



# Building a Better Bellwoods

Annual Report to the Community



2022-23



# About Bellwoods

Established over 65 years ago, Bellwoods is a charitable, not-for-profit organization that provides supportive housing and community-based, client-directed support services for the physically disabled who want to remain living independently in the community. Our personal support and independent living education services are provided to individuals 16 years of age or older with physical support needs. Today, our clients represent a growing number of seniors and those at risk of homelessness. Many of our services are provided to clients who reside at home or at one of our eight supportive housing sites. We also offer attendant outreach services and a range of short-term transition programs that include a hospital to community reintegration program.

## Our Vision

We envision a future where barriers do not exist.

## Our Mission

Fostering independent living through excellence and innovation.

## Our Values

- Client & family centred services
- Delivering high quality programs
- Building collaborations & partnerships
- Performance excellence
- Ensuring staff are valued, engaged & supported



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# Leadership Team

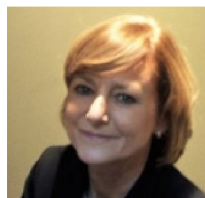
## Board of Directors



**Aly N. Alibhai**  
Director



**Tracy Brennan**  
Director



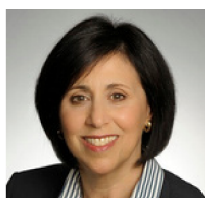
**Cindy Dunn**  
Director



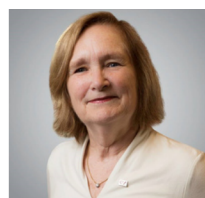
**Farrell Hall**  
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**Craig Knowles**  
Director



**Roslyn Levine**  
Director



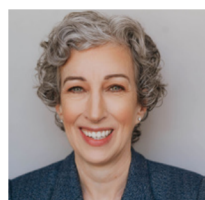
**Mary Lewis**  
Chair/President



**Iona MacRitchie**  
Director



**Jim Tom**  
Director



**Sandra Waechter**  
Treasurer



**Kate Wilkinson**  
Director

## Senior Leadership Team



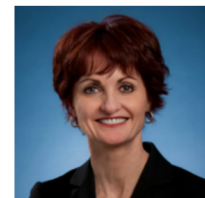
**Susan Andrew**  
Vice President,  
Corporate  
Services &  
Support



**Krista Griffin**  
Vice President,  
Service  
Excellence &  
Innovation



**Mark Herron**  
Vice President  
Finance & CFO  
(Interim)



**Susan Jewell**  
Chief Executive  
Officer (Interim)

## Message from Chair & CEO

This report highlights activities that were undertaken in 2022-23 to meet the needs of our clients, staff, and the organization. The strategic plan refresh we undertook this year placed a further emphasis on independent living and at the first Board meeting of the year we adopted the definition of independent living developed by our Bellwoods Community Advisory Council (BCAC). We welcome the work of the Community Councils and know that our clients will continue to help us identify and address areas where change is needed.

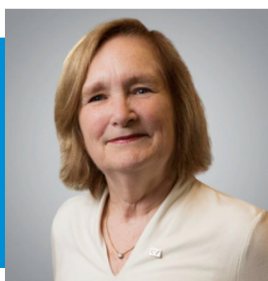
This past year, Bellwoods celebrated its 65th anniversary. Our commitment to support people with physical disabilities and help them live independently in the community remains at the core of our mission. With the passing years, of course, longstanding clients are aging. We have also undertaken to make a home for individuals with very complex challenges. Consequently, we are seeing an increase in the types and intensity of services and supports that our clients need.

Today, we are also seeing more clients struggling to support their basic needs, and are also faced with challenges achieving stable staffing levels across our programs. These changes are compelling us to rethink how we work with our funders and partners to continue to deliver safe high-quality services. One thing remains constant, clients want to be meaningfully involved in their service delivery and have a voice in shaping our services.

Building on the momentum of our history and past accomplishments, this year's Annual Report – ***Building a Better Bellwoods*** – reflects our commitment to strengthen service excellence, retain and recruit great people, and collaborate with the broader community services sector to advocate for stability and growth in the supportive housing and attendant outreach services sector.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our exceptional staff and Supervisors, this past year we were successful in recruiting new staff and managed – for the first time since before COVID – to have a full staff compliment. However, the competition for health service providers is fierce. There is so much that needs to be done to create a culture and work environment where staff in the community services sector feel valued and supported, and where meaningful learning and exchange opportunities inspire staff to stay and continue to excel in their career.

