

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples





MISION

To enhance the quality of life for our community, and deliver purposeful services to advance the social and economic integration of our community into broader Canadian society.

VISION

To grow a united, engaged, and prosperous community.

VALUES

Unity
Accessibility
Equity
Accountability
Justice

CSSP Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples

CGHH Centro para Gente de Habla Hispana

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



We acknowledge that the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples is located on the traditional and unceded territories of the Haudenosaunee. Anishinaabe, and Huron-Wendat peoples. We recognize the enduring presence and contributions of these Indigenous Nations, who have lived on and cared for these lands for thousands of years.

As we serve the Hispanic and Latinx Community in Toronto, we also honour the rich tapestry of Indigenous cultures that exist throughout Latin America. From the ancient civilizations of the Mayan and Aztec to the vibrant traditions of the Quechua, Aymara, Guarani and Mapuche, we celebrate the diverse histories, languages and practices of Indigenous Peoples across the Americas.

We acknowledge the historical injustices faced by Indigenous communities both here and in Latin America and we commit ourselves to the journey of reconciliation, fostering an environment that respects and uplifts all voices. Together, let us honour the past, embrace our shared humanity and work towards a future of understanding, collaboration and inclusion for everyone in our community.



MESSAGE FROM INTERIM PRESIDENT

The staff and Board of CCSP are delighted to conclude another wonderful year serving our Latinx/Hispanic community. This year presented some difficult challenges for our community. Like many Canadians, our community is facing higher rental costs, higher food prices, and higher gas and electric bills. The cost of living has soared to record highs. Now more than ever, the work that we do is critical for the well-being of our community. We thank our staff for their commitment to the work that we do.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND SUPPORT

President John F. Kennedy once said, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

CSSP And this past year, has experienced many changes. To start, we welcome many new faces to the CSSP family who bring energy. enthusiasm, and a tremendous amount of valuable experience to complement the work we do. We also thank to those who said goodbye to CSSP this past year, including our former President of Board of Directors, Fabiana the Montoya. They have left an indelible mark on all of us. We wish them the best of luck!

Change has not only occurred in our personnel, this year the CSSP Board has also been working to ensure that our by-laws are in keeping with the new Ontario Not-for- Profit Corporations Act (ONCA). The new legislation permits many activities to take place electronically as needed. We have proposed some changes to ensure that our by-laws are up to date and that they provide for effective representation of the community that we serve.

Change has also come to our beloved building in the form of a major HVAC project which overhauled our heating and cooling system. Additionally, we have a new collective agreement between some of our staff and CSSP. We are truly blessed to have such dedicated workers.

More importantly, change was tangible in the adaption of our programs to new circumstances. The Legal Clinic, the HIV/Aids Prevention Program, the Women's Program, our Seniors Program, the Food Bank and Volunteer Program continue to provide services that are most needed within our Latinx/Hispanic community.

Finally, I wish to extend a heartfelt thank you to our financial supporters and our allies. Without your financial assistance, help and guidance, we could not do the work we do. Your generosity is what makes Canada great. For my part, I continue to be inspired by the staff and board at CSSP, who have dedicated themselves to the very best of humanity; that is to give of themselves for the greater good.

John Navarrete

Interim Chair of the Board of Directors



MESSAGE FROM **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



WORKING TO SUPPORT AND MEET OUR COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

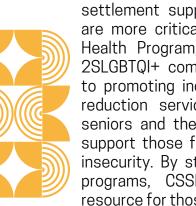
Since becoming Executive Director of the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples (CSSP) in June 2024, my focus has been on leading the organization into a new era, building on our legacy while preparing for emerging challenges.

For the past 50 years, CSSP has offered an expanding range of essential services. including, but not limited to, settlement support, legal services, gender-based violence prevention and response, sexual health and harm reduction programs, a food bank, outreach to seniors, and community advocacy. However, with rising immigration pressures, particularly in Ontario, alongside housing shortages and economic hardships, we must adapt to meet the growing demands on our services.

