celebrating healthy lifestyles through in-house events.

A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

begins with care and commitment

The wellness of our staff and our community is a top priority for our agency. At Peel CAS we approach wellness holistically – focusing on the physical, cultural, mental and spiritual well-being of our teams and the families that we serve.

We were so proud to be named one of Canada’s Healthy Workplace Month® Great Employers by Excellence Canada and Canada Life this past October. Peel CAS was celebrated for our planning and action to foster a physically and psychologically safe and healthy workplace within four categories: mental health and workplace culture, healthy lifestyles, physical environment and corporate social responsibility.

The accolade is in recognition of the care and dedication of our Workplace Wellness Committee, Health & Safety Committee and Peer Support Teams. Together with these inspiring groups, our

comprehensive wellness strategy encompasses an exceptional benefits program, interactive events, seminars and resources, a recognition program and various outlets for feedback and development.

As part of our wellness programming, each year our highly anticipated Workplace Wellness Fair showcases several healthy lifestyle vendors from across the region. Staff and community members share tips and resources from stress management solutions and fitness to counselling services and art therapy. We also host various wellness engagement programs in-house including meditation sessions, Zumba classes, acupuncture, Yoga and guided lunch and learn presentations.

We applaud our teams for encouraging each and every one of us to reach our full potential through healthier lifestyles.



Workplace Wellness Fair with community partners.

CHILD PROTECTION

is a shared responsibility

The services provided to the community by Peel CAS are crucial to the ongoing safety of children and youth throughout our region. Despite the ever present challenges we face as a sector, we confidently pursue new opportunities and partnerships with the unwavering support of our incredible community. Tackling the complex and nuanced nature of child welfare requires innovative thinking and strengthened core services which we continue to build each year.

As part of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, our agency has a Child Abuse Review Team (CART) that includes representatives from the medical community, police, education system, community services and the Office of the Crown Attorney. This multi-agency committee focuses on improving child abuse investigations and community collaboration to better serve children, youth and families in Peel. Child protection is a shared responsibility and we all have a duty to work together to help keep children safe.

This program, like many others, broadens the reach of Peel CAS to protect and strengthen our society's most vulnerable. Domestic violence represents **28%** of all referrals; **26%** of our calls involve physical abuse and **14%** are related to caregiving capacity including mental health concerns and addictions.

"A critical piece in our partnerships is to assess risk and provide enhanced safety for children and youth, and the best way to build the safety and stability of the child is to strengthen the safety of the family unit," said Daria Allan-Ebron, Service Director, Advice and Assessment, Peel CAS.

The ongoing and growing support from the community is the reason we are able to offer the level of service that we do, with our dedicated team of qualified and caring staff.

Thank you to our CART Members for your continued support and advocacy:

Associated Youth Services of Peel (AYSP)

Child Development Resource Connection Peel (CDRCP)

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board

Malton Neighbourhood Services (MNS)

Peel Children's Centre

Peel Crown Attorney's Office

Peel District School Board

Peel Regional Police

Caledon Ontario Provincial Police

Region of Peel – Human Services, Public Health

Trillium Health Partners

William Osler Health System



WE ARE HERE TO HELP



Left to right, Senator Victor Oh, Cliff Silveira (Peel Children's Aid Foundation Board President) and Renae Addis (Executive Director Peel Children's Aid Foundation). Photo cred: Andrea Marchant Photography

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to our agency operations. We have worked quickly to meet these challenges in order to continue to support our community's most vulnerable.

"This is an extremely stressful time for families. Physical isolation combined with mounting anxiety surrounding the health of their family, strained finances and a lack of accessible services and support is overwhelming. These added stressors often indicate that the well-being of children and youth is at a greater risk. Our message to families is that they are not alone – we are here to help, call us," said Daria Allan-Ebron, Service Director, Advice and Assessment, Peel CAS.

