

In every moment, you are there

HOW YOUR SUPPORT IS HELPING SURVIVORS
ON THE JOURNEY FROM FEAR TO STABILITY



Birchway

N I A G A R A

2025 | 2026
GRATITUDE REPORT

You are creating hope

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

We will be a shoulder to lean on, a voice to advocate for, a space to feel safe in, an ally to trust, a guide to navigate, and a counsellor to heal for everyone affected by all forms of abuse.



Your generosity and advocacy throughout 2025–26 have strengthened Birchway Niagara's ability to walk alongside survivors of abuse on their journey from fear to stability. You have not only supported existing shelter and outreach programs. You have also made it possible for Birchway Niagara to start making plans to move forward with a critical expansion later this year, a project that will remove barriers many women face when trying to access shelter services.

The past year also saw the strengthening of the partnerships that make the work of supporting and empowering survivors possible. Birchway Niagara was deeply honoured to be recognized by one of these partners, Bridges Niagara Immigrant and Refugee Services. Being chosen as their Impact Employer of the Year reflected the importance of communities working together to create a future where everyone can live free from abuse and violence.

Every time you raise your voice, advocate for change, provide support or partner with Birchway Niagara, you are helping shape the future of services for survivors across our communities.

Thank you for being there in every moment.

Jennifer Gauthier
Executive Director

Advocates and MPPs from across Ontario gather at Queen's Park to launch the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence.



You are providing safety

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thank you to our 2025 - 2026 Board of Directors

Jennifer Kodis (President)
Chelsey Lapointe
(Vice-President)
Edwin Leung (Treasurer)
Belinda Anderson
(Secretary)
Anas Abidrabbu
Devon Cooper
John Darch
Eric Dolansky
Chris Lindley
Narissa Sawh
Saroj Vasant
Marlene VanderSpek

Last year, as part of the 15 Beds Campaign, allies like you were asked to help keep 15 community-funded safe beds open alongside the 30 supported through government funding. Thank you for rising to the challenge.

Your gifts, volunteerism, advocacy, community events and other acts of support are making it possible to keep these additional shelter beds open. Because of you, more women and children across South Niagara have access to safety and support.

My favourite memory of the 15 Beds Campaign is the hundreds of paper beds that lined the rink at the Gale Centre during the Birchway Book Riot in June. Together, they created a powerful visual reminder of how our community comes together to protect and empower survivors.

Thank you for being there for everyone who turns to Birchway Niagara, and for standing behind the talented staff who compassionately guide survivors during every moment of their journey from fear to stability.

With gratitude,



Jennifer Kodis
President, Board of Directors



We exist to
protect and
empower.

You are building for the future

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Below (top to bottom): Artist's rendering of future staff/volunteer entrance; The recently completed playground; Pet-friendly rooms will remove a critical barrier to service.



As of spring 2026, Birchway Niagara's allies have donated or committed \$4,469,285 toward the Creating Safe Spaces capital project. This project will help to enhance client privacy with a new entrance, create pet-friendly rooms so families do not have to choose between safety and their beloved animals, add welcoming spaces where families can connect with loved ones while in shelter, and provide other critical upgrades.

With phase one of this project complete, which includes an exciting new playground and backyard updates, we look forward to our allies' continued support in raising the remaining \$1,030,715 with a goal of breaking ground on expanding the shelter in late 2026.

If you or your organization are interested in supporting this project, reach out to Amanda Braet at 905-356-3933 ext. 241 or visit birchway.ca to learn more.

Thank you to our capital donors

Jana & Michael Katz, The Branscombe Family Foundation, Niagara Community Foundation – David S. Howes Fund, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Wise Guys Charity Fund, Hope Presbyterian Church, Purple Leash Project, Carlie Smith & anonymous donors.



of calls/texts to the Birchway Niagara support line are from women who say they have a pet.

You are breaking the cycle

PUBLIC EDUCATION

With your support, Birchway Niagara's Prevention and Public Education program continues to raise awareness about healthy relationships, communication, respect and violence prevention.

A growing focus of this work is engaging men and boys. In partnership with Interval House of Hamilton, Birchway Niagara continues to facilitate the Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM) and Coaching Leadership, Equity, & Respect (CLEAR) programs, supporting local coaches and teachers in promoting positive mental health, leadership and respect both on and off the field.

This year, the Niagara Spears Football organization and teachers leading Stamford Collegiate's "The Forge" became active participants in these programs. As part of these initiatives, the Niagara River Lions have partnered as ambassadors, connecting directly with students to show that violence never equals strength.

Below (top to bottom): Teachers from Stamford Collegiate's "The Forge"; Birchway Niagara at Niagara Falls Community Health Centre information fair; Coaches from Niagara Spears Football attend a Coaching Boys into Men training session.



2025-2026 PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM IN NUMBERS

1,641

people attended a public education presentation hosted by Birchway Niagara.

1,599

people interacted with a staff member or volunteer at an information fair.

You are surrounding survivors with care

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Navigating the System: A Gender - Based Violence Perspective 2025

Final Report for the CEVAW Referral Pathways Mapping Project

Birchway Niagara's ability to support survivors extends far beyond the walls of our shelter. Thanks to a network of community partners across Niagara, women and families are able to access care, resources and connections that help them move toward safety and stability.

This year, Birchway Niagara continued to work alongside the Coalition to End Violence Against Women (CEVAW) and Community Potential in the development and launch of *Navigating the System: A Gender-Based Violence Perspective*. This referral pathways mapping project helps strengthen coordination between organizations and improve survivors' ability to access support when they need it most.

Birchway Niagara has also continued its ongoing commitment to supporting the development and implementation of the Niagara Region's *Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy*. Working alongside other organizations, leaders and residents from across the Region, we are honoured to help create collaborative solutions to address poverty, which disproportionately affects survivors of abuse.

At our shelter, REACH Niagara regularly visits clients to help address medical and mental health needs, bringing critical care directly to women and children during difficult moments in their lives.



COMMUNITY POTENTIAL



Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy

REACH Niagara

You are strengthