

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2029

ETHICAL, ACCOUNTABLE, EFFECTIVE, COMMUNITY-CENTRED



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR & THE REGISTRAR AND CEO
- 3 OUR STORY
- 5 OUR COMMITMENT TO FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES
- 8 OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
- 11 OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS
- 13 OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the College) operates on the original land of a vast diversity of Indigenous Peoples, much of which has been and still is occupied by settlers. We are privileged to have the College's office located in Toronto, on the "Dish With One Spoon Wampum Territory" - a treaty between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee peoples that binds them to share the area and protect the land in the spirit of community.

Today, the province of Ontario continues to be home to a vast diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Each nation is unique in its world views, language, histories, current position and future accomplishments. We encourage all registrants to know and seek to understand the local First Nations communities on whose lands they practise.

# JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR & THE REGISTRAR AND CEO

At the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the College), we are dedicated to serving and protecting the public through regulatory leadership. Through the regulation of the social work and social service work professions, we promote ethical and professional practice in order to maintain high standard of care for all Ontarians. We are proud to share our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan, which will serve as our guiding framework for the next five years. This Strategic Plan reflects our unwavering commitment to regulatory excellence and public safety. It is a testament to the collective effort of our dedicated staff, engaged registrants, diligent Council members and the public, who are at the heart of our mission and work.

The strategic planning process involved numerous and detailed engagement points. We extend our sincerest appreciation to all individuals who participated, as their contributions were pivotal in shaping the future direction of the College. Throughout this process, our priority was to ensure that the strategic plan development was informed by the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of all our engagement groups and partners.

**Council Members:** We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Council members for your governance and oversight, ensuring that every step of this strategic planning process aligns with our core values and mandate. Your dedication and support have been invaluable.

**Our Staff:** To all College staff members, your unwavering dedication and hard work have been the backbone of this extensive process. Thank you for your invaluable contributions.

**Registrants and Engagement Groups/Partners:** We deeply appreciate the insights and expertise provided by our registrants during the consultation phases. Your professional experiences and perspectives have been instrumental in ensuring that our Strategic Plan is robust and comprehensive.

**The Public:** We are grateful to the public for your engagement and trust, which guide us in fulfilling our mandate to protect your well-being.



**John E. Fleming**, C. Dir.  
Council Chair



**Denitha Breau**, RN, MSN, MBA  
Registrar & CEO

As highlighted and demonstrated in our many initiatives, such as those included in the [2023 Annual Report](#), the College has made significant strides in regulating the social work and social service work professions by upholding high standards of professional practice and prioritizing public protection and safety. Our new Strategic Plan builds on these foundations, reaffirming our commitment to these vital components of our mandate. This new Strategic Plan is not just our roadmap for the years to come; it serves as a call to action, emphasizing our commitment to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion and ultimately our commitment to the public.

Looking ahead, we recognize the need to adapt to the dynamic and evolving environment of Ontario while reflecting on our role as a regulator. Our Strategic Plan not only addresses current challenges, but also anticipates future needs. By embracing innovation and staying true to our mandate, we aim to remain relevant and effective in protecting the public and supporting the social work and social service work professions.

Our primary goal remains unchanged: to protect the public through effective regulation of social work and social service work. This Strategic Plan serves as a blueprint for not just meeting, but exceeding the expectations placed upon us, fostering continued trust and confidence among those we serve: the public. Together, we are steering the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers towards a future where we overcome the challenges of today and embrace the opportunities of tomorrow.

Thank you for being a part of this important journey. Please enjoy exploring more about how we will move forward, together.

**AT THE ONTARIO COLLEGE  
OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND  
SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS,  
WE ARE DEDICATED TO  
SERVING AND PROTECTING  
THE PUBLIC THROUGH  
REGULATORY LEADERSHIP.**

# OUR STORY

The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the College) is the regulatory body for social workers and social service workers in Ontario. The College was created when the province of Ontario fully proclaimed the [Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998](#) on August 15, 2000. Accountable to the [Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services](#), the College currently regulates the largest group of mental health practitioners in the province.

The College's ongoing mandate is to protect the public from unqualified, incompetent and unfit practitioners. It fulfills this mandate by:

- Setting entry-to-practice requirements to ensure that only those with specific educational qualifications are eligible for registration.
- Setting, maintaining and ensuring that all registrants follow the [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice](#).
- Maintaining a [Public Register](#) of registered social workers and registered social service workers in Ontario.
- Requiring registrants to engage in ongoing learning through the [Continuing Competence Program](#).
- Maintaining rigorous [complaints and discipline](#) processes.

**ACCOUNTABLE TO THE  
MINISTRY OF CHILDREN,  
COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES, THE COLLEGE  
CURRENTLY REGULATES  
THE LARGEST GROUP  
OF MENTAL HEALTH  
PRACTITIONERS IN THE  
PROVINCE.**

## VISION:

Confidence that the professions provide safe, ethical and high-quality service for the well-being of the public.

## MISSION:

Committed to regulating Ontario's social workers and social service workers by upholding ethical and professional practice.

## CORE VALUES:

### ETHICAL, ACCOUNTABLE, EFFECTIVE, COMMUNITY-CENTRED

- **Ethical:** Behaving in a manner that is equitable, inclusive, respectful, kind and upholds the dignity of all individuals.
- **Accountable:** Serving and protecting the public by remaining responsible, responsive and transparent.
- **Effective:** Conducting and providing service in a timely, efficient and impactful manner.
- **Community-centred:** Collaborating with diverse perspectives, interests and identities to ensure voices are heard, valued, included and respected.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO FIRST NATIONS, INUIT AND MÉTIS PEOPLES

As the provincial regulator for social workers and social service workers in Ontario, we are dedicated to protecting the public and ensuring high standards of professional practice. Our commitment to truth and reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples is an essential part of our public protection mandate.

Today's society, and the field of regulation, is built upon colonialism and the genocide of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. The College recognizes the historical and ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous communities and is focusing its efforts on anti-Indigenous racism. We acknowledge the shameful role that the social work and social service work professions have played in perpetuating harm to Indigenous Peoples, including the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop, which evolved into the Millennium Scoop, and ongoing overrepresentation in both the child welfare system and judicial system. We recognize the systemic racism and discrimination within the healthcare and social service systems that First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples continue to experience, and further recognize that colonization has deeply contributed to the significant health disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples.

We also recognize that First Nations, Inuit and Métis registrants have not contributed to perpetuating these harms and are actively working to heal their communities from the impacts of systemic oppression and intergenerational trauma.

The College is early in its reconciliation journey, and we are working to understand, listen, learn and unlearn. It is our responsibility to establish and develop specific reconciliation commitments in supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action within our regulatory context. We recognize the importance of intersecting identities and cultures, especially as it relates to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, and we are committed to listening to the voices of all to inform our work. We pledge to implement strategies that support the healing journey of Indigenous communities and individuals. Truth, reconciliation and decolonization will be a central focus in our equity,

**THE COLLEGE RECOGNIZES  
THE HISTORICAL AND  
ONGOING INJUSTICES  
FACED BY INDIGENOUS  
COMMUNITIES AND IS  
FOCUSING ITS EFFORTS ON  
ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM.**

diversity and inclusion initiatives. The College is actively working on building meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities and individuals, rooted in partnership and collaboration. We join the collective healing journey and strive to be accountable and to engage respectfully to the needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples.

We understand that we have much to learn and unlearn, and we are committed to contributing to a more inclusive and just future. As part of our journey, we aim to support the needs and intersectional identities and cultures of Indigenous individuals and communities.

### **ACTING ON OUR COMMITMENT**

Together with the ongoing guidance of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples, College staff and Council members will turn our intentions into actions and hold space for Truth and Reconciliation to be confirmed through the following actionable plans.

#### **Collaboration and Partnerships**

- We will build meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities to begin to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action within the regulatory context.
- We will develop meaningful connections with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples to enhance both our understanding and responsiveness to their needs and will work collaboratively through College initiatives.
- We will increase the impact and visibility of Indigenous perspectives and support Indigenous voices within our organization and the broader social services sector.

**IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY  
TO ACT AND DEVELOP  
SPECIFIC RECONCILIATION  
COMMITMENTS IN  
SUPPORTING THE TRUTH  
AND RECONCILIATION  
COMMISSION'S CALLS  
TO ACTION WITHIN OUR  
REGULATORY CONTEXT.**



### **Transparency and Accountability**

- We will establish meaningful metrics and benchmarks with our First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to measure our progress in achieving our goals.
- We will annually publish reports and share our stories of our efforts, highlighting our learnings and areas for improvement.

### **Education and Training**

- We will develop practice resources to raise awareness and understanding of the unique challenges faced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities to assist College registrants in better serving these communities.
- We will provide mandatory training for all staff and Council members on anti-Indigenous racism, Indigenous cultural competency and impacts of colonialism.

### **Data-Driven Decision Making**

- We will use data and evidence-based and relational approaches to apply our policies and guide our practices regarding First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As the provincial regulator for social workers and social service workers in Ontario, we are dedicated to protecting the public and upholding high standards of professional practice. Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a fundamental part of our work, driven by the urgency to address and dismantle systemic barriers rooted in colonialism. Our commitment to EDI will primarily focus on actions against anti-Black racism and the history and experiences of slavery and colonization of people of Black-African descent in Canada. Our commitment to EDI is further guided by relevant data that underscores the disproportionate overrepresentation of Black individuals and communities within the child welfare and judicial systems in Ontario, and across Canada<sup>1</sup>. We recognize that these inequities and injustices are a direct result of systemic racism perpetuated by colonial structures and practices.

We are committed to advancing initiatives against anti-Black racism as a key part of our EDI objectives and our broader public protection mandate. This focus directly relates to our role in safeguarding clients and communities by ensuring fair and equitable standards of care and treatment for all.

While our focus is on combating anti-Black racism, we remain acutely aware of other forms of systemic racism. It is incumbent upon us to acknowledge that other forms of systemic racism are actively present and impact Ontarians every day. We have consciously chosen to prioritize depth over breadth, with the approach to “go deep, not wide.” By concentrating our efforts on specific forms of oppression and racism, we believe that we can achieve significant and meaningful impact. This deliberate focus does not diminish the importance of other issues but rather highlights our determination to make a substantial impact in areas where it is most needed.

---

<sup>1</sup>[Source](#)

**OUR COMMITMENT TO EDI IS FURTHER GUIDED BY RELEVANT DATA THAT UNDERSCORES THE DISPROPORTIONATE OVERREPRESENTATION OF BLACK INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE CHILD WELFARE AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS IN ONTARIO, AND ACROSS CANADA.**

The College recognizes the historical and ongoing systemic barriers faced by Black communities in Ontario. We also recognize the importance of intersecting identities and cultures, especially as it relates to Black communities, and we are committed to listening to the voices of all to inform our work. We pledge to proactively address anti-Black racism within our regulatory practices and provide resources to support registrants in their practice. We are committed to implementing strategies that specifically combat anti-Black racism across all aspects of our work. These initiatives are integral to our EDI efforts and align with our values and strategic priorities of being community-centred and effective.

We understand that we have much to learn and unlearn, and we are committed to contributing towards a more inclusive and just future. As part of our journey, we aim to support the needs and intersectional identities and cultures of Black individuals and communities.

### **ACTING ON OUR COMMITMENT**

To ensure our commitment is translated into actionable plans, we have developed an overview outlining specific steps we will take as a part of our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. Together with the ongoing guidance from diverse individuals and communities, College staff and Council members will turn our intentions into actions and hold space for change to truly occur through the following actionable plans.

**WE ARE COMMITTED TO IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES THAT SPECIFICALLY COMBAT ANTI-BLACK RACISM ACROSS ALL ASPECTS OF OUR WORK.**

#### **Data-Driven Decision Making**

- We will use data and evidence-based approaches to inform our policies and practices regarding equity, diversity and inclusion.

#### **Education and Training**

- We will provide mandatory training for all staff and Council members on anti-Black racism and cultural competency.
- We will continue to develop practice resources to raise awareness and understanding of the unique challenges faced by Black communities to better equip College registrants in serving these communities.
- We will ensure ongoing professional development opportunities focused on EDI principles and anti-racism practices.

### **Collaboration and Partnerships**

- We will engage and partner with Black-led organizations, community groups and other engagement groups to co-develop and implement activities.
- We will increase the impact and visibility of Black perspectives and support Black voices within our organization and the broader social services sector.
- We will continue to collaborate with government bodies and other regulatory organizations to align our efforts and share best practices.

### **Transparency and Accountability**

- We will establish clear metrics and benchmarks to measure our progress in achieving EDI goals.
- We will annually publish reports and share our stories on our EDI efforts, highlighting our learnings and areas for improvement.

# OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

At the end of 2023, the College Council embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process to identify the future direction and priorities for the next five years. The College was committed throughout the planning process to ensuring that there was an opportunity for engagement groups to give input. In the initial stages of the strategic planning process, multiple engagement groups actively participated in the development of the Strategic Plan through focus groups, interviews and an online survey. This process was guided by our commitment to engagement and transparency. The engagement groups provided valuable insights and direction for the future of the College and contributed greatly to the final version of the Strategic Plan.