While continuing to follow recommendations from public health officials, our team rallied alongside our community partners to develop innovative strategies to keep our operations running efficiently. The health and well-being of our staff, caregivers and the children and families we support is always our top priority. All of our 24/7 child protection services remained intact through a modified remote working strategy. The following programs were implemented to maintain effective service delivery:

COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund

The fund was established by Peel Children's Aid Foundation to provide more than **400** families and **200** youth with urgent items including grocery gift cards, disinfectant supplies, clothing, cell phones, toiletries, baby formula and other emergency needs.

Community Partnerships

In partnership with the Mississauga Convention Centre (MCC), the Foundation's staff and volunteers delivered MCC donated meals to **45** families each week. They also continued to provide much needed items through our Distribution Centre to hundreds of families that require food, clothing and hygiene products.

Our partners at Safe Centre Peel, Victim Services, Interim Place, Family Resource Life Centre, Catholic Cross Cultural Services and Indus provided assistance through new 24/7 intake hotlines, increased translation services and maintained commitment to referrals, assessment and support programs.

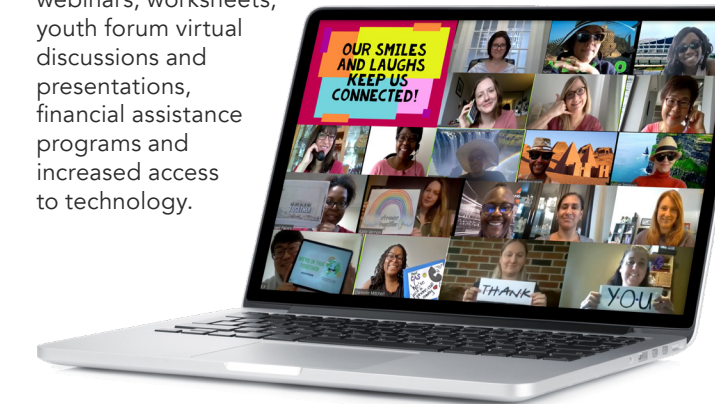
"Community collaboration, understanding and equity intelligence are always critical. We have a responsibility to be mindful of intersectionality on marginalized families and to ensure that cultural needs are also met and supported", said Chima Nsitem, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Peel CAS.

Staff Support Systems

Our teams highlighted the importance of self-care during this period, taking into account all of the resources available to staff through our Employee Assistance Program and Peer Support Teams. Our internal Wellness Committee also provided helpful mental health resources for employees and their clients to practise at home. Personal Protective Equipment was provided to our front-line staff when visiting family homes and taking

care of children. We also implemented a new form of service delivery through virtual platforms which improved accessibility and interactions with children, youth, families and caregivers.

We developed tailored resources for each of our client groups which included educational activities for youth, e-learning webinars, worksheets, youth forum virtual discussions and presentations, financial assistance programs and increased access to technology.



Communication Networks

Open lines of transparent communication with our team members, families and community partners continues to be prominent. Internally we hosted a virtual all-staff meeting of over **440** employees; our IT department ensured that our team members had the tools they needed to work remotely; internal videos of appreciation were circulated; and digital workshops provided innovative tools for client interaction while maintaining positive morale.

"We continue to be inspired by the overwhelming support from our community, steadfast dedication from our staff, and the strength of the children, youth and families we serve. Thank you all for your unwavering commitment to work together to make our community stronger for a better tomorrow," said Rav Bains, CEO, Peel CAS.

AKOMA Wraparound Program

This January, Peel CAS launched the Akoma (Akan word for heart) Wraparound Program as a pilot project with Roots Community Services and the Free for All Foundation. This initiative seeks to reduce racial inequities and increase the well-being of African-Caribbean-Black-Canadian (ACB) families who are involved with the child welfare system in Peel. Developed in consultation with numerous community stakeholders, the "Akoma" service model is the result of an alliance between the Black Community Action Network (BCAN) and Peel CAS.

Participating youth and families are paired with an Akoma wraparound worker, a highly trained and experienced professional who integrates case management, counseling, community engagement, system navigation and advocacy, through a lens of anti-Black racism and anti-oppression principles. Through Akoma, families receive culturally-sensitive support and resources to meet their social, mental and economic needs.

"As a child welfare agency, Peel CAS exists to support children, youth and families," says Peel CAS CEO Rav Bains. "We want African-Canadian families to know that we are listening and are committed to providing culturally-safe and supportive services so that they experience us differently."

