



WOODGREEN

Opportunity made here.

# WoodGreen Pre-Budget Submission for Ontario Budget

2024



COMMUNITY CARE  
PROGRAMS



COMMUNITY  
MENTAL HEALTH AND  
ADDICTIONS SERVICES



DEEPLY AFFORDABLE  
HOUSING



HOMEWARD  
BOUND





WoodGreen Community Services is one of Toronto's largest social service agencies, serving clients across 40 locations, and offering over 75 programs and services addressing the health and well-being of our community.

WoodGreen offers community programs and services that connect underserved populations with impactful supports to enhance self-sufficiency and improve clients' physical, social and mental well-being. We provide innovative solutions to critical social needs, including:

- Housing
  - Community care services
  - Community mental health and addictions services
  - Child care
  - Employment and financial empowerment services
  - Newcomer services
  - Youth programs
  - Developmental services
- WoodGreen's programs reduce cycles of poverty and provide an opportunity for people to thrive and live healthy and well.

### WOODGREEN RECOMMENDS:



Sustainable and expansion funding towards community care programs such as adult day programs, meal services, transportation, assisted living services and caregiver supports.



Support for non-profit affordable housing developers, including upfront equity, lower borrowing rates and designating surplus provincial land.



Funding towards program expansion for community mental health and addictions services.



Funding for the women's economic empowerment program Homeward Bound that supports single mothers across southern Ontario with wrap around supports to get an education and a job.





For Budget 2024, WoodGreen recommends that the Government of Ontario invest in four key areas: community care programs, community mental health and addictions services, deeply affordable housing, and women's economic empowerment.

The Government of Ontario should:

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** Provide an additional investment in community care to sustain adult day programs, meal services, transportation, assisted living services and caregiver supports.
- 2** Provide funding towards program expansion for community mental health and addictions services.
- 3** Support the development of affordable housing by providing non-profits up-front equity (through a revolving equity fund), lower rates, and provincial surplus land.
- 4** Invest in Homeward Bound programs to support an estimated 274 single mothers in 5 Southern Ontario communities with getting an education, housing, child care and employment.



COMMUNITY CARE  
PROGRAMS

**\$2.8 M**

including an additional \$1,348,385  
to sustain and an additional  
\$1,495,414 to expand our programs



**1**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Government of Ontario should provide an additional investment for the community care sector of \$76.2 million in line with the Ontario Community Support Association's call.<sup>1</sup> This funding would increase service providers' operational budgets to meet the growing need for community supports and sustain programs such as adult day programs, meal services, transportation, assisted living services and caregiver supports. WoodGreen requires an additional \$1,348,385 to sustain and an additional \$1,495,414 to expand our programs.

Ontario needs a strong community care sector that can support and alleviate the strain that hospitals, primary care, and long-term care (LTC) face. Many people are not able to get the care they need because of the lack of capacity. This past year there were over 200 temporary closures of emergency rooms across Ontario.<sup>2</sup> Admissions into LTC homes are becoming increasingly delayed with nearly 40,000 Ontarians on the waitlist.<sup>3</sup> As well, patients who occupy a bed but do not require the intensity of service, called alternate level of care (ALC) patients, are filling hospitals. This is the result of a lack of alternative options, and these ALC patients currently make up 17% of hospital bed occupancy in Ontario.<sup>4</sup>

Community care programs keep people at home and in their community, which can alleviate pressure off hospitals and reduce waitlists for alternate care settings. The Auditor General found that investing in community resources and transferring hospital patients to more appropriate facilities will also reduce the need to treat patients in hospital hallways.<sup>5</sup> Community

care is also more cost efficient than hospitals and LTC homes. To care for an ALC patient, it costs hospitals around \$750 per day and it costs LTC around \$201 per day, whereas community care costs around \$103 per day.<sup>6</sup> Community care services help clients avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and promote independence and dignity. However, these programs and services cannot help the health system without investment to sustain and expand community care.

