

# Strides at Five!

2024 – 2025  
Annual Report



## VISION

# Thriving children, youth, families and communities.

## MISSION

**We build strength and resilience with infants, children, youth and families, by providing equitable, accessible, client-driven services, system leadership and advocacy.**

## VALUES

**Excellence  
Collaboration  
Respect  
Courage**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lauren Dade, Chair  
Donna Chow, Vice Chair  
Nadia Sahadeo, Treasurer  
Sibel Cicek  
Bryan Heal  
Paul Huyer  
Laura Jamer  
William Lumsden  
Tom Moutsatsos  
Jason Pilz  
Vidya Rajasingam  
Zannalyn Robest  
Ragaven Sabaratnam  
Lin Sallay

# Reflections on Strides' Five Year Anniversary:

## Message from the Board Chair and President and CEO

It is hard to believe that five years have passed since Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre and East Metro Youth Services came together to form Strides Toronto in 2020.

At the height of a global pandemic that kept us apart physically, our journey began with a bold act of unity that shaped us into a stronger, more effective organization, rooted in community and committed to equity. As we integrated our services and operations, we also continued to grow, finding new and better ways to support infants, children, youth and their families. We have grown from a \$30 million to a \$45 million organization expanding our ability to respond to the complex and evolving needs of the communities we serve.

Each new year brought us closer to realizing the agency we envisioned at the time of amalgamation. Our commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) has been foundational in that journey. We embed IDEA at all levels of the organization through hiring, policies, training and accountability. In addition, Strides Toronto continues to lead a coalition of agencies through the HOPE Strategy (Honouring Our Promise: Ending Anti-Black Racism), advancing a sector-wide transformation towards greater inclusivity and anti-racism.

We reached a major milestone this year by relocating three sites to two new locations designed to create welcoming, accessible environments for clients, and to foster greater staff collaboration. We are incredibly grateful to the many staff members whose efforts brought these new spaces to life and to our funders for their incredible financial support.

In the fall, with funding support from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, we secured a dedicated home for our Anti-Human Trafficking residential treatment program for young survivors of trafficking. Scheduled to open in the fall of 2025, the program will be supported by an interdisciplinary team that will work with partners such as Toronto District School Board and the Children's Aid Society's Children at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) Unit to deliver a comprehensive treatment and educational program.

Investments in data and quality have helped us better understand the needs of our clients and communities, providing real-time insights that inform service planning and delivery across our programs. We have applied learnings to reduce our family counselling waitlist through a focused quality improvement initiative. At the same time, we continue to advocate for increased investment in the community workforce, recognizing sector-wide pressures that create barriers to timely access to service. Our Youth and Family Advisory Committees have been vital allies in our work, offering direct input into program design, sharing their lived experiences, and ensuring that our services remain grounded in the realities of the people we serve.

Throughout, Strides has been shaped by the collective efforts of many. Our board has provided exceptional governance leadership, guiding the organization's strategic decisions and priorities. Across the organization, staff have been agile and resilient, continuing to support infants, children, youth, and families with compassion and excellence. Our system transformation efforts are enabled by the collaboration and contributions of many partners. Together, this collective effort allows Strides Toronto to be bold and remain responsive to evolving needs. Many thanks to all for your efforts over the last year. We are stronger for it!