Key areas such as Violence Against Women (VAW) prevention and response, settlement support, and legal services are more critical than ever. Our Sexual Health Program, with a focus on the 2SLGBTQI+ community, remains central to promoting inclusive health and harm reduction services, while outreach to seniors and the food bank continue to support those facing isolation and food insecurity. By strengthening these core programs, CSSP will remain a vital resource for those who need us most.

we navigate this ever-evolving As landscape, our success will rely on expanding volunteerism, enhancing youth engagement, and bolstering support from our community, financial contributors, and partners. These relationships are essential to broadening our reach and amplifying our impact. Now, more than ever, a shared commitment to CSSP's vision and mission remains as vital as it was when it first began.

Together, we will ensure that CSSP remains a cornerstone of support, rooted in the rich ethno-linguistic heritage of our community, and continues driving positive change for generations to come. I look forward to supporting this journey as executive director, building a brighter, more inclusive future that honors CSSP's legacy while embracing the evolving needs of those we serve.





SETTLEMENT **PROGRAM**

SUPPORT FOR NEWCOMERS

Higher immigration levels, expanded outreach efforts, comprehensive and tailored services and the challenging economic situation for newcomers all contributed to a spike in settlement files opened in fiscal 2023-24. In total, 1400 files were opened this year, compared with 1,064 files the previous year, an increase of 32%.

The temporary opening of a familybased humanitarian pathway for Colombians and Venezuelans and high levels of immigration overall led to greater numbers of clients seeking our services, as did closer ties with agencies that provide employment services.

Expanded outreach efforts, including the invitation of several new outside speakers to our workshops, led to

greater visibility and awareness of our In addition the program's ability to address specific needs in the Spanish language, such as language training, job search support and social integration, has increased its relevance. Jobmarket fluctuations and enduring inflationary pressures made newcomer journey particularly challenging this year, prompting clients to seek additional supports to ensure smoother transitions.

Significantly, 65% of participants report having obtained stable housing within the first six months of enrolling in the program. Additionally, 70% of our clients have found employment or enrolled in higher education, allowing them to contribute to the local and develop meaningful economy careers.







When I arrived in Canada, I was lost and overwhelmed. The Settlement Program was my lifeline. They helped me understand how to navigate the job market and, within three months, I was able to get a job. The staff were always supportive, offering not only professional guidance, but emotional support, which made the different.

I came to this country with my family and we had no idea where to start. Thanks to the program, my children are thriving in school and we now have a place to call home. I am so grateful for everything that you have done for us.

These testimonials highlight the meaning of our work: helping individuals and families build a solid foundation as they begin their new life in Canada. Through ongoing support and community-building efforts, the Settlement Program is not just a service but a partner in the journey of every newcomer we serve.

SEXUAL

HEALTH PROGRAM





SUPPORT FOR LATINX 2SLGBTQI+

Operating out of our satellite location at Carlton and Jarvis Streets, the Sexual Health Program offers a range of programs and services aimed at supporting the Latinx 2SLGBTQI+ community, with a particular focus on individuals living with or at risk of HIV.

Community events and partnerships were at the centre of our work again this year. A fruitful collaboration between our mental health councillor and HQ Toronto, a health hub offering non-judgmental, barrier-free sexual health services, opened access to the Spanish-speaking community. After translating HQ tools and materials into Spanish, our counsellor facilitated a series of weekly group workshops on "Mental Health and Me" The program provided an overview of mental health to address anxiety, depression and mood regulation, allowing participants to deepen their personal development and well-being.

In addition to the group work, our mental health counsellor provided 1-on-1 counselling to 494 clients and collaborated with HQ to provide psychiatric evaluations and referrals two days per week.

On the outreach front, we participated in Hallowe'en at Church in the Church and Wellesley Village, Pride Toronto, the Hispanic Heritage Fair, and a health fair for migrant agricultural workers in Bradford, among other events.

In partnership with ACT (AIDS Committee of Toronto), we delivered workshops for Latinx people living with HIV, promoting health. education and community engagement.

