

**eko**  
EMPOWERED KIDS  
ONTARIO

**eao**  
ENFANTS AVENIR  
ONTARIO



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

Empowered Kids Ontario / Enfants Avenir  
Ontario is a business name used by the Ontario  
Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

This past year was one like no other, and underscored the importance of focusing on what really matters. EKO navigated the challenges with the tremendous support of our growing membership, ensuring Ontario kids with disabilities and their families could rely on our sector. Our report shares how we moved forward alongside our members and partners, and ultimately how we came out of this extraordinary year stronger together.

We are proud to highlight the incredible work done by our sector. EKO, our members and our staff showed their true expertise and responsiveness during crisis, always focused on the health, safety and well-being of kids with disabilities and their families. It is notable how Ontario's child development and rehabilitation sector came together and took care of each other. We saw collaboration, innovation, and self-awareness at every turn. This year taught us that we can do anything we put our minds to... if we do it together.

This has been a year of hope. The Ontario government made an historic investment in the child development and rehabilitation sector—the first significant increase in base budgets in more than a decade. We are focusing our innovative energy on building capacity in the sector, including engaging 47 organizations in a program that enables providers to meet the needs of kids with disabilities and their families.

Ontario's system of health and social care is transforming, keeping pace with global trends. Our Board took on strategic planning focused on the changing landscape as we determined the best way to support our members and remain a thought partner for government. Our previous strategic plan supported considerable progress, including modernizing our governance structure, rebranding, and expanding membership. Our new strategic plan builds on these and other successes.

The EKO Board has an important role to play in building a diverse and inclusive environment and to exemplify this culture. We are working to improve our clarity of purpose and fluency, enabling learning and development to inform new approaches and ensure EKO reflects the full range of voices of those who receive care from our members

To our EKO members, team, partners and stakeholders: Thank you for the chance to work with you during these extraordinary times. We are proud of what we achieved together during the past year and we are excited to do more. Stay safe, healthy and strong.

Sincerely,



Penny Smiley  
Chair



Jennifer Churchill  
CEO



# A Strategic Plan for a Changing Landscape

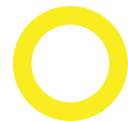
EKO is primed for growth and change. Our strategic planning process built upon previous successes, and focused on the trends likely to shape the child development and rehabilitation sector in coming years to determine how EKO could best respond.

Our vision remains unchanged: Kids with disabilities and their families living their best lives. It's a simple and powerful premise.

## How do we make this happen?



EKO's [Strategic Plan 2021-24](#) is our guide, designed to help build capacity in our rapidly changing world, to support kids with disabilities and their families in the coming years.



EKO will help its members, governments and other stakeholders better understand the experiences and priorities of kids with disabilities and their families so that they can better serve and support them.



EKO will help government better understand the value of responsive and innovative services and the policy and resourcing challenges faced in serving kids with disabilities and their families.



EKO will become an even more responsive, effective and properly-resourced organization in order to better engage and support a growing number of current and future members.



EKO will help a growing number of current and future members strengthen their capacity to respond to families, government policies, and changes in their overall operating environment.

# COVID-19 Response and Recovery

The global pandemic has been hard on Canadians, but it has affected kids with disabilities and their families disproportionately, pausing or limiting necessary supports, generating protocols that were unfriendly to kids with disabilities or even leaving kids with disabilities and their families without assistance. Many parents spoke of watching their kids lose hard-earned advances that were months or years in the making.<sup>1</sup>

EKO continued its work this year, supporting our sector's resiliency, providing leadership and tools to meet challenges, activating our network and partnerships, and always advocating for the needs of kids with disabilities and their families.

An essential element of the post-pandemic response for kids with disabilities is the in-person delivery of the School-based Rehabilitation Program. EKO worked with stakeholders to generate a shared understanding of the program's purpose and mandate. Gaining support for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services-funded program and its objectives ensures organizations responsible for the program have agreement from publicly funded Boards of Education, and Education Directors, to access to schools and classrooms, and engage with educators to the benefit of kids and families.

## Children's Health Coalition Ontario

The Children's Health Coalition Ontario maintained an active voice as the province addressed the pandemic's challenges. The Coalition's advocacy has been successful in several ways:

- 1 Pediatric expertise joined the provincial vaccine table with EKO represented at Ontario's Pediatric Vaccine Table
- 2 Caregivers for kids with disabilities and kids with mental health needs included in the second wave of the vaccination rollout
- 3 Ministry of Education recognition that in-person learning is essential for kids with complex care needs
- 4 Messaging that schools must be the last to close and the first to re-open in the province's recovery plan shared by important influencers
- 5 EKO joined Ontario's COVID Children's Response and Recovery Table, the single voice for children as the province navigates the fourth wave of the pandemic and concurrently addresses response and recovery.

