



2024 - 2025
ANNUAL
REPORT

Children's Aid
Society



La *Société* de
l'aide à l'enfance

WINDSOR - ESSEX



A MESSAGE



BOARD CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“Together, we have achieved meaningful progress.”

Dear Members of the Board, Community Partners, and Friends,

It is our privilege to present the Board Chair and Executive Director's Report for the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society (WECAS) for the past year. This has been a year of both progress and significant challenges, and we are proud of how our staff, foster families, volunteers, and partners have worked with resilience and dedication to ensure the safety and well-being of children, youth, and families in our community.

Key Successes

1. Strengthening Services to Children, Youth, and Families

- We continued to prioritize family preservation and early intervention, with increased emphasis on prevention and community-based supports.
- Investments in culturally responsive practices have strengthened our work with Indigenous, Black, and newcomer families, helping to reduce disproportionality in care.
- WECAS has been the safety net for children and youth with complex needs and their families.

2. Supporting Youth in and from Care

- The Society enhanced supports for youth transitioning out of care, including improved access to housing, education, and mental health resources.
- Through partnerships with our Foundation and donors, youth in care were supported in pursuing higher education and training opportunities.

3. Staff Commitment and Innovation

- Despite resource pressures, staff continued to deliver high-quality services, demonstrating extraordinary compassion and professionalism.
- We remain focused on our staff, recognizing the importance of supporting our workforce during a period of high demand and organizational change.
- Staff have continued to support the most vulnerable and challenging children and youth, despite the lack of appropriate placements for them.

4. Community Partnerships

- Collaboration with community agencies, schools, and health providers strengthened wrap-around supports for families.
- Our partnerships with local First Nations and Indigenous service providers have deepened, advancing our commitments to Truth and Reconciliation.

Mission Statement

The Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society is dedicated to the well-being and safety of every child by advocating for, and partnering with, our children, families and communities.



MESSAGE CONTINUED

Key Challenges

1. Financial Pressures

- Like many children's aid societies across Ontario, WECAS faced a structural deficit due to flat or insufficient provincial funding despite rising service demands.
- Cost-saving measures and deficit management planning were required, including difficult decisions around staffing and program delivery.
- The cost of supporting children and youth with complex needs is a significant cost driver for our budget.

2. Increasing Complexity of Needs

- Families are presenting with increasingly complex needs, including housing instability, food insecurity, mental health challenges, and the impact of systemic inequities.
- The lack of specialized residential placements for children and youth with complex needs continues to be a critical gap, leaving agencies struggling to find appropriate supports.

3. Workforce Strain

- Restructuring and workforce realignment have placed significant stress on our staff.
- The cumulative stress of fewer resources and complex cases, including the staffing of these children and youth, has negatively impacted staff.

4. Systemic and Legislative Change

- Shifts in child welfare policy and oversight have required significant adaptation. While many of these changes are positive, they require resources, training, and time to implement effectively.



Looking Forward

As we move into the next year, WECAS remains committed to strengthening families, protecting children, and working in partnership with our community to build a more responsive and equitable child welfare system. Our priorities will include:

- Continuing advocacy for adequate funding and resources to meet community needs.
- Advancing equity and anti-oppression initiatives to ensure services are fair, inclusive, and culturally safe.
- Expanding prevention and early intervention services to support families before crises occur.
- Investing in our staff and caregiver community to ensure the sustainability of our workforce and programs.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Board of Directors for their leadership, to our dedicated staff, volunteers and foster families for their tireless efforts, and to our many community partners for their collaboration and shared commitment to children and families in Windsor-Essex. Together, despite challenges, we have achieved meaningful progress. With continued resilience, innovation, and community support, we will move forward with confidence and compassion.

Respectfully submitted,



Kulveer Virk
Board Chair



Derrick Drouillard
Executive Director



DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

On February 11th, WECAS staff gathered to honour Black History Month by reflecting on the colonization and discrimination within the child welfare system, which creates inequities for black families. This time was a reminder of the importance of our continued commitment to addressing systemic barriers to ensure that we are delivering services in a more equitable and culturally responsive way to meet the needs of families.



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER PRESTON CHASE,
FILMMAKER, HISTORIAN AND
SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER**

NATIONAL DAY OF TRUTH & RECONCILIATION



September 30th is NDTR, and this year's theme was "Restoring Connections to Culture as a Pathway to Wellness & Healing". On this day, WECAS staff gathered to honour the children, families, and communities impacted by residential schools and take a moment to learn about the rich cultures, voices, and histories of the First Nations, Inuit, and Metis (FNIM) peoples. Staff took pride in wearing orange to show their support and to raise awareness of the intergenerational impacts of residential schools, emphasizing the message that "Every Child Matters".

RAMADAN MUBARAK

The Society's Muslim Relations Committee delivered a series of initiatives to celebrate Ramadan and Eid with Muslim children in care of the Society and those in ongoing family service. On April 4th, a celebration was held that included a Guest Speaker, Sheikh Amir, ISWA, dinner and Eid gifts. We were grateful to ISWA and the ICNA sisters who provided the Iftar meal.



