



INSTITUT THOMAS MORE INSTITUTE

2025-26 ANNUAL REPORT

Share Your Curiosity



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to share with you the 2025-26 Annual Report, providing you with a look at the accomplishments and challenges of the year.

This year marked **our 80th anniversary**, allowing us to celebrate the rich history of the Thomas More Institute and to rededicate ourselves to the mission that has marked Thomas More from the start: **a belief in the importance of lifelong learning for adults of all ages and a dedication to creating a place where people can be part of a community of learners, following their curiosity as students, course designers, and discussion leaders.**

This work changes lives. In today's polarized world, adults are seeking renewal – spaces to think deeply, connect with others, and make sense of a rapidly changing society. Rooted in the humanities, our learning model responds to today's needs and empowers individuals.

This year, our courses and academic events reached a record number of participants. **Course registrations were up by 22%, and over 330 people attended our academic events**, many of them new to the Institute. Our Seniors Outreach Program continued to contribute to the lives of Montreal seniors at residences and community centres, attracting over 300 registrations.

Our fundraising also increased this year, with many of you stepping forward to support the Institute in its 80th anniversary year, testifying to the impact Thomas More has had on you, whether just recently or over many years. This year's first ever fundraising walk and our winter and spring appeals led to a total of funds raised of \$176,981. Your generosity makes possible the future work of the Institute.

In the face of challenging times for the funding of programs in the humanities, you stepped up. We are so grateful for your support!

The Thomas More Institute is only as strong as the community that supports it. In addition to the essential contributions of our donors, Thomas More was able to attract more students due to the outstanding work of our course designers and discussion leaders, most of whom are volunteers. **The Institute also has a stellar staff undergirding its offerings, led by Manager of Academic Affairs and Operations, Joseph Vietri, and by Manager of Development, Marleigh Greaney.** Without the vision, dedication, and hard work of Joseph, Marleigh, and the small team of two full-time and two part-time staff, the Thomas More Institute could not support the incredible contributions of our largely volunteer course designers and discussion leaders.

Thank you for your support and looking forward to another year of sharing our curiosity,

Carol Fiedler, Board Chair



Fundraising Walk

This photo and others throughout the report are courtesy of our fantastic volunteer photographer, Dominic Varvaro.

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

MISSION	The Mission of the Thomas More Institute is to empower adults of all ages through timeless, topical, and culturally relevant discussion courses, instructor-led classes, and events, thereby broadening perspectives, fostering community, and deepening our understanding of the world in which we live.
VISION	The Thomas More Institute is a place where adults can discover and explore their potential, express their ideas, and grow intellectually in a vibrant, supportive community.
VALUES	• <u>Curiosity</u>: Championing lifelong learning and the continuous pursuit of knowledge and growth • <u>Creativity</u>: Encouraging imaginative thinking and innovative exploration of ideas • <u>Openness</u>: Fostering respectful dialogue and welcoming diverse perspectives • <u>Critical Thinking</u>: Promoting the capacity to analyze, interpret, and question the information and views we encounter, at times presenting an alternative way of thinking • <u>Shared Inquiry</u>: Cultivating learning through dialogue with others • <u>Community</u>: Nurturing a vibrant, inclusive community of engaged learners



2026-31 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PROMOTIONAL & VISIBILITY STRATEGY	Promote the Thomas More Institute through increased social media engagement and by augmenting the reputation of the Institute through partnerships with academic and cultural institutes.
GOVERNANCE STRATEGY	Improve the efficiency and efficacy of the board and staff of the Thomas More Institute through clear modes of governance.
FINANCE AND FUNDING STRATEGY	Revise our investment strategy and seek funding from private foundations, government grants, fundraising events, the annual appeal, and a legacy program.
HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY	To maintain the vitality of Thomas More's volunteers and staff, create a work atmosphere that provides opportunities for creativity and innovation, and sustains a collaborative and agreeable work environment.
CURRICULUM & DEGREE STUDENT STRATEGY	Ensure continued innovation in the curriculum offered by the Institute; increase the number of students taking courses for credit.



WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

In a moment when public support for humanities programming is shrinking, and polarization and misinformation increasingly crowd out real conversation, the Thomas More Institute offers something adults are actively seeking: a place to think deeply, connect genuinely, and be part of a community built on curiosity rather than credentials. **Guided by our six core values — curiosity, creativity, openness, critical thinking, shared inquiry, and community — we cultivate the skills that democratic life depends on: the ability to listen across difference, weigh evidence, and reason together rather than past one another.** This is not incidental to what we do; it is central to it. In an age of algorithm-driven echo chambers, the discipline of sitting in a room and working through hard questions with people unlike yourself is a quietly radical act — and a necessary one for a healthy, engaged Canadian society.

For 80 years, we have proven that this kind of learning doesn't require a university's cost — just a room, a text, and people willing to ask hard questions together. Unlike most lifelong learning programs, which rely on lecture-style instruction delivered by paid faculty, our courses are designed and led by trained volunteers who guide discussion rather than deliver content — a model that puts dialogue, not credentials, at the centre of learning. **This year, that model reached more people than ever: registrations grew 22%, our Seniors Outreach Program brought discussion-based learning to over 300 older adults across Montreal, and more than 25 volunteer course designers and 50 discussion leaders contributed thousands of hours to keep our curriculum alive and evolving.**

Yet this growth comes as **a significant funding source has stepped back**, leaving a real gap between what our community needs and what we can currently sustain. **As we close our 80th anniversary year, we're asking our supporters to help ensure that the next 80 years of Thomas More are as vital as the last — because a community's capacity for critical thought, respectful dialogue, and genuine connection is not a luxury. It's a necessity.**



CURRICULUM: OUR COURSES

At the Thomas More Institute, our courses allow students to follow their curiosity and come to see the world in new ways, whether thinking with others about the meaning of a great book, pursuing a love of art through a deep dive into a particular epoch or an informed visit to Montreal's Museum of Fine Arts, or honing their craft as a writer in our writing courses.

At Thomas More, we believe people become who they are when they think deeply about the world and discuss meaningful questions with others.

41 COURSES
527 REGISTRATIONS
50+ COURSE LEADERS
25+ DESIGNERS



CURRICULUM: THE SENIORS OUTREACH PROGRAM

**301 REGISTRATIONS • 13 PROGRAM SITES
21 VOLUNTEER DISCUSSION LEADERS • 260 SESSIONS**

The Seniors Outreach Program extends the mission of the Thomas More Institute by bringing **accessible, intellectually stimulating, and community-driven learning directly to seniors at residences and community centers across Montreal**. This program:

- Reduces social isolation through regular interaction and meaningful engagement
- Is a program for seniors and by seniors, as most discussion leaders are themselves seniors
- Ensures lifelong learning is both financially and physically accessible
- Empowers older adults to contribute as volunteer leaders and participants
- Challenges the mind and warms the heart
- Builds a strong and inclusive community of learners



PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS COMMENT:

"The program is something I look forward to every week. It has broadened my interests and provided a real learning experience."

*"The courses have rekindled my passion for reading and lively debate.
It's not just about learning. It's about feeling alive again."*

CURRICULUM: ACADEMIC PROGRAMING BY THE NUMBERS

The Thomas More Institute extends the reach of its programming by offering events that bring Montreal's academic and writing communities to a larger public. This year, we offered 8 academic events, welcoming 333 people, including the poetry reading highlighted in the photos on this page.

Academic Courses	2024-25	2025-26
Courses Offered	41	41
New Student Registrations	111	118
Returning Student Registrations	321	409
Total Registrations	432	527
Seniors Outreach Program	295	301

78 % of course registrations came from returning students, demonstrating the lasting value participants find in our academic programming.