We also engaged in outreach at the Hassle Free Clinic and in bathhouses and contributed to an online directory of resources (the Red Care Collective) for service providers and people living with HIV in collaboration with The 519. The PrEP Clinic, Casey House, The Blue Door Clinic and Black CAP

In 2023-2024, we delivered: SAFE-SEX KITS HARM-REDUCTION KITS **HIV TESTING KITS**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROGRAM



An unprecedented influx of vulnerable Spanish-speaking migrants and enhanced partnerships contributed to a 65% increase in the number of clients supported by the program this year when compared to fiscal 2022-23.

Staffed by three counsellors and a transitional housing worker, the

Lester R. Cuellar CSSP Ally Wins Award

"Ha sido un gran honor haber recibido el reconocimiento del Fiscal General de Ontario por el trabajo que he realizado en relación con el Centro. Estoy muy agradecido por la colaboración que he tenido con el Centro y con todas las consejeras del Centro con quienes he tenido el privilegio de trabajar.

Muchas veces, las personas que asistimos están pasando por momentos muy difíciles. Las consejeras del Centro y yo hacemos todo lo posible para apoyar a estas personas y brindarles acceso a recursos que a veces pueden ser difíciles de obtener. Comparto este reconocimiento con el Centro y les agradezco a todas las consejeras del grupo de mujeres."

Lester is a family lawyer in Toronto, recipient of the 2023-24 Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction (VSAD).

program offered telephone, online and in-person crisis counselling, orientation about legal rights, and assistance with transitional housing applications, among other services.

Support groups and workshops enabled the program to magnify its impact and manage the increased demand for services. In support groups held in the Spring of 2024, women facing common issues gathered to share their experiences and offer support and comfort to others.

The groups provided participants with a safe space to receive information that was practical and constructive, assisting them in developing better coping strategies. Workshop topics included how to deal with anxiety through art, developing resilience, transitional housing, and résumé building.

Outreach efforts were fuelled by a stronger social media presence and collaboration with the Redwood Mobile Healing Centre, the Comprehensive Care for Women of the Consular Network of Mexico Abroad, a program offered by the Mexican Consulate, and the Black Creek Community Health Centre's lactation and pregnancy care project.

"You gave us our first step to continue our life in Canada. You will always be a blessing to women and children like us."

Anonymous





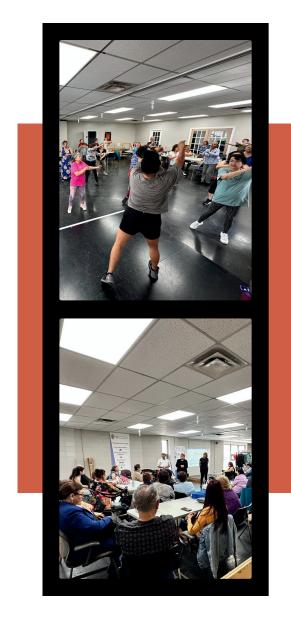
SENIORS PROGRAM

LIVELY SENIORS PROGRAM BUILDS STRONG COMMUNITY TIES

The Seniors Program has blossomed into a vibrant and inclusive space, offering a variety of activities that foster strong community connections. With an average of 35 participants attending each week, Zumba classes led by Grety Sosa Lopez and bingo sessions organized by the seniors themselves, where participants donate prizes and manage the games, have become core elements of the program.

Partnerships and collaborations have enriched the program. A talk by Arami Galeano on the challenges immigration is one example. In addition. the group has connected with the Spanish-speaking seniors at North York Community House and launched a 3-day Literacy Senior Digital Program, coordinated with the Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre, to help participants gain confidence in using technology.

There was also time for fun. A joyful joint birthday celebration for program members, where they shared a cake and a lively game of "pin the tail on the donkey" to the tune of *El Burrito Sabanero* and cultural outings to Fallstaff Park and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) brought people together.



Expanding partnerships with local organizations remains a priority, with plans to offer workshops on topics such as mental health, navigating government services, and financial These will literacy. topics participants improve their overall wellbeing, access essential services more easily, and gain the knowledge to manage their finances confidently. Additionally, efforts are underway to secure funding to reintroduce a food program, providing meals and making it easier for group members to spend their mornings and afternoons at CSSP.