On behalf of everyone at Bellwoods we celebrate Bellwoods' history as a leader in the independent living sector and thank everyone who has supported us over the years.



**Mary Lewis,**  
Chair of the Board of Directors



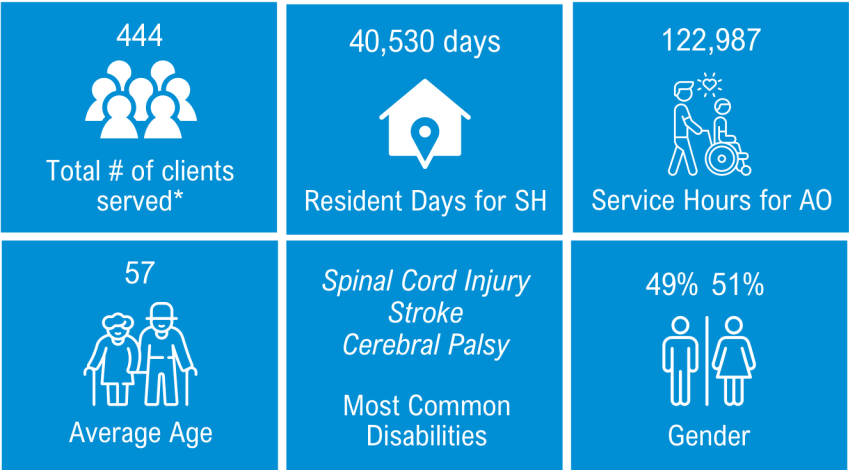
**Susan Jewell,**  
Chief Executive Officer (Interim)



# By the Numbers

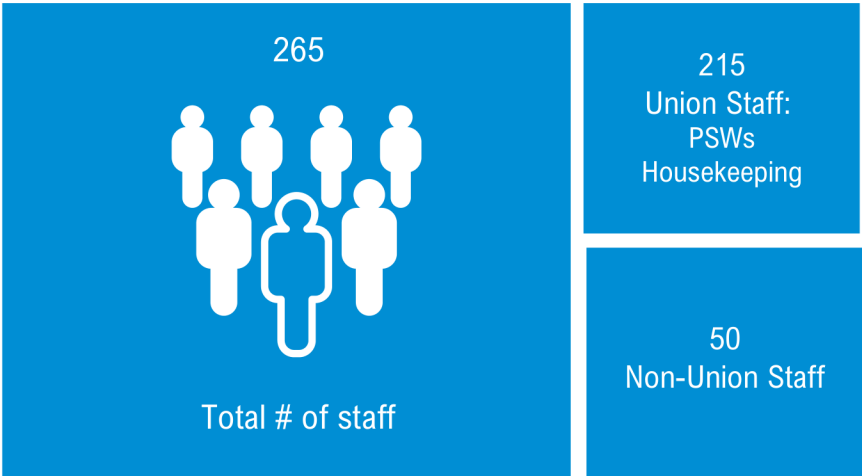
Understanding our community is a key factor in planning to meet the needs of our clients today and in the future:

## 2022-23 Profile of Clients



*\*Includes 136 supportive housing clients, 242 attendant outreach clients, 32 clients transitioning through our reintegration program, and 34 clients served through the Housing with Layered Supports program.*

## 2022-23 Profile of Staff



# Year at a Glance: Highlights

## Celebrating 65 years (1957-2022)

August 8, 2022 marked the 65th anniversary of Bellwoods' founders opening the doors to the first community residence for woman living with cerebral palsy at 718 Kingston Road. Originally started for the purpose of supporting social contact for women with cerebral palsy, the Adult Cerebral Palsy Association became the nucleus and impetus for establishment of Bellwoods Centres for Community Living Inc. Today, our supportive housing and attendant outreach programs continue to support people with a broad range of physical disabilities, many of whom are also living with chronic health conditions. Bellwoods 2023 Annual Meeting will provide an opportunity for clients and staff to celebrate this important landmark.