An Evening of Poetry at the Thomas More Institute

VISIBILITY: OUR ACADEMIC EVENTS

Academic events at the Thomas More Institute bring meaningful dialogue about important issues to a wider public. They connect our community to Montreal's four universities, its multiple CEGEPs, and its writing community.

**Poetry Readings • Interviews with Scholars • Literary Talks • Art Talks
8 Academic Events • Over 330 Participants**



This year we brought back our Spring Interview Series!

Celebrating Eighty Years of the Thomas More Institute: Dialogue and Encounter with One Another and the Issues of Our Time

- **Migration and Democracy:** An Interview with Mireille Paquet
- **Visions of Canada from an Indigenous Centre:** An Interview with Niigaan Sinclair
- **Dialogue and Education:** An Interview with Eva Pomeroy and Jessica Riddell
- **The Thomas More Discussion Method:** A Conversation with Valerie Amyot, Claire English, Irene Menear, Daniel Schouela, and Joseph Vietri

ENGAGEMENT: OUR COMMUNITY EVENTS

Over **180 people** attended our **five community events** this year, testifying to the strength and vitality of our learning community.



Fundraising Walk



Open House



Seniors 50th Anniversary



Feast of Lights



Volunteer Appreciation Day

HUMAN RESOURCES: OUR VOLUNTEERS

The Thomas More Institute is powered by volunteers.

This year, over 25 volunteers designed our courses, more than 50 volunteers led discussions in our classes, and another five assisted with administration and hospitality at events.

Volunteers at Thomas More, most of whom hold a higher degree, receive extensive training in facilitating discussion:

prospective discussion leaders attend an introductory training workshop, leaders and designers attend refreshment workshops each year, and the Manager of Academic Affairs provides extensive one-on-one support for leaders and designers throughout the year.

We are so grateful for our talented and generous volunteers!



Thomas More Institute Volunteers gave more than **9,000 volunteer hours** this year, constituting a remarkable **in-kind contribution of \$450,000** to our annual budget.



GOVERNANCE: OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2025-26 Board of Directors

Carol Fiedler, Ph.D., Chair

Marilyn Kaplow, M.B.A., M.Sc.A., Vice Chair

David Dussault, B.A., Treasurer

Christine Jamieson, Ph. D., Secretary

Martin Baenninger, B.A.

Shehrnaz Choski, Ph. D.

Louise Jarrett, B.A., Dip. Ed.

Ronika Khanna, C.P.A., C.F.A

Judy Macdonald, B.A., D.Ed, M.ED.

Daniel Paul, B.Com., LL.L.

Len Richman, M.A.

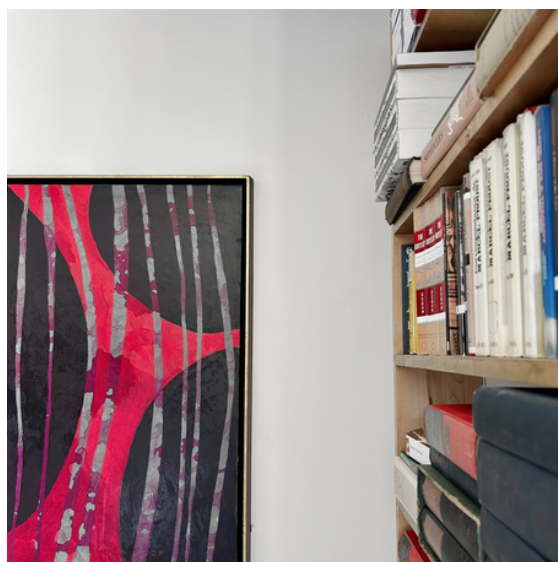
Daniel Schouela, M.A.

Mariela Tovar, Ph.D.