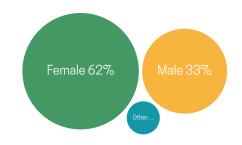




FOOD **BANK**

+4,200
PEOPLE BENEFIT

CLIENT GENDER DISTRIBUTION





Nearly seven million Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, according to an inaugural poverty report issued by Food Banks Canada in September 2023.

The report highlighted that food insecurity has a disproportionate impact on racialized communities, including the Latinx community in Toronto. Many families report skipping meals or relying on cheaper, less nutritious options to make ends meet. This not only affects physical health but also has profound implications for mental well-being, with increased stress and anxiety levels reported among those facing food scarcity.

CSSP is dedicated to closing the gap between access to nutritious food and those who need it most. With support from North York Harvest and Second Harvest Food Banks, as well as Shopper's Drug Mart and other local businesses, we distributed over 1,400 food hampers between 2023 and 2024, helping to feed more than 4,200 people

in our neighborhood, including children and seniors.

Local organizations and food banks are working diligently to address these challenges, offering essential services and culturally relevant food options. Yet, systemic barriers persist, and reliance on these resources often highlights the lack of long-term solutions. More recently, the North York Harvest Food Bank reported that 1 in 10 Torontonians rely on food banks. This number it is expected to increase in the coming year.

To truly address food insecurity, we need to improve access to employment opportunities, provide support for immigrant services, and advocate for policy changes that ensure food equity for all.

To our volunteers, thank you for the amazing work that you do at the food bank! Your hard work truly makes a difference in our community.



LEGAL CLINIC

INCRESE OF IMMIGRATION AND HOUSING CASES



1,572Legal Matters

\$28,681

Unpaid Wages Recovered

With Canada's immigration policy dominating the news cycle this year, it is not surprising that immigration files made up the largest share of the legal clinic's caseload again this year. More than 670 new immigration matters were opened in 2023-24, a 30% increase from the previous year.

Canada has experienced a large influx of newcomers and refugee claimants from Latin American countries, leading to an increase in applications for work permits and permanent residence. There has also been a notable jump in the number undocumented migrants seeking to remain in Canada on Humanitarian and Compassionate (H&C) grounds, as many refugee claimants were refused.

Housing cases increased by a factor of four from the year previous (214 vs. 53). Affordability issues were front and centre in many of these cases, but the challenges faced by our clients also clearly demonstrate the ways in which precarious immigration status in Canada

and the language and cultural barriers faced by many of our clients contribute to housing insecurity for the Spanish-speaking community.

The hiring of a new employment law community legal worker in the summer of 2023 led to an increase in employment law cases, as well. The CSSP continued to be at the forefront of wage theft matters, with \$28,681 in unpaid wages recovered for vulnerable workers, most of whom were undocumented.

This year also featured the revival of CSSP's signature Cafecito program. Our employment CLW joined forces with the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), Latinos Positivos, The Community Legal Clinic of York Region (CLCYR), Battista Migration Law Group, and MCIS to present two innovative workshops on employment rights, human rights and sexual health for Spanish-speaking migrant workers in Leamington, Ontario, with one of the workshops having an 2SLGBTQI+ focus.

Our Access to Justice for Spanishspeaking Seniors project funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario kicked off in July 2023. As anticipated, there was a tremendous response to this initiative.

One-hundred and seventy-five (175) individual case files were opened over the 12-month grant period, and 26 workshops were delivered on issues such as wills and powers of attorney, financial literacy, fraud prevention, and access to Wheel Trans.















The legal clinic at the CSSP was recognized as a key outreach collaborator in the ground-breaking community report Hidden in Plain Sight: Precarious Legal Status Trajectories and their Long-term Consequences released by the Citizenship and Employment Precarity (CEP) research project in 2024. The CEP project is led by Professor Luin Goldring at York University and Professor Patricia Landolt at the University of Toronto.

The CEP survey found that for migrants entering Canada on a temporary basis. includina international students, temporary migrant or foreign workers, refugee claimants, visitors or those with a temporary resident permit, the

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

ADDRESSING PRECARIOUS LEGAL STATUS

transition from temporary to permanent status is complex, costly and uncertain. Arriving as a visitor or with a temporary resident permit and no work authorization had the poorest outcomes for well-being, while refugee claimants who had not obtained PR at the time of the survey had significantly poorer health and employment outcomes.