WoodGreen Community Services offers many community care programs and services for children, youth, adults, seniors, caregivers, and people with disabilities, such as housing and homelessness services, meal services, assisted living services, therapeutic counselling, transportation and integrated care services to improve clients' physical, social and mental wellbeing. WoodGreen Community Services also works in partnership with others in the health sector to deliver integrated care that reduces the number of alternate level of care patients in hospitals.

**CLUSTER CARE**

WoodGreen's Cluster Care program provides frail seniors full-time assisted living services in a shared living environment. This model gives clients the opportunity to live independently and prevents ALC clients from occupying hospital beds. Our program has been **able to divert 75% of our cluster care clients away from LTC.**

Each cluster brings together eight to eleven frail seniors with complex needs. Clusters have private bedrooms for each

**17%**

**Alternate level of care (ALC) patients, are filling 17% of hospital beds in Ontario.**





senior, and a common living, dining and kitchen area where residents can gather to socialize and enjoy mealtimes. **This model creates a community for seniors and reduces social isolation.** PSWs staff the clusters 24 hours a day, to safeguard client safety and assist residents according to their individual needs. The model provides support for seniors who are experiencing advanced frailty, including those with mental health and neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

Cluster care is more cost efficient than LTC, **costing an average of \$99 per bed**, compared to \$201 per LTC bed. Investing in cluster care would save the health system \$38,807 per patient per year. WoodGreen requires approximately **\$976,686 for two cluster care units total of 27 beds.**

#### **PERSONAL SUPPORT SERVICES & CARE AT HOME**

WoodGreen's personal support services are available to seniors living in their own

homes or in WoodGreen's seniors-only residences. Our team of personal support workers provide personal care, meal preparation, medication reminders and household support. WoodGreen requires **an additional \$220,029 to increase our client target by 10 per cent.**

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**\$99**

**average cost of  
care in community  
per bed compared to  
\$201.00 in LTC**

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#### **SENIORS SOCIAL WORK AND PSYCHOGERIATRIC SERVICES**

Seniors Social Work and Psychogeriatric Services programs fill a critical service gap in seniors' services. The programs offer case management, therapeutic counselling, and service navigation services and supports to people aged 55 and older living with complex mental health and/or substance use issues, cognitive issues (e.g. dementia), frailty, and other psychogeriatric conditions related to the aging process. Psychogeriatric specialists provide services in clients' homes and communities, supporting transitions from acute care, preventing evictions and unnecessary hospitalizations, and enabling seniors to age well at home.

There has been an increased demand for specialized psychogeriatric community-based supports. WoodGreen requires an **additional \$298,699 per annum to grow these programs and meet the demand.**



COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH  
AND ADDICTIONS SERVICES

**\$4.2 M**

including an additional \$862,241  
to sustain and an additional \$3,350,946  
to expand our programs



**2**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Government of Ontario should provide an additional investment of 7 per cent base increase towards expanding existing community mental health and addictions services, in line with the call from Addictions & Mental Health Ontario (AMHO). WoodGreen requires an additional \$3,350,946 to expand our programs and services to meet demand.

Demand for non-profit services is continuing to greatly increase and has grown 29% since 2020 according to the Ontario Non-Profit Network (ONN).<sup>7</sup> For example, in 2020, it was reported that 28,000 children and youth with mental health needs were on waitlists in Ontario, double the amount compared to 2017.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, non-profits are facing a staffing shortage. AMHO surveyed hundreds of community health organizations and found that 94% of community health organizations identified compensation as the single biggest challenge for recruitment and retention.<sup>9</sup> Community mental health organizations, including WoodGreen, are experiencing staff burnout and turnover due to the high demand for services.

We need immediate government intervention to address critical staffing shortages and ensure stability of our health care system. In Budget 2023, the Ontario government invested \$425 million over three years (a five per cent increase in overall funding) to the mental health and addictions sector. This funding allowed organizations to sustain their community mental health programs, staffing, and administrative costs. However, for organizations that

**42,290**

**number of calls the Toronto Seniors Helpline responded to, nearly triple its funded target.**

completed their moderation period for Bill 124 in 2022-23, the majority of the funding increases were used to respond to the three years of restricted increases to salary and benefits. The increased funding has allowed for programs to be sustained but is not enough to allow programs to expand to meet the increased demand for mental health services.