Carolyn Van Der Meer, M.A., Grad Cert.
(until December 2025)

This year our board completed the **2026-31 Strategic Plan for the Thomas More Institute.**

The strategic plan aims at **increasing the capacity and reach of the institute through streamlined promotion, increased outreach to the larger Montreal academic and cultural communities, and investment in a new website and database.** We are also committed to a steady increase in student registrations, improved governance, and a **financial plan to create a strong and sustainable Thomas More through fiscal responsibility and targeted fundraising.**



HUMAN RESOURCES: OUR STAFF

A small, but very talented and dedicated staff of three full-time and three part-time employees allows this volunteer-driven organization to thrive! We aim to create a work environment that provides opportunities for creativity and innovation, and that encourages employees to pursue additional training so that both they and the institute can flourish.



The Thomas More Institute's Staff	Position
Joseph Vietri	Manager of Academic Affairs and Operations
Marleigh Greaney	Manager of Development
Lucía Linaje-Ferrel	Marketing and Community Relations Coordinator
Melissa Otten	Academic Services Coordinator
Jennifer MacGregor	Seniors Outreach Program Coordinator
Patricia Saxton	Accountant

FINANCE AND FUNDING:

OUR SUPPORTERS – FUNDERS

The Thomas More Institute is profoundly grateful to the following organizations who have funded our work this year.

Government Agency or Foundation	Purpose
Azrieli Foundation	Support for general activities of the Thomas More Institute
Canada Summer Jobs (May 2026-August 2026)	Administrative Support Positions (2)
Canadian Heritage (April 2025-March 2026)	Project Support: Building Community Through Discovering Art
New Horizons for Seniors Programs (April 2026-March 2027)	Project Support: A Seniors Volunteer Program
Zeller Family Foundation	Program Support: Seniors Outreach Program

Our new volunteer program will reinforce the work now carried out by a small group of outstanding administrative and hospitality volunteers. New volunteer positions, both big and small, will ensure that Thomas More will continue to be the warm and vibrant community that makes it unique. At the same time, the volunteers will benefit as they meet new people, learn new skills, and find purpose in helping others. The Thomas More Institute is pleased to announce that this project has been made possible in part by the Government of Canada’s **New Horizons for Seniors Program**.

FINANCE AND FUNDING: OUR SUPPORTERS – FUNDERS, CONT.

Building Community Through Discovering Art

Thanks to funding from Canadian Heritage, the Thomas More Institute was able to offer eight art workshops this year that created connections between seniors, families, and art lovers through shared art experiences. These workshops promoted our values of curiosity, creativity, openness, critical thinking, shared inquiry, and community.



Intergenerational Art Workshop

8 Workshops
174 Participants



Medieval and Renaissance Art Event at the Thomas More Institute and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts



FINANCE AND FUNDING:

OUR SUPPORTERS – DONORS

In the face of our loss of financing by the Ministry of Education in 2024-25 and in the midst of the celebration of our 80th anniversary this year, you, our donors, stood up to support lifelong learning in the liberal arts. Your donations are a vote in favour of critical thinking, shared inquiry, and the ever-growing community of learners that makes up the Thomas More Institute. We thank you for supporting this unique place where ideas are exchanged, questions are pursued, and individuals are transformed within a vital and supportive learning community.

