

# IMPACT REPORT GENERAL



CHEO is always evolving to meet the changing needs of children, youth and families. Equipment is upgraded with advanced technology, innovative in-hospital programs are made available for patients, and researchers work tirelessly to achieve ground-breaking discoveries that will transform treatments and outcomes. But none of this progress is possible without you. Our growth is thanks to the incredible generosity of philanthropists like you who have made a personal choice to take the health and wellbeing of the next generation into their own hands. Every dollar you contribute strengthens CHEO, the CHEO Research Institute and Roger Neilson Children's Hospice. This report shows some of the accomplishments made possible thanks to your decision to give and invest in a bright future not only for the young people in our community and region, but for children across Canada and beyond.

## A space for families to recharge

Thanks to donor support, the 4 North Family Room has officially re-opened its doors, marking a significant milestone for families who had been anticipating this moment for nearly four years. This beautiful new space is a warm and inviting room for families who spend time at CHEO with their children during oncology treatments. The room offers a bistro table, comfortable seating and loungers where families and caregivers can relax. It also includes charging stations, a large fridge for snacks and meals, a microwave, toaster, kettle and complimentary coffee. A wall-mounted screen provides useful information for families. The 4 North Family Room is made possible by donors who are making CHEO as comfortable as possible for oncology families.



*"This special space offers a much-needed break, a chance to step away from the medical environment, and feel supported. It's a space for parents to rest, reflect, and recharge so they can continue to be there for their child, no matter the challenges ahead." – Dr. Lindy Samson, Chief of Staff*



## Your Impact: CHEO's Transport Team can now help older kids

CHEO's Critical Care Transport Team has extended its life-saving expertise to include children who weigh up to 88 pounds. Until recently, older equipment limited the team to treating and transporting children up to a maximum weight of 11 pounds.



This team of specialized nurses and respiratory therapists are on call 24/7, travelling vast distances by ambulance, helicopter, or plane offering advanced care during transport, including intubation, administering medications and stabilizing critically ill children to communities across eastern and northern Ontario and western Quebec. The team collaborates with hospitals and community health organizations across the province to handle complex medical situations during transit.

The Transport Team, which celebrates its 35th anniversary this year, helped 595 infants, babies and children in 2024 and travelled approximately 149,000 kilometres – which is equivalent to 3.72 times around the Earth. Your generosity means the world to children and youth when access to urgent critical care makes all the difference.

## **Research Chair: Dr. Robert Myette – pediatric kidney disease research**

Research at CHEO would not be possible without generous donors whose gifts support the operating costs of the CHEO Research Institute. Having reliable funding means researchers can be hired, laboratory facilities can be established, and additional research funding can be secured from other sources to continue the work. The CHEO Research Institute and CHEO Foundation are proud to announce Dr. Robert Myette as the CHEO Foundation Research Chair in pediatric kidney disease. This position offers Dr. Myette, a pediatric nephrologist and clinician scientist at CHEO, dedicated time and funding to pursue research to better understand and treat nephrotic syndrome in children.



Nephrotic syndrome (NS) is a condition related to loss of protein in the urine which leads to significant swelling, infections, blood clots and increased risk of heart disease. For every 10,000 children in Canada, approximately two develop nephrotic syndrome, the main cause is unknown. While considered rare, CHEO currently cares for hundreds of children with this condition. Prescribing high-dose steroids is the first course of treatment. Unfortunately, many patients go on to develop steroid-resistance and many experience

unpleasant side effects. Dr. Myette and his team are trying to better understand childhood NS by studying a specific type of cell in the kidney known as the podocyte. When podocytes are injured and leak protein, they release cell parts that can be collected from the urine and studied. Children with NS have a higher number of these cell parts in their urine. Understanding why these podocytes are injured and how to better repair them using less steroids is the goal of this work. This allows CHEO to offer more personalized and ultimately more precise treatment approaches.

## Grief and bereavement care

CHEO and Roger Neilson Children's Hospice provide special bereavement care that recognizes the impact of loss and grief on young people as well as parents and caregivers after the death of a loved one. CHEO's team of child life specialists, social workers and spiritual support providers accompany families as they experience the realities of a life-limiting illness and the end-of-life process. Services available to families include peer-to-peer and counselling tailored to young grievers, group bereavement sessions, individual counseling and a variety of memory-making and legacy building options at no cost. Donations are vital to ensuring CHEO has ample resources available for people of all ages and at different stages of grief. These therapeutic resources in the hands of dedicated palliative care professionals support both patients and families throughout their care journey. Thank you for helping children, youth and families cope with the enormous stress and fearful uncertainty of loss.

## Head to Toe at CHEO

Recognizing when children and youth are having thoughts about suicide is crucial to protecting their health, and this focus has become part of CHEO's standard of care through the donor-funded "Head to Toe" assessment program. When a child or youth is admitted to CHEO for any reason, part of their evaluation includes a nurse asking them if they are having, or have had, thoughts about suicide. The Ask Suicide-Screening Questions tool uses specific questions to determine if the patient is at risk. If they are, further evaluation will judge the level of risk and the healthcare team can direct the family to the appropriate interventions, ranging from mental health education to specialized psychiatric care. This standardized assessment helps mental health professionals reach children and youth who might otherwise go unnoticed, reduces emergency hospital visits for mental health crises and facilitates early access to mental health services.



In 2024, CHEO nurses screened 983 inpatients for suicidal ideation, with 140 patients showing positive results by answering yes to at least one of the five questions. Data indicates that a total of 4,937 patients have been screened since 2019, with 653 youth receiving a positive screen result. Each time a youth is screened, it creates an opportunity for meaningful conversations about mental health, accessing services, and engaging in discussions about their wellbeing.



## You are funding therapeutic recreation programs for children and youth

Donor generosity supports year-round therapeutic recreation programs for children and youth with physical, developmental, and behavioural disabilities. These children often need specialized adaptations and assistance to engage in meaningful recreational activities, the lack of which can significantly affect their development, independence, and quality of life. CHEO's Recreation Therapy programs are designed to help participants achieve their individual goals while building skills and confidence. Through sports, physical activities, social integration, life skills and the arts, these programs empower children to thrive.

- Launched in 2024, the Family Art Program gives children and parents spaces to participate in creative activities specifically designed for them. Children and youth are encouraged to build friendships through engaging art projects, while parents have a chance to socialize and connect with others facing similar parenting experiences. Fostering comfortable environments allows children to play and families to open up about their challenges and share their journeys of raising a child with a disability. The Family Art Program has proven to be highly successful, promoting a stronger sense of community for parents and reducing their feelings of isolation all while their children try new things and expand their horizons.
- In the summer of 2024, Recreation Therapy staff hosted seven weeks of full-time summer camps. Three of these weeks were held on-site at CHEO, where the focus was on developing life skills, including taking the bus and LRT, planning outings, purchasing lunch, and trying new activities. Additionally, Recreation Therapy launched a new partnership with Carleton University, participating in their multisport camp. Summer camps have become highly sought after by families, children and youth. With the reduction of recreational services in the community, the demand for CHEO's camps has increased significantly.

Each year, CHEO Foundation is proud to offer donors like you an update on how your gifts are making a real and measurable difference in the lives of the children, youth and families you have chosen to support. The work that goes on at CHEO, the CHEO Research Institute and Roger Neilson Children's Hospice touches on every aspect of pediatric care. Your decision to give, when there are many options to choose from, is your commitment to the future and the generations to come. Your gifts are a declaration that the best life for every child and youth is your goal as much as ours. **We hope this report has shown you the power of your contributions and how much you are appreciated. Thank you.**