

# POST- SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM REPORT

2023/2024



**CHILDREN'S  
AID FOUNDATION  
OF CANADA**

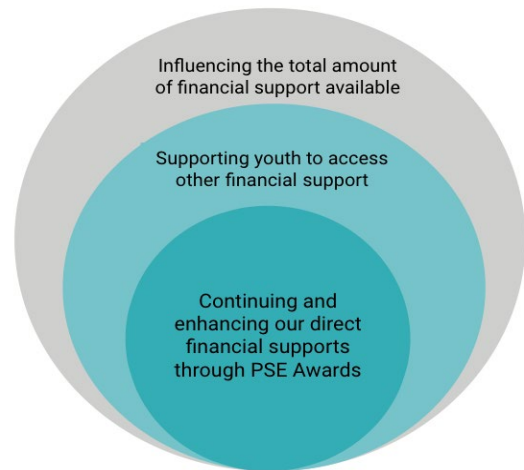
## Executive Summary

Children's Aid Foundation of Canada recognizes that the path to post-secondary education for a young person with experience of child welfare is not an easy one. Though 62% of Ontario 16- and 17-year-olds in care hope to pursue post-secondary education<sup>1</sup>, the reality is only 46% of those in care graduate from high school (vs 83% of their peers not from care) and are 50% less likely to attend post-secondary studies<sup>2</sup>. Youth in transition from care face a disproportionate number of barriers to pursuing post-secondary education related to their experiences, but the cost of attending a post-secondary institution, without the financial support, or guidance, of family, is an overwhelming one.

A survey by Maclean's magazine of Canadian youth found the average cost of post-secondary education is approximately \$20,000 per year, with 74% of that total made up of rent (40%) and tuition (34%)<sup>3</sup>. In almost all cases young people leave care between the ages of 18 and 21, having to navigate rent, work, living expenses, and a post-secondary education on their own.

Scholarships, bursaries and other awards provide essential support to students by acknowledging these barriers and granting funds to help relieve financial anxiety, at the same time as letting a young person know they are supported and believed in. In 2023-24 the Foundation completed its work towards a clear

strategy for the future of its post-secondary education (PSE) program, acknowledging that we have an important role to play to ensure that no young person from care in Canada be limited by financial barriers in their pursuit of a post-secondary education.



Guided by a National Post-Secondary Education Advisory Council and a series of engagements with subject matter experts, the Foundation's PSE strategy focuses on three important ways we can contribute to reducing or eliminating financial barriers to education access for young people from care. First, to enhance the Foundation's PSE support to improve the user experience for youth and increase our reach. Next, to make it easier for youth to navigate to and access existing financial resources and support. And lastly and most far reaching, to leverage our influence to increase the total dollars available for young people transitioning from child welfare on a national level.

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<sup>1</sup> Data obtained through personal communication with CAFC, May 2023. Information from OnLAC, 2022

<sup>2</sup> The Post-Secondary Education Program Review." Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, 2017 [https://www.cafdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/WhitePaper\\_LongForm.pdf](https://www.cafdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/WhitePaper_LongForm.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> "The cost of a Canadian university education in six charts." Maclean's, 2018 <https://www.macleans.ca/education/the-cost-of-a-canadian-university-education-in-six-charts>

# THE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM

## Impact to date

Since 1995, when the Foundation's PSE program was launched awarding \$15,000 to nine students in the Toronto area, the program has grown exponentially. In 2023-24, we awarded over **\$2.2** million dollars to **680** individual students across Canada, bringing the total granted through the PSE Program to **\$24.4** million to **8170** young people across Canada, solely through the incredible generosity of donors.

The Foundation's PSE supports are comprised of four core elements:

### Foundation Scholarship, \$5000

The Children's Aid Foundation of Canada post-secondary scholarship awards young people \$5000 for each academic year until they finish their program through a once yearly competitive application.

### Foundation Bursary, up to \$2000

Bursary awards are available throughout the school year (funding allowing) to full- and part-time post-secondary students who were not ranked to receive a scholarship, or missed applying for the scholarship application.

