



# Halton Children's Aid Society 2019-20 Annual Report

## A Community of Caring



**“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”  
~Helen Keller**

Vision—Children, Youth and Families Thrive

Mission—We protect children and youth, strengthen their well-being and support lifelong, enduring relationships



# Land Acknowledgement

Halton, as we know it today, is rich in history and modern traditions of many First Nations and the Métis. From the Anishinaabe to the Attawandaron, the Haudenosaunee and the Métis, these lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in Indigenous history.

As we gather today on these Treaty lands, we have the responsibility to honour and respect the four directions, land, waters, plants, animals and ancestors that walked before us and all the wonderful elements of creation that exist.

We would like to acknowledge that we live and work on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Mississaugas of the Credit and Attiwoneronk.



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# Message from Our Executive Director and Board Chair

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Halton Children's Aid Society (Society) for the year 2019-20! This past year saw the Society make several significant shifts in our approach to child welfare service delivery, challenging previously accepted ways of understanding and practice in our work with children, youth and families. This report contains illustrations of the bold and transformative changes embraced by the Society, which we are confident will move us ever closer to the fulfilment of our vision—Children, Youth and Families Thrive.

As ever, our message to our community at the close of another year is one of gratitude and appreciation for the remarkable generosity of the Halton community in supporting our work on behalf of vulnerable children, youth and their families. The spirit of true collaboration between all of our community partners allowed the focus to remain steadfastly where it needs to be—on the child and their specific needs, strengths and plans. The tangible support provided to our service recipients all through the year—donations, gifts, volunteerism and countless acts of kindness—adds another critically important source of support for families who are struggling. The interplay of these two positive social conditions in Halton Region is how our **Community of Caring** is created and sustained.

Of course, the year's review not only includes achievements, opportunities and challenges inside the Society and the community. At the end of the 2019-20 fiscal year, a global health crisis drove all of the change experienced by the Society, its staff and the children, youth and families with whom we work. COVID-19 and the pandemic planning implemented by the Society, the community, across Canada and all over the world singularly consumed our time, attention and resources.

While the pandemic is still very much center stage in significance, in this report we welcome the opportunity to share the successes of the Society, its staff, foster, kin and adoptive caregivers, volunteers and the Board of Directors over the entire past year.

## Road Home Project

This is one of the boldest initiatives in the history of our Society. Moreover, it is working! The goals of the project are to reduce the number of children coming into care, reduce the number of youth in group and foster homes and return children and youth to kin/customary caregivers and adoptive homes. This project is a true collaboration as we have engaged with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and our community partners—Reach Out Centre for Kids, the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital and Connections Halton. While the project has only just begun, already 12 children have begun their journey to permanency and four youth have been linked with a plan for long-term connections and supports.

## Service Model Re-design

In early 2020, during a Society-wide Listening Tour, we heard from staff about the challenges and pressures inherent in the Society's service delivery model. They offered excellent suggestions and ideas for improvement and so, using this feedback, we re-designed the service delivery model. Foundational to the new model was an approach of early help and a philosophy that we will not raise children in care. Our staff will develop service specialties around specific areas of work with families. We are dedicated to providing the best service possible to children, youth and families in Halton Region. As part of our commitment to evidence-based practice, we are engaged with the University of Toronto to evaluate our case management approach, which was launched March 2, 2020.

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## Diversity and Inclusion Journey

Our journey toward diversity and inclusion, as led by our Diversity and Inclusion Consultant, Annemarie Shrouder, is moving to the next phase now that the data collection phase is complete. A key component of the data collection was a survey of all our staff to measure their experience of engagement and inclusion at the Society.

A report benchmarking our organizational readiness to move forward on the journey and recommendations for next steps is being reviewed by the Society's Leadership Team and will be presented to the Board of Directors in the fall.

Joining with Roots Community Services, the Society is piloting a program to address the over-representation of African Canadian youth in care through culturally relevant services. Using evidence-based intervention to build emotional strength, resilience and social skills within youth, a critically important outcome of this project is admission prevention. Reducing the over representation of African Canadian children and youth in care is a top priority for the Society.

We are working on our competence in locating, accessing and honouring Indigenous sources of knowledge and input on behalf of the Indigenous children, youth and families the Society is serving. We are locating Indigenous service providers and developing relationships with Band representatives in the home communities of our service recipients seeking their input into case plans. In August, I had the honour of meeting with Chief Stacey Laforme of Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. He was most generous with his time and consideration on how our Society can be a better service provider and collaborate with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation Social Services. Our Society participated in the development of the Indigenous Framework for Halton lead position and we embraced the arrival of Angela Bellegarde last fall to take on this important work in our community. The Nine Child Welfare Sector Commitments to Reconciliation are embedded in our service plan and the reduction of Indigenous children and youth in care is a top priority for the Society.