## Continuing Advocacy Work

During the past year, Bellwoods reflected on what is needed to continue to raise awareness of the value of our sector. Our experience and a growing body of research supports three main conclusions:

1. Supportive housing and attendant outreach services helps people with disabilities live with dignity and independence in the community.
2. Supportive housing and attendant outreach services reduces the use of emergency health care, hospital admissions, and unnecessary long-term care admissions.
3. Supportive housing communities help people with disabilities receive more appropriate health and community supports that meet their needs.

## Refreshing our Strategic Plan

In July 2022, Bellwoods' Board of Directors undertook a 'refresh' of its current strategic plan. The review resulted in some revisions to the wording of the organization's mission statement and strategic directions to emphasize Bellwoods commitment to independent living. Strategic Directions were also confirmed for 2022-23 - 2023-24. The strategic refresh confirmed the need to remain focused on core services and service delivery for clients, as well as activities to improve staff wellness, increase staff retention, and build a strong culture of community within the organization.

### Our Strategy 2022 - 2024

#### Strategic Directions

- 1 Innovate and collaborate to meet the growing needs of our clients and team
- 2 Demonstrate our excellence in independent living
- 3 Broaden and deepen our impact

#### Action Priorities

- To advance our strategic directions, we will focus on:
- Ensuring independent living is a central focus in everything we do
  - Advocating for sustainable funding and for greater consideration of the needs of individuals with disabilities in the health system
  - Building partnerships with similar organizations to improve services and grow our voice
  - Supporting our team to achieve excellence in the delivery of our core services

## Accreditation with Exemplary Standing

Bellwoods earned Exemplary Standing from Accreditation Canada during our on-site survey in October 2022. This is the third consecutive time Bellwoods has been awarded with this distinction. It is the first time, however, that Bellwoods met 100 per cent of all System-Wide and all Service Excellence standards. The accreditation award is a testament of Bellwoods' commitment to quality and safety.





# Meeting the Needs of Our Clients

## 2023 Client Experience Survey

The organization continues to work on improving consistency in scheduling and staff coverage. Bellwoods had a good response to the 2023 client survey with 117 clients responding. This is a higher response rate than previous years.

More than 70% of clients responding to the survey reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements: *clients know their rights and responsibilities; clients are involved in development of their service plans; clients are comfortable voicing their concerns about service delivery; clients know who to contact regarding changes in their bookings.*

Specific areas where clients would like to see improvements relate to:

- Ensuring stability and consistency of high-quality staff.
- Improving scheduling and communication for service bookings.
- Having clear guidelines for clients and staff on the importance of respect and courtesy for one another.
- Improving day-to-day communications between and among Service Coordinators, Supervisors and PSWs.

## Supports for Clients

The complexity of clients supported by Bellwoods is changing. These changes are requiring a broader range of supports beyond PSWs including nurses, occupational and physical therapists, social workers, and mental health and addictions service providers.

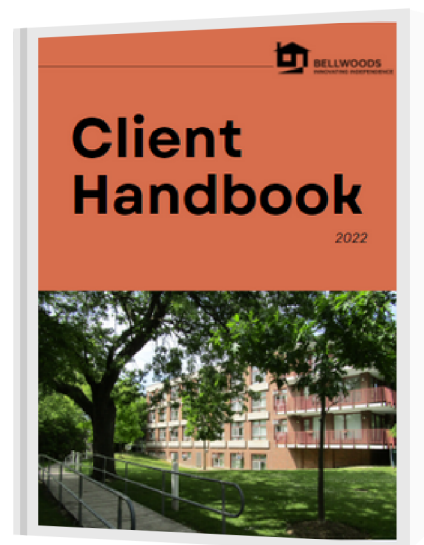
Throughout the year, Bellwoods launched a series of other initiatives to support clients including:

- Navigation services and supports to link clients to community resources (e.g., Mobile Foot Care, Mobile Tax Services and Mobile Dental Care).
- Continued work at the Community Councils to address client concerns and generate solutions co-designed with clients. In 2022-23 the Councils were expanded to include all program areas (e.g., AO and the remaining SH sites).
- Re-establishment of the Client-led Townhalls.
- Piloted a Community Calendar to share upcoming site and organizational events.



## Client Handbook

A new Client Handbook was released providing updated information on housing and supports at Bellwoods. The handbook answers questions about some of our policies and responds to some of the commonly asked questions received from clients (e.g., pets, smoking, client complaints).