## Vaccine Education Course

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services directive issued in August required EKO members to adhere to a vaccination policy no later than September 23, 2021. To assist our members, EKO contracted the Ontario Public Health Association to design an education program satisfying these requirements and addressing issues specific to the demographics represented by EKO members' staff.



**30 minutes**



**8 Modules**



**7 Knowledge Questions**



**101 Learners received Certificates of Completion in the first 4 weeks course is offered**

<sup>1</sup><https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00066-eng.htm>

## EKO's 2020 Fall Policy Forum

The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear that complex problems are best addressed collaboratively, grounded in the experiences of the people who are closest to the issues. This year EKO activated a crowd-sourced approach to identify the policy issues that matter most to kids with disabilities and their families who navigate the system. Families and “graduates” shared their views about strategies to transform our system of care. This approach ensures EKO’s input on policy discussions is family and client-focused, aligned with families’ expectations, and grounded in health and social care system engagement standards that lead to improved outcomes.

**3** focus groups

**8** interviews with system graduates

**5** Themes

Survey available in **2** languages

More than **240** survey respondents

## EKO's Growing Membership

Welcoming new members, EKO expanded and further deepened its broad representation of Ontario’s child development and rehabilitation sector. Our members are joined by a commitment to drive inclusion, equity and opportunity for kids with disabilities and their families, and to advance Ontario’s capacity to provide smart, innovative approaches to care at home, in schools, and in the community—across the province.



**8 NEW MEMBERS**



**GROWTH IN 1 YEAR**



# Ontario's Historic Investment

In the 2021 budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy, the government included an historic investment in the child development and rehabilitation sector: \$240 million over four years to address wait lists for pediatric rehabilitation and child development. This will allow EKO members to see more of the kids who are waiting for all levels of service—whether they need only a few visits or many to help them achieve their goals. EKO is grateful for this funding that positions more kids to live their best lives, and for ongoing efforts to address the urgent treatment needs of kids with disabilities and their families.

**\$60 million**  
increase to base budgets

EKO members provide core rehabilitation therapies to more than  
**150,000 kids** every year, at home, in schools and in their communities

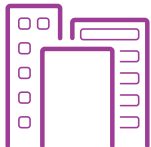
**80,000 kids** waiting for treatment



# Building Sector Capacity

EKO secured grant funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services for a second phase of the Building Capacity program.

The program now includes a research component looking at virtual care. This work aims to determine the effectiveness of a broad range of virtual care services provided to Ontario children, focusing on the processes and outcomes of a variety of services to identify potential ways to enhance both program and service delivery, as well as measurement of the resulting impact of these services.



**47 participating organizations**



**24 one-on-one consultations in the first 2 months**



**18% growth in the number of individuals participating**



### Evaluating Virtual Care

- 1 year
- 4 phases
- 6-person research team
- 5 Evaluation Advisory Committee members
- Asset mapping survey of 126 organizations
- 3 questionnaires contribute to evaluation plan



**504 registrations from March to November 2021**



**6 webinars in 8 months**



**108 tools in the Resource Library**  
 ▪ 4,931 views in 6 months



# Research and Knowledge Translation

We understand the potential developmental and rehabilitation science holds for improving lives, the opportunity for practitioners to inform research initiatives, and the need for rigorous research to inform policy and practice. Each year, EKO is proud to support advances in our understanding and promote the use of research to improve the lives of kids with disabilities and their families.



**12 Letters of support for provincial and national research grants**



**2 Partnerships for grant applications**



**EKO staff joined 2 research teams: CIHR-funded TIPS and CanChild Rapid Review**

- Presented at 2 conferences
- 1 study submitted for publication



# Accolades

## 2021 EKO Scholars

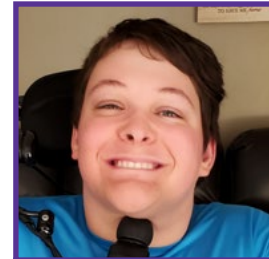
At EKO we believe nothing should stand in the way of promising young people pursuing their higher education and career goals, and we are honoured to recognize students with disabilities who have shown determination, self-advocacy, academic success and a commitment to their community, as they embark on this next phase of their lives.

This year EKO introduced a scholarship for Canadian First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth—a timely initiative given the association’s further reach into Northern Ontario and growing relationships with organizations that serve Indigenous communities.

EKO Scholars are selected through a competitive process by a jury of leaders in healthcare, education, child development services, former EKO scholars, and those with lived experience of disability. The 2021 EKO Scholars are honour roll students, athletes—including a Paralympian in training with his goal set on the 2024 Paris games, a recipient of a Governor General’s Caring Canadian award, advocates, actors, public speakers, mentors, and an aspiring novelist. All are attending Ontario college and university programs studying game development, arts and science, business law, health sciences, developmental services, and recreation therapy.

- **6 EKO Scholars**
- **1 new scholarship introduced this year**
- **Value of each scholarship: \$2,500**
- **In the first week of announcing the 2021 EKO Scholars:**
  - 14,251 Impressions on Twitter
  - 10,13 Impressions on Facebook
  - 260 engagements from dignitaries and organizations
  - 1,186 engagements from EKO members and families

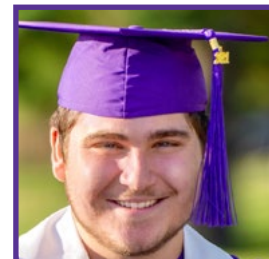
### Meet the 2021 EKO Scholars:



**Bryce Desrochers**



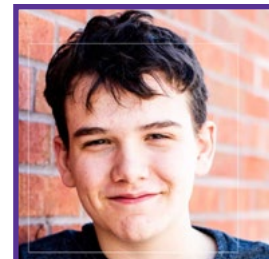
**Thalia Avgousti**



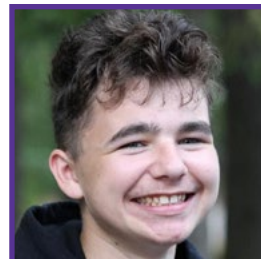
**Evan McDonald**



**Katrina Lamothe**



**Dylan Kingston**



**Owen DiManno**

## EKO Tribute Awards

For more than a decade, EKO has honoured the outstanding contributions and careers of those who leave an indelible mark on Ontario’s child development and rehabilitation sector. The past 18 months have revealed the resilience, resourcefulness and tenacity of Ontario’s child development and rehabilitation sector, and this year EKO’s Tribute Awards returned to recognize, celebrate and encourage the vital work of those in Ontario’s child development and rehabilitation sector.

### 3 Tribute Award recipients 3 categories



**Tribute Award for Advocacy:  
Lucy Goldberg**



**Tribute Award of Excellence:  
Anne Huot**



**Tribute Award for Leadership:  
Sherri Smith**

# Financial Performance

Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets

Year ended March 31

	2021	2020
<b>Restricted Contributions</b>		
Children's Rehab. Information Systems Project	680,907	588,598
Project Private Delivery	302,948	755,234
Capacity Building and Research	50,000	–
IDRS Project	–	28,211
	<b>1,033,855</b>	<b>1,372,043</b>
<b>Restricted Expenses</b>		
Children's Rehab. Information Systems Project	680,907	588,598
Project Private Delivery	302,948	755,234
Capacity Building and Research	50,000	–
IDRS Project	–	28,211
	<b>1,033,855</b>	<b>1,372,043</b>
<b>Excess restricted revenue over restricted expenses</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Unrestricted Revenue</b>		
Membership Fees	720,590	574,596
EKO annual conference	7,575	707
Interest Income	5,436	22,346
Donations	5,024	810
Other revenue	–	13,095
	<b>738,625</b>	<b>611,554</b>
<b>Unrestricted Expenses</b>		
Salaries and benefits	461,224	262,894
Professional Fees	60,005	82,131
Special projects	43,182	–
Office	27,393	30,038
Marketing and Communications	27,095	25,250
Board	21,200	20,524
Professional Development	17,868	14,246
Rent	11,433	11,397
Committees	10,908	11,031
Scholarship Awards	10,311	6,136
Travel	896	19,224
Amortization	158	227
EKO annual conference	(1,292)	26,935
	<b>690,381</b>	<b>510,105</b>
<b>(Deficiency) excess of unrestricted revenue over unrestricted expenses</b>	<b>48,244</b>	<b>101,449</b>
<b>Operating fund balance, beginning of year</b>	<b>698,175</b>	<b>596,726</b>
<b>Operating fund balance, end of year</b>	<b>746,419</b>	<b>698,175</b>



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