Elements of the Akoma program include:

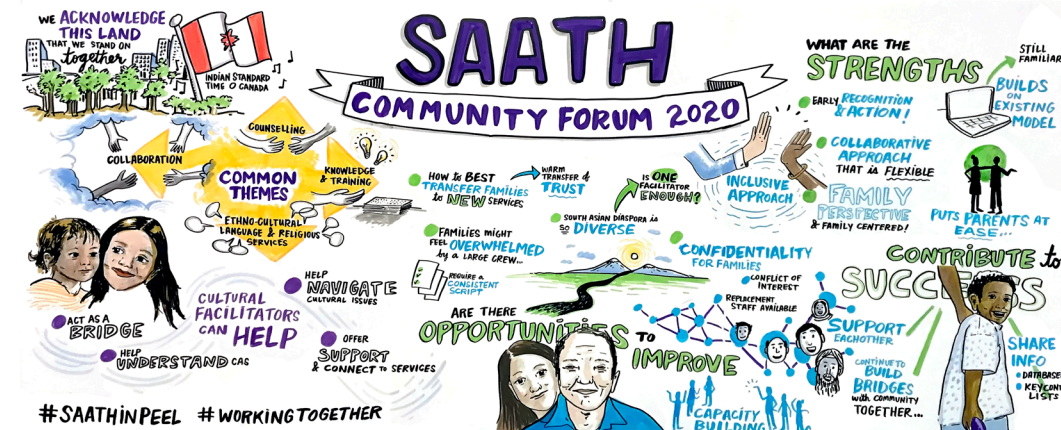
- Joint visits with a CAS child protection worker and Akoma wraparound worker;
- Afro-centric parenting and informal networking support;
- Access to support with employment, housing, education and child care;
- Facilitating mental health service support through community partnerships.

"We are pleased to have partnered with Peel CAS," said BCAN Executive Director, Sophia Brown-Ramsay. "Aligning with Peel CAS on this initiative allows us to strategically address anti-Black racism and collectively address issues and barriers faced by African-Canadian families in Peel."



Akoma Wraparound Event

Peel CAS is proud to have the lowest number of children in foster care per capita in the province. The agency is committed to continuous improvement in its support of our region's diverse communities. Programs like Akoma recognize the systemic barriers and oppression racialized youth and families experience, and help to address them through cultural sensitivity and community partnerships.



SAATH program supports South Asian community

Peel CAS and Indus Community Services hosted an interactive community forum on January 17, 2020 to discuss the SAATH approach. SAATH, which means "together" in Hindi, is a partnership between the two agencies to provide an integrated, innovative approach to service delivery to help achieve better outcomes for South Asian families.

Similar to the Akoma Wraparound Program, SAATH aims to provide a culturally centred approach, with a focus on the unique perspectives and experiences of the South Asian community. When Peel CAS comes in contact with a family who may benefit from SAATH, staff reach out to Indus to connect with a cultural facilitator. This facilitator has strong connections to South Asian communities and familiarity with their languages, religions, traditions, and cultural practices. Also well-versed in the specifics of the child welfare system, the facilitator can provide culturally appropriate resources and support to the family, help navigate cultural issues, and advocate for the family's needs in cooperation with the child protection worker.

"SAATH is the culmination of many years of collaboration between Indus and Peel Children's Aid," said Gurpreet Malhotra, CEO of Indus Community Services. "Our interactive community forum was a great opportunity to hear from the community and other service agencies on how we can move forward, continue to improve, and provide the best possible services to the families we support."

Peel CAS is pleased to be building strong working relationships with the many communities in Peel Region. SAATH and Akoma are important steps toward building trust with families of diverse cultural backgrounds to work together on building a better future for the children and youth we serve.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Province of Ontario launches process at Peel CAS

On September 18, 2019, Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, Jill Dunlop, announced a community engagement process focused on improving the Province's adoption system.

Minister Dunlop, along with Jeremy Roberts, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister, went on to host roundtable discussions across the province as well as an online survey to broadly consult on child welfare modernization and make adoption easier for children and families.