## Transition from Hospital to Home - Client Stories

### Community Connect (CC) Program

The Community Connect (CC) Program facilitates timely discharge of clients from hospital. Most clients are recovering from a life-altering traumatic injury or health event that has resulted in significant change to their pre-hospital level of physical functioning.

Our CC Program helps individuals with their journey to recovery (see two of our client stories below).

*FT*

In July 2022, FT, a woman in her late 20s was on a break from school visiting family in Toronto and was in a bike accident and sustained several injuries including an ankle fracture. She was admitted to Toronto Grace Health Centre for approximately four months from July to November. FT relied on her manual wheelchair for independent mobility and the use of crutches to help with transfers.

At the end of November, FT was accepted into Bellwoods' Community Connect (CC) Program and worked closely with Michelle, one of Bellwoods' Independent Living Facilitators (ILF). Michelle supported FT with her goals for independent living and explored options to help strengthen her function and mobility. During FT's stay in the CC program, she was able to obtain an accessible parking permit to support her in commuting around the community. FT attended all of her outpatient physiotherapy appointments and ultimately achieved her goal of climbing a flight of stairs. Approximately two months into her stay in the CC Program, she was able to climb 18 steps!

In January 2023, FT was motivated to return to school for the winter semester, which was two months earlier than her anticipated discharge date.

*SM*

In October 2022, SM, a 52-year old male, and an active member of the artist community was diagnosed with a spinal cord injury after sustaining a stroke. In February 2023, he entered Bellwoods' Community Connect (CC) four-month Transition Program following completion of an inpatient rehabilitation stay at Lyndhurst Centre (Toronto Rehab Institute). SM was motivated to strengthen his mobility and gain independence with day-to-day activities.

With the help of therapy programs and Bellwoods' Independent Living Facilitator, Abiraa, he was able to transition from using a ceiling lift to being able to transfer independently from his bed to a wheelchair. SM also learned to prepare meals which has increased his independence and confidence.

SM is excited to be planning his return home and continue creating music. Currently, Abiraa is helping SM apply for funding through the March of Dime's to make his home more accessible.



## Community Events for Clients



Annual Client BBQ (July 2022)

Held at Shaw and Dundas, this event was well attended and very much appreciated by clients.



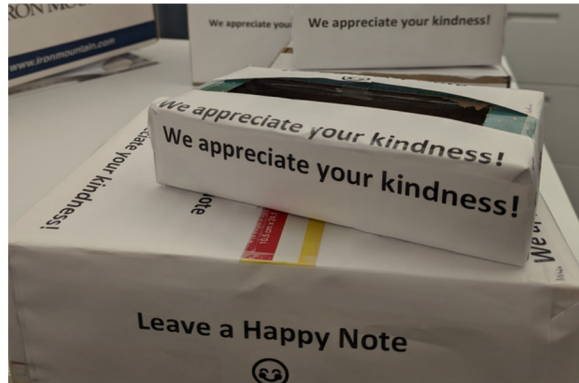
Fall Prevention Fair (November 2022)

This interactive fair included educational activities, prizes and refreshments.



Celebrating Black History Month  
(February 2023)

The event included educational activities, prizes and refreshments.



Random Acts of Kindness  
(February 2023)

This recognition event encouraged staff and clients to be a positive influence in each other's lives. Over 100 kindness messages were received from staff and clients.



Nutrition Workshop & Cooking Class  
(March 2023)

Thank you to Mary Popovich, R.D., who held a workshop for clients on meal planning. The session was followed by a cooking class led by the Transitions Team.

## Bellwoods' Community Advisory Council (BCAC)

This year, BCAC continued to strengthen its operation as a committee of the Board. Regular meetings were held that allowed for discussion of issues raised by clients, the organization, and the Board. Members of BCAC also participated in the annual Board Orientation session along with new Board members. This helped clarify roles and responsibilities of Board committee members as well as some of the processes that support planning and decision-making within the organization.

In Fall 2022, the committee established two Working Groups based on recommendations from clients.

### Working Group 1



#### Job Initiatives

This group is exploring employment opportunities and supports for clients. The group is developing a resource list of employment programs, and exploring partnerships with other groups to help clients who are seeking employment.