Many respondents reported experiences of illegalization or were compelled to engage in "the work of status" which the authors define as the resources, time, and effort that migrants dedicate to trying to obtain a relatively more secure legal status, whether temporary or permanent, or to prevent deportation.

Community research project linked precarious status to poorer health and employment outcomes

Overall, the authors warned of an emerging two-tier society in which citizens, permanent residents temporary entrants with precarious legal status live and work side by side. Without adequate data, the long-term implications of these shifts for social and health inequality, labour markets and workplaces in Canada are unclear.

page



Early in the fiscal year, the legal clinic was contacted by police about a troubling human trafficking situation. A police investigation had led to the discovery of more than 100 Spanish-speaking workers from Mexico living crammed in unsuitable quarters above a strip mall in Toronto. The workers had been enticed by the false promise of riches and were working in construction when police discovered them.

BRIDGING SERVICES TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Open Work Permits issued for victims of human trafficking

Our legal team sprang into action. We met with the workers, who were being temporarily sheltered in a hotel, to discuss their legal options, and we successfully submitted applications for temporary residence and work permits for 14 of the workers who wished to remain and work legally in Canada.

As the year unfolded, the legal clinic continued to act on suspected human trafficking situations. often collaboration with our Violence Against Women (VAW) program. As the only multi-service agency devoted solely to the Spanish-speaking community in Toronto, there is a unique opportunity for synergies between our programs.



TEAM WORK IN ACTION

In conjunction with the VAW program, for example, the legal clinic addressed the situation of a client and her daughter who had been living in a 3-bedroom, 1-bathroom house with 30 other people, consisting of 24 men and 6 women. The client reported that the women were being sexually assaulted by some of the men and that other criminal activity was occurring at the premises. The legal clinic connected the client with our police contacts and a meeting was arranged with the client, who had moved out, but was concerned for the welfare of the remaining women.

The CSSP aims to expand our capacity to deal with these complex situations, which are often associated with immigration scams and coercion in the workers' home countries. The VAW program, for example, participated in a training provided by Covenant House in February 2024 designed to assist VAW counsellors and transitional housing workers in understanding the various forms of human trafficking and teach practical skills to better identify and serve survivors. The legal clinic, for its part, continues to expand our expertise and network of contacts to assist us in addressing this growing problem.







FINANCIAL **STATEMENT**



2023

Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples

Statement of Revenue and Expenses April 2023 - March 2024

2024

REVENUE		
Grants	19,907	
Income - Fundraising	19,960	14,278
Income - Municipal Grants	101,007	84,796
Income - Federal	73,443	80,115
Income - Provincial	1,232,684	1,206,869
Income - Foundations	92,055	199,670
Rent & Other Income	114,286	134,687
United Way	152,768	171,738
Total Revenue	\$ 1,806,111	\$ 1,892,153
EXPENSES		
Legal Disbursement - LAO	100	650
Occupancy	192,990	214,467
Office	49,984	59,983
Payroll Expenses	1,418,480	1,329,712
Program Expenses	76,488	83,363
Promotion and Publicity	670	1,208
Purchased Services	61,108	81,552
Staff Training	6,687	8,549
Trust - Foundations	4,366	24,944
Total Expenses	\$ 1,810,875	\$ 1,804,650
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$ -4,764	\$ 87,503

Please contact us for more details.



OUR TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2023-2024

- Fabiana Montoya
- John Navarrete
- Renatto Soldi
- Marcela Aranda
- Dara MacDonald
- Erika Aguilera

- Javier Solís
- Julio Vergara
- Monica Navascues
- Valentina Latorre Franky
- Veronica Marson



CSSP STAFF

- Amilcar Kraudie
- Moira Daly
- Ximena Escobar
- Alicia Torres
- Ana Calero
- Ana Castro
- Ana Roa Vargas
- Ángela Velásquez
- Carlos Baque Olaya
- Diana Isaza

- Diana Ramírez
- Eliana Fonseca
- Elvis Lazaro
- Erica Flores-Urias
- Federico Garcia
- Gia Pflucker
- Gloria Carrasquero
- Gloria Hernández
- Hernán Sierra
- Jahir Benítez