Many community mental health programs at WoodGreen are above capacity including Toronto Seniors Helpline, Crisis Outreach for Service for Seniors, Walk-In Counselling, Comprehensive Care and Integration Specialist Team, Counselling and Support Services, and Psychogeriatric Supports. Our programs have experienced a large increase in demand and a significant increase in the complexity of client needs and presentations.

**TORONTO SENIORS HELPLINE (TSH)**

TSH is a one-stop navigation and service access phone number that provides support to older adults and seniors with physical, cognitive, mental, and

developmental health challenges. Recognized as a **Leading Practice** by **Health Standards Organization**<sup>10</sup> the TSH's team of registered healthcare professionals provide telephone-based supportive counselling to reduce isolation, connection to community services and supports, crisis de-escalation for those in crisis, warm referrals to community support services (with 30+ partner agencies in Toronto), and activation of in-person crisis supports when needed. Staff on the Toronto Seniors Helpline on average interact with **three thousand seniors per month. Last year, the helpline responded to 42,290 calls, nearly triple its funded target.**

**TSH is open 365 days a year**, with phone and web chat support, live answer in English and French, and interpretation available in 100+ languages.

To sustain and expand to better meet the increasing demand and provide our **service 24 hours** per day to become more closely aligned with 911, **an additional investment of \$207,593 per annum is required.**



**\$0.9 M –  
\$2.8 M**

the amount of cost savings  
through WoodGreen's Walk-in  
Counselling service since 2010.

### CRISIS OUTREACH SERVICE FOR SENIORS (COSS)

COSS provides mobile community-based crisis response for older adults (65+ years or age 55 – 64 with geriatric presentation) living in Toronto with cognitive, addictions issues, or mental health concerns. This service is **available 365 days a year** from 9am to 5pm and receives regular referrals from hospitals, police, housing providers, community agencies, and concerned families and caregivers.

COSS offers immediate in-person crisis intervention support, crisis counselling, short-term intensive case management, harm reduction, mental health and addictions support, and fosters connection to follow-up services and supports. In addition, COSS provides specialized Behaviour Support for seniors with responsive behaviours, and health assessments and primary care by Nurse Practitioners. Last year, **COSS surpassed its targets by supporting 2,261 seniors.**

To expand services to meet the growing demand, WoodGreen requires an additional **\$2,293,116** in annual funding to create more comprehensive care by creating **5 new enhanced positions** (e.g. 2 nurse practitioners and 3 occupational therapists) and **10 new full-time crisis staff**. This expansion would allow the program to increase its capacity and support an **additional 1,260 clients per year**. If each one of those new clients avoid going to the hospital for one day per month for a year, it would save approximately **\$11,037,600 per year in healthcare costs<sup>11</sup>**.

### COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT SERVICES, WALK-IN COUNSELLING

WoodGreen's Walk-in Counselling (WIC) service is an innovative mental health resource that provides **immediate access to high-quality psychotherapeutic counselling free of charge to a diverse client population**. The program addresses a wide range of emotional, behavioural,

and social concerns including anxiety, depression, troubles with anger, difficulties at work or school, relationship issues, parenting concerns and other issues.

Operated primarily through support of volunteers, the program is extremely cost-effective and fills a critical gap in our health system by providing no-cost, quick access psychotherapy, which can prevent mental health crises and potentially reduce 911 calls and unnecessary hospital visits. From its inception in November 2010 to the end of October 2023, **WoodGreen Walk-in Counselling service provided a total of 7,224 counselling sessions and supported 6,087 individuals**. In 2023, WIC provided over 400 counselling sessions supporting over 300 adults and youth. If we consider the typical counselling rates of \$100 - \$300 per hour, **this would total \$941,000 - \$2,823,000 in savings** since WIC's inception for individuals in need of support.