Part X of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA)*, which came into effect January 1, 2020, regulates personal information and the rules on collection, use and disclosure of that personal information. The spirit of this legislation is a rights-based approach to an individual's access to their children's aid record. Part X not only gives individuals the right to access their entire record and the right to have it corrected.

## Legal Services Review

In early 2019, the Society engaged a consultant to conduct a review of our legal services to assess its contribution to the Society's mission, vision, values and model of service. The review included an examination of internal agency practice, external relationships and a relevant comparison to peer agencies. The findings of the final report were very positive, highlighting good integration of legal and social work practice with fidelity to the Society's values. The Society enjoys a position of respect within the legal community and has the lowest conversion rate of cases from investigation to ongoing services in the province.

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## Engagement in the Planning for Child Welfare Modernization

In August 2019, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Ministry) announced a comprehensive consultation process to gather input to build a 'world class child welfare system' in Ontario. This consultation included a public, online survey, creation of consultation tables and regional listening tours.

Our Society's Board of Directors and Leadership Team participated in this process with enthusiasm, sharing the positive and successful aspects of the Halton Model of service delivery with its emphasis on community-based child welfare. Our recommendation was that child welfare modernization include community service provider integration as well as child welfare amalgamation in communities where it would work best.



It is with great appreciation and humble gratitude that we thank the amazing professional and dedicated staff of the Halton Children's Aid Society. Our staff are second-to-none for their creativity, compassion and commitment. From all areas of the organization these qualities are demonstrated, never so strongly as during the last few months through the pandemic. Our gratitude goes to foster, kin and adoptive caregivers for their unwavering commitment and caring to the children and youth with whom they share their hearts, their families and their homes. Thanks is not a big enough word to recognize the countless hours and millions of moments during which our volunteers embody the values of the Society through their selfless dedication to children and youth, in so many ways. To our community partners and service professionals who bring expertise and compassion to the multi-faceted plans for children and youth, we commit to strengthening our relationships with you and thank you for all your contributions. To the donors and philanthropic community members of Halton Region who embody the Community of Caring, thank you for opening doors and adding hope to the courage and tenacity of our children, youth and families who you are helping every day. Lastly, with thanks and appreciation, we recognize the guidance and wisdom of our Board of Directors who assist us to keep the Society on track to deliver on the vision, mission, values and service excellence that distinguishes our Society.

We find ourselves at the beginning of a year in our Society's history that will be monumentally influenced not only by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also by another global movement. A movement that was reignited by unspeakable acts of anti-Black racism and other direct violence against racialized and marginalized citizens around the world and here in Canada. We want to contribute to the creation of a truly equitable and just society through the re-dedication of our commitment to equity in every facet of our organization. We will continue to be inspired by the voices of our youth through which a better future is articulated. We look forward to sharing the progress we make in these endeavours with the Halton community and know that you share in this cherished outcome.

Emad Elsayed, Board Chair

Janice Robinson, Executive Director

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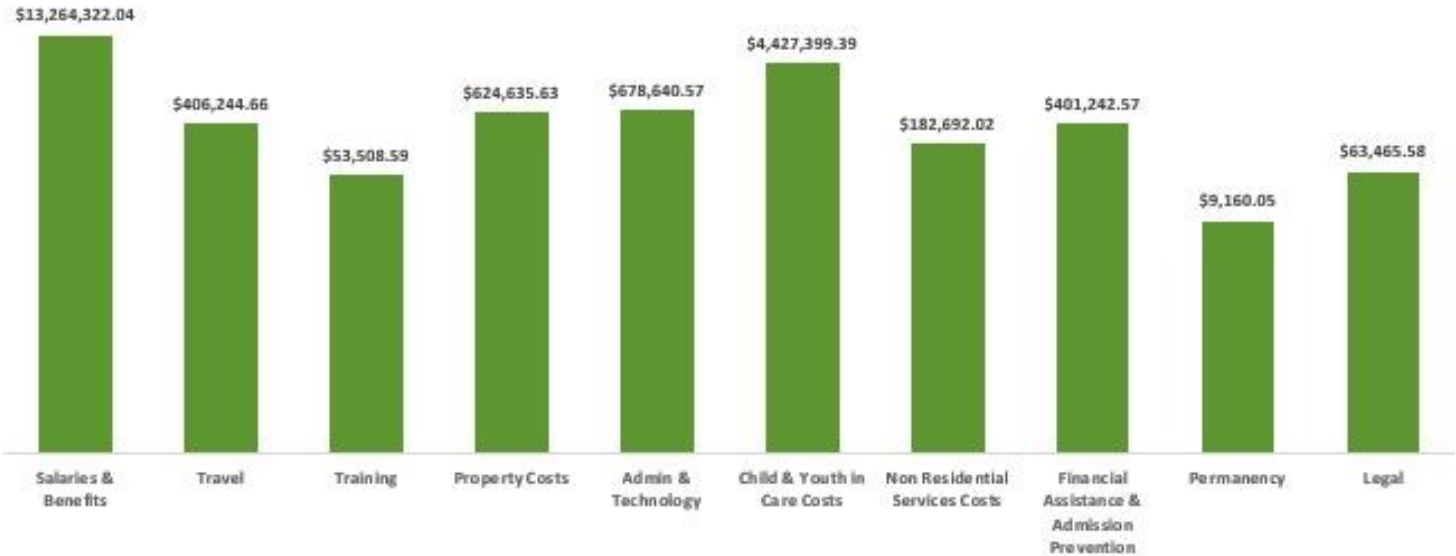


# Financial Summary

## Revenues



## Expenses



**\$19,890,930**  
(revenue)

**\$20,111,311**  
(expenses)

**2019-20 deficit = \$220,381**

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# Early Help

We work with our partners to provide early intervention.  
Only 13% of our families return for service within 12 months.

**510**

cases linked to community services

**91%**

of our work  
is completed at investigation

**49**

duty to report/community engagement presentations completed to help  
awareness that it is EVERYONE'S responsibility to keep children and youth safe

**41**

children and youth placed  
with kinship families when they  
could not remain in their own homes

**34**

community placements—schools,  
counselling services, community HUBS,  
Halton Region and the police service—  
enable staff to provide early intervention,  
accessibility and help

**3,795**

(children and youth)

**1,059**

(parents)

received programming through  
Our Kids Network Hubs

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# Permanency Begins at Home

**97%**

of cases enable children and youth to remain with their families

**66%**

of children and youth are discharged within one year of coming into care

**83%**

of children and youth return to family or kin

**3**

adoptions finalized (or in process)

**123**

number of children and youth in our Society's care

**67%**

of our children and youth in care are over the age of 12



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# Youth Programs

## Halton Youth Initiative

Elevates the youth voice and empowers youth to have a positive impact in their community. Supported by adult allies, this initiative is youth led with youth identifying local issues and strategies for possible solutions. Activities are grounded in an asset-based approach and focus on relationship building.

**131**  
youth

**46**  
adult allies

**1,752**  
youth hours

**288**  
adult hours

**\$68K**

received from the Children's Aid Foundation  
of Halton to support these initiatives

**28**

youth attended post-secondary education

**92**

children/youth participated in FUTURES educational, life skills and recreational programs

**665**

youth received outreach services from Bridging the Gap's homeless program for youth aged 16-24

**32**

youth attended events including YouthSAID programming, Children and Youth in Care Day, YouthCAN Conference and Grand River Zone events

**88%**

of eligible youth  
in care attending  
high school

**91%**

of youth 18-21 years of  
age actively pursuing  
education,  
employment or training

**321**

number of significant  
connections engaged in  
support network  
planning for children  
and youth

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# Our Team

## Board of Directors

### Board Executive

**Emad Elsayed**, Chair

**Joyce See**, Vice Chair

**Mike Reid**, Finance and Risk Management Committee Chair

**Terry Spearin**, Governance Committee Chair

**Joan Lewis**, Director at Large

### Board Members

**Jason Barr** | **Eslyn Blair** | **Terry Kelly** | **Hazel Lambert** | **Marcus Logan**

**Ann Murray** | **Brendan Neil** | **Kamran Niazi** | **Brad Saunders**

## Leadership Team

**Janice Robinson**, Executive Director

**Lynn Barker**, Director of Service

**Jennifer Binnington**, Director of Service

**Michelle McGaw**, Director of Human Resources and Organizational Excellence

**Juliette Prouse**, Director of Finance and Property Management

**Robyn Connolly**, Executive Assistant to the Executive Director/Communications Specialist



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# Aspirational Compass