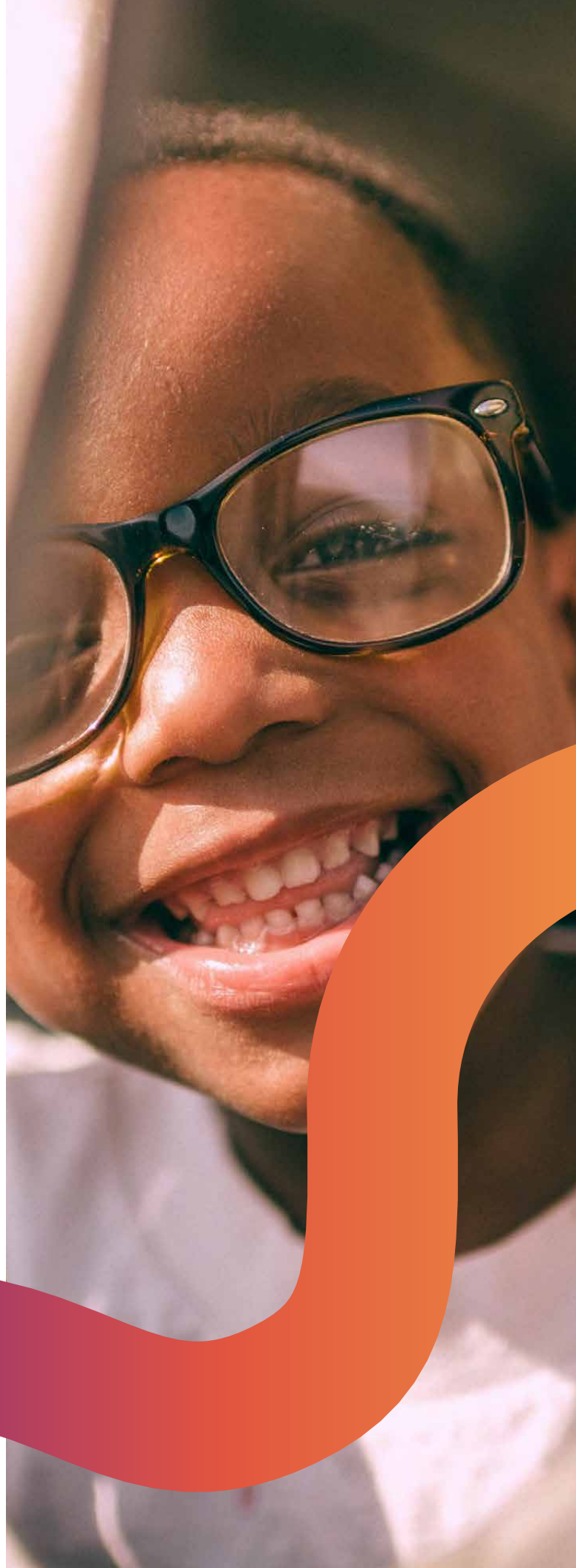
Looking ahead, we are building on a strong foundation as we embark on our next five years and remain committed to learning and leadership. As a multi-service agency, we will continue to adapt to meet the diverse and changing needs of the communities we serve. Grounded in our values and driven by the strengths of those we serve, we will keep working in partnership to advance meaningful change towards a city where every infant, child and youth has the opportunity to thrive.



**Janet McCrimmon**  
President and CEO



**Lauren Dade**  
Chair of the Board



## Client Quote

"The therapy my son has been receiving through Strides has been extremely helpful. As a parent I have learned multiple strategies that have made communication with my child easier and much more positive.

It is also very comforting having the therapist available as a resource when things are negatively spiraling. My son feels comfortable enough around her that he seems to be able to open up."

– Parent, Mental Health Services

# We have grown!



**\$43mil**  
in funding



**380**  
total employees



**38**  
languages spoken  
by our employees



# Driving Change through System Leadership and Equity

Strides Toronto continues to lead transformative initiatives that align with our five strategic pillars. From expanding system access to championing diversity, our recent achievements include:

## Reducing Wait Lists

After a redesign of our intake protocols, our referral systems and our model of service, we have reduced average wait times for Family Counselling by 55%, from 284 to 82 days. At the Toronto East Youth Wellness Hub, an agile Brief Therapy model has reduced wait times from three to four months to just two to four weeks.

## Advisory Councils

We have re-engaged our Youth Advisory Council and launched a Family Advisory Council, both of which are informing key areas such as service design, client experience, and advocacy work.

## Governance Leadership

Our commitment to the 50–30 Challenge has earned recognition from the UN Global Compact Network Canada. We now have 62% representation from women and 69% of the board identifies as being from equity-deserving groups (e.g., racialized individuals; members of the 2SLGBTQ community) above the challenge targets.

## Training for Black Youth Mental Health Support

In partnership with the Scarborough Ontario Health Team, we were funded \$363K to lead a joint initiative to create a mental health and addictions training program and curriculum aimed at equipping non-Mental health and addictions (MHA) professionals with the skills to better support Black youth and their families. We have trained approximately 150 non-MHA professionals in Scarborough to support this initiative.