### Working Group 2



#### Food Security

This group is exploring opportunities to partner with private and community organizations to respond to issues related to food security. Building on the community garden project launched in 2021-22, efforts are under way to secure grants to support some new exciting activities to support food security for clients.

Other activities undertaken by BCAC included:



Continued advocacy work to raise awareness of the lack of funding for persons with disabilities. Clients participated in a demonstration held on May 3, 2022 led by a group known as *By Clients for Clients*. This was one of several events sponsored by anti-poverty activists and disability advocates calling for increases to ODSP.



Organized a community garden party at Dundas/Shaw in May 2022 to kick-off the gardening season. Board members, staff and community members were in attendance.



Ratified the terms of reference for the Community Councils. These staff-led meetings provide an opportunity to review issues at a geographical/site level. Clients liaise with site management to strengthen communication and work towards identifying solutions working collaboratively with site management.



BCAC received a grant in March 2023 from *Community Food Centres Canada*. The grant will be used to sponsor an advocacy event as part of a *Disability Without Poverty* postcard campaign to urge the federal government to roll-out the Canada Disability Benefit before the end of 2023.



Participated in a Board Strategic Planning focus group to provide advice on Bellwoods' vision, mission, values and strategic directions (2022-23 - 2023-24).



# Meeting the Needs of Our Staff

Over the past year, the human resources team has been focused on the day-to-day operational activities of the organization. The team remains committed to talent acquisition and retention strategies and as a result, improvement initiatives directed at Bellwoods' talent acquisition processes have focused on responding to Personal Support Workers (PSW) opportunities.



## Recruitment

The external environment is very competitive. Bellwoods competes for PSWs in both the hospital and community sector. Wages are higher in the hospital sector and client complexity is greater at Bellwoods than other community-based organizations. These issues are specific areas that Bellwoods continues to be mindful of as we work to attract and retain employees. Recruiting for attendant outreach positions continues to be a significant challenge as well as the need for more full-time PSW opportunities.



## PSW Wage Enhancement

In 2022, the Ontario Government passed legislation making the \$3/hour wage increase for PSWs permanent. This was welcome news given that the long-standing issue of wage parity has been a key challenge impacting recruitment and retention, particularly in the community services sector.



## Training & Development

This year the Human Resources and Clinical Resource Teams launched a skills training series. This training gave staff an opportunity to refresh their clinical skills and receive training on other skills including Client Safe Handling, Safe Work Environment, Communication/De-escalation, and Ethics/Ethical Decision-Making.



## 2022 Employee Engagement Survey

Among staff who responded to the survey, there were high levels of support in some important areas. For example, *staff feel that their responsibilities are clearly defined, enjoy positive relationships with their supervisors and managers, and believe that their workload is appropriate.*

There were some specific areas where staff want to see improvements. These relate to:

- More stable schedules to provide greater consistency in work. *(This includes a number of staff indicating their preference for full-time hours and status).*
- Better communication between managers/ schedulers and PSWs.
- Greater consistency in workload among staff.
- Greater consistency in the application of policies and processes to support high service delivery standards.
- Reducing the amount of travel between client visits for staff working in attendant outreach.



## Staff Engagement & Recognition

The team continued to focus on engagement, professional development and recognition efforts. In May 2022, Bellwoods celebrated PSW Day where we carried out a number of recognition activities to honour our PSWs.

In October, we celebrated Community Support Month where our staff participated in Cheers to your Peers, a peer to peer recognition program, which was a huge success for the second year. We also honoured 31 staff in recognition of their years of service.

Staff also completed an employee engagement survey in November/December 2022 with an overall satisfaction score of 89% for all union and non-union employees.

## Celebrating Staff

Bellwoods celebrated staff through a number of events held throughout the year including:



**PSW Day  
(May 19, 2022)**

Staff were provided with Bellwoods' sweat shirts, snacks and received personalized thank you postcards from clients. Bellwoods' leadership attended all sites for the full day – a wonderful event!



**Ontario Community Support Month  
(October 2022)**

Ontario Community Support Month gave us an opportunity to celebrate Bellwoods' long-service staff. A number of staff appreciation activities were planned during the month.