### Foundation Graduation Award, up to \$2000

Are awarded to prior scholarship and bursary recipients who graduate from their post-secondary program.

### Youth Opportunity Fund, assessed by individual request.

An additional fund to help young people in their academic, or career related goals. Funding can support requests such as tutoring, vocational assessments or career counseling, equipment required by post-secondary programs or employment opportunities, certification or support to participate in skilled trades-related training, short-term courses or apprenticeships, application fees or preparation courses for graduate programs, high school upgrading or academic bridging/transitional year programs.

The Foundation is also partnered with,

## Ted Rogers Scholarship Fund

In our final year of collaboration with Rogers Communications, Children's Aid Foundation of Canada acted as a national partner organization referring 50 selected youth who demonstrate community leadership to the Ted Rogers Scholarship Fund.

## Ontario Trust for Student Support (OTSS) Endowed Funds

In 2011, Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada established endowed funds at George Brown College, Centennial College, Humber College, and the University of Waterloo. These funds were matched by the Ontario government through the Ontario Trust for Student Support program. Students are selected through the Foundation’s scholarship and bursary review process and are awarded funding from these endowments into their student accounts.

## Corsage Project Community Awards of the greater Toronto area

The Corsage Project’s fundraising and granting flows through Children’s Aid Foundation of Canada. Starting in 2014, the Foundation began managing the applications and allocation of their scholarships, but the Corsage Project has retained the application process and selection of their annual Community Awards, with payments issued by the Foundation.

In addition to the PSE program, the Foundation also provides grants to numerous partner agencies throughout Canada to fund education-related supports to young people in all stages of their path through post-secondary education.

## Granting Overview – 2023-24

**680 individual students were supported in the 2023-2024 academic year, with \$2,152,623 in awards,**

	2023-24		2022-23	
	Granted	Students Supported	Granted	Students Supported
Scholarships	\$1,492,500	319	\$1,311,250	296
Bursaries for full or part-time studies	\$311,250	199	\$252,750	160
Scholarships or bursaries through OTSS	\$50,000	15	\$36,000	16
Youth Opportunity Fund*	\$173,073	115	\$132,055	94
Graduation Awards*	\$124,300	100	\$137,850	116
<b>Sub-Total:</b>	<b>\$2,151,123</b>		<b>\$1,869,905</b>	
<b>Other Scholarships Partially Administered by CAFC</b>				
Ted Rogers Scholarships† (Canada)	\$0	39	\$0	51
Corsage Project Community Awards	\$1500	3	\$2000	4
<b>Sub-Total:</b>	<b>\$1500</b>		<b>\$2000</b>	
<b>TOTAL GRANTED/SUPPORTED:</b>	<b>\$2,152,623</b>	<b>790</b>	<b>\$1,871, 905</b>	<b>737</b>

\*Students receiving HSBC Youth Opportunity Fund grants and Ilan Levy Graduation Awards of Excellence may also be receiving a scholarship or bursary, which has been accounted for in the total of individual students.

†Funding for the Ted Rogers Scholarships is granted directly to students by the Ted Rogers Scholarship Fund.