To further address the ever-increasing demand for specialized and accessible longer-term psychotherapy and intensive case management, WoodGreen offers clinical and therapeutic counselling, case management and group support services to individuals age 16+ experiencing concerns with mental health, substance use issues and other challenges. Counselling and case management services, provided by registered professionals, utilize a wide range of therapeutic modalities and are

offered for up to two years, depending on client needs and goals.

WoodGreen Community Services requires an **additional investment of \$565,764 per annum** to grow the current initiatives and meet the increasing demand for psychotherapy mental health supports.

### COMPREHENSIVE CARE AND INTEGRATION SPECIALIST TEAM (CCIS)

WoodGreen's Comprehensive Care and Integration Specialists **fill gaps in care for individuals living with multiple and highly complex health and psychosocial issues**, many of whom would otherwise require prolonged and frequent hospitalizations. Recognized as a **Leading Practice by the Health Standards Organization**, the Comprehensive Care and Integration Specialist team connect clients to essential services and supports; coordinates follow-up care; and provides support with housing, legal, financial and immigration issues.

This team works with clients to develop individual Coordinated Care Plans and ensures that their care providers work as a team. CCIS **bridges the gap between acute and medical care providers and the community sector and supports timely, and effective care transitions across various systems and providers**. WoodGreen requires an additional **investment of \$284,474 per annum** to grow the program.





DEEPLY AFFORDABLE  
HOUSING

**\$1.0 B**

in a pre-development revolving equity fund for non-profit developments.



**3**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Government of Ontario should support the development of affordable housing by providing non-profits up-front equity (through a revolving equity fund), lower rates, and provincial surplus land. Provide an investment of \$1 billion in a pre-development revolving equity fund for non-profit developments, that could be used to create up to 40,000 units of mixed income housing through new development or partnership with private sector developers.

Canada's supply of community housing makes up less than four per cent of Canada's total housing stock. This is less than half of the average supply of community housing across OECD and G7 countries.<sup>12</sup> Canada has experience rapid population growth in Canada over the past five years, yet Canada has built few purpose-built rentals compared to the previous 5-year period.<sup>13</sup> To tackle the housing affordability crisis, the Government of Ontario needs to invest in non-profit housing developers.

WoodGreen's housing services provide many high-risk populations including seniors in independent living, people with disabilities, and homeless men, women, single mothers, and families with safe housing. Over the next 10 years, WoodGreen plans to scale up and increase our portfolio by 2,000 affordable housing units.

Over the last few years, WoodGreen has tested a series of innovative approaches to increase our affordable housing stock.

**<4%**

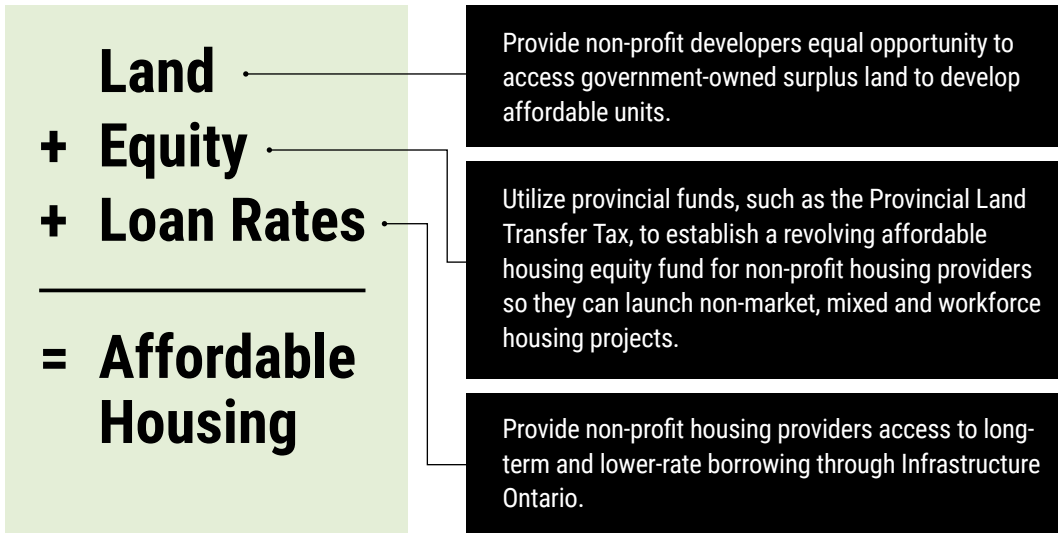
**Canada's supply of community housing makes up less than four per cent of Canada's total housing stock. This is less than half of the average supply of community housing across OECD and G7 countries.**

