



**LAWSON**

# **Ottawa deserves better.**

**ALEX LAWSON FOR MAYOR**

## **An ounce of prevention.**

The Lawson plan to keep kids from starting: ask Ottawa's teenagers every year, open Third Spaces in the evening, and measure every community centre by mission per square foot.

## 01 / OVERVIEW

# Prevention is the other half of recovery.

Recovery First Ottawa lays out how this city helps people get off drugs. This plan is about keeping kids from starting.

Talk to the people on our streets and in our shelters and you hear the same story again and again. Long before they lost a home, they lost their way, and they lost their connection to a community. Nobody was coaching their team. Nobody noticed when they stopped showing up. Addiction and homelessness are where a lot of those stories end. The time to change the ending is when that person is twelve.

Ottawa's numbers are not a crisis. Ontario students drink, smoke and use cannabis less than they did twenty years ago. But the warning lights are on. A quarter of Ontario students now spend five hours or more a day on social media, and 30 percent rate their own mental health as fair or poor. Violent offences involving young people in Ottawa rose 7 percent in 2024, to 640, even as overall youth offences fell. We want to get ahead of this while it is still a prevention problem.

Iceland faced worse numbers in the 1990s and turned them around without a scare campaign. It asked its teenagers what they needed, built more of it, and measured the results every year. That model now runs in Canada under the name Planet Youth, with federal money behind it. Lanark County is on the list. Calgary and Mississauga are on the list. The national capital is not.

**Iceland did not out-police the problem. It out-competed it, with somewhere better to be.**

### ICELAND, TEEN DRINKING

**42% to 5%**

**15 and 16 year olds drunk in the past month, 1998 to 2016**

Sigfúsdóttir et al., 2009; Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis.

### HEAVY SOCIAL MEDIA USE

**1 in 4**

**Ontario students on social media 5+ hours a day**

CAMH, Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 2025.

### FEDERAL PREVENTION MONEY

**\$750,000**

**Per community, over three years. Lanark County has it. Ottawa doesn't.**

Public Health Agency of Canada, August 2025.

### CITY BUILDINGS

**132**

**Recreation complexes, community centres and community buildings the City already owns**

City of Ottawa, Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, 2021.

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## 02 / THE PROBLEM

# The bill for doing nothing is already here.

Substance use cost Canada \$49.1 billion in 2020, about \$1,291 for every person in the country. Apply that to a city of Ottawa's size and the bill is roughly \$1.4 billion a year, including about \$150 million in policing, plus paramedics, emergency rooms and lost work.

You can see it on our streets. Ottawa police responded to 1,480 overdose calls in 2024 and 810 in 2023, and the calls are climbing again this year. Opioid overdoses sent 1,337 people to Ottawa emergency rooms in 2023. Overdose calls in the ByWard Market alone went from 77 in 2018 to 467 in 2023. Every one of those calls ties up an officer, a paramedic crew or an emergency room bed that someone else in Ottawa is waiting for.

Keeping a kid from ever starting costs less than all of it.

**Kids are more alone than they look.** One in four Ontario students spends five hours or more a day on social media. For a lot of teenagers, the only place to be with friends after school is a screen.

**The connection is breaking earlier.** Thirty percent of Ontario students rate their mental health as fair or poor. The people who end up in our shelters tell us the slide started long before the first drug, when the team, the club and the adult who noticed them disappeared.

**Youth violence is moving the wrong way.** Violent offences involving young people in Ottawa rose from 600 in 2023 to 640 in 2024, a 7 percent increase, while overall youth offences fell 11 percent. The total is small. The direction is the warning.

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## 03 / WHAT WORKED

# Iceland asked its kids what they needed.

In the late 1990s, Iceland's teenagers had some of the highest drinking rates in Europe. The country did not rely on scare campaigns. It surveyed nearly every teenager, every year, and acted on what they said.

The answer was simple. Kids who spent time with their parents, played organized sports and took part in music, art and clubs were far less likely to drink, smoke or use drugs. So Iceland built more of all of it. Reykjavík gives every child a recreation card, now 75,000 krónur a year (about \$750), to spend on sports, arts and activities. It runs youth centres attached to its schools, open into the evening, with free drop-in for 10 to 16 year olds.