## The PSE Strategy – 2023-24

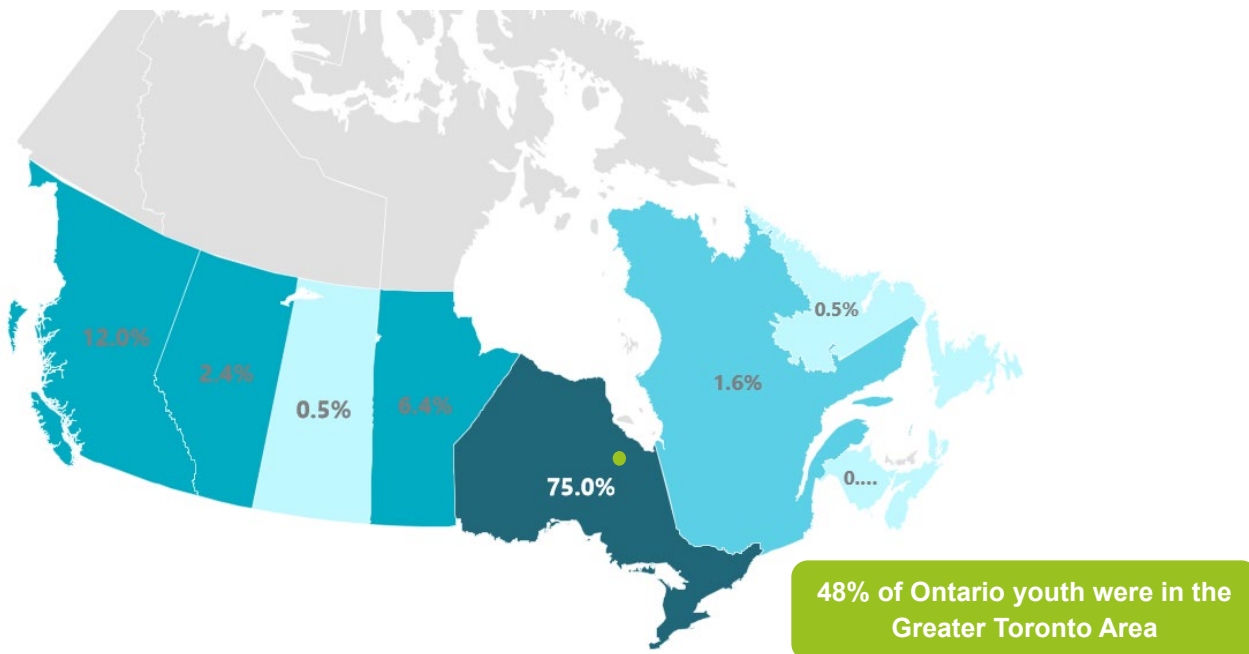
In 2023-24 the Foundation focused on the implementation of the inner circle of the PSE Strategy: enhancing the Foundation’s direct supports to students. The Foundation was guided in these adjustments by the recommendations of the National PSE Advisory Council to remove several identified barriers to access to the Foundation Scholarships and the other core elements of the PSE program, while also prioritizing academic persistence and reinforcing strengths-based considerations within selection criteria.

The Foundation made public our commitment to support scholarship recipients with \$5000 for every year of academic studies until their program was complete, without having to reapply each year. An award renewal system was designed and successfully introduced for the current 2023-24 scholarship recipients. The Foundation eligibility criteria was expanded so that all youth transitioning out of care at the age of majority were eligible to apply, regardless of their care status, and based on strong recommendations from subject matter experts, the Foundation launched a pilot to open PSE applications to students over the age of 30 who had not previously received Foundation PSE support. For new applicants, the Foundation’s forms have been redesigned to be easier to complete, and to focus on strengths- and persistence-based evaluation questions. Lastly, the Foundation Scholarship application and notification timeline has been changed to better align with the timeline when young people are applying to or making decisions about school.

## Our Reach

The individuals who received 2023-24 Foundation PSE support through the four core programs.

