

MEDIA RELEASE



WES for Youth Online Used \$145,300 OTF Grant to Advance Mental Health E-Counselling

Walkerton, ON (December 11, 2023): On November 24th, MPP Lisa Thompson met with representatives from WES for Youth Online to formally congratulate them on work done as a result of receiving a \$145,300 Resilient Communities Fund grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). The grant, awarded in 2022, has helped the organization make significant progress with its mission to provide free, professional e-counselling services to youth across Ontario.

“WES for Youth Online does amazing work to protect and support youth who are struggling with their mental health,” said Lisa Thompson, MPP for Huron-Bruce. “This funding will provide WES for Youth with the financial support they need to strengthen their team and further develop their programs. I have no doubt that they will leverage this investment to positively impact countless lives for the better.”

The OTF grant enabled WES for Youth Online to hire a Program Director, a full-time role that ensures the continuous improvement of their e-counselling services and the supervision of their counselling team. The Program Director's expertise and dedication have been instrumental in maintaining and enhancing the quality of e-counselling services, particularly important as the demand for mental health support among Ontario youth increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to strengthening their team, the funds were used to launch a new platform and further developing their programs. This demonstrates WES for Youth Online's commitment to adapt to the evolving needs of Ontario's youth and to provide a safe and secure environment for them to access mental health support conveniently and without cost.

WES for Youth Online's ultimate goal is to make professional mental health care easily accessible to all youth in Ontario. It aims to break down barriers and create a safe, inclusive space where young individuals can seek the support they need, on their terms. This mission aligns with the organization's founding principles and its dedication to offering free mental health services to all youth in the province. WES for Youth Online was founded in Walkerton in 2012.

“WES for Youth Online is deeply grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their unwavering support through the Resilient Communities Fund,” said Jennifer Mulcaster, Executive Director, WES for Youth Online. “The grant of \$145,300 has been a cornerstone in our mission to provide, professional e-counselling services to youth across Ontario. It has allowed us to strengthen our team, enhance our services, and work towards breaking down barriers in accessing mental health care. The Ontario Trillium Foundation's support has been instrumental in our journey to create a safe and inclusive space for Ontario's youth to find the support they need, and we are committed to continuing this vital work in the years to come.”

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As a virtual organization that has expanded its reach to serve the entire province, WES for Youth Online has demonstrated remarkable progress in its mission to provide critical mental health services to the youth of Ontario. The support received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation has been pivotal in this journey, helping it identify clear goals for the future and continue the crucial work in the decade ahead. Youth in Ontario are encouraged to visit their website, www.wesforyouthonline.ca, to sign up for its services and benefit from the valuable support provided by this commendable organization.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation's (OTF) mission is to build healthy and vibrant communities across Ontario. As an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada's leading granting foundations, last year, OTF invested over \$110M into 1,022 community projects and partnerships. Visit otf.ca to learn more.