

# Annual Report

## 2024-2025



## Our Mission

People with intellectual disabilities have the opportunity to participate in all elements of living in the community



## Board of Directors and Executive Leadership

**Rick Jones**  
Board Chair

**Warren Burger**  
1st Vice President

**David Cooperman**  
Treasurer

**Tony Collini**  
Director

**Melissa Abrams**  
Director

**Emily Mete**  
Director

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## Senior Management

**Susan Fielding-York**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Warren Simmons**  
Director  
Community Support Services  
Planned Giving Representative

**Michelle Shedden**  
Director of Operations

**William (Bill) Bye**  
Finance Controller

**Larissa Wall**  
Senior Manager Human Resources

## Message from the CEO and Board Chair

This past year at Community Living St. Catharines has been one of change, determination, and progress. Together, we have faced challenges with resilience and embraced opportunities with optimism.

We are proud to report that significant strides were made in strengthening our organization. The implementation of new schedules and the successful filling of vacant positions have been important steps in enhancing our ability to deliver consistent, high-quality support. These changes have not always been easy, but they were necessary to ensure that we continue to meet the evolving needs of the people we support and their families.

Looking ahead, we see opportunity. With the dedication of our staff, the guidance of our Board, and the support of our community partners, we are positioning ourselves to pursue excellence in all that we do. The foundation we have laid this year sets the stage for growth, innovation, and a brighter future.

We extend our deepest thanks to our staff for their unwavering commitment, to our supporters for their trust and encouragement, and to the individuals and families we serve, who inspire us daily.

Our vision remains clear: to provide exceptional service, to empower the people we support, and to strengthen our community through inclusion, respect, and opportunity. Together, we look forward to the year ahead with confidence and renewed purpose.

With gratitude,

**Susan Fielding-York**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Rick Jones**  
Board Chair

## Quality Assurance

Community Living St. Catharines (CLSC) successfully completed the Developmental Services (DS) Compliance Inspection in October 2024. We are proud to have received positive feedback from the Ministry Program Advisor, who recognized the strength of our agency's practices.

Our agency staff worked cooperatively to maintain a high level of readiness for the inspection, while our internal review processes ensured CLSC's ongoing alignment with all ministry requirements.

We extend our sincere thanks to all employees for their continued commitment to following the policies and practices that support our continued success during these important reviews.



## Preschool Services

Preschool Services provides support to children from birth to age six who demonstrate developmental needs and are attending Early Learning environments, while also offering guidance to their families. Over the past year, the program supported 171 children across 34 Early Learning settings. Currently, 48 of these children are preparing to transition into the school system, a process, that requires coordinated planning with school boards throughout the year to ensure smoother, and more inclusive transitions from preschool into the school setting. In addition, our connection with the Entry to School program (ETS) enabled six children to benefit from this specialized service.

After many decades of service and leading the way in the inclusion of children, the Preschool department is now entering its final few months of operations, as the Regional Municipality of Niagara, transitions to a new model of service delivery. Under the new framework, only two agencies will be designated to operate the Special Needs Resourcing programs. This will now be called Community Pedagogy and Quality Team. As this takes effect as of December 31<sup>st</sup> our team remains focused on ensuring a smooth transition for children, families, and community partners who rely on these supports.

Due to the review of the current resource model, opportunities to participate in committees or working groups were limited. However, Resource Consultants continued to engage meaningfully within their Early Learning settings, collaborating

with staff and other professionals to support inclusive practices and ensure the provision of high-quality care. Agency required trainings through Surge as well as Safety Care, First Aid and CPR were attended by all Consultants. We were also able to take part, for the second year, in the Parent Involvement Committees' Resource Fair. This was a well-attended information event for parents within the school system where we were able to showcase what we do in the community.

The Consultants also facilitated a region wide childcare training day "Let's Dive Deeper into Wellness." Prior to this event all Resource Consultants received training on effective facilitation. In addition, the Consultants were able to attend a presentation on Infant and Early Years Mental Health by Dr. Jean Clinton.

Staff attended the Early Childhood Education Awards of Excellence; the Preschool team presented the Kelly Albanese Memorial Inclusion Award to Port Dalhousie Nursery School. This was the second consecutive year that one of our supported Early Learning Centres has been recognized for outstanding commitment to inclusive practices.