Twenty years on, the share of 15 and 16 year olds who had been drunk in the past month fell from 42 percent in 1998 to 5 percent in 2016. Daily smoking fell from 23 percent to 3 percent. The share who had ever tried cannabis fell from 17 percent to 7 percent. The share playing organized sports at least four times a week rose from 24 to 42 percent.

The lesson is not a single program. It is a whole community, sustained over years. Ottawa will commit to it for the long term.

## 04 / ALREADY IN CANADA

## Lanark County is doing it. Ottawa isn't.

The Icelandic model now runs in Canada under the name Planet Youth. Lanark County, forty minutes from Ottawa, was the first Canadian community to sign on, in 2020. It surveyed its Grade 10 students in 2022 and again in 2024, and it is building the coalition of schools, parents and community groups the model depends on.

Since 2024, the federal Youth Substance Use Prevention Program has funded 13 community projects across Canada to run this model, including Calgary, Mississauga, Sudbury, Peterborough, North Bay and Lanark County, with up to \$750,000 over three years for the most advanced communities. Municipal governments were eligible to apply.

Mississauga is on the list. Lanark County is on the list. The national capital is not. That changes in the first year.

## 05 / MISSION PER SQUARE FOOT

## Buildings you book, not places you belong.

The City of Ottawa owns 15 recreation complexes, 49 community centres and 68 community buildings, 132 in all, plus 70 fieldhouses, 21 indoor pools, 44 ice pads and 30 gymnasiums. Ask how many of those rooms sit empty on a Tuesday night and nobody can tell you. That is the problem.

We are going to measure every one of them by a new standard: mission per square foot. Not how much rental revenue a room brings in, but how much community happens in it. How many kids, how many programs, how many hours the lights are on for a reason.

Ask BGC, the YMCA, Kiwanis or any community association what holds them back and the answer is almost always the same: space. BGC Ottawa already serves more than 5,000 children and youth a year and wants to grow from 19 priority neighbourhoods to 30. One basketball club president told Ottawa Sports Pages in 2021 that facilities had "always been the biggest obstacle, even before COVID." The City has the rooms. These groups have the people and the ideas. The City's job is to get out of the way and hand them the keys.

## Somewhere to go that isn't a bedroom and a phone.

Home is the first space. School is the second. A Third Space is where you go to be with people, with no appointment and no fee. For a lot of kids today, the only third space is a screen.

We will pilot Third Spaces inside City community centres, and in libraries or other City-owned buildings where an area has no community centre: a lobby or a dedicated room, open later into the evening. What goes inside is shaped by the kids and partners at each site, things like pool tables, arcade games, music or a small canteen. Free. Supervised. A place to gather.

They will be staffed mostly through partnerships with high schools. Every Ontario student needs 40 hours of community involvement to graduate. Third Spaces become a placement where students earn those hours as peer leaders, event organizers and mentors, alongside an adult lead from a partner organization. Older kids running a space for younger kids. That is citizenship you can see.

Canada already has working versions of this.

**Reykjavík.** City youth centres attached to the schools for ages 10 to 16, with teen evenings three nights a week. General drop-in is free. The original model: evening hours for teenagers are the point, not a nice-to-have.

**Quebec's maisons des jeunes.** More than 250 community-run youth houses for ages 12 to 17, funded by Quebec's health ministry as a standing program at about \$175,000 per house a year. A hangout space run by community groups, not bureaucracy, at province-wide scale. Montreal has had them since 1981.

**Toronto Public Library Youth Hubs.** 32 branches, open weekdays 3:30 to 7 p.m., with free snacks, gaming, laptops and homework help. Drop-in teen space works inside an existing public building.

**Edmonton's after-school youth pass.** \$2 a day for ages 8 to 17 at City recreation centres, delivered with 11 non-profit partners. 848,079 youth visits in 2023, up 20 percent in one year. Partner delivery scales.

**Manitoba Lighthouses.** 71 community-run youth sites, 38 of them in Winnipeg, each funded \$12,000 a year by Manitoba Justice as crime prevention. A province paying community groups to keep the lights on for kids, at low cost per site.

## Ottawa already has the pieces. It doesn't have a network.

Ottawa is not starting from zero. Since 2023, the City's Play Free program has opened drop-in swims, gyms and skates to everyone 17 and under at no cost; since 2025 it runs on Saturdays. BGC Ottawa runs clubhouses in priority neighbourhoods. Sixteen community houses in Ottawa Community Housing neighbourhoods give kids a safe door to knock on. The Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre

runs The Zone, a drop-in for 12 to 17 year olds at the Lion Dick Brûlé Community Centre in Kanata, one night a week. The Youth Services Bureau keeps a downtown drop-in open for 16 to 20 year olds who need housing, health or crisis help. Federal Building Safer Communities money, more than \$6.6 million since 2023, already flows through City Recreation and BGC in priority neighbourhoods.

What Ottawa does not have is a network. Most of these run in the afternoon, one night a week, or in a handful of neighbourhoods. Nobody ties them together, and nobody measures them against what teenagers say they need. Most of what exists is also targeted, either by household income through the City's Hand in Hand fee support or by priority neighbourhood. That help matters and it stays. But Play Free only reaches kids who live near a City pool, rink or gym, and most rural villages have none. Third Spaces are for every kid, in every part of the city, with no form to fill out. This plan does not replace any of these programs. It gives them the space, the evening hours and the partners to grow.

**Every part of the city.** A kid in Vanier, a kid in Barrhaven and a kid in Carp deserve the same shot at a team, a stage and a place to go on a Friday night. Pilots will be chosen across urban, suburban and rural Ottawa, guided by what our own teenagers tell us in the survey, not by who lobbies hardest.

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## 08 / THE PAYOFF

# Stronger kids, a stronger economy.

This is not only about drugs. It is about what kind of adults our kids become, and whether they can afford to build a life in Ottawa.

Kids who stay connected stay in school. A Université de Montréal study that followed Canadian children into adulthood found boys who played organized sports at age 12 were almost 15 percent more likely to have a high school diploma by age 20, and girls about 7 percent more likely. Finishing school pays. In the 2021 census, working-age Canadians with a bachelor's degree earned an average of \$69,900 a year, against \$42,960 for those with a high school diploma. That is a gap of almost \$27,000 a year, every year, and finishing high school is the first step to a trade ticket or a college diploma as much as to a degree. Over a working life, it is the difference between struggling to make rent and buying a home.

The cost of falling off the path is climbing. Among Canadians aged 25 to 29, 14.6 percent are not working, not in school and not in training, up from 12.8 percent the year before. Every one of them is a paycheck not earned, taxes not paid and a family under pressure. Affordability starts long before the first rent cheque.

That is why this plan connects directly to our Jobs and growth plan and its commitment to get young people in front of the employers who are actually hiring. Third Spaces give teenagers a place to earn their volunteer hours, and students who put in 100 hours leave with a City reference letter. Ottawa grows its tax base by attracting employers and well-employed residents. The best place to start is with kids who grow up here, finish school here and get hired here.

# Ten commitments.

## MOVE 01

### **Ask Ottawa's kids every year, the cheap and simple way.**

Every year, survey students in grades 7 to 12 through all four school boards, the way Iceland does: once a year, in class, anonymous. Questions are age appropriate for each grade, and parents can opt their child out. The questions follow Iceland's model: time with family, sports, arts and clubs, friends, school, sleep, screens, feeling safe and early substance use. The only things recorded besides the answers are age and school. No names, no student numbers, no logins tied to a child. Students answer on the school devices they already use, and every answer flows into one shared portal that adds the results up automatically. Results are published online every year by school area, with small groups combined so no child can be identified. No consultants, no multimillion-dollar study. A survey that does not change a program is a waste of a kid's time, so every result is tied to a decision about what Third Spaces offer and where they open.

## MOVE 02

### **Bring Planet Youth to Ottawa.**

Build the local coalition with Ottawa Public Health and the school boards now, without waiting. Federal implementation money only goes to communities that have already done this groundwork, so Ottawa will be ready, and we will press the federal government for a new funding round and Ottawa's fair share. Work with Planet Youth Lanark County to borrow what already works there: its school board agreements, its community coalition model and its lessons from four years of doing this. Work with Planet Youth so Ottawa's yearly survey counts toward the model and the federal funding that comes with it, and so Ottawa's results can be compared with Lanark County's and Iceland's.

## MOVE 03

### **A mission per square foot audit.**

Within the first year, report on every City recreation building: hours open, hours booked, rooms sitting empty. Publish it. Every centre gets measured by how much community use it delivers.

## MOVE 04

### **Community groups get first call on empty space.**

Vacant rooms and idle hours are offered first to community associations and non-profits like BGC, the YMCA and Kiwanis for youth programming, at little or no cost. One simple agreement, standing bookings, no annual re-application. The City will look at covering approved youth partners under its own insurance so liability coverage stops being a barrier.

## MOVE 05

### **Pilot Third Spaces.**

Open Third Spaces in a first group of community centres across urban, suburban and rural Ottawa, using libraries or other City-owned buildings where there is no community centre nearby. Later evening hours on the nights kids actually need them. Free to use.

## MOVE 06

**Staffed by the community.**

Each site has an adult lead from a partner organization, supported by high school students earning their 40 community involvement hours as peer leaders. Every adult who works or volunteers at a Third Space must pass a Vulnerable Sector Check. We will work with the school boards to make it a recognized placement. Every student who completes 100 hours at a Third Space, more than double the graduation requirement, leaves with a City reference letter for their first job or post-secondary application.

## MOVE 07

**Ask first, then help.**

Before designing a single program, the City sits down with community associations, organizers and non-profits and asks one question: how can we help? They already have the ideas. The City brings the space, the keys and the backing, not another layer of process.

## MOVE 08

**Measure it, then expand it.**

Track visits, repeat attendance and partner programs at every pilot, alongside the Planet Youth survey results. Expand where kids are showing up. Report it all publicly.

## MOVE 09

**Make other governments pay their share.**

Pursue federal prevention funding, including the renewed Building Safer Communities Fund, which has already put more than \$6.6 million into Ottawa youth programs. Ontario already funds an After School Program, \$43.9 million over three years through 110 organizations, but it is built around the hours right after school. We will lobby Queen's Park to add an evening Third Spaces stream for teenagers, modelled on Manitoba's Lighthouses and Quebec's maisons des jeunes, where the province funds community groups to keep the doors open. And Ontario funds 32 Youth Wellness Hub networks for 12 to 25 year olds. None is in Ottawa. We will push for one. Costs stay low because the buildings already exist and the people running them already care.

## MOVE 10

**Open the door to Ottawa businesses.**

Invite Ottawa businesses and foundations to sponsor Third Spaces in their own communities, with every sponsor disclosed publicly.

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**10 / QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

## Straight answers.

**Isn't this the school boards' job?** Schools run until 3 p.m. The hours that matter for prevention are 3 to 10 p.m., and the buildings that are empty then belong to the City. The boards are partners: they deliver the survey and recognize the volunteer hours. The City delivers the space.

**What does it cost?** The buildings are already built, heated and insured. The new costs are evening staffing for the adult leads, the audit and the survey platform, offset by federal prevention funding,

provincial programs that already exist, and partners who bring their own people. The first-year audit will report exactly what the pilots cost per visit, in public, before anything expands.

**Why would a survey change anything?** Because every result is tied to a decision. If kids in Orléans say there is nowhere to go after 7 p.m., a Third Space opens in Orléans. If sleep and screens are the problem in one school area, the programming there changes. Iceland's results came from doing this every year for twenty years, not from doing it once.

**Is the survey a privacy risk?** No names, no student numbers, no logins tied to a child. Age and school are the only fields recorded besides the answers. Parents can opt their child out. Results are published only by school area, with small groups combined so nobody can be picked out.

**Isn't this a left-wing social program?** It is a crime-prevention and cost-control plan. Manitoba funds its Lighthouses through its Justice department. Every overdose call Ottawa avoids is an officer, a paramedic crew and an emergency bed freed up for someone else. Using buildings we already own, run by groups that already exist, is the cheapest prevention there is.

**Why not just more police?** Police are part of public safety, and this campaign supports them. But a police officer cannot be in a 14-year-old's Tuesday night. A coach, a peer leader and an open gym can.

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## 11 / WHY ALEX

# I know what a drop-in program is worth.

I grew up in a low-income neighbourhood. The only place I could play soccer was a drop-in program run by the Boys and Girls Club. Not a league. Not a travel team. A field, and an adult who showed up.

Then it closed. Funding. The field was still there. The kids were still there. The adult who showed up was gone.

It never took much. It took somebody deciding it mattered enough to keep paying for. That is why this plan is built on the groups already doing this work and the space the City already owns, and why it measures whether kids actually show up. Nobody should have to build something new to give a kid somewhere to be on a Tuesday night. We just have to stop letting the lights go out on the programs that work.

Iceland proved it. Lanark County is doing it. Ottawa should lead it.

We've got a lot of work to do.

Ottawa deserves better.

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## 12 / SOURCES & VERIFICATION

# Every figure here is sourced.

### ICELAND, DRUNK IN THE PAST 30 DAYS

42 percent of 15 and 16 year olds in 1998 (Sigfúsdóttir et al., Health Promotion International, 2009). 5 percent in 2016 as reported by the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis, cited by the World Health Organization (2025) and Mosaic/World Economic Forum (2018).

<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2018/10/iceland-knows-how-to-stop-teen-substance-abuse-but-the-rest-of-the-world-isn-t-listening/>

## ICELAND, SMOKING, CANNABIS AND SPORT

Daily smoking 23 percent (1998) to 3 percent (2016). Ever tried cannabis 17 percent to 7 percent. Organized sport at least four times a week, 24 percent (1997) to 42 percent (2012). Same sources; Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis trend data as presented by Planet Youth.

<https://academic.oup.com/heapro/article/24/1/16/677129>

## REYKJAVÍK RECREATION CARD AND YOUTH CENTRES

Frístundakort, 75,000 ISK per child per year for ages 6 to 18, raised from 50,000 effective January 1, 2023 (about C\$750). Youth centres (félagsmiðstöðvar) for ages 10 to 16, attached to schools with a teen level, teen evenings typically 19:30 to 21:45 or 22:00 three nights a week; general drop-in is free, clubs and trips carry fees.

<https://reykjavik.is/fristundakortid>

## ONTARIO STUDENT DRUG USE AND HEALTH SURVEY, 2025

CAMH, released August 24, 2026; 11,108 students in grades 7 to 12 from 246 schools. 25 percent spend five hours or more a day on social media; 30 percent rate their mental health as fair or poor; alcohol, tobacco and several other substances "at or near historic lows" after a decades-long decline.

<https://www.cp24.com/local/toronto/2026/08/24/percentage-of-ontario-youth-struggling-with-mental-health-back-to-pre-covid-level-survey-suggests/>

## OTTAWA YOUTH VIOLENCE, 2024

Ottawa Police Service 2024 Annual Report: youth crimes against the person 600 (2023) to 640 (2024), up 6.7 percent; total youth Criminal Code offences 1,503 to 1,331, down 11.4 percent. Reported by the Ottawa Citizen, April 6, 2026.

<https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/who-we-are/resources/Documents/Reports-and-Publications/2024-Annual-Report.pdf>

## COST OF SUBSTANCE USE

Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms 2007 to 2020: \$49.1 billion in 2020, about \$1,291 per person; policing \$5,264.9 million, paramedic services \$223.8 million, emergency department visits \$413.5 million (paramedic and ED figures exclude Quebec). Ottawa estimates apply per-capita national figures to Ottawa's mid-2024 population of 1,094,340 (City of Ottawa): \$1,291 x 1,094,340 is \$1.41 billion; policing \$5,264.9 million divided by Canada's July 2020 population of 38,005,238, times 1,094,340, is \$152 million.

<https://movendi.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Canadian-Substance-Use-Costs-and-Harms-Report-2023-en.pdf>

## OTTAWA POPULATION

Mid-year 2024 population estimate, 1,094,340. City of Ottawa.

<https://ottawa.ca/en/living-ottawa/statistics-and-demographics/current-population-and-household-estimates>

## OTTAWA OVERDOSE CALLS AND EMERGENCY VISITS

Ottawa police overdose calls 1,480 (2024) and 810 (2025); overdose-related emergency department visits 941 (2024) and 607 (2025), Ottawa Citizen, March 8, 2026. Opioid overdose ED visits 1,337 in 2023, Ottawa Public Health, Current Local Evidence to Inform Ottawa's Overdose Prevention and Response (March 2025). Ottawa Police Service reported 707 overdose calls from January 1 to August 10, 2026, the basis for "climbing again this year."

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/overdose-calls-decreased-ottawa-2025-080054440.html>



## **BYWARD MARKET OVERDOSE CALLS**

Ottawa Police Service data as reported by Canadian Affairs, August 19, 2024: 77 overdose calls in 2018, 144 in 2022, 467 in 2023.

<https://www.canadianaffairs.news/2024/08/19/overdose-surge-in-byward-market-prompts-new-paramedic-strategy/>

## **PLANET YOUTH LANARK COUNTY**

Began March 2020 as the first Canadian Planet Youth community; Grade 10 surveys in February to March 2022 (seven schools, 70 percent response) and 2024. Presentation by David Somppi, chair, to the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit, May 11, 2023. Federal funding recipient is Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth.

<https://planetyouthlanark.ca/>

## **FEDERAL YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION PROGRAM**

Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Funded projects list (updated January 16, 2026): 13 community projects implementing the Icelandic Prevention Model, including United Way of Calgary and Area (\$750,000 over three years), The DAM (Mississauga), Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre (Sudbury), Haliburton, Kawartha, Northumberland, Peterborough Health Unit, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit (\$750,000 over three years) and Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth (\$750,000 over three years), plus a knowledge hub at Renison University College. The Stream 1 call for proposals (closed January 15, 2024) listed regional and municipal governments and their agencies as eligible applicants. No Ottawa organization appears on the list.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/canadian-drugs-substances-strategy/youth-substance-use-prevention-program.html>

## **PHAC ANNOUNCEMENT, AUGUST 29, 2025**

Supporting communities to prevent and reduce the impacts of substance use on youth": \$2.9 million for four projects (Nipissing, Lanark County, Timiskaming, Calgary), "up to \$750,000 over three years.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2025/08/supporting-communities-to-prevent-and-reduce-the-impacts-of-substance-use-on-youth.html>

## **CITY OF OTTAWA RECREATION BUILDINGS**

Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan, approved October 13, 2021: 15 recreation complexes, 49 community centres, 68 community buildings, 70 fieldhouses, 21 indoor aquatic facilities, 53 ice surfaces (44 City-owned), 30 gymnasiums including 9 school gyms under joint-use agreements.

<https://engage.ottawa.ca/parks-and-facilities-recreation-master-plan>

## **BGC OTTAWA**

Ottawa Business Journal Giving Guide, 2024 edition: more than 5,000 young people a year, 19 neighbourhoods, aiming for 30 priority neighbourhoods.

<https://obj.ca/giving-guide-bgc-ottawa/>

## **GYM AVAILABILITY**

Ottawa Sports Pages, "Lack of gym availability forcing Ottawa youth sports groups to turn kids away," November 3, 2021. Quote from Derek Firth, president, Ottawa Shooting Stars Basketball.

<https://ottawasportspages.ca/2021/11/03/lack-of-gym-availability-forcing-ottawa-youth-sports-groups-to-turn-kids-away/>

## **QUEBEC MAISONS DES JEUNES**

Regroupement des maisons des jeunes du Québec: more than 250 member houses for ages 12 to 17. Average funding about \$175,000 per house in 2023-24 through the health ministry's PSOC community-organization program, as reported October 2024; the RMJQ calls that about a quarter of real need. Maison des jeunes de Pierrefonds (Montreal) opened in 1981.

### **TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY YOUTH HUBS**

32 locations, Monday to Friday 3:30 to 7 p.m., free daily snacks, laptops, iPads, gaming and school support.

<https://www.tpl.ca/youthhubs>

### **EDMONTON AFTER-SCHOOL YOUTH PASS**

\$20 a month or \$2 a day, ages 8 to 17, weekdays 1 to 5:30 p.m., all City of Edmonton recreation centres, delivered with 11 non-profit agencies. 848,079 visits in 2023, up from 704,482 in 2022. Global News, February 2, 2024.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10268267/edmonton-youth-rec-centre-use>

### **MANITOBA LIGHTHOUSES**

Public Safety Canada Crime Prevention Inventory (updated 2021): 71 sites, 38 in Winnipeg, \$12,000 in annual funding each, supported by Manitoba Justice, ages 6 to 25. Manitoba Justice still lists 71 sites.

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/crm-prvntn/nvntn/dtls-en.aspx?i=10151>

### **PLAY FREE**

Launched April 2023 with weekend gym sports and Swim Saturdays; skating added in 2024; "Play Free Saturdays" in 2025, free drop-in swimming, skating and gym sports every Saturday for ages 17 and under. City of Ottawa newsroom, December 18, 2024.

<https://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/city-news/newsroom/city-offers-play-free-saturdays-kids-and-youth-2025>

### **HAND IN HAND**

City of Ottawa recreation fee assistance program, \$185 per person per year; applicants encouraged to pay at least 25 percent of program cost.

<https://ottawa.ca/en/node/1029251>

### **COMMUNITY HOUSES**

Ottawa Community Housing describes 16 community houses serving its communities (2022 and 2023). Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses.

<https://www.och-lco.ca/partner-spotlight-rochester-heights-celebrates-official-opening-of-new-community-house-space/>

### **THE ZONE, KANATA**

Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre, counsellor-facilitated drop-in for youth 12 to 17 at 170 Castlefrank Road (Lion Dick Brûlé Community Centre), Mondays 5 to 8 p.m. Champlain Healthline listing, updated September 16, 2026.

<https://champlainhealthline.ca/displayService.aspx?id=211378>

### **YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU DROP-IN**

Downtown Services and Drop-in, 147 Besserer Street, ages 16 to 20, weekdays 12 to 6 p.m. and weekends 1 to 6 p.m.

<https://www.ysb.ca/services/community-and-housing-services/drop-in>

### **BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES FUND**

City of Ottawa, \$6,679,734.62, April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2026 (federal grants and contributions record). National renewal of \$157.5 million over three years announced March 31, 2026; Ottawa's renewed allocation was not confirmed as of April 2026. Delivery partners include BGC Ottawa and City of Ottawa Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services.

<https://search.open.canada.ca/grants/record/ps-sp.088-2024-2025-Q4-00139,current>



## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT HOURS

Ontario Secondary School Diploma requires 40 hours of community involvement. Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2024.

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-schools-kindergarten-grade-12-policy-and-program-requirements-2024/diploma-and-certificate-requirements-related-procedures>

## ONTARIO AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

\$43.9 million over three years to 110 organizations serving more than 13,000 children and youth. Government of Ontario release, October 23, 2025.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-after-school-program>

## YOUTH WELLNESS HUBS ONTARIO

32 hub networks across Ontario for ages 12 to 25 (several listed as coming soon); none in Ottawa. Funded by the Province of Ontario, launched in 2017 with the Graham Boeckh Foundation.

<https://youthhubs.ca/ywho-sites>

## SPORT AND HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

Kosak, Harandian, Bacon, Fitzpatrick, Correale and Pagani, "Active Child, Accomplished Youth," Children, 2024, 11(9), 1140, using the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (n=2,775). Organized sport participation at age 12 predicted high school completion by age 20 (standardized coefficients 0.146 for boys, 0.071 for girls). Université de Montréal release, January 16, 2025.

<https://www.mdpi.com/2227-9067/11/9/1140>

## EARNINGS BY EDUCATION

Statistics Canada, The Daily, November 30, 2022: 2020 average employment income of working-age earners (25 to 64), bachelor's degree \$69,900, high school diploma \$42,960.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221130/dq221130a-eng.htm>

## NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING

Statistics Canada, "Youth not in employment, education or training: Recent trends" (2025): ages 25 to 29, 14.6 percent in 2023/2024, up from 12.8 percent in 2022/2023.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2025001-eng.htm>

## JOBS AND GROWTH PLAN

Alex Lawson for Mayor, Jobs and growth plan (August 2026), including the commitment to broker youth hiring commitments from employers and publish who delivered.

<https://votealex.ca/policy/>

*Authorized by the official agent of the Alex Lawson campaign.*