**1,998**  
unique clients  
were served by  
Help Ahead

# A Safe Place to Heal:

## Launching Our Anti-Human Trafficking Treatment Program

Toronto remains a major hub for human trafficking, accounting for 22% of all Canadian cases between 2011 and 2021. Recognizing this ongoing crisis, Strides Toronto has taken decisive action. Aligned with the Government of Ontario's renewed Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy, we have designed a specialized, live-in treatment program tailored to the unique needs of female-identified youth aged 12 to 17 who are survivors of sex trafficking.

Our approach was grounded in collaboration. With input from the Lotus Health Clinic at The Hospital for Sick Children, Victim Services Toronto, the Children's Aid Society's *Children at Risk of Exploitation* (CARE) Unit, community consultants and survivor advocates, we developed a holistic model of service rooted in trauma-informed care and survivor voice. In the fall of 2023, we were approved for a capital investment through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to acquire a treatment home. We have since secured a home that will provide safe housing for up to five youth simultaneously. The site features a wellness and fitness room, a craft and computer room, a large private yard, and light-filled common areas to support recovery and growth.

Staffed by an interdisciplinary team that includes child and youth care practitioners, complex care navigators, a teacher from the Toronto District School Board, a nurse practitioner and a psychotherapist, this 24/7 live-in program will offer wraparound support through individualized, evidence-based care. Referrals will come primarily through CARE Units, along with other mental health or child welfare pathways.

Opening in fall 2025, this program is a critical step toward healing and long-term resilience for survivors in our community.



# Creating Space for Growth:

## Our Move to New Homes

In 2024, Strides Toronto transitioned three of its locations to two newly renovated service hubs at 100 Consilium Place and 1940 Eglinton Avenue East. This transition was a landmark achievement, shaped by thoughtful planning, stakeholder engagement and a commitment to operational continuity to minimize disruption to service. Throughout the process, our teams were driven to enhance both operational excellence and ensure positive client and family experiences.

Each new space was designed with inclusivity and wellness in mind. Features include universal and gender-neutral washrooms, a wellness room, accessible kitchen features, braille signage and automatic door openers. Co-located programs promote collaboration and seamless service integration. Our IT team ensured continued high-performance connectivity, while additional staff coordinated the secure transfer and digitization of many organizational records.

From a client service lens, we have continued our partnerships with the City of Toronto to create an enhanced youth space and with the TDSB for an onsite classroom. Thanks to some additional funding from CAMH, we were able to re-establish and expand our Youth Wellness Hub at 100 Consilium Place.

These milestone moves are a testament to the dedication of our staff, leadership and board of directors. These new homes are not just buildings; they are platforms for more integrated and accessible services for clients, deeper connections amongst staff, and a stronger future for our staff, our clients and the community. We are grateful to our funders including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health for their support of these projects, as well as our landlords Starlight and Madison Group for their investments in our new spaces.



## Client Story

KM's family first encountered Strides Toronto through a Strengthening Families program on offer at the time. "That was the first time I got in touch with a facility that actually cared about mental health. I thought that was so cool," KM says. "It really intrigued me, especially growing up in a household where all of that is super stigmatized. I actually felt safe for once, and that was worth exploring."

Over the next eight years, KM committed to that exploration. They participated in both short and longer-term therapy, finding support that met their evolving needs. "It became this really fun whirlwind of just really digging into my mind and understanding why I work the way I do."

As their journey continued, Strides Toronto's care coordinator connected them to a nurse and psychologist, who medically diagnosed their anxiety and depression. "I spent all these years not knowing why I function the way I do. Now I have all these answers [and] it's so freeing basically. It's very empowering to just understand myself more. And I'm pretty sure that goes for a lot of people, especially youth and families. When they can understand themselves more, it's life-changing, essentially... and life-saving."

Today, as part of Strides Toronto's Youth Advisory Committee, KM connects with other young people to hear their perspectives, gather feedback on programs and services and help identify meaningful solutions to issues affecting youth.

It's been a remarkable evolution. "I never saw myself as a leader. I was very, very insecure and I'm always, like, doubting myself. But I feel like it became so natural to become a leader because of the way the staff fostered this thing that was always in me that I just couldn't see. I was able to understand who I actually am and what I want to speak for, basically, for my whole life."



## Client Story

When Liam was nine years old, he received a diagnosis of moderate to severe autism. "I had done speech, occupational and physiotherapy before he was diagnosed," says his mother, Hannah. "But it was hard to hear the diagnosis and to know what to do because of the many options."