For instance, we have partnered with the private sector to develop WoodGreen-owned land, partnered with private developers to manage units from their developments once built, and integrated with other agencies to acquire new units and to create future opportunities for redevelopment.





The government can empower non-profit developers to increase the supply of affordable housing by providing land, equity and lower-rate loans.



**Land**

There is not enough land available in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area to meet the needs of the long-term population size forecasted by the provincial government.<sup>14</sup> The Ontario government made a promising step forward to address the need for more land by committing to use provincially owned surplus lands for non-profit housing as part of the government’s More Homes for Everyone plan. The province needs to follow through on this commitment. Through creating a partnership with WoodGreen, there is an opportunity for surplus land to be developed into affordable, mixed and workforce housing.

**Loan Rates**

A major challenge for non-profits is getting attractive lending rates in Ontario’s financial market. To enhance the financial viability of WoodGreen and other non-profits in developing new affordable housing we are asking for Infrastructure Ontario (IO) to extend access to long term and lower borrowing rates to non-profits without

requiring a municipal guarantee. Layering low-rate mortgage debt with other Federal and City grants and loans will help accelerate and scale the development of new affordable housing in Ontario.

**Upfront Equity**

The Government of Ontario should create a revolving upfront equity fund for non-profit affordable housing developers. This can be a revolving fund, where affordable housing developers who receive equity from the fund, can pay back into the fund once the building is complete.