JUNE PRIDE MONTH & PRIDE PARADE CELEBRATIONS

As an agency dedicated to the well-being and safety of every child, and to advocate for marginalized children, families and communities, we acknowledge our responsibility through our work and in our sphere of influence to enhance the 2SLGBTQIA+ community's outcomes and experiences. We stand firmly in the belief that all youth, including 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, have a right to respect, safety and well-being in all spaces.



2024- 2025 AT A GLANCE



June 19, 2025 – Media Event to Announce Opening of the YouThrive Program & Transitional Housing Facility

Mayor Drew Dilkens, Cynthia Summers, CEO, Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation and members of the local media joined WECAS leadership at the grand opening on June 19th. With funding from three levels of government, a partnership between the City of Windsor, Public Safety Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation (CHC) and the Windsor Essex Children's Aid Society (WECAS) officially opened the youth supportive housing complex with dedicated life skills programming. The housing complex created by the CHC, will support up to 15 individuals at a time, between the ages of 18 and 23, transitioning out of the child welfare system and into adulthood.



Food For Families on Family Day – On Family Day, February 19th, volunteers came together once again at Sobeys, St. Clair Beach, to support the "Food for Families" initiative, organized by Co-operators, PLP Financial Services Inc. Over 100 people came out to help, including WECAS Staff members and their families, volunteers, community members, and, new this year, members of the Windsor Express basketball team! Together, they bagged over 1,300 bags of groceries that were distributed to families receiving services from WECAS.

National Volunteer Week in Canada was April 27 – May 3.

On May 3rd, we proudly recognized all of our amazing Volunteers at our Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon. We were joined by Volunteer Drivers, Tutors/Mentors, Fundraising & Special Events Volunteers and members of our Society Board of Directors. It was a wonderful celebration in honour of National Volunteer Week! This event was sponsored by our CUPE 2286 Union.



May 14th marked the 10th anniversary of Children and Youth in Care Day. Celebrated annually in Ontario, it recognizes the resilience, strength, and contributions of young people in and from care. WECAS participated in the ongoing provincial campaign organized by the OACAS, #ForgetMeNot. Children and youth were invited to the WECAS agency to create their own interpretations of forget-me-nots. The finished paintings are now displayed on the upper walls of the fourth floor and other areas of the building. This display serves as a permanent reminder of the children and youth the agency serves and reinforces the message that they are not forgotten.

2024- 2025 MORE AT A GLANCE

5/5 On the Drive May 5th – Over 130 guests attended WECAF’s annual signature event, 5/5 on the Drive: A Celebration of Cinco De Mayo, held on Sunday, May 5th at J.P. Wiser’s Experience Centre. Guests enjoyed an afternoon of Latin music, delicious Mexican/Canadian food, and an opportunity to win prize packages featured in the Piñata Dream Raffle. Proceeds from 5/5 on the Drive were applied to the Foundation’s three-year campaign, exceeding the \$1.5 million campaign goal. The campaign focused on programs that strengthen families and support youth. The event also honoured retiring Foundation Board Chair Cheryl Sprague for her over a decade of dedication.



WECAS hosted a Community of Care “Think Tank” on May 27th to address the growing crisis around the lack of services and placements for children and youth with complex needs. The purpose of this community gathering was to bring service providers and stakeholders together to strengthen collaboration and explore system solutions through enhanced service delivery coordination, communication, advocacy and information and resource sharing. Over 25 community agencies in the areas of health care, developmental services, education, and housing attended the event.

Youth Conference held on April 27th – On April 27th, two-time Canadian Olympian Brandon McBride and his awesome team of Mentors at McBride Youth United Association put on an incredible event for our community youth. Brandon spoke to the youth about the importance of having people in your corner to support your goals and that having grit, and demonstrating hard work and perseverance led him to success both on and off the track.



2024- 2025 MORE AT A GLANCE



Dress Purple Day on October 25th – We all have a role to play in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families in Ontario. On Dress Purple Day, we showed our support for the children, youth, and families in our community facing challenges. The community was inspired to dress purple to show your friends, family, neighbours and community that you are available to help.

Foster Parent Appreciation Event at Point Pelee – On Saturday, October 19, 2024, WECAS hosted all of our foster parents for an Annual Appreciation Event. This year, the event took place at Point Pelee National Park, and it was a day to remember! Many of our foster families attended and enjoyed the beach, a campfire, a scavenger hunt, delicious food and many smiles together. Some people described the day as feeling like a family reunion. The weather could not have been better for sharing such a wonderful celebration. It was a feel-good day, and our foster families deserved it!



S.E.E.D Store Opens July 2024 – The agency opened the S.E.E.D (Security, Equity, Empathy & Dignity) Store with a \$55,000 grant from the Solcz Family Foundation. The goal of the new program is to address the challenges and barriers of food insecurity and the rising cost of living, particularly for those served by the Society.

The store was established for youth and families to access on an emergency basis, items for free, to help meet their basic needs in the short term, while they seek more sustainable solutions within their community of supports. The Store also provides community resources relevant to their current needs to ensure we are always working toward supporting them in their own community of services.

