



Insights and Encounters

May 2026

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From l-r: Agnes Thomas, Graham Webb, Cardinal Leo, and Lino Casalino

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto provides leadership, supports social services, and facilitates advocacy for its member agencies and the people they serve. At its core is Catholic Social Teaching that focuses on the poor and marginalized, urging us all to build a just society and safeguard the dignity of every person.



Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto's Annual Meeting with Cardinal Leo Highlights Mission of Service



On May 7, the Board and staff of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto (CCAT) gathered with His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo for our Annual Meeting, an opportunity to commemorate the past year's work and reflect together on our shared mission.

For more than a century, we have supported the work of Catholic social service agencies across the Archdiocese, accompanying those on the margins with compassion and practical care rooted in the Gospel call to love our neighbour. As Chair of CCAT, Cardinal Leo led us in giving thanks for this enduring ministry.

The Annual Meeting, held at the Catholic Pastoral Centre, flowed seamlessly into a celebration of Mass in the St. René Goupil Chapel. In his homily, His Eminence reflected on the Gospel reading from John (15:9–11), emphasizing the call to abide in Christ's love. He spoke of the distinction between pleasure, happiness, and joy, noting that authentic joy is sacred, found only by abiding in Christ's love, and rooted in a life lived in communion with Him.

Heartened by his reflections, we concluded the evening with a formal dinner in gratitude for the service of our volunteer Board of Directors and in recognition of members who completed their terms: Lino Casalino and Graham Webb. The gathering affirmed our commitment to promoting and advancing Catholic Social Teaching in action, strengthening our resolve to continue this work in faithful service to the Church and the wider community.



A Celebration of Neurodiversity, Dignity, and Community

Catholic Community Services of York Region



Earlier this spring, CCSYR hosted the Autism Acceptance Event, welcoming families for a day rooted in connection, creativity, and shared understanding. Guided by the theme “Celebrating Neurodiversity with Humanity,” the gathering centred on affirming the dignity of people living with autism and deepening awareness of acceptance and difference.

Families arrived with joy and hope, and the space was designed to feel calm and grounding, with the colour blue symbolizing peace. Participants engaged at their own pace through thoughtfully designed activities, including a fishing table, music circle, relaxation corner, sensory slime-making, finger-painting, and arts and crafts. Each station offered pathways for expression, supporting comfort, autonomy, and inclusion.

The event was strengthened by dedicated volunteers whose support helped create a welcoming, respectful environment. Their presence ensured families felt supported and included throughout the day.

A particularly impactful moment came from Andrii, a program participant, who shared his experience of autism: “..... I accept the world differently.....”. His reflection added depth, reminding us that understanding grows through lived voices and genuine listening.

The broader impact of CCSYR’s disABILITY Services was reflected in a parent testimonial: “CCSYR’s Autism Program helped my child develop important communication and life skills... we’ve seen real growth in confidence and daily routines, and it has made a big difference in our lives.”

As National Accessibility Week approaches, this event reminds us that inclusion is built through everyday acts of recognition, respect, and belonging. We extend our sincere gratitude to CCAT and ShareLife donors for their continued support.



Safer Families Program

Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin (CFSPD)



The flyer features the Catholic Family Services logo and the Peel CAS logo. It includes a central image of hands holding a family silhouette. The text is organized into sections: 'PRESENTED BY CFSPD SAFER FAMILIES PROGRAM', 'TRAUMA-INFORMED PARENTING SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES', 'WHO BENEFITS?' with a list of checkmarks, 'BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES TOGETHER.', and 'Workshops:' with a bulleted list of activities.

PRESENTED BY CFSPD
SAFER FAMILIES PROGRAM

**TRAUMA-INFORMED
PARENTING SUPPORTS
FOR FAMILIES**

WHO BENEFITS?

- ✓ PARENTS IMPACTED BY TRAUMA OR VIOLENCE
- ✓ FAMILIES NAVIGATING CO-PARENTING CHALLENGES
- ✓ FATHERS SEEKING SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY
- ✓ YOUTH AFFECTED BY FAMILY CONFLICT
- ✓ NEWCOMERS ADAPTING TO CANADIAN FAMILY SYSTEMS
- ✓ CAREGIVERS SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA
- ✓ INDIVIDUALS HEALING FROM INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA
- ✓ COUPLES REBUILDING TRUST AFTER CRISIS
- ✓ FOR CLIENTS OF THE SAFER FAMILIES PROGRAM AND OTHER CLIENTS REFERRED BY PEEL CAS

BUILDING STRONGER FAMILIES TOGETHER.