Engagement groups involved in the strategic planning process include:

- Canadian social work regulators
- College Council
- College registrants
- College staff
- Health Profession Regulators of Ontario
- Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction
- Non-Council Committee Members
- Ontario Association of Social Workers
- Ontario Social Service Workers Association
- Ontario regulators
- Public through the Citizen’s Advisory Group
- Social work and social service work educators
- Social work and social service work employers

## GROUPS ENGAGED WITH

805 Social Workers and Social Service Workers

86 Members of the Public

48 OCSWSSW Staff and Council Members

10 Provincial and National Regulators

10 Academia Partners

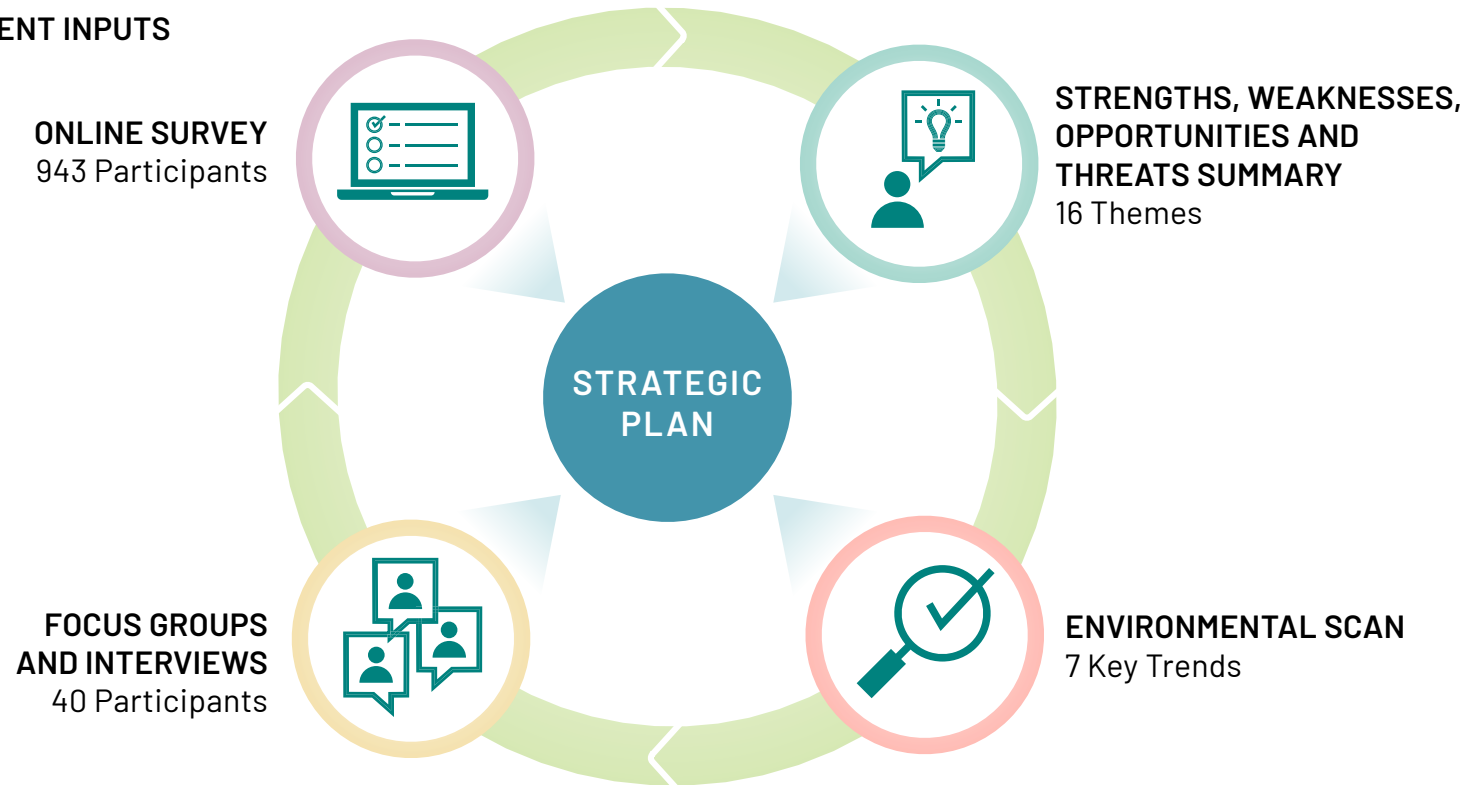
6 Government Partners

2 Provincial Social Work and Social Service Work Associations

Following these engagement activities, Council members participated in facilitated sessions, in preparation for which they reviewed consultation findings from the surveys, interviews and focus groups and a number of other background materials. These facilitated discussions supported Council in refining our strategic framework and the strategic action plan development.