Liam participated in multiple group sessions and individual therapy, slowly improving his communication skills. When the pandemic hit, his in-person sessions stopped but the support from Strides Toronto didn't. "The therapists were so great. They would send me information sheets, we would meet once or twice a week over Zoom, and they would watch me and explain how to do things or why something wasn't working," says Hannah.

When Liam returned to in-person programming in 2022, he took "a massive leap forward. The way the locations were set up with different rooms put his brain in the right mindset to help him learn. He's very sensory motivated and the sensory room blew me away," she says.

Liam also began using a communication app that supports non-speaking children to express themselves confidently and initiate conversations. In the safety of the Strides environment, Liam feels comfortable to "be himself, learn without judgment, express what he feels and communicate more, which is huge."

Hannah credits the staff for building a relationship with Liam that has been essential to his learning success. "He felt like he was really important. I appreciate the tenacity and expertise to help him reach his potential in a kind and non-pressurized way," she says. "Nothing is impossible with them."



# 2,057

unique clients  
supported through  
our mental health  
services



# 11,948

unique clients  
accessed  
community  
services



## Client Story

When Shabina was in sixth grade, her father passed away. She, her mother and younger brother tried to process their grief for more than a year, but as Shabina puts it, “there was a lot of struggles with our mental health. My mom reached out to Strides, and we got a family counsellor.”

At first, Shabina wasn’t very engaged in therapy. “It was during the pandemic, so we weren’t able to go in person. There was a lot of ability for me to just kind of hide in my room,” she admits. Struggling with anxiety and depression, she began to fall behind in school. At the same time, she was holding on to a lot of anger and pain, which contributed to what she describes as a “very strained” relationship with her mother.

Things became more difficult when her mother was hospitalized. Shabina and her brother moved into Megan Residence, one of Strides Toronto’s two live-in treatment programs

At Megan Residence, she was able to “connect with a lot of amazing staff who have taught me so much about just life in general. And I’ve developed better ways to cope.” Knowing that she could speak freely and get support at any time made a significant difference. “You literally just go downstairs and like, ‘hey, I want to talk.’”

Today life feels much more manageable. “In general, I’m doing great... It’s like the downs don’t feel as terrible as they did when I wasn’t in treatment. It felt like it was life or death when a situation came... and now I really just want to work through it and do the best that I can without harming myself [and keep] my mental health in mind.”

Megan Residence became a turning point. She not only found “a sense of security and adults I can lean on,” but her therapists have helped her work through her trauma and develop a more healthy relationship with her mom. “It’s amazing.”







# Our Role as Lead Agency

Since 2012, the Ontario government has appointed 31 Lead Agencies across the province to create a coordinated, integrated and accountable mental health system that simplifies access for children and youth with mental health challenges and their families.

As Toronto's Lead Agency, Strides Toronto provides system leadership, planning, performance management, service delivery and program alignment citywide, guiding key initiatives such as the HOPE Strategy (Honouring Our Promise to End Anti-Black Racism), One Stop Talk/Parlons maintenant, the Help Ahead Coordinated Point of Access, the Child and Youth Mental Health Intensive Services Review and the sector's 2024-27 multi-year plan.

**“Our goal is to integrate the IDEA lens into the day-to-day work of the organization and not view it as a side of the desk initiative that we work on when we have time.”**

– Janet McCrimmon, Strides President and CEO

## Embedding Equity:

### Progress on the HOPE Strategy and IDEA Initiatives

Strides Toronto continues to focus on and embed Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (IDEA) within our operations and throughout the sector. Central to this work is the HOPE Strategy (*Honouring Our Promise to End Anti-Black Racism*) launched in 2023, which brought together a coalition of agencies within Toronto's infant, child and youth mental health system.

Now in its second year, the strategy has yielded a robust Implementation Roadmap focused on five priorities: leading systems change, improving access to culturally appropriate care, reducing stigma, hiring and supporting Black staff, and strengthening engagement with Black communities. Key achievements include the development of a hiring toolkit for inclusive practice, co-developed with human resource representatives from across the infant, child and youth mental health (ICYMH) sector; piloting a staff census and client demographic data collection among a select group of sector agencies; and supporting sector-wide clinical supervisor training to embed anti-racism into day-to-day supervision practice.