Workshops:

- Making Co-Parenting Work
- Stress & Self-Care
- Healthy Parenting
- Healthy Fathers Group
- Communication Skills
- Conflict Management
- Healthy Relationships
- Understanding Abuse and the Impact on the Family

EQUIP FAMILIES WITH TOOLS TO HEAL, CONNECT, AND PARENT WITH CONFIDENCE.

CFSPD is a family service agency focused on offering counselling supports and services for families in the Peel and Dufferin community. Our Safer Families Program offers counselling support, group programs, and case management for families experiencing early signs of conflict and violence at home.

We deliver this program in collaboration with Peel Children’s Aid Society (Peel CAS). The focus is to support families in times of crisis to prevent escalation of violence and ensure timely connection to appropriate services, keeping children safe in their homes. Currently, the program accepts referrals only from Peel CAS.

The Safer Families Program is grounded in early intervention. By supporting families at risk of violence, the program works to reduce the likelihood of harm. Early support improves outcomes and reduces the need for more intensive interventions. Taking a whole-family approach strengthens relationships, improves well-being, and promotes long-term stability for all family members.

This early intervention model can also be applied across other social service and community settings, such as schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations. Expanding these approaches would allow more families to receive support sooner and help prevent issues from escalating. By focusing on prevention, collaboration, and wraparound care, this model can improve outcomes and reduce strain on crisis-driven systems while strengthening family connections and building resilient communities.



Opening Doors to Possibility

Covenant House Toronto



Opening doors to possibility: How our employment centre helps youth build confidence, skills, and stability

Every day at Covenant House Toronto, young people walk into our employment centre carrying more than backpacks and résumés. They are stepping into a job market that is more competitive than ever, yet they still bring their courage, curiosity, and hope for their futures.

“Young people today are navigating a difficult job landscape that’s rapidly shifting as Artificial Intelligence reshapes how people apply for work, what roles look like, and what employers are looking for,” said Fred Shayo-Mushi, Manager of Employment and Education.

“For youth experiencing homelessness, employment searches are often compounded by trauma, stigma, or mental health challenges. That’s why it’s so critical that employment supports are tailored to their unique needs, so they can truly succeed.”

The centre is a place where hopes are transformed into goals and action. It’s where youth explore new career paths, build practical skills, and gain the confidence to imagine themselves in new roles.

Once a youth meets with an employment counsellor, the focus is on understanding where they are on their journey and identifying any barriers impacting their path to employment. Often that starts with the basics: improving sleep, managing anxiety, building communication skills, or addressing trauma.

“We always ask ourselves: Who is in front of us? What do they need right now to move forward?”

In the centre, youth learn how to write a résumé, tips to prepare for job interviews, communication skills for work settings, how to navigate challenges, and how to show consistency on the job. Youth can also earn certifications like First Aid and food safety and have access to an employment closet where they can access clothing for job interviews.

Beyond providing individual support, the team also hosts workshops that introduce youth to different career paths and learning opportunities.

“When youth feel supported and equipped, something shifts,” Fred said. “A future becomes something they can finally see and reach.”



Introducing: Deaf Services Canada!

Deaf Services Canada-formerly Silent Voice Canada



It's official! Silent Voice Canada has changed its name to Deaf Services Canada, launched on May 8, 2026! Same comprehensive roster of accessible programs, services, and resources serving Deaf seniors, adults, parents, youth, children, infants, and their families in American Sign Language (ASL) and other signed languages, just a new name, one that better reflects what we do, with whom, and where, and a name that resonates more with members of the Deaf community.

A remarkably community-driven process

Last year, on the occasion of our 50th anniversary, we put a call out to the community for new name ideas. From May to September 2025, we collected input from Deaf community members and other interest-holders.

“Nothing About Us Without Us” informed our process.

In the fall of 2025, the list of ideas was shortlisted following an agreed-upon set of criteria. In January 2026, the list was shared widely with the deaf and hard-of-hearing community and their families for a vote. There was a clear winning name. In fact, the top two names were variations of the same three words and represented 66% of the vote: Deaf Services Canada at 46% and Canada Deaf Services at 20%.

In addition to aligning our work and operations with Catholic Social Teachings and Values, staff used our full-team retreats to articulate their collective “why.”

They expressed a shared commitment to creating meaningful change and embodying qualities such as resourcefulness, accessibility, responsiveness, respect, restoration, authenticity, and transformation.



Excited for the Next 50 Years...