Our approach ensures that our Strategic Plan reflects the collective input of the College and its interested parties and sets a clear, focused direction for the next five years.

### STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT INPUTS



# OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## REGULATORY EXCELLENCE

Reducing public risk and harm through leading regulatory approaches that serve the public and uphold ethical, professional practice.



## ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY, INNOVATION AND EFFECTIVENESS

Swiftly adapting to change, embracing technology for smarter work, managing growth effectively and always aiming for excellence.

## COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Building strong relationships to enhance knowledge, improve professional standards and enhance public safety.

## COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

Ensuring clear, accessible and ongoing communication that informs and listens to people and communities.



## **REGULATORY EXCELLENCE**

Reducing public risk and harm through leading regulatory approaches that serve the public and uphold ethical, professional practice.

### **We Will Statements**

- We will articulate and advance our risk-based regulatory approach to reduce risk and prevent harm.
- We will make informed decisions, driven by data and grounded in evidence.
- We will continually enhance our regulatory practices, ensuring they are aligned with leading professional, ethical and equitable practice.
- We will stay at the forefront of changes in our regulatory environment and actively adapt our approaches to ensure they remain relevant, effective and equitable.
- We will measure, assess, adjust and enhance our regulatory impact, striving for excellence in all we do.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- Risks are proactively identified and addressed appropriately.
- Greater public protection from potential harm.





## **ORGANIZATIONAL AGILITY, INNOVATION AND EFFECTIVENESS**

Swiftly adapting to change, embracing technology for smarter work, managing growth effectively and always aiming for excellence.

### **We Will Statements**

- We will operate with agility to enable us to be prepared for the changing regulatory landscape and emerging technologies.
- We will allocate resources efficiently and proactively develop organizational capacity to serve evolving needs.
- We will implement service delivery standards and approaches that will result in an effective, timely and responsive organization.
- We will apply our learnings from First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and principles of equity, diversity and inclusion to the standards and policies developed.
- We will build an equitable, diverse and inclusive workforce where all staff and Council have a sense of belonging and their talents contribute to organizational success.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- Improved timeliness and consistency in service delivery.
- Increased responsiveness and capacity to support societal needs and concerns.
- Enhanced cultural competency.



## COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

Ensuring clear, accessible and ongoing communication that informs and listens to people and communities.

### We Will Statements

- We will clearly communicate our [\*Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice\*](#) to ensure people and communities are well-informed and provided with the right information.
- We will continue to create accessible and user-friendly resources that contribute to public protection.
- We will foster open dialogue with the public and the professions to continuously improve practices and respond effectively to the evolving needs of society.
- We will listen to the public and tailor our communication methods to meet diverse needs, utilizing various platforms and formats to effectively reach, inform and educate our communities.

### Expected Outcomes

- The public has greater awareness of how to access the protections the College provides.
- The College has greater understanding of the perspectives of others.
- Increased public confidence, credibility and trust in the College.



## **COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

Building strong, informed relationships with various people to enhance knowledge, improve professional standards and ensure public safety.

### **We Will Statements**

- We will collaborate and engage broadly with equity deserving groups, communities, the professions, organizations and individuals on relevant topics that protect and serve the public interest.
- We will strive to achieve equity for those who are currently and have historically been denied.
- We will work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and actively address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action that apply to the work of the College.
- We will strengthen partnerships with government, regulators and others to learn and advance common goals.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- Involvement and contributions from diverse perspectives increasing effectiveness in advancing goals.
- Professions are well-prepared, competent and ready to serve the public.

---

**ONTARIO COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS AND SOCIAL SERVICE WORKERS**

250 Bloor Street East, Suite 1000  
Toronto, Ontario M4W 1E6

Phone: 416.972.9882  
Toll-Free: 1.877.828.9380  
Fax: 416.972.1512

[ocswssw.org](http://ocswssw.org)