Additionally, in partnership with TAIBU Community Health Centre, we supported screenings and discussions of their documentary “Working While Black” across the sector. Internally, we have expanded IDEA resources on our iLearn platform and have launched an eight-course IDEA learning suite (in partnership with the Diversity Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University), that can be leveraged and tailored for each Core Service Providers in Toronto within the ICYMH sector.

## Meeting the Moment:

### Scaling Up One Stop Talk/ Parlons maintenant

As host site for One Stop Talk/Parlons maintenant (OST/PM), Strides Toronto is leading the provincial efforts to ensure immediate, equitable access to brief mental health services for children and youth. This virtual program enables young people under 18 to connect with registered clinicians online or via phone for free, single-session counselling when they need it most. Through coordinated intake and navigation, young people are connected to both virtual services and local child and youth mental health supports, creating a responsive system that reduces wait times and supports early intervention.

In support of this vision, the Ministry of Health has mandated that ICYMH agencies that are funded to provide brief services actively participate in promoting and delivering brief mental health services via OST/PM. We are currently operating with 22 partner agencies and approximately 80 designated clinicians trained across the province to ensure OST/PM is the primary virtual front door for youth mental health care in Ontario. Over the next three years, we look forward to integrating the 48 other ICYMH agencies that offer brief services into the OST/PM model of service.



# 4,611

**clients served through  
One Stop Talk/Parlons  
maintenant since launching  
in November 2022**

## Bridging Access:

### Transforming Infant, Children and Youth Mental Health Services in Toronto

Over the past year, Strides Toronto has led a collaborative planning process to advance the next phase of Help Ahead, a city-wide initiative to improve access to mental health services. In partnership with 22 core service providers, this work included strategic engagement with the sector, including dedicated planning days with senior leaders and clinical directors. Together, we defined the expanded the scope of programs that will be included in the next phase and refined a coordinated waitlist management approach to better support young people, families and service providers. This work has laid the foundation for a more seamless, equitable and integrated mental health access model.

## Enhancing Care:

### Infant, Child and Youth Mental Health Intensive Services Review

In partnership with Capitalize for Kids, Strides Toronto conducted a comprehensive review of Intensive Services (day treatment, live-in treatment, and in-home supports) to deepen understanding of the infant, child and youth mental health landscape. This first phase resulted in a detailed report identifying key areas to improve experiences for clients, families and staff.

The report outlined a roadmap of 29 recommendations, organized under four strategic pillars: Service Delivery; Governance; People and Organization and Performance Management. In the year ahead, efforts will focus on translating these recommendations into an actionable implementation plan.

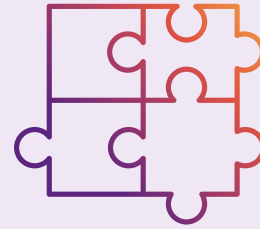
## Client Story

After trying several ABA programs for her son Gabriel, Vittoria knew she had found the right fit at Strides Toronto. "I just felt relief, a positive feeling. Even with the intake worker, the questions they were asking and the way they spoke seemed a lot more empathetic and they understood the needs."

As an educator, Vittoria brings deep knowledge and strong advocacy to her son's care. She says Strides Toronto's collaborative Autism Team supports her goals for Gabriel. "[His Board Certified Behavioural Analyst therapist] is phenomenal. She really listens to the family and what their needs are." Vittoria also values the team's multidisciplinary approach and coordination with Gabriel's other care providers. "[One therapist] has gone to his different providers to see what they are doing and has invited them to observe what she's doing. That has benefited Gabriel a lot. She has also helped me with his teachers, bringing her clinical perspective and they listen."

When Gabriel started at Strides, he would only make one- or two-word utterances. Today he is speaking in full sentences. "They really push him in a good way. They are firm but fair. He has such a good rapport with his therapists. He's communicating more and his receptive language has improved tremendously."

Before Strides, Vittoria did at-home ABA training with Gabriel in their basement, which he began to associate with work. "He won't go to the basement, or rarely, even now," she laughs, but "he loves going to Strides. When we pull up, he says he needs to go to the washroom to make sure we go in. He has a whole routine. He knows where to hang up his coat, takes out his device and lunch bag and just takes off. He loves it there."