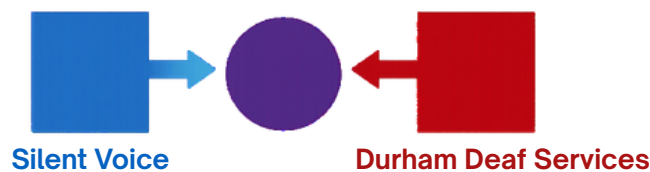
Deaf Services Canada



With more than 90% of our team identifying as Deaf or Hard of Hearing, a series of ASL 5-handshape signs naturally emerged to represent these values: elevate, raise, uplift, interact, transform, thrive, celebrate, as well as diversity and responsiveness.

These insights shaped the logo design. The 5-handshape symbolizes uplifting one another; the use of colour reflects diversity; and the figures represent the people we serve, from youth to older adults.

Why purple?



Purple represents the merger of Silent Voice Canada (blue) and Durham Deaf Services (red). Purple also represents creativity, respect, depth, and community.



Offering services since 1975 and becoming a Catholic Charities member agency in 1981, we are so excited to bring in the next 50 years with our new name and visual brand that align with our philosophical brand to uplift each other and those we serve. Visit us at www.deafservices.ca and follow us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn. We can be reached at deafservices@deafservices.ca.



Restoring Dignity through Housing and Work

Restorative Justice Housing Ontario (RJHO)



Restoring Dignity through Housing and Work

Colin's journey reflects the dignity of work and the importance of creating opportunities for individuals leaving incarceration who can and want to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Nearly three years ago, Colin entered a Restorative Justice Housing Ontario (RJHO) home after experiencing incarceration, addiction, and isolation. Like many individuals leaving the justice system, he faced significant barriers to employment, stable housing, and rebuilding his life. RJHO provided safe, supportive housing that gave him the stability needed to focus on recovery, community, and purpose.

"I now know that my past is not my prologue," Colin says.

Through volunteering, Colin began redefining his future. Colin dedicated over 50 hours a week serving meals and supporting vulnerable community members. This opportunity, restored his confidence, dignity, and belief that he could positively contribute to society.

Today, Colin works with University Health Network after completing a Peer Support Program. Drawing from his lived experience, he now supports others facing addiction and recovery challenges with empathy and understanding.

Colin's story demonstrates that meaningful work is about more than employment, it is about dignity, belonging, and opportunity. Stable housing played a critical role in making this possible. Without a safe place to live, maintaining employment, volunteering, or participating fully in community life becomes incredibly difficult.

At RJHO, we see housing stability and employment as deeply connected. When individuals are given support, safe housing, and the opportunity to work and contribute, communities become stronger, more inclusive, and more just for everyone.

We are grateful for the support of the CCAT and supporting men having what may be their first chance at stable housing, restored community connections and hope for employment in the GTA.





Gathered in Grace: A Mother's Day Celebration

Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers



Thirty pregnant and parenting young mothers, along with twenty-six infants and toddlers, gathered at Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers to celebrate Mother's Day in a joyful and meaningful way. Rooted in compassion, dignity, and hope, the organization's free programs and services provide a welcoming and supportive environment where mothers come together to learn, share experiences, and discuss topics important to them as parents and individuals. Over time, these groups have become far more than programs, they have become a community of friendship, encouragement, belonging, and care for one another.

For many of the young mothers attending, this was their only Mother's Day celebration, so the team at Rose of Sharon worked hard to make the day especially meaningful and uplifting. The event was filled with laughter, creativity, and heartfelt moments, with activities designed to celebrate both motherhood and self-care while affirming each woman's value and strength.

A highlight of the day was the Mommy & Me portrait station, generously provided by Greg King Photography, who volunteered his time to capture keepsake photos for the mothers and their children. Other activities included yoga sessions promoting relaxation and wellness, and a journaling workshop where mothers reflected on milestones, gratitude, and their journeys through pregnancy and parenthood.

The celebration also featured a shared meal of sandwiches, vegetables, fruit, and desserts. Volunteers from the Newmarket Lions Club helped serve, and the club generously covered the cost of the food, allowing mothers to relax and connect.

Adding to the occasion, MP Sandra Cobena attended, bringing a cake she personally served and surprising each mother with a rose, an act that made many feel truly seen and appreciated.

Throughout the event, laughter, conversation, and the joyful sounds of children filled the space, creating an atmosphere of warmth and connection.

By day's end, the room overflowed with gratitude and joy, a powerful reminder of the impact of compassion, community, and love in action. When you see a mother smiling with pride and happiness, and a baby responding with a sweet smile of their own, even for a moment, the worries of the world seem to melt away.