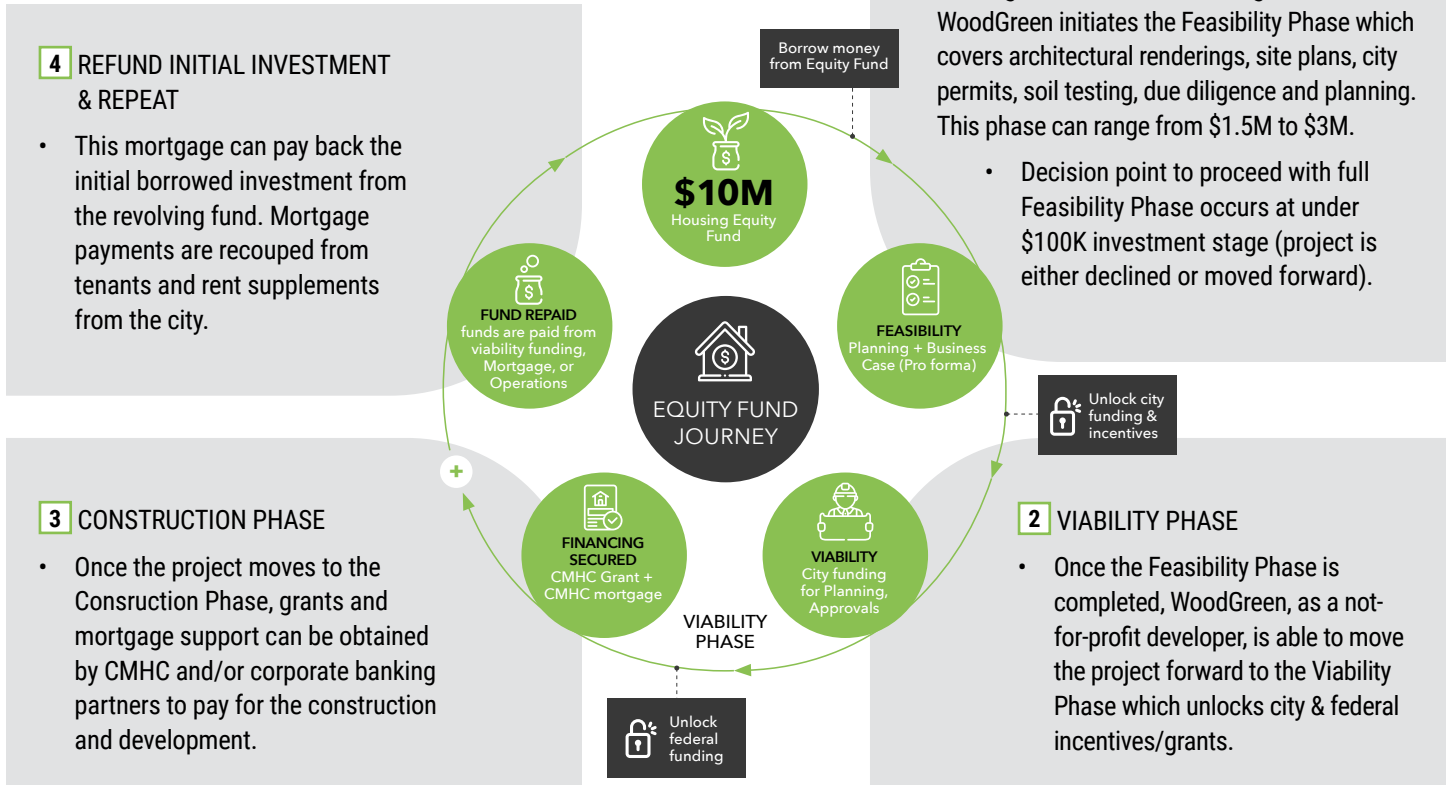
Despite WoodGreen’s significant successes in developing affordable units, our organization lacks predictable and readily available investment capital to finance and scale up development. WoodGreen has a growth strategy to scale and speed up the development of deeply affordable housing. However, to achieve our goal, we need the government’s support with upfront equity. Purpose-built rentals require about twice as much initial equity in comparison to a condo

where developers can get upfront deposits from purchasers. Organizations developing purpose-built rentals need to fill that equity gap with other capital, which many non-profit developers struggle with.

Giving upfront equity to non-profit community housing providers will allow them to move projects forward to the viability phase which will unlock financing, incentives and grants from the municipality, the Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC), and/or corporate banking partners to pay for the construction and development. The source of equity could come from land transfer tax. The province collected \$1.77 billion through the land transfer tax in FY 2022-2023. If the government were to invest \$1 billion of the land transfer tax into an equity fund for non-profit developments, that money could be used to create up to 40,000 units of mixed income housing. This will enable stacking with other sources of financing including CMHC and social impact investors. See charts below for the costing of the revolving equity fund.

**WoodGreen: A Revolving Affordable Housing Investment Fund**

This fund removes the barrier to seize development opportunities due to the high cost associated with the Feasibility Phase. **The example assumes equity of \$10m to build one 100-unit building.**



Assuming the sector has a revolving equity and an accelerated approval process, for less than three years the model reduces the overall costs for adding 40,000 units.

Pre-Construction Capital Needed without Recycling (Loan Tenure >10yrs)*					
# of Units Built in 10 Years	150	1,500	3,750	7,500	40,000 units
Up-front Capital Required	11,250,000	112,500,000	281,250,000	562,500,000	\$3,000,000,000
Pre-Construction Capital Needed without Recycling (Loan Tenure = 5yrs)*					
# of Units Built in 10 Years	150	1,500	3,750	7,500	40,000 units
Up-front Capital Required	5,625,000	56,250,000	140,625,000	562,500,000	\$1,500,000,000
Pre-Construction Capital Needed without Recycling (Loan Tenure < 3.5yrs)*					
# of Units Built in 10 Years	150	1,500	3,750	7,500	40,000 units
Up-front Capital Required	3,750,000	37,500,000	93,750,000	187,500,000	\$1,000,000,000





**HOMEWARD BOUND**

**\$8.8 M**

over 4 years towards Homeward Bound programs, supporting 274 single mothers in Southern Ontario



**4**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Government of Ontario should invest \$8.8 million dollars over 4 years towards Homeward Bound programs to support an estimated 274 single mothers in 5 Southern Ontario communities with getting an education, housing, child care and employment.

Homeward Bound is a program created by WoodGreen that supports single mothers to permanently transition from social assistance to stable employment in high-demand fields. Homeward Bound is a proven and best in-class program that provides wraparound comprehensive supports to low-income women-led families, 80 per cent of whom have faced domestic violence or other trauma. Over the

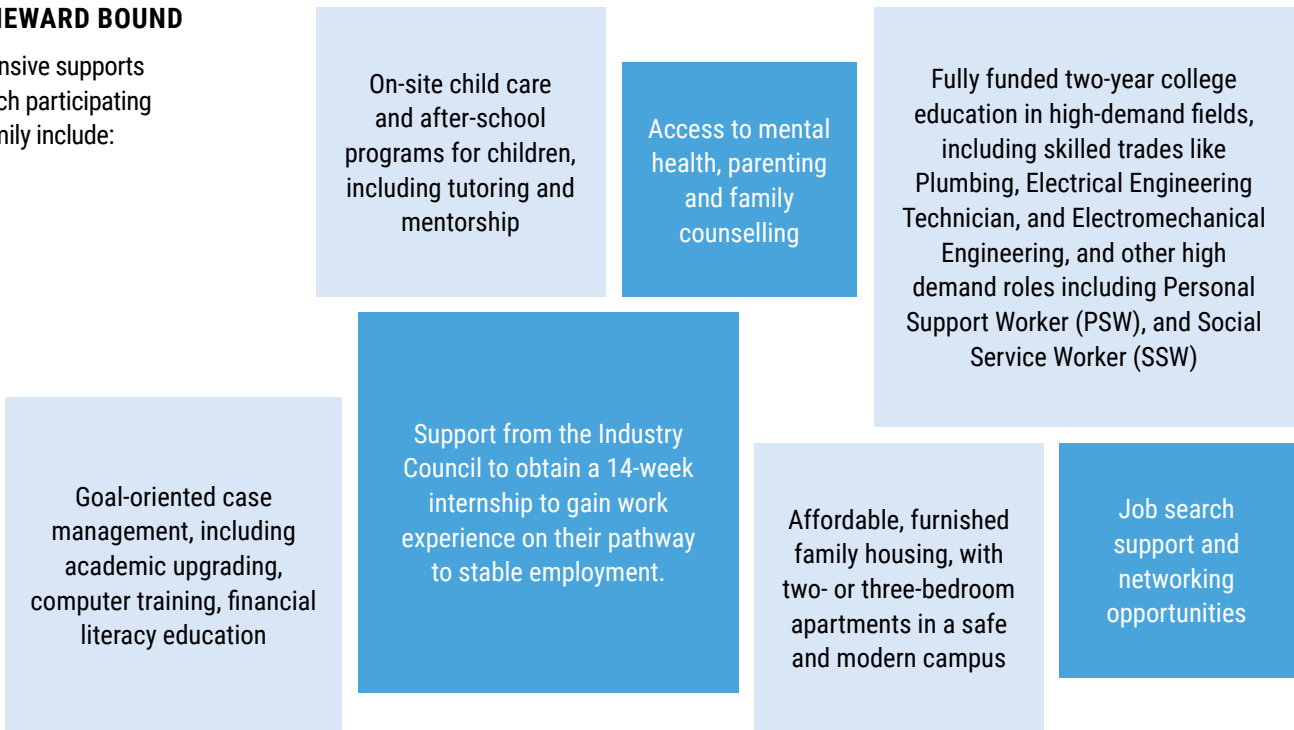
course of four years, the program allows the women to build foundational skills and provides mentoring and job training needed for self-sufficient independence, while ensuring that their families have the stability and supports needed to allow these mothers to succeed. Homeward Bound was originally piloted by WoodGreen in 2004 in Toronto and has expanded to now operate in five Southern Ontario

communities: Toronto, Halton, Brantford-Brant, Peterborough, and expanding to Durham.

This funding would support critical frontline operating positions such as social workers and family resource workers, tutors, housing support workers and other positions essential to the delivery of Homeward Bound programs across Southern Ontario.

**ABOUT HOMEWARD BOUND**

The comprehensive supports provided to each participating women-led family include:



## HOMeward BOUND'S SUCCESS

People experiencing homelessness often need a range of supports and services such as housing, employment training, job seeking assistance, education support, life skills development, and legal and newcomer services to help stabilize their lives.<sup>15</sup> According to a study conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, 35% of individuals who exit Ontario Works ultimately returned to social assistance within a year-and-a-half of their exit.<sup>16</sup>

Homeward Bound is unique in targeting all associated barriers to seeking economic independence to ensure participants permanently transition off social assistance. Homeward Bound's record of success is consistent and profound:

- 92% of participants who were living in a shelter when they began Homeward Bound, now live in market rental, subsidized housing, or own a home.
- 94% of the program graduates reported being stably housed.

- The employment rate amongst participants entering Homeward Bound was six per cent compared with 87% up to five years after graduation.

The proposed investment could leverage up to \$52.8 million in savings for the Ontario Government over the four-year period of the investment, through both lower social assistance requirements and increased tax revenue.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 2024 Pre-Budget Recommendations. Ontario Community Support Association. (2023, December). <https://www.ocsa.on.ca/2024-pre-budget-recommendations>
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- 3 Arthur, S., Hirdes, J., Heckman, G., Morinville, A., Costa, A., & Hebert, P. (2021, January). Do premorbid characteristics of home care clients predict delayed discharges in acute care hospitals: a retrospective cohort study in Ontario and British Columbia, Canada. *BMJ Open*. <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/11/2/e038484.full.pdf>; Kuluski, K., Ho, J. W., Cadel, L., Shearkhani, S., Levy, C., Marcinow, M., Peckham, A., Sandercock, J., Willison, D. J., & Guilcher, S. J. (2020, October 23). An alternate level of care plan: Co-designing components of an intervention with patients, caregivers and providers to address delayed hospital discharge challenges. *PubMed*. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32602628/>
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- 8 More severe mental health issues reported in kids. *Children's Mental Health Ontario*. (2022, April 5). <https://cmho.org/more-severe-mental-health-issues-reported-in-kids/>
- 9 Compensation Working Group. (2023, November). Ontario Community Health Compensation Market Salary Review. *AMHO*. <https://amho.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Ontario-Community-Health-Compensation-Study.pdf>
- 10 Leading Practices: Toronto Seniors Helpline. *Health Standards Organization*. (2022). <https://healthstandards.org/leading-practice/toronto-seniors-helpline/>
- 11 Based on the cost of \$730.00 for a hospital bed per day.
- 12 Consultations in advance of the 2024 Budget Committee on Finance for Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2024 Budget. *Canadian Housing Renewal Association*. (2024, August 9). <https://chra-achru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/CHRA-Submission-to-the-Standing-Committee-on-Finance-for-Pre-Budget-Consultations-in-Advance-of-the-2024-Budget.pdf>
- 13 Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. (2023, August). The National Housing Accord a multi-sector approach to ending Canada's Rental Housing Crisis. [https://assets.nationbuilder.com/caeh/pages/453/attachments/original/1692060486/2023\\_National\\_Housing\\_Accord.pdf?1692060486](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/caeh/pages/453/attachments/original/1692060486/2023_National_Housing_Accord.pdf?1692060486)
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