## Honouring our Long Service Staff

Bellwoods is extremely fortunate to have staff who are so strongly committed to their work and to the organization. This past year, we celebrated the following milestones.

**5**  
Years

Alemwork Banti  
Rosa Cotrina  
Edith Duncan  
Mohammed Hassen  
Marelyn Senior  
Ajit Prabhu

**10**  
Years

Teresita Cayaco  
Glenda Domingo  
Susan Ula  
Grantley Yearwood  
Charles Nwachukwu

**15**  
Years

Victoria Casero  
Alicia Drzewicki  
Sacha Heravi  
Malvin Legaspi  
Indrawatee Marajh  
Parbati Paudel  
Regina Quainoo  
Shawn Reynolds  
Juliet Thompson  
Anna Yip

**20**  
Years

Cornelia Corridon  
Diane Dockray  
Jacqueline Martin  
Paul Newman  
Susana Quilet

**25**  
Years

Sahhoudra Dudhnath  
Jan Mowat  
Keswarlall Thani

**30**  
Years

Jacqueline McLaren  
Edith Samad



# Meeting the Needs of Our Organization

## Advocacy

After more than 65-years supporting and keeping persons with disabilities living and thriving in the community, Bellwoods continues its work to raise awareness of the value of supportive housing/attendant outreach services and to better understand some of the cost drivers impacting the sector. Emerging issues that need to be addressed relate to:

- The “invisibility” of the sector in contrast to the competing voice with long-term care and acute care
- Deficits in supportive housing programs arising from the complexity of client needs and clients aging in place
- Low volumes in traditional attendant outreach services programs
- Limited understanding of the capacity and potential of the sector in helping people remain living independently in the community
- Persistent recruitment and retention challenges attributed to PSW shortages, wages, and lack of stability
- Systemic difficulties in realizing opportunities to develop new needed housing.

Bellwoods remains strongly committed to ensuring that the provincial government is aware of the important part supportive housing plays in keeping people living in the community. Supportive housing has an important role in solving today's current pressures on hospitals and long-term care homes. The sector requires the same level of recognition and support as LTC and hospitals and must be seen as an essential part of the health system.

The pandemic was a turning point for the disabled community and fueled feelings of inequity and injustice. In addition, the renewed focus on equity, diversity and inclusivity across society today has underscored how much remains to be done to ensure that persons living with disabilities have equitable access to health and social programs including the right to live independently in the community.

## Partnerships

While Bellwoods continues to strengthen its relationships with traditional partners (e.g., Ministry of Health, Ontario Health, hospitals) it is also forging linkages with new partners to raise awareness of budgetary pressures, demonstrate the value of supportive housing/ assisted living options, and advocate for appropriate recognition and resourcing to respond to challenges confronting the sector.

### **Strengthening existing partnerships**

Partnerships are seen as essential to improve the organization's services and give the organization a “stronger voice.” This past year we were fortunate to advance a number of activities in collaboration with some of our key partners.

### Accreditation

Bellwoods was delighted to have some of our close partners provide testimonies about our services as part of accreditation. Thank you to Home & Community Care Support Services, Hospital for Sick Children, North Yorkers, PACE Independent Living, UHN - Hillcrest, and VHA Healthcare.

### COVID Support

Bellwoods played an important role in supporting some of its community partners in keeping their communities safe during COVID by hosting immunization clinics, providing access to PPE supplies, covering PSW shifts at other organizations in times of urgent need, and supporting assessments for admission in other organizations.

### Housing with Layered Supports (HLS)

Bellwoods continues to partner with the City of Toronto to deliver services under the HLS program to reduce homelessness. As part of this program, Bellwoods provides case management to support clients in eviction prevention, housing set-up (e.g. furniture and household supplies), access to services to meet basic needs, and referrals to clinical and treatment services. The overall goal is to help clients stabilize housing and maintain their independence in the community.

### Home & Community Care Services with Residential Accommodation (HCCRA) (formerly known as Reintegration Care Units)

Bellwoods continues to play an ongoing leadership role in the Home & Community Care Services with Residential Accommodation (HCCRA) program. Formerly a pilot project, known as Reintegration Care Units (RCUs), the HCCRA is now a permanent program funded by Ministry of Health and Ontario Health. Services being provided by Bellwoods include:

- Operation of a Centralized Referral Management (CRM) program that facilitates access to 208 RCU beds/units in the Toronto region for patients transitioning out of hospital. (Note: Bellwoods operates 15 units as part of this program - Community Connect).
- Coordinating implementation of a new Allied Health Professional program to support HCCRA partners in providing rehab services to clients.