- Silvana Venegas
- Lida Velásquez
- Mayra Salas
- Myriam Motta
- Natalia Calderón
- Pedro Boada
- Raúl Burbano
- Ricardo Morales
- Rodrigo Gorosito
- Wendy Vásquez



V\$\text{UNTEERS

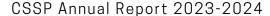
- Abraham Carreño
- Ángela Velásquez
- Camila Benavidez
- Carlos Baque Olaya
- Edgar Moreno
- Eduardo Padilla
- Evelyn Villalobos
- Henry Renán Fajardo
- Ivonne Solano Guerra
- Jade Paola Corona



- Jaime Araya
- Jimena Niza
- John Maxwell
- Jorge Cruz
- José Ramírez
- Juan José López
- Julia Vera
- Karla Rincón
- Luis Barra
- Luz Hernández

- Mario Alvarado
- Martha López
- Nury Márquez
- Oscar Ulloa
- Oswaldo Escobedo
- Priscila Miuccio
- Salvador Muñoz
- Tyler Jue
- Wendy Vásquez

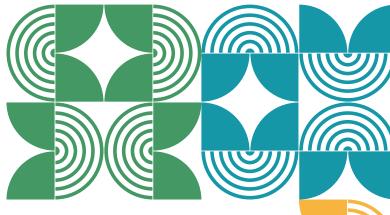




COMMUNITY **PARTNERS**

We appreciate your collaboration. Together, we're creating positive change in our community. Thank you!

- Access Alliance
- ACT Toronto
- Advocacy Centre for the Elderly
- Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
- Battista Migration Law Group
- Black CAP Coalition for AIDS Prevention
- Black Creek Community Health Centre
- Black Legal Action Centre
- Blue Door Clinic
- Catholic Children's Aid Society
- Catholic Crosscultural Services
- CATIE
- Children's Aid Society
- Correo Canadiense
- COSTI Immigrant Services
- Covenant House Toronto
- CP24 CHUM Christmas Wish
- Culturelink Community Centre
- Cyber Seniors
- Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood &
 - Community Health Centre
- Elderly Abuse Prevention Ontario
- ESET Canada
- Family Service Toronto
- FCJ Refugee Center
- Hispanic Canadian Heritage Council
- Hispanic Development Council
- HQ Toronto
- IN Magazine
- Jane Finch Community and Family Centre
- Kababayan Multicultural Centre
- LA Centre for Active Seniors
- La Red Hispanos
- Lamp Community Health Center



- Latinos Positivos
- Mennonite New Life Centre
- North York Community House
- Oasis Dufferin Community Centre
- Ontario HIV Treatment Network
- Ontario Victims Services
- San Lorenzo Radio Voces Latinas
- Regent Park Community Health Centre
- Rexdale Community Health Centre
- Romero House
- Second Harvest Food Rescue
- Sun Life Financial
- The 519
- The Community Legal Clinic of York Region
- The Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance
- The Learning Enrichment Foundation
- The Neighbourhood Group
- The Redwood Mobile Healing Centre
- Toronto Community Housing Priority Unit
- Toronto Police Neighbourhood Officer Program
- Toronto Star Children's Charities
- Two Ten Footwear Foundation Canada
- Unison Health and Community Services
- United Food and Commercial Workers Union
- University of Ottawa
- University of Toronto Dalla Lana School of Public Health
- Women's College Hospital
- WoodGreen
- Workers Action Centre
- YMCA
- York Hispanic Centre

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Together, we're making a significant impact in the community.

Black Creek Humber Cluster Communication Leadership Project

City of Toronto - Community Service Partnership

Community Volunteer Income Tax Program

Employment Services Toronto - Investing in Neighborhoods

Law Foundation of Ontario

Legal Aid Ontario

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Ministry of Health - AIDS Bureau

Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

New Horizons for Seniors Program

North York Harvest Food Bank

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Public Health Agency of Canada

Second Harvest

United Way of Greater Toronto

Azrieli Foundation

DLA Piper (Canada) LLP

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVALUABLE SUPPORT!





CSSP - CGGH

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Sexual Health Program

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