With MPPs Deepak Anand, Natalia Kusendova and Nina Tangri as well as Nicole Bonnie, OACAS CEO in attendance, Dunlop applauded Peel CAS's commitment to family based care and to improving the lives of children and youth in the child welfare system. Peel CAS was pleased to participate in this launch, and subsequent conversations with the Province and other stakeholders to improve the child welfare system.



Inset from left: MPP Nina Tangri, Minister Jill Dunlop, Rav Bains, Parliamentary Assistant Jeremy Roberts, Nicole Bonnie, MPP Deepak Anand and MPP Natalia Kusendova

ADVOCATING TOGETHER

with youth and for youth



Our team's youth success strategy focuses on helping youth prepare for adulthood by giving them the tools that they need to build healthy lifestyles and achieve their goals. From bursary programs for post-secondary education to seminars and mentorship initiatives, we continue to assist in building successful life skills in partnership with community agencies.

Together with our Peel Children's Aid Foundation, this year we were able to provide over **60** bursaries to aspiring graduates totaling over **\$220,000**.

"We want to ensure students receive the support and stability they need while in school," said Renae Addis, Executive Director, Peel Children's Aid Foundation.

"As a third year student I am grateful for the support as it helps reduce the need to work long hours to cover expenses. The bursary helps me focus on school and maintain my GPA," said Nashane, Peel CAS bursary recipient and student at York University.

Financial literacy has also become a cornerstone of our skills development strategy. Upon completion of

the financial literacy program youth are connected to employment opportunities. Between October and February, 51 youth ages 15-21 participated in this training.

"I'm lucky and thankful to find work through Peel CAS contacts," said Christina, Peel CAS Youth Council Member.

To enhance our community outreach, we launched a Youth Council this past January which is designed to provide networking opportunities and easy access to resources for youth in Peel. We also have an agency Board member sitting on our Youth Council to help ensure their voices are reflected at the governance level.

In response to COVID-19, our Youth Council has created a website, inittotheryouth.org, and social media groups to promote engagement, facilitate 24/7 conversations and to bring about awareness of financial assistance programs, wellness activities and employment services.

In partnership with the Halton Children's Aid Society and the Ontario Education Championship Team (OECT) the council was proud to host our first virtual #InItTogether Youth Forum with over **130** participants from across the province. The evening featured guest speakers providing helpful tips and resources for youth on topics including financial aid, entrepreneurship, health and wellness, and training development opportunities.

"It's amazing to be associated with young people and an organization that goes to great lengths to create opportunities for our youth to connect, learn and build a community to support each other," said Sandeep Auja, Peel CAS Board Member and youth mentor.

Operating Revenue and Expenses April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020

	2019	2020
Revenue		
Ministry funding		
Current year	68,681,237	69,871,912
Income from other sources	174,486	132,504
Gain on sale of assets	3,791,481	0
	72,647,204	70,004,416
Expenditures		
Adoption costs	870,961	895,834
Boarding rates	10,892,032	10,932,968
Building occupancy	2,842,267	2,670,777
Clients' personal needs	1,309,005	1,501,580
Employee benefits	9,072,800	9,672,812
Health and related costs	480,674	459,683
Miscellaneous	394,463	482,811
Office administration	219,040	340,725
Other program costs	176,144	195,495
Promotion and publicity	287,615	346,228
Purchased services-client	780,457	1,085,211
Purchased services-non-client	564,203	353,326
Salaries & wages	38,747,196	39,246,168
Technology	658,479	1,113,032
Training and recruitment	449,413	555,476
Travel	1,456,817	1,518,536
Amortization - net	465,288	367,678
	69,666,854	71,738,340
Expenditure recoveries	1,632,381	1,943,992
	68,034,473	69,794,348
Surplus of revenue over expenditures for the year	4,612,734	210,068
Fund balance -beginning of year	2,467,660	7,080,391
Transfer to operating fund from capital fund	0	0
Fund balances - end of year	7,080,391	7,290,459

Full audited financial statements are available upon request. Please call 905-363-6131 ext. 3334.

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