# 1,960

**unique clients  
were served by  
our autism and  
developmental  
services**



# Financials

Year ended  
March 31

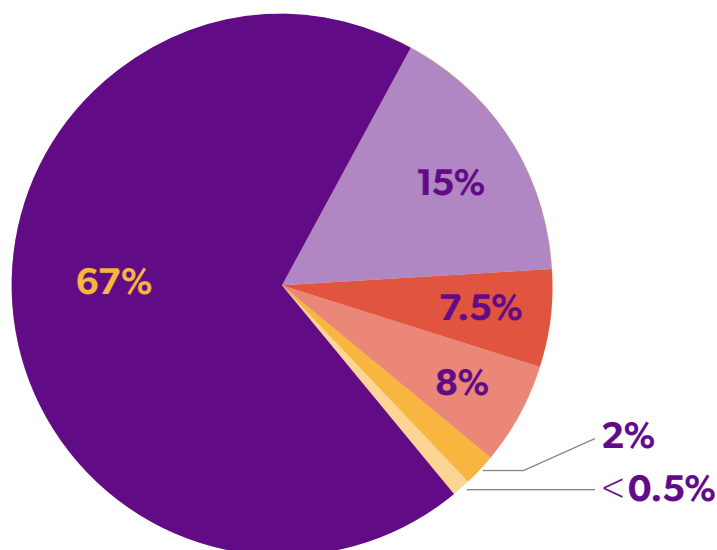
## Revenue

	2025	2024
Ministry of Health	20,600,345	19,443,307
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services	5,704,953	5,966,934
City of Toronto	1,776,471	1,813,938
Federal Government	1,062,152	1,131,259
Surrey Place	6,318,266	6,016,230
Special programs	3,543,600	2,483,660
Fee for service	3,270,458	2,133,881
Investment income	724,444	797,948
Other	41,969	40,790
Donations and fundraising	34,747	114,312
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$43,077,405</b>	<b>\$39,942,259</b>

## Expenses

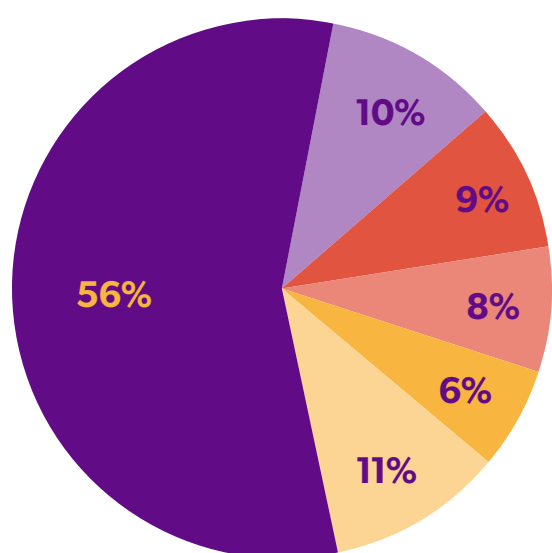
	2025	2024
Salaries and wages	24,321,293	22,666,816
Employee benefits	4,439,134	3,948,535
Purchased client services	3,836,146	3,868,928
Contracted-out services	3,272,958	3,000,708
Travel and communication	2,552,054	1,024,279
Rent	2,074,319	2,178,370
Other services	778,917	664,645
Training costs	730,043	731,523
Other supplies and equipment	520,504	548,241
Repairs and maintenance	410,306	249,020
Insurance	227,558	217,225
IT - supplies and equipment	131,236	114,329
Utilities	67,709	68,005
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$43,362,177</b>	<b>\$39,280,624</b>





## Revenue

- Government
- Surrey Place
- Special programs
- Fee for service
- Investment income
- Donations, fundraising and other revenue



## Expenses

- Salaries and wages
- Employee benefits
- Purchased client services
- Contracted-out services
- Travel and communication
- Rent and other expenses

## Other Items

	2025	2024
Unrealized gain (loss) from investments	192,327	166,468
Amortization of property and equipment	(1,169,806)	(1,566,881)
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	1,169,806	1,566,881
Amortization of lease inducements	-	12,583
<b>TOTAL OTHER ITEMS</b>	<b>\$192,327</b>	<b>\$179,051</b>

## Revenue Over Expenses

	2025	2024
<b>(DEFICIENCY)/EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$(92,445)</b>	<b>\$840,686</b>

# Our Funders and Donors

Thank you! With your support Strides Toronto is making a tremendous difference in the lives of children, youth and families.