\$25,000+	Anonymous (1)			
\$10,000+	Anonymous (1)	John Scott		
\$5,000+	Anonymous (1) Paris Arnopoulos Cole Foundation	Dorvador Investments Inc. Carol Fiedler Anthony Rustin		
\$1,000+	Anonymous (3) Donald B. Andrus Martin Baenninger Marlene Bourke Andrew Byers	Kathleen Dunn David Dussault Elliot Goldberg Christine Jamieson Anthony Joseph	Judy Macdonald Sara & Donald Pistolessi Thomas Tutsch Jonathan & Susan Wener	
\$500+	Anonymous (5) Bethcare Senior Services Cielo Carin Shernaz Choksi Barry Cole Norman Cook Martha Downey Nasser Elmasri	Jessie L. Fiedler William Fiedler Ron Fitzgerald Carl Frymel Louis Gaboury Wojciech Galuszka Bill Gilsdorf Marilyn Kaplow Ronika Khanna	Ellen Kom Brian McDonough Diane Moreau Sandra Paikowsky Roger Perrault Maria Pitacciatto Sharon Poissant	James M. Queen Brigitte Ramaseder Mary Louise Sacconaghi Stephanie Scherzer Daniel Schouela Debrah White
\$250+	Anonymous (2) David Ades Mimi Belmonte Family Patrick Benaroche Olivier Brasseur Wilma Brown Rustum Choksi William Collier	James Cullen Marlene Danies Mickey De Takacs Ossama El Nagggar Marie-Helene Fox Marleigh Greaney Peter Huish Luc Lepage	Saykaly Mark Peter Mendell Irene Menear Lawrence Mysak Michael O'Brien Jeanne Papenthien Francis Parfitt Eva Pomeroy	Christian Roy Hélène Roy Georg Schmidt Steven Schouela Allan Schouela Robert Smol Charles Taylor

FINANCE AND FUNDING: OUR SUPPORTERS – DONORS, CONT.