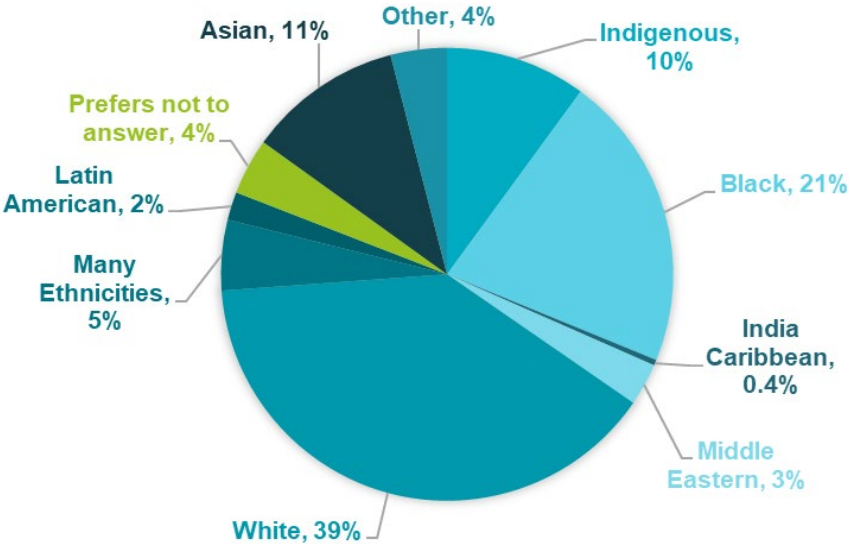
### Location



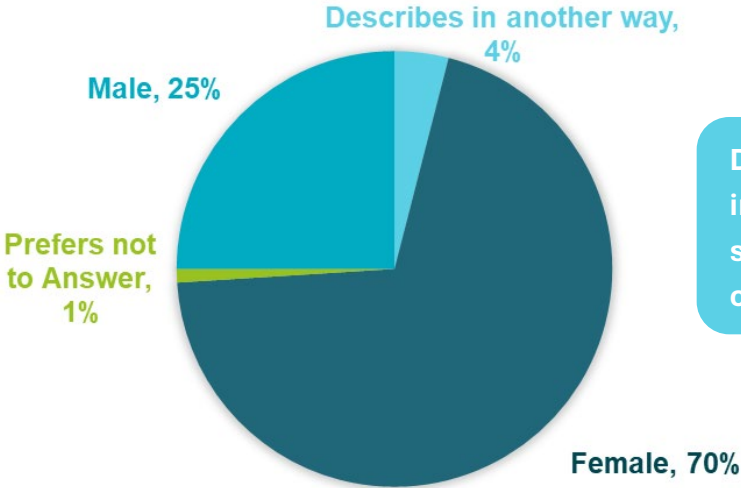
In 2023-24, the PSE program reached recipients in 9 provinces, with growth in the number of students from Quebec, the prairie and eastern provinces.

### Ethnic Identity

Of the recipients who received either a 2023-24 Foundation scholarship or bursary,



### Gender



Describes in another way includes transgender, two-spirited, gender non-conforming and non-binary

### Schools and Programs

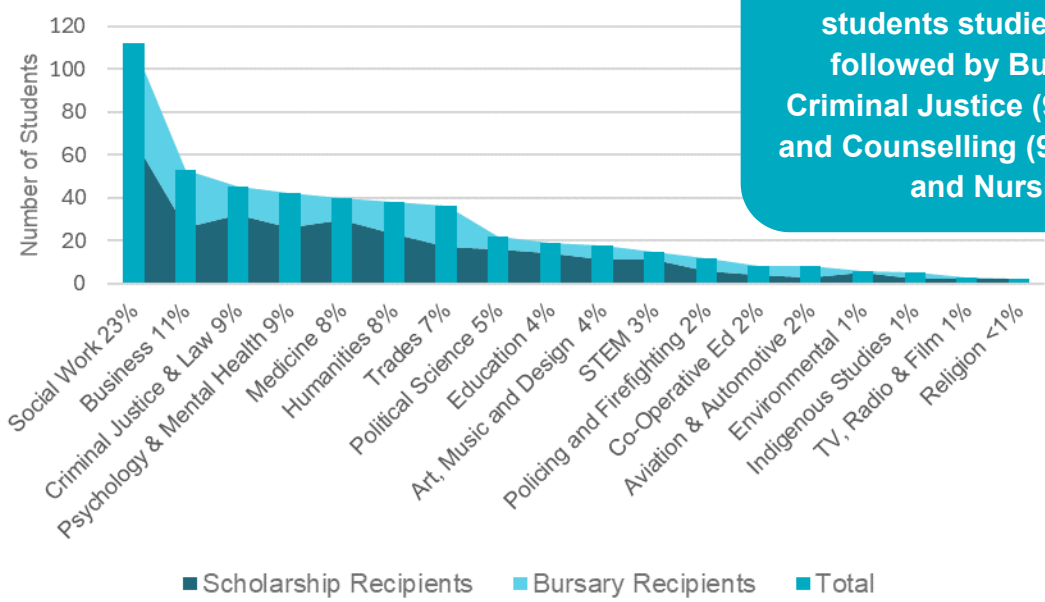
Of the recipients who received either a 2023-24 Foundation scholarship or bursary,