Palliative Care Everywhere

Saint Elizabeth Foundation

Recently, Saint Elizabeth Foundation joined the palliative care community across Canada in recognizing National Hospice Palliative Care Week. Observed annually during the first week of May, the week serves as an opportunity to advocate for quality, equitable end-of-life care for all Canadians.

This year’s theme, Palliative Care Everywhere, strongly reflects our Foundation’s mission to provide compassionate care to those most in need, including individuals experiencing homelessness, marginalization, and social isolation. As a national charity, Saint Elizabeth Foundation brings together communities, collaborators, and more than a century of experience to strengthen community-based care and advance more equitable end-of-life journeys for vulnerable populations across the country.



Throughout the week, our teams came together to recognize and champion the importance of compassionate, dignity-centred hospice palliative care through moments of connection, reflection, and appreciation.

Through initiatives ranging from Journey Home Hospice to our National Centre for Equity & Innovation in End-of-Life Care and Spiritual Health, Grief & Bereavement programs, we continue to help build more compassionate, inclusive systems of care nationwide.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our staff, volunteers, supporters, and community partners — including Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto — whose ongoing compassion and commitment make this work possible each day. Your care, kindness, and dedication help create spaces of comfort, connection, and humanity for those we serve.

To learn more about our work, please visit www.foundation.sehc.com.



IN OUR OWN WORDS

Lino Casalino

Outgoing First Vice-Chair
CCAT Board of Directors

A Grateful Reflection on Service and Mission

After completing two consecutive terms with Catholic Charities, first as Board President and now as First Vice-Chair, I find myself both reflective and deeply grateful. This is not just a moment to look back on the accomplishments of the past year, but to reflect on what I have personally witnessed over more than a decade of volunteering with this organization.

Before Catholic Charities, my professional life was largely focused on helping companies generate profit. It was important work, and I was paid to do it well. My role with Catholic Charities, however, introduced me to something far more meaningful: the opportunity to serve others with no financial reward, grounded in faith and Christian values, and focused on supporting the most vulnerable in our society.

I want to offer a heartfelt thank you to the incredible staff at Catholic Charities, my fellow board members, past and present, our many volunteers, the leadership and staff of our member agencies, our partners at ShareLife, and those within the Archdiocese of Toronto. You inspire me daily and have strengthened my faith not only in Catholic social teaching, but in humanity itself.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the future of Catholic Charities. Over the past year, we developed a new five-year strategic plan shaped by Catholic Social Teaching and a detailed assessment of community needs across the Archdiocese. Thanks to generous bequests and the support of ShareLife, we are now positioned to invest in seven critical areas: housing and homelessness, food security, mental health and wellbeing, migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, seniors, and palliative care.

While we face real challenges of rising demand, increasing complexity of need, and limited funding, I am confident in the team, the partnerships, and the mission that guide this work. Together, Catholic Charities will continue to grow, adapt, and serve with compassion and purpose.

The work ahead is demanding, but the future is full of promise.

PAUSE & REFLECT

Emerging from the Winters of Life

Dr. Agnes Thomas



“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.”

It is spring again, and resurrection season for those who believe. There are so many parallels we can draw between these seasons and our own life seasons. Here in my land, we have just come out of a harsh, unpredictable winter that confused all living things and, in some cases, caused distress and illness. Some people got colds and allergies, while plants, whose shoots emerged from the earth, died when the frost returned after a day or two of warmth.

This reflection was sparked by insights from one of the harshest winter seasons I have ever endured. There were days when the cold air felt as if it had settled inside me, not just around me. Days when simply getting through was all that could be mustered. In retrospect, those days served as a reminder that sometimes your own strength is not enough and that healing takes time. And now, slowly but surely, seeing the light and warmth emerge from the dark, cold earth, like the tulips waiting to show their beauty, feels like a gift.

Why the metaphorical reference to seasons? All the seasons are part of our lives, and they do not follow straight lines but cycles. Every living thing must learn to live within them and find meaning, so the gift can be cherished. Seasons are felt differently depending on where we are, yet they are there for all who pay attention. In earlier days, elders imparted their knowledge to help children understand, adapt to, and prepare for these changes.

Who is the wisdom whisperer in your home or community? And how are they helping young people understand the seasons of life and their place in them?

PAUSE & REFLECT

The little secret about seasons, both external and internal, is that the sooner we accept them, the better we live through them. In winter, we must learn to shed what no longer serves us so we have room for the new growth in spring and the bloom of summer in our lives. Sometimes, we are to plant new seeds, prune what needs to be cut, and clear what has finished living in order to welcome new life. When we don't maintain them, they become what we call the burden or the clutter of our lives, taking away the beauty and joy of holding and dwelling in them.