The store has shown great success in its first year by offering free, timely and targeted support to service recipients. This program will continue to help those in need of food, personal care, and household supplies throughout the holiday season and beyond.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2024 – 2025 Financial Summary

	2024-2025	2023-2024
Province of Ontario	\$57,442,051	\$57,198,677
Other Income	624,725	693,040
Non-Retainable Revenue & Expenditure Recoveries	1,785,652	2,282,004
Total Revenue	59,852,428	60,173,721
Salaries, Benefits, Travel and Training	43,454,542	41,398,212
Boarding Rate Payments	15,179,602	13,842,402
Child, Youth and Family Costs	4,842,017	4,897,163
Administration and Technology	4,303,385	4,250,584
Total Expenditures	67,779,546	64,388,361
Deficiency of Revenue Over Expenditures	\$ (7,927,118)	\$ (4,214,640)

Audited Financial Statements available at wecas.on.ca

SERVICE statistics

- Families Served in Community with Protection Concerns...**3,582**
- Investigations Completed...**2,785**
- Average Families Served at Ongoing Protection...**797**

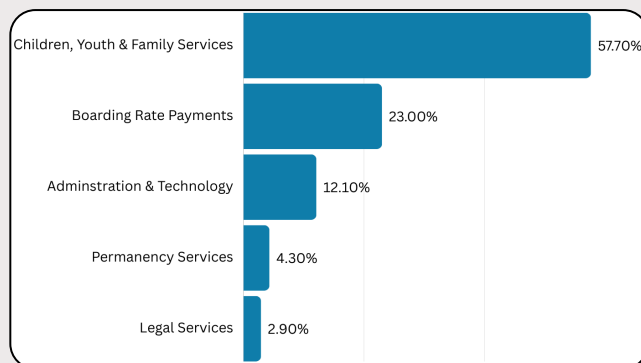
CHILDREN & YOUTH served

- Children and youth in care...**212**
- Youth served through RSG program...**155**
- Children and youth in kinship service...**136**
- Transitional aged youth...**3**
- Adoptions completed...**18**

SERVICE complement

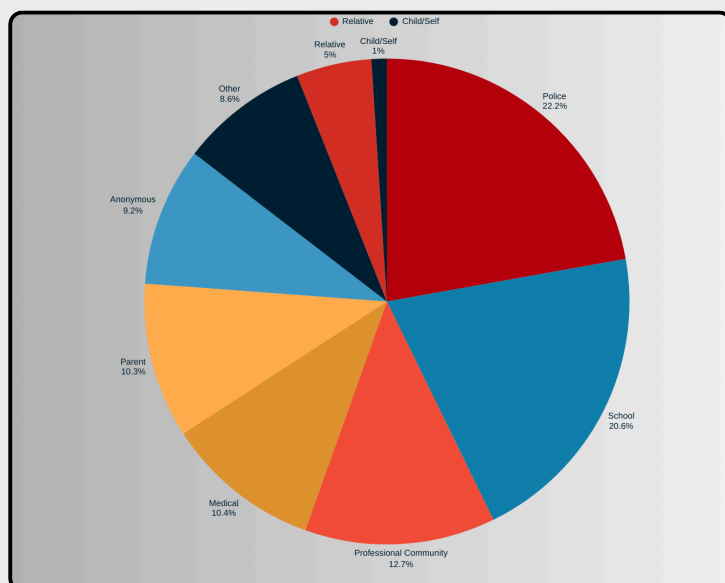
Staff ↔ **334.4** *full-time equivalent
 Volunteers ↔ **114**
 Community Links ↔ **200**
 Kinship Service Homes ↔ **110**
 Foster and Kinship Care Homes ↔ **90**

HOW THE DOLLAR WAS SPENT



Total
 Year ended March 31, 2025
\$65,993,894 (net)

REFERRAL SOURCES





BOARD OF DIRECTORS & SENIOR LEADERSHIP

2024 – 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Kulveer Virk, Chair
Ms. Stephanie Savoni, Vice Chair
Ms. Melissa Cuzzocrea, Treasurer
Ms. Stephanie Williams, Secretary
Cst. Shane Renaud, Services Planning Committee Chair
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Ms. Kendall Dunlop
Ms. Princess Small
Ms. Neelu Sehgal
Ms. Marium Tolson-Murtty
Mr. Chris Werstein

2024 – 2025 SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Mr. Derrick Drouillard, Executive Director
Ms. Olivia Carlini, Director of Finance and Administration
Ms. Jaclyn Beaudoin, Director of Human Resources
Mr. Leonardo Gil, Senior Director of Services
Dr. Kim Brisebois, Director of Intake and After Hours
Mr. Bill Morris, Director of Resources & Permanency (retired June 2024)
Ms. Loran Dutka, Director of Family Services
Ms. Jacqueline Bobyk-Krumins, Director of Children Services
Ms. Dorothy Watson, Director of Resources (started June 2024)
Mr. Hugo Vega, Director of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
Ms. Claudine Wilson, Director of Legal & Privacy Services
Ms. Candice Hanna, Director of Family Services (September 2024 – May 2025)

THANK YOU



(519) 252-1171



www.wecas.on.ca