- **55%** attended **university**
- **43%** attended **college**
- **2%** attended **private/career college**
- **30** were pursuing a **post-graduate or graduate program**

**Students attended 123 schools across Canada**

85% of the 2023-24 Foundation Scholarship students are on track to continue their studies, or to start their next program in 2024-25

**Programs**



Nearly a quarter of the total 2023-24 students studied Social Work followed by Business (11%), Criminal Justice (9%), Psychology and Counselling (9%) and Medicine and Nursing (8%)

**The Graduation Award**

In the 2023-24 fiscal year the Foundation supported **100** graduates who had received Foundation Scholarships, bursaries or a combination of the two throughout their programs. Of that number, **44** graduated from university, and **56** from college. Of the university graduates, **11** students completed master’s, doctorate, or Juris Doctor degrees.

The Ilan Levy Graduation Awards of Excellence not only celebrate a young person’s achievement but, through surveys completed by graduates, also help to inform the Foundation on its PSE strategy and programs and to bridge them with its existing youth in transition programs, like Youth Works, our national youth employment program, ensuring we are better able to give positive assistance to young people throughout their path to a career and independence.

From the application, and follow-up survey we learned,

The average amount received from the Foundation over the course of post-secondary studies for university graduates was \$16,500 and for college graduates was \$9,600

Of the 2023-24 Graduates, 44% only received scholarships, 30% received a combination of scholarships and bursaries, and 26% only received bursaries for their programs

The 2023-24 graduates reported having an average of \$25,000 of student debt at graduation. The Canadian average is \$28,000 <sup>5</sup>

The university undergraduates completed their programs in an average 4.20 years. The Canadian population average is 4.53 years <sup>6</sup>

The college diploma graduates completed their programs in an average of 2.67 years. The Canadian population average is 2.54 years <sup>6</sup>

In 2023-24, the graduates included 16% black youth, 11% Asian youth, 10% indigenous youth, and 37% white youth. 15% of the graduates described themselves as being of many ethnicities, or in another way, and 7% were represented by Latin American, India-Caribbean and Middle Eastern young people. 4% Preferred not to answer.

6+ Months from graduation, 42% of graduates were working, 36% were continuing their education or training and 2% were participating in a practicum or internship

6+ Months from graduation, 9% of the graduates were actively looking for work, and 2% were stay-at-home parents, who intend to continue towards their goals in the future

80% of Graduates report they have the same career goals as when they first graduated. Of those, 81% said their current activities have either gotten them to their goal, or are helping to work towards it

## 2024-25

In 2024-25 fiscal year the Foundation will have completed a full year cycle of the PSE strategy changes and will be reporting on its impact on the award and its recipients. As the Foundation's awards alone are not sufficient to meet our intended impact of removing all the financial barriers faced by youth from care in pursuing post-secondary education, the plan of expanding into the second circle priority, how best can we support young people in accessing existing financial resources and supports throughout the PSE landscape, will begin. Combined we will be closer to the Foundation's longer-term goal, of leveraging our influence and position to increase the total dollars available for young people with lived experience of the child welfare system for post-secondary education by bringing together and joining networks of leaders, including First Voice youth and other experts, to create coalitions and collectively advocate for change.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. [Table 37-10-0036-01 Student debt from all sources, by province of study and level of study](#)

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. [Table 37-10-0140-01 Graduation of career, technical or professional training certificate students, within the province or territory of first enrolment, by student characteristics](#)