## **Community Support Services (CSS) - Children**

CSS – Children provides services and supports to children and youth between the ages of 4 and 18 years. The program is dedicated to empowering families by guiding them through available community resources and strengthening their ability to advocate for their child's needs. CSS Consultants deliver support to the family, foster community connections, and assist with long-term planning. In the past year, CSS-Children supported 168 children and youth, with referrals continuing to grow at a steady and significant rate.

Our Transitional Services provide specialized planning for youth funded by the Ministry of Children Community and Social Service (MCCSS). The focus of this program is to prepare the individual, their family, and their support team for the transition from child to adult-funded services. Over the past year transitional services supported the successful transition of 65 youth.

Now in its second year, the Extensive Needs Service (ENS) has expanded its service to families through targeted modifications. ENS is designed to provide additional support to children and youth living with complex medical, social, physical and developmental needs. The program assists families in accessing services while fostering strong partnerships with community agencies. Currently 8 of our families are receiving active support through ENS.

Our Consultants work closely with a wide range of community partners to streamline services and provide coordinated support to children and youth connected with our program. Collaboration this year included agencies such as Bethesda, The RAFT, Pathstone. Contact Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board, District School Board of Niagara, Niagara Childrens' Centre and De-dwa-da-dehs-nye Aboriginal Health Centre.

Our team remains committed to ongoing professional development, participating in training opportunities on a wide range of topics, including Solution-Focused Approaches, Conscious Care, Youth and Bipolar Disorder, Anti-Human Trafficking, FASD Sex-Related Trends, and Workplace Stress.

For the second consecutive year, we participated in the DSBN Parent Involvement Committee (PIC) Conference, where we contributed resources to the Resource Fair. In addition, Consultants delivered several presentations throughout the year, including sessions for the Niagara Catholic District School Board on Transitioning to Adult Services, as well as a presentation to the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) on supports and services provided by Community Living St. Catharines. They also partnered with Contact Niagara and N-Tec to provide a presentation to the NCDSB on Transitionally Aged Youth (TAY) Planning and resource for families. In collaboration with Community Living Fort Erie and Contact Niagara Consultants further supported professional development by delivering a full day session on TAY Planning.



# Adult Planning

Over 200 individuals are connected with Adult Planning and have had a Person-Directed Plan completed. A Person-Directed Plan (PDP) is a document that describes in detail who the person is; their strengths; support needs; their dreams and goals; their support circle; and how to best achieve their goals. This document provides necessary information to those in a supporting role which is beneficial to the person and their family as it minimizes the need to explain their stories repeatedly.

Referrals to Adult Planning are made through Developmental Services Ontario-Hamilton Niagara Region (DSO-HNR). It is not uncommon for those being referred to have multiple complex needs in addition to having an intellectual disability. These complex needs often include mental health challenges; substance abuse; physical challenges; and involvement with the Criminal Justice System. Ever present is the lack of appropriate housing and food insecurity. Relationships with community agencies have been fostered to provide wrap-around supports for those with complex needs.

The following are agencies that Adult Planning has been able to coordinate services and supports with:

- Bethesda Services
- Dual Diagnosis Justice Case Manager-Bethesda
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Housing Help-Community Care
- Carolyn Fast Consulting
- Community Integration through Cooperative Education Program-Niagara College
- John Howard Society
- March of Dimes Employment Services
- NTEC Employment Services
- The Public Guardian and Trustee
- Positive Living Niagara-Streetworks,
- Quest Community Health Centre
- RecFit Services
- DSO-HNR

Open communication is maintained with several agencies through community support team meetings which are held bi-weekly or monthly depending on the person's needs. Community support team meetings provides the opportunity to celebrate successes as well as to address concerns.

Adult Planning's partnership with Carolyn Fast, Independent Facilitator, continues to grow. Carolyn is able to help the person and their family develop their support circle which is comprised of natural supports as well as with professional supports. Support circles are important as services continue to change. Members of support circles help the person reach their goals as well as to foster greater independence and to share responsibility with the family. Carolyn helps the person and their family members to see that possibilities for their future are endless.

The Adult Planner continues to represent Community Living St. Catharines on the Community Integration through Cooperative Education (CICE) Program comprised of members throughout the Niagara Region. Committee members are kept apprised of Niagara College news. CICE program success is shared with the committee and members have the opportunity to provide input on CICE program changes. This program is specifically designed for those having learning challenges and it is a viable option for many people supported through Adult Planning.

## Community Development

There has been a lot happening in the Community Development Department this year.

Our Best Buddies Brock University Club has rebounded very well this past year after our pandemic rebuild year. We had 44 people supported by our agency and 47 students in the club. We held monthly group events which included a Meet and Greet; Mini Meet and Greet; Holiday Fun Fair; Canvas Painting; Valentines Day activities; Bowling at Parkway Social; and a Semi-Formal Dance with a catered lunch. The people we support to date pay a minimal fee to help offset a couple of our group events. All of our group events that are not at a community venue are held at Isaac's Pub right on campus at no charge to us. This past year we received \$1,500.00 from the Brock University Student Union to offset costs as well. We held two fundraisers this year – Niagara Ice Dogs where we get a portion of each ticket sold and Boston Pizza where we get 1/2 of all food sales on the day of our event. We look forward to another fantastic year.





Our After-Hours Programs continued to be a great success. Over the course of the year, we offered weekly Virtual Bingo, Drop In and Classes of Interest such as baking, cooking, crafts, and exercise/ movement. In order to keep stats on attendance we calculate opportunities for people to attend these three activities. Over the course of the year the Wednesday classes offered 393 opportunities; Virtual Bingo offered 582 opportunities; and Drop In offered 789 opportunities to people supported by our agency. There was an increase in opportunities in all three activities over the previous year.

We also offered many Special Events such as Hamilton Tiger Cats; Dances; Mid-Summer BBQ; Merrittville Speedway; Toronto Blue Jays; and several activities held over Community Living Month. We were very happy to offer our Arts and Crafts Vendor Market which showcased 34 creative and talented vendors. These vendors included both people supported and community members. It was a huge success and we will be holding the Vendor Market again this year on November 1<sup>st</sup>.



We welcomed one new volunteer who needed their high school community service hours. We had nine student placements this year from programs such as Educational Assistance/Adult Supports, Social Service Worker and Resource Consultant. These students were from Niagara College and Mohawk College. We also had four Brock University students who were doing their internship with both our Best Buddies programs as well as in our After Hours and CPS programs.



We continue to partner with Dr. Maureen Connelly – Professor PEKN at Brock University to provide a movement and cognitive based program focusing on Aging and Disabilities with an additional focus on Dementia. The initial pilot in July/24 was a success and the university has continued to offer this program through out the school year.

# Community Participation Supports (CPS)

Community Participation Supports (CPS) provides supports and services to 98 individuals with the emphasis on personal growth and development through adult learning, volunteering, community involvement, social inclusion and recreational opportunities and experiences.

CPS Participants enjoy community volunteer opportunities throughout the year:

- ◇ Book Sorting for Charity each November
- ◇ Niagara Grape & Wine Festival set up each September
- ◇ Meyer's Greenhouse weekly
- ◇ Christmas Cards for Seniors



Person centered classes and activities offered through CPS are based on goals identified by the participants and include:

- \* Supporting and participating in Best Buddies events and fundraisers
- \* Community Arts and Craft and the public library; Art/Ceramic Studios; Art Galleries, Museums and Heartland Forest
- \* Regular visits to the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre as part of the ImpACT Education Series
- \* Visits to the Police Station and other community locations
- \* Community Sporting Events including the Ontario Parasport Games
- \* Visits to Sherkston Shores each summer to enjoy the amenities
- \* Summer trips to Safari Niagara, Driving Range and Batting Cages, Rock'n Bowl and Mini Putt as well as picnics and games at local parks
- \* Learning new sports such as Pickle Ball and accessing community venues such as the Sports and Abilities Centre
- \* Seasonal and Holiday related activities
- \* Weekly Lunch Program offering individuals supported at CPS and staff the opportunity to purchase lunches once per week that are prepared by individuals supported. The proceeds of this lunch program are used to



provide meals through our Helping Hands Program to people we support free of charge

- \* Hosting seminars with Community Policing Officer to address safety in the community which are open to all people supported by CLSC
- \* Hosting students completing Placement Hours
- \* On-going classes and activities such as Drum-Fit; Swimming; Bowling; Computer Skills; Health and Fitness; Art; Music and Kitchen Skills;
- \* Operating a Lending Library in Group 4
- \* Planting, maintaining and harvesting a vegetable garden at Red Roof each summer



# Human Resources Department

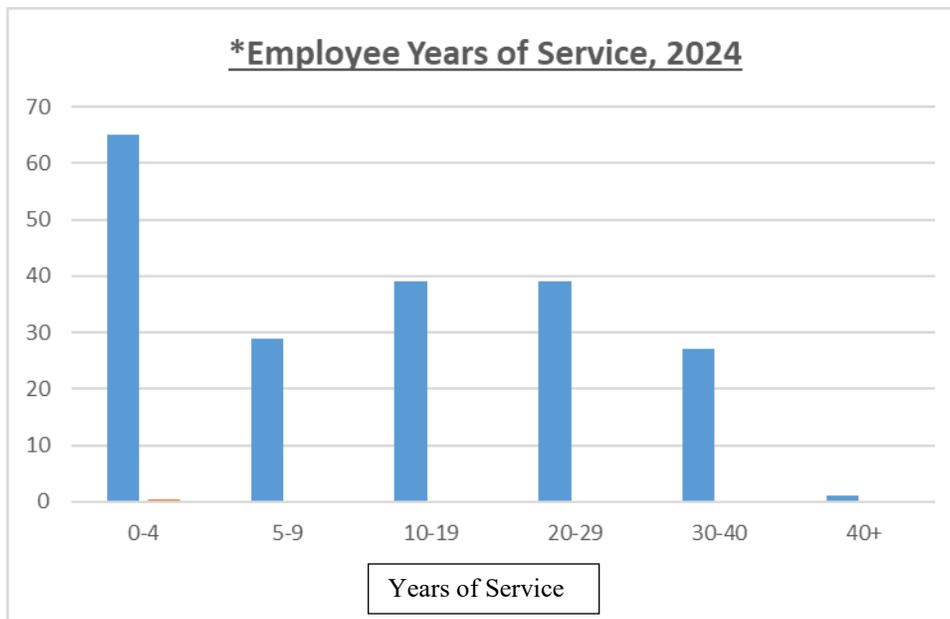
## HR Stats:

⇒ We have a total of 206 employees and welcome the following employees hired between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025:

### New Hires:

- 31 Direct Support Professionals
- 1 Adult Supports Supervisor
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- 1 Scheduling Coordinator
- 1 Finance Coordinator
- 1 Adult Supports Program Coordinator
- 1 Maintenance and Repair Technician
- 1 Senior Manager, Human Resources

⇒ Hired 2 summer contract employees through the Canada Summer Jobs Grant 2024 in Maintenance and Quality Assurance.

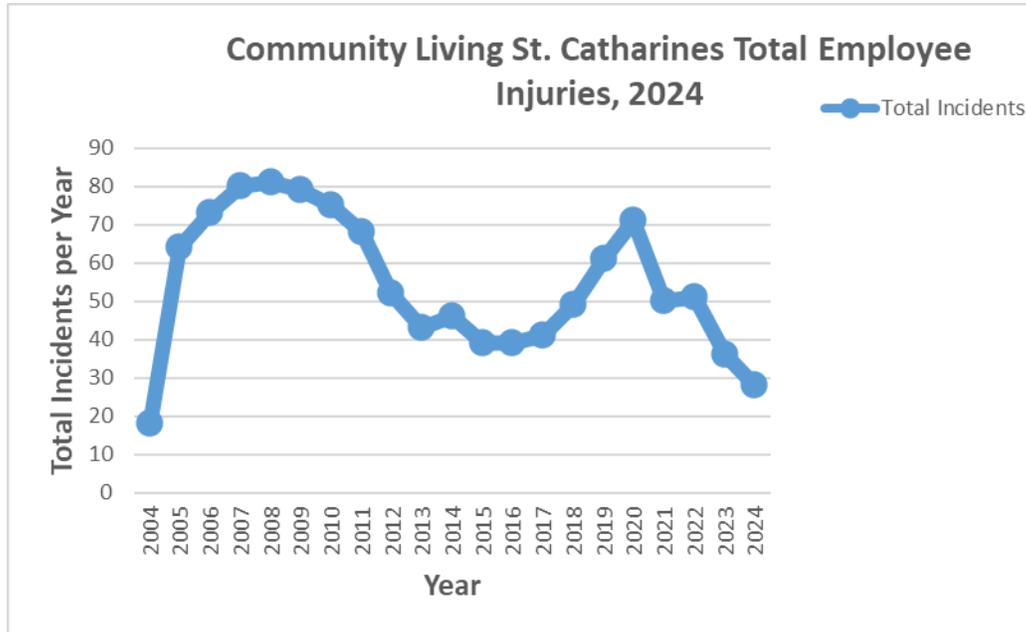


⇒ 35% of our employees have worked for CLSC for 20 years or more

⇒ 21 employees marked 5-40 Years of Services in 2024, including 1 employee who celebrated their 40 years of service to CLSC

⇒ 59 in-person trainings were conducted between April 1, 2024-March 31, 2025 and launched a total of 8 Training Bundles (Workplace Violence, QAM, Fire Safety, MSDs, WHMIS, Slips Trips and Falls, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Training, etc) assigned through the online Surge Learning Platform.

⇒ Our total Employee Workplace Injuries/Incidents continued to decrease by 22.2% in 2024:



### HR Highlights:

- ⇒ We welcomed Larissa Wall, Senior Manager, Human Resources, hired in March 2025. Larissa brings to CLSC over 20 years of experience in human resources management, specializing in talent acquisition, employee relations, health & safety and performance management.
- ⇒ Human Resources launched a comprehensive Strategic Recruitment Plan in 2024 to increase retention and recruitment of the agency talent pool within 24 months, in conjunction with the initiatives in the CLSC Strategic Plan 2022-2026.
- ⇒ The Human Resources Department hosted our first agency in-house job fair in May 2024, coinciding with Community Living Month.
- ⇒ Annual Public Health Inspections were completed at all Residential Sites with full compliance.
- ⇒ Human Resources received zero non-compliances and zero recommendations for annual MCCSS Compliance Audit, 2024.
- ⇒ CLSC honoured our employees celebrating 5 Year increment work anniversary milestones, with an Employee Appreciation Years of Service Awards Dinner, held on Thursday, November 21, 2024 at Club Roma. We look forward to returning to Club Roma for this year's Employee Appreciation Years of Service Awards Dinner in November 2025.
- ⇒ Physical Demands Analysis Plans were completed for each of our Residential Sites through CBI Health.
- ⇒ CLSC HR Team participated with Bethesda HR Team to promote Developmental Sector job opportunities and the DS Apprenticeship Program at the "Level Up" Trades Fair at Niagara Falls Convention Centre, November 2024.

### In Memoriam:

- ⇒ Jean Gilmour, Residential Supervisor, passed away in August 2024. She was our longest-term employee who would have celebrated 50 years of employment with Community Living St. Catharines in 2025. She embodied the spirit of person-centred support, kindness, service and togetherness that makes our agency so special. Jean will forever be remembered as the heart of all we do at CLSC.

# Adult Support Services

We continue to celebrate meaningful activities and relationships through Flash Friday. This has also been achieved through welcoming new individuals to Community Living St Catharines. We look forward to continuing in fostering new friendships and opportunities to the people we support. It is recognized that Flash Fridays would not be possible without the front line staff supporting individuals and ensuring they are living their best life. For this, we thank you.

Scheduling Coordinator, HR and Program Supervisors are diligently working through Staff Schedule Care. Each Group Living site has a SSC Champion to assist through this transition which is amazing. We are looking forward to this software that will automate many time-consuming tasks, freeing up staff to focus on other essential duties.

We are in 2025 without some of our peers. In the face of losing people we care for, CLSC community continue to be strong and cherish the time with people supported. It is here we continue to realize the strength in cultivating the strong relationships that individuals have formed over the decades.

Adult Supports continue to work with DSO and MCCSS for vacancy management and ensuring suitable transitions of people supported. When we are facing a lack in base funding to assist people aging in place, we need to be creative and this has encompassed assessing the growing, changing and complex needs that individuals supported are experiencing. CLSC has observed successful transitions of people supported to a different home and build rapport with staff teams and individuals. CLSC is building partnerships with stakeholders and medical services to sustain individuals placements successfully here at CLSC as best as we can.

Organizational restructure welcomed CPS to direct service model under Adult Supports. We are looking forward to championing flexible and accessible opportunities through the leadership of the CPS staff and leadership team.

Employees and leadership participated in professional development that included Rational Detachment, Ethical Decision Making and Conscious Care. Employees have been sharing their interest to participate in leading, mentoring and coaching fellow colleagues and opportunities had been presented through the spring session DSP2 refresh. We look forward to fostering more of these opportunities to contribute to growth and development as Direct Support Professionals.



# Thank You!

## Celebrating Successful Milestones For People with Intellectual Disabilities

Community Living St. Catharines and its Board of Directors wish to extend their thanks and their appreciation to our growing number of donors, partners, and volunteers whose support of our goals and mission allowed us to expand our programs and provide new opportunities for the people we support.

### OUR SUPPORTERS



### OUR PARTNERS



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