## Funders

Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough  
Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto  
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
City of Toronto  
Els for Autism Canada  
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada  
Knowledge Institute on Child and Youth Mental Health and Addictions  
Malvern Family Resource Centre  
Michael Garron Hospital  
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services  
Ministry of Health  
Ministry of Sport  
Ontario Health  
Operation Springboard  
Public Health Agency of Canada  
RBC Foundation  
Slaight Family Foundation  
Surrey Place  
Toronto District School Board  
Toronto Respite Network  
United Way of Greater Toronto  
YWCA Toronto

## Donors

### \$25,000+

Donna Chow

### \$1,000 TO \$9,999

Estate of Margaret Wood  
Janet McCrimmon  
Jennifer A. Williams  
Judy and Paul Huyer

### \$500 TO \$999

Anastasia Giannaris  
Lauren Dade  
Tom Moutsatsos

### \$200 TO \$499

Alfred Chu  
April Chivvies  
CAF of Canada  
Carter's and Mischief  
Chelsea Pictures Inc.  
Edward Jones  
Gordon Raman  
James Tower  
Louise and Michael O'Neill  
Ming Cheung  
William Lumsden

### UP TO \$199

Amber Yared  
Bryan Heal  
Charlene Butler  
Darryl Nurse  
Darya Shavandi  
Divya Steinwall  
Erin Physick  
Jason Pilz  
Kiaunna Bennett  
Krista Smedley  
Lillian Desorcy  
Loraine Bairstow  
Nadia Sahadeo  
Nicole Burke  
Paul Van de Laar  
Praxis Counselling  
Ragaven Sabaratnam  
Ross Ridout  
Sibel Cicek  
Simon Berkowitz  
Susan Austin  
Vidya Rajasingam  
Zannalyn Robest

# Thank You!

We want to express our gratitude for the amazing team at Strides Toronto. Together, we have achieved so much! Your dedication and commitment have empowered so many people to reach their potential. A sincere thank you to all of our staff, with special recognition to those who celebrated service anniversaries last year.

## 35 YEARS

Monica Por, Child and Family Therapist  
Cindy Broderick-King, Service Navigator 1 (CPI)  
Eleni Makris, Child and Family Therapist

## 30 YEARS

Sharon Suet Luen Li, Family Home Visitor  
Linda Brightling, Early Childhood Education Therapist  
Dawn Scott, Manager, Day Treatment

## 25 YEARS

David Andrews, Live-In Treatment Relief - Sleeping Overnight  
Anuranjita Kaur, Child and Family Therapist

## 20 YEARS

Chantal Paterson, Intake Worker, Autism Services  
Lindsay Wheelans, Manager, Live-In Treatment Services  
Alicia Adams-Mitchell, Manager, Urgent Response Services  
Apostolos Karageorgopoulos, Individual and Family Therapist

## 15 YEARS

Pauline Nedrick, Live-In Treatment Child and Youth Practitioner  
Rushida Morgan, Day Treatment (Child and Youth Worker)  
Kathryn Taylor, Autism Outreach and Education Facilitator

## 10 YEARS

Karen Feder, Manager, Preschool Speech and Language Program  
Brittany Prince, Help Ahead Intake Worker (CPI)  
Mitra Mohseni-Khameneh, Service Navigator 2 (CPI)  
Vanessa Decastro, Service Navigator 2 (CPI)  
Melissa Smithson, Live-In Treatment Child and Youth Practitioner  
Alina Trusca, Clinical Supervisor, Autism Services

## 5 YEARS

Li Yin, Provincial Walk-In Clinician  
Paul Van De Laar, Vice President, Service Excellence  
Jocelyn Tripp, Child and Family Therapist  
Yasmeen Shaikh, Live-In Treatment Child and Youth Practitioner

**“The welcoming and safe environment the staff provided made me feel great. I like that staff were easy to communicate with and it was like this was one of my safe spaces.”**

**– Youth participant, Community Services**

Have a question?

Want more information?

Go to **StridesToronto.ca** or email  
**contactus@stridestoronto.ca**

**f** StridesTO

**X** StridesTO

**▶** StridesToronto

**@** stridestoronto

**in** Strides-Toronto



Helping children, youth  
and families thrive