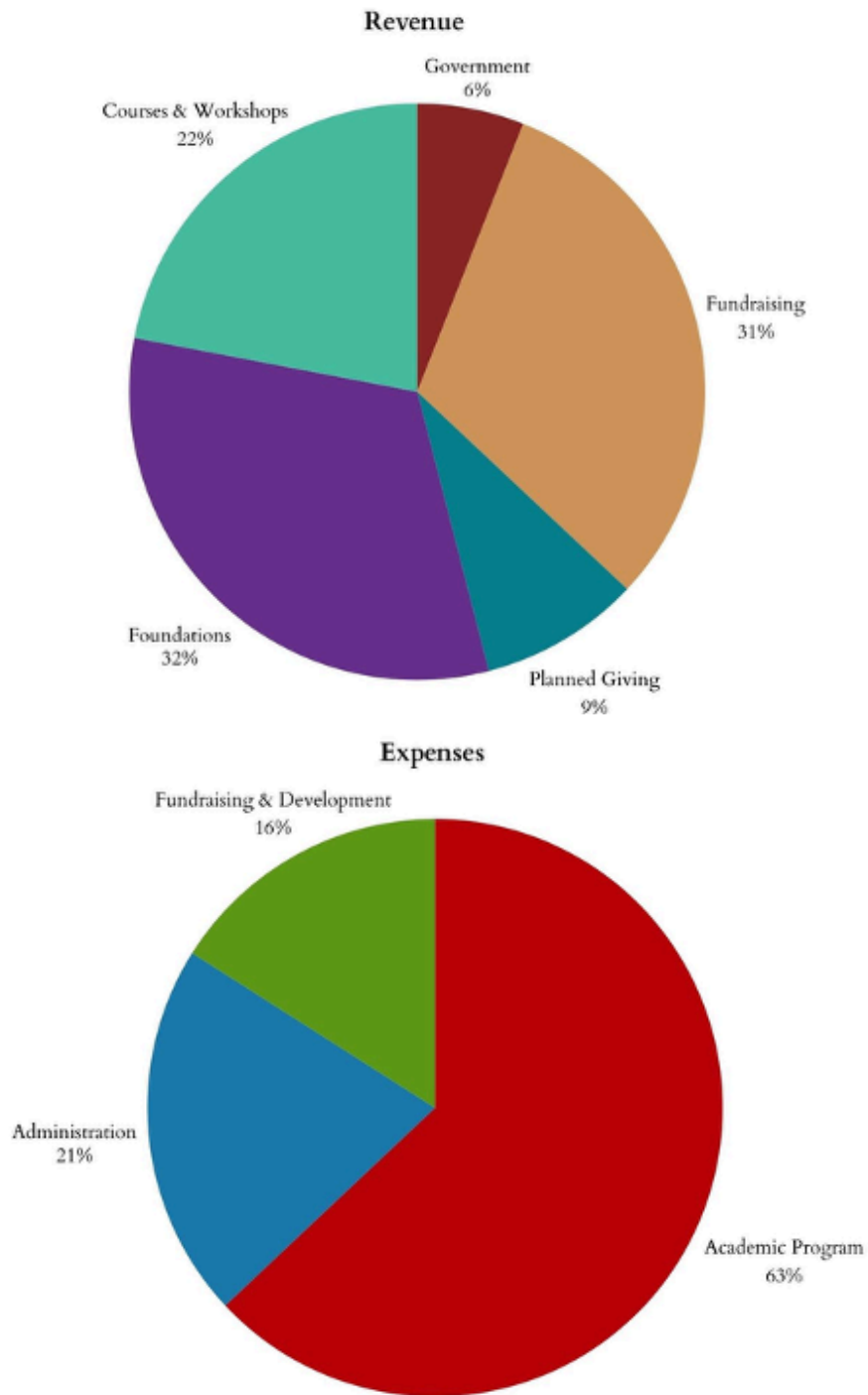
\$100+

Anonymous (13)	William Derby	Dolores Luber	Rhona & Jerry Rosenblatt
Liliane Aberman	Diana Dubrovsky	Louise MacLellan	Jean Rowlands-Tarbox
Zsolt Alapi	Claire English	Shaun McDonald	Kenneth Salomon
Jack & Diane Altman	Geo Fiedler	Simmy Mendelson	Diane Sasson
Nathalie Amzallag	Maureen Fitzgerald	Wolf Mendritzki	David Schouela
Diana Bennett	Mariana Frank	Carmela Mindel	David Schouela
Catherine Bérubé	Carol Clarke Gendron	Joann E. Mitchell	Benjamin Serfaty
Paul Billette	Ruth Gesser	Caroline Nabozniak	Kathleen Shaw
Rebekah Bradley	Nathalie Gregoire	Hazel de Neeve	Alice Sidorow
Lois Brimacombe	Bernadette	Veronica Noble	Patricia Sikender
Gregory Brown	Griffin-Donovan	Tina Nussbaum	Nancy Souaid
Anna Bushell	Alice Herscovitch	Mary O'Sullivan	Karen E. Staudinger
Moira Carley	Louise Jarrett	Micheline Paquin	Debra Surjadinata
Sylvie Carmel	Catherine Jenner	Paula Pedicelli	Joseph Tarasofsky
Marilyn Carr	Peggy Johnson	John Phyper	Eliane Telio
Christo Carson	Loretta Kampeas	Renee Prendergast	Meira Terk
Kim Cavener	Julie Kavanagh	Lynne Pugsley	Faye Trecartin
Rubin Cohen	Manika Khanna	Claudie Rawas	Ronald Tuckey
Kathy Cohen	Renuka Khanna	Roman Rogulski	Dominic Varvaro
Anne Cornelius	Paul Lafontaine	Barbara Rolston	Francoise B. Vien
Louise Cromwell	Ralph Leavitt	Frank Rooney	Susan Zegray
Giovanna D'Alesio			

Up to \$99

Anonymous (16)	Barbara Cuerden	Patricia Legault	William Russell
Judy Abrams	Rosemary Cyr	Lou Lukanovich	Holly Russell
Susan Ajersch	Susan & Colin Day	Deborah MacDonald	Madeline Russell
Mary Allen	Maria De Wolfe	Stephanie MacLean	Rebecca Rustin
Susan Anastasopoulos	Bruce Dixon	Alexa MacLean	Patricia Saxton
Charles Anderson	Colette Dolman	Sue Maheu	Chantal Shapiro
John Aylen	Carol Elliott	Denis Marcoux	Heidi Shapiro
Masoud Behbahani	Balazs Farkas	Genevieve Mareschal	Yasmine Sikender
Lenore Beitel	Kate Fellerath	Eta Markowicz	Scott Simons
Janet Boeckh	Jennie Ferris	Maggie McDonnell	Marcy Slapcoff
Howard Bokser	Anne Fitzpatrick	Sarah Mitchell	Dina Souleiman
Elisabeth Boylan	Marie Fortier	Jan Morgan	Jen Strahl
Geoff Brown	Lynda Gelston	Jessica Noras	Carolyn Van Der Meer
Jonathan Brun	Lisa Gifford	Claire O'Brien	
John Carson	Laurie Gordon	Margaret O'Donnell	
Christopher Cassidy	Sheila Greenberg	Stamatia Piper	
Kerry Chambers	Michele Hehn	Luc Plante	
Carole Channer	Richard Irving	Sonia Ribaux	
Guy Alexander Charette	Rina Kampeas	Len Richman	
Sylvia Chenette	Ron Kampeas	Julie Rivet	
Marthe Couture	Jonathan Kaplansky	Catherine Rossignol	
Susan Cox	Jacqueline Kost	James Rowen	

FINANCE AND FUNDING: FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE



Over 2025-26, as demand for our programs has grown, so have our fundraising efforts and their success. Even so, **we continue to face real financial pressure following the 2024-25 loss of the Ministry of Education's longstanding support for our Academic Program – a reduction of \$131,400, representing 30% of our operating budget.**

A one-time legacy grant from the Myriad Foundation has offset this loss, but that grant will terminate next year, leaving us with a significant deficit. **Closing this gap remains a top organizational priority.**

FINANCE AND FUNDING: FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

FINANCES		
	2026	2025
REVENUE		
Student Fees		
- Courses	79,511	65,227
- Seniors Outreach Program	9,280	9,010
Government Grants		
- Ministère de l'enseignement supérieure du Québec	0	0
- Gvnt of Canada – Community Services Recovery Fund	0	3,000
- Gvnt of Canada – Heritage Canada	21,428	0
- ESDC – Canada Summer Jobs	1,250	0
- ESDC – New Horizons for Seniors	2,857	633
Foundation Grants		
- Myriad Foundation	125,000	88,988
- Other Foundations	15,000	5,000
Fundraising		
- Annual Appeal	96,167	92,023
- Fundraising Events & Other Initiatives	41,464	0
- Planned Giving	40,000	40,000
Other Income		
- Workshops, rentals, book sales, coffee fund	5,181	405
	437,138	304,286
EXPENSES		
Education Costs		
- Education Salaries	144,254	157,490
- Classroom Expenses	19,716	20,820
- Seniors Outreach Program	14,152	14,664
- Reading Expenses	12,803	10,469
- Advertising (Social Media & Print)	6,305	13,851
- Course Calendar & Outreach	4,410	8,068
- Community Events	11,580	3,584
Administrative Costs		
- Administrative Salaries	70,032	75,610
- Building Expenses	23,472	27,068
- Telecommunications	2,709	2,668
- IT Expenses	16,064	15,998
- Office Expenses (incl admin travel & meals)	3,425	4,353
- Interest & Bank Charges	9,116	9,815
- Professional Fees	12,931	22,526
- Insurance	2,143	2,019
- Other Admin Expenses	2,073	2,151
Fundraising & Development Costs		
- Development Manager	51,630	27,895
- Other Fundraising Expenses	10,980	4,879
Loss On Disposal of Fixed Assets	1,656	
Depreciation Expense	8,437	6,956
	427,888	430,884
Excess (Deficiency) Before Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments	9,250	(126,598)
Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments	141,153	135,085
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenues Over Expenses	150,403	8,487

LOOKING AHEAD: 2026-27

We envision a world in which curiosity overcomes division, thoughtful dialogue builds understanding, and lifelong learning strengthens more connected, resilient, and compassionate communities.



Join us as we help build a world where learning takes center stage

Take a course - Lead - Design - Donate - Volunteer



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