### Building new partnerships

This past year, Bellwoods forged some exciting new partnerships to support the needs of our clients.

#### PSW Training

Bellwoods participated in the *Skills Development Fund Project* training program, led by Vibrant Healthcare Alliance. The project recruited and trained 61 PSWs (utilizing an online training platform) to attract existing and aspiring PSWs to work in the community care sector. The project included culturally- informed experiential skills training over a 13-week period in three cohorts. The four partners involved in the project were: Bellwoods, PACE, ACCESS Centre for Independent Living and Vibrant. The end goal was to identify potential recruits, both permanent and casual for the four participating organizations.

#### Behavioural Supports for Clients

Bellwoods and LOFT Community Services collaborated to provide behavioural supports for clients in the HCCRA program (Community Connect at Bellwoods) through their Behavioural Support Transition Resource (BSTR) Team.

#### Food Security

Bellwoods is partnering with Second Harvest to respond to food security needs within our community. A community cupboard has been established that is stocked weekly. This partnership recognizes the growing need for access to nutritious food. Awareness of this need grew out of the *Community Garden Project* initiated by clients in 2021-22.

#### Employment Opportunities

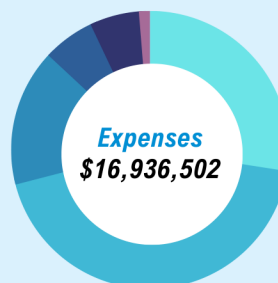
Bellwoods is collaborating with Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (SCIO) to support our clients in finding meaningful employment. The employment services program offered by SCIO provides help with resumes, cover letters, interview skills, employment courses, job supports as well as assistance transitioning into the work place.

## Operating Funds

Government funding remains the primary source of revenue for Bellwoods.



89%	Ontario Health Funding
5%	City of Toronto Funding
3%	Rental Income
3%	Misc Income



27%	Attendant Outreach
44%	Supportive Housing
16%	Operating
6%	Pandemic
6%	Building
1%	Amortization



## Looking Ahead

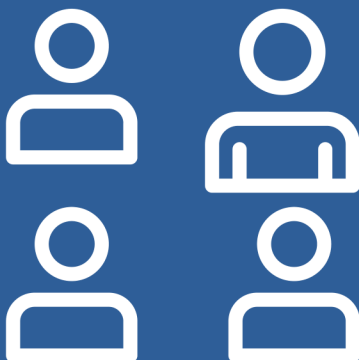


### Funding & Efficiencies

- Address the current supportive housing (SH) funding shortfall to achieve longer term sustainability.
- Reduce our dependency on agency use to improve consistency and quality of services delivered to our clients.
- Work with partners to resolve funding requirements to support regularly scheduled building maintenance and replacement of equipment.

### Achieve Service Excellence & Quality Targets

- Meet/exceed all Multi-Sector Service Accountability Agreement targets for base funding (MSAA) and targets for projects and specialized funding.
- Strengthen client services with stable operations and enhanced efficiencies.
- Create a culture of support and enhance team engagement.
- Increase the number of clients served in Attendant Outreach (AO).
- Build stronger client and staff relations.



### Talent Acquisition & Engagement

- Continue to refine the recruitment and onboarding process for both union and non-union employees to improve retention and new hire satisfaction.
- Optimize staffing and consistency of client service delivery in the attendant outreach (AO) services program.
- Advocate for sector-wide wage enhancements and additional funding to provide shift models in attendant outreach in the community sector.
- Focus on improvement initiatives related to employee engagement survey (i.e., culture, scheduling, team building).



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*Bellwoods relies on the generosity of donors  
and is grateful for their support.*

#### To make a charitable donation:



Visit Bellwoods website: Donate Now  
<https://bellwoodscentres.org/support/donate-now/>



Contact Communications & Development Associate  
at 416-447-1168 or by email [ayip@bccfsp.org](mailto:ayip@bccfsp.org)



# Building a Better Bellwoods

## Annual Report to the Community

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for Community Living



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