Each season brings its own lesson, often when we least expect it. It asks something different of us each time. What worked before may no longer work now. The person who once walked through winter without a hat may now need one to avoid harm. The same is true of our inner lives. As we grow, our thresholds change.

Sometimes we cannot get through a season alone. We lean on a neighbour, or we become that neighbour for someone else. Treating every season the same leaves us unprepared and, at times, hurting.

One insight from this past winter stays with me: no matter how ready you think you are, you are never prepared enough. You need grace, strength, and deep faith and humility to seek help, endure certain seasons, and be in the Light again. And sometimes, our purpose in that season is not just to survive it, but to help someone else through theirs.

There are winters, for example, of grief, loss, illness, war, addiction, and/or betrayal. Regardless of what has brought someone into that place, they need care, presence, and hope. The story of resurrection reminds us of this. It calls us to be signs of hope in a world where we depend on one another more than we often admit.

When approached with openness and care, even the hardest seasons can reveal something beautiful. Life can emerge from places that once felt desolate. Hope can take root where there was despair.

So, the question remains: how are you responding to the season you are in? What story will you tell your children about it? What tools will you offer to someone who is not ready for their season? Whatever season you find yourself in, the call remains the same: to be fully human, with all its beauty and vulnerability, and to be a neighbour to those who need you.

Which seeds from the past season are you keeping and planting in anticipation of spring?

May this season be gentle upon you. May you feel the strength and hope it offers. And may you find light, even as you emerge from your own winter.




ON THE HORIZON

Call for Proposals is now open!

We're inviting practitioners, educators, researchers, and community leaders to share insights, research, and lived experience rooted in real-world impact.

We're accepting:

✓ Papers ✓ Panels ✓ Posters ✓ Conversation Circles

 Submission deadline: June 30, 2026

Be part of shaping how we turn values into action.



Call for Proposals
Deadline: June 30, 2026


Panels


Papers


Conversation Circles


Posters

Share your voice. Shape the conversation.
[#SynergyTO2026](#)

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Toronto

How you can contact member agencies and affiliated agencies of Catholic Charities

MEMBER AGENCIES

COMMUNITY/FAMILY SERVICES

Catholic Community Services of York Region
1-800-263-2075
www.ccsyr.org

Catholic Crosscultural Services
416-757-7010
www.cathcrosscultural.org

Catholic Family Services of Durham
1-877-282-8932
www.cfsdurham.com

Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin
905-450-1608
www.cfspd.com

Catholic Family Services of Simcoe County
1-800-726-2503
www.cfssc.ca

Catholic Family Services of Toronto
416-921-1163
www.cfstoronto.com

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Deaf Services Canada
416-463-1104
www.deafservices.ca

Mary Centre
416-630-5533
www.marycentre.com

Saint Elizabeth Health Care
905-940-9655
www.sehc.com

St. Bernadette's Family Resource Centre
416-654-9810
www.stbernadettesfrc.org

St. Michael's Homes
(Our Place Community of Hope Program)
416-926-8267
www.stmichaelshomes.org

SENIORS

Centres d'Accueil Héritage (CAH)
416-365-3350
www.caheritage.org

LA Centre for Active Seniors
416-452-4875
www.lacentreforseniors.ca

Houses of Providence
(Unity Health Toronto)
416-285-3666
www.providence.on.ca

Society of Sharing
416-413-0380
www.societyofsharing.org

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto
416-395-1500
www.torontoccas.ca

Covenant House Toronto
1-800-435-7308
www.covenanthousetoronto.ca

YOUNG PARENTS

Rosalie Hall
416-438-6880
www.rosaliehall.com

Rose of Durham
(Young Parents Division of CFS Durham)
905-432-3622
www.roseofdurham.com

Rose of Sharon
905-853-5514
www.roseofsharon.com

Vita Centre
905-502-7933
www.vitacentre.org

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Birthright International
1-800-550-4900
www.birthright.org

Good Shepherd Ministries
416-869-3619
www.goodshepherd.ca

Natural Family Planning Association
437-600-9333
www.toronto.naturalfamilyplanning.ca

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys FertilityCare Toronto
416-465-2868
www.fertilitycare.ca

Society of St. Vincent de Paul
(Camp Ozanam)
416-364-5577
info@ssvptoronto.ca

To learn more about
Catholic Charities, go to:

www.ccat.ca



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