



\$1,270,700 to Expand Community Programs and Services in Durham Region

DURHAM — The Ontario government is investing \$1,270,700 this year through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's (OTF) Grow program to support two non-profit organizations in Whitby and one in Ajax. This funding helps organizations promote active lifestyles, protect arts, culture and heritage, and expand opportunities for children and youth across the province, while delivering on the government's plan to protect Ontario by strengthening local services and build stronger, more resilient communities. "Our government is continuing to deliver for Durham Region with new investments through OTF's Grow grants that will strengthen our communities and empower our local non-profit organizations," said Lorne Coe, MPP for Whitby, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence, and Security. "Organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters South Durham and Northumberland,

the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region and Sunrise Developmental Support Services are pillars of our community, and this support will enable them to improve programs that are essential to the well-being of people in Whitby, Ajax, and other parts of the Region of Durham, making a lasting impact for years to come." Every year, OTF Grow grants support community organizations across the province to expand and improve the delivery of community-based programs and services that Ontario families rely on, with investments of up to \$600,000 to support programs and services. Some of this year's recipients include:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters South Durham and Northumberland - \$346,000
- Alzheimer Society of Durham Region - \$461,300
- Sunrise Developmental Support Services - \$463,400

"In Durham Region and communities across Ontario, non-profits are running proven programs that help people build

skills, stay active, and feel more connected to where they live," said Stan Cho, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. "This investment will help build on the successes of local initiatives, empowering them to reach more people, deepen their impact, and strengthen community life all across the province." Through OTF's various granting programs, Ontario has invested more than \$857 million in over 7,700 projects since 2018. These investments have created more than 10,700 full time jobs and generated over \$1.3 billion in economic benefits for communities across the province. For more information and a list of recipients, visit the Ontario Trillium Foundation's website. "We are deeply grateful for this remarkable investment from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Government of Ontario. This support will allow the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region to expand and strengthen vital programs that empower people living with dementia and their care partners. We are excited for the

investment will allow us to expand our Community Program from three days to five days per week, doubling our capacity and supporting the 36 individuals currently on our waitlist. Through increased community engagement and practical life skills development, including navigating public transit, we will continue to help adults with developmental disabilities build independence, confidence, and a stronger sense of belonging in the Durham Region." - Gillian Barrie, Chief Executive Officer, Alzheimer Society of Durham Region "We are incredibly grateful to OTF for their generous support. This funding allows us to adapt our group mentorship program for girls ages 11-14 to better address the challenges they are facing today, including gender-based violence, online safety, bullying, and mental health. We are thankful to OTF for recognizing the urgency of this work and for standing alongside us as a committed partner in supporting girls' mental health, safety, and empowerment in our community," - Melanie Stewart, Executive Director, Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Durham and Northumberland "Sunrise Developmental Support Services is deeply grateful to receive a \$463,400 Grow Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. This

investment will allow us to expand our Community Program from three days to five days per week, doubling our capacity and supporting the 36 individuals currently on our waitlist. Through increased community engagement and practical life skills development, including navigating public transit, we will continue to help adults with developmental disabilities build independence, confidence, and a stronger sense of belonging in the Durham Region." - Amber McKinley, Executive Director, Sunrise Developmental Support Services "The Ontario Trillium Foundation is pleased to invest in this new round of Grow grants, which are designed to improve the lives of Ontarians. These grants play an essential role in helping non-profit organizations broaden their local programming to address diverse community needs." - Katharine Bambrick, CEO, Ontario Trillium Foundation "Durham Region is proud to be home to non-profit organizations that make a meaningful difference in people's lives. This

investment through the Ontario Trillium Foundation will strengthen essential programs, expand community supports, and help ensure residents across Durham Region can continue to access the services they rely on." - John Henry, Regional Chair and Chief Executive Officer for The Regional Municipality of Durham The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. Its mandate is to build healthy and vibrant communities across Ontario by investing in community-based initiatives and strengthening the impact of the province's non-profit sector. OTF programs support the arts, culture, heritage, sports and recreation, human and social services, and environment sectors across the province. • Applicants can apply for funding of \$100,000 to \$600,000 over two or three years through OTF's Grow grant to expand, improve or adapt an existing program or service.

Canada's GST was meant to tame the debt. Now it barely covers the interest

By Lee Harding
The GST was sold to Canadians as a way to balance the budget, but today it mostly pays the interest on Ottawa's debt. Canada's Goods and Services Tax now effectively serves one purpose: helping to pay interest on the federal debt. And, thanks to continued deficit spending, these revenues aren't quite enough to cover the entire cost. This should be a fiscal wake-up call for the federal government and all Canadians. The 2025 budget revealed the problem. GST revenues and interest payments on the debt were both about \$61 billion. By 2029-30, the GST will take in \$64 billion, but interest payments on the debt will reach \$76 billion. Without a slash in spending or an increase in the GST rate to six or seven per cent, this gap will remain indefinitely. This milestone, perhaps better called a millstone, is even more significant when we look back on the last few decades of political history. After all, the GST was sold to Canadians as a way to balance the budget. Canada's GST revenue now roughly equals interest payments on the federal debt. Years of deficit spending mean the GST increasingly services debt. Persistent budget deficits and rising debt are turning GST into a debt-servicing tax.

Under Pierre Trudeau, the

Liberals ran many deficit budgets, causing a snowball of increasing interest payments. By the time the Brian Mulroney Progressive Conservatives came along in 1984, a return to balance was a favourite political topic. When the government replaced the 8.5-per-cent hidden manufacturers' sales tax on goods produced in Canada with the seven-per-cent GST, Finance Minister Brian Wilson pledged, "All GST revenues will be allocated solely to the effort to bring the public debt under control." The statement implied the GST would not just eliminate annual deficits (meaning an annual balanced federal budget) but also run surpluses to reduce the accumulated debt. Admittedly, this was political spin. All federal taxes go into one big pool of money. It's also hard to say what "under control" really means, but it does imply the debt was out of control prior to the introduction of the GST in 1991. Sadly, the Mulroney government never did balance the budget. So much for bringing the debt "under control." In 1993, the Reform Party ate the Progressive Conservatives' lunch on a platform of debt repayment, while the Chrétien Liberals won a majority. The Liberals floated the idea of tax increases, but a national

the Tax tour sponsored by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation proved that a nation already upset with the GST had no appetite for more taxes. This empowered the Liberals to slash spending and do what the GST had not. They finally balanced the budget. The federal government reduced its direct spending and its transfers, forcing provinces and municipalities to tighten their belts. Austerity was necessary and helpful. After sliding for a quarter-century, debt was partially repaid for 11 years. The bad habit of deficit spending was broken and the wisdom of balanced budgets was recognized by politicians at all levels of government (even if not all provinces consistently achieved it). Regrettably, the common-sense approach of spending within one's means went out the window with the worldwide financial downturn of 2008. The Stephen Harper Conservative government held a minority and opposition calls to turn on the government taps became too loud to ignore. Even Reform Party founder Preston Manning said the \$55-billion deficit the Conservatives announced in the 2009 budget was "pretty scary." Others weren't so sure. NDP leader Jack Layton advocated continued deficit spending to usher in a new era of nation-building.

Although the Conservatives ran smaller deficits continually until losing power in 2015 (and were on track for balance in their final year), conventional wisdom had shifted. On Aug. 27, 2015, Liberal leader Justin Trudeau announced a plan for three years of "modest short-term deficits" with a return to balanced budgets in the fourth year. He said with interest rates being so historically low, there was no better time to borrow. Unfortunately, once a balanced budget was no longer the goal, the Liberal-proposed fiscal guardrails were missed and then seemingly abandoned. The initial target was to restrict deficits to \$10 billion, but the Liberals did not meet that target. The fourth year of power came and went. The pandemic came and the federal government opened the floodgates of money. Some went to Canadians, some went to contracts that critics say delivered little or no value, and some went to expansive new social programs. Eventually, the weak target of an ever-falling debt-to-GDP ratio was missed. Today, there is neither a worldwide recession nor a pandemic nor any other crisis, save for trade uncertainty with the U.S. The historically low interest rates that allegedly made it a good time to borrow are long

gone. Yet, the deficits remain when there is no excuse for them. Canadians still hate the GST, but its rebranding can serve a new redemptive purpose. Let's name it the DST for Debt Servicing Tax. Every time Canadians buy something and have to pay for it, they can think about how irresponsible it is for a government to spend beyond its means and start demanding they never do so again.



Mayor Kevin Ashe

Honoured to attend Tema Foundation's Ontario Education Day once again. Thank you to the frontline workers, first responders, and healthcare professionals who show up with compassion and courage every day. Your work truly changes lives. Grateful to Tema Foundation for creating space where you can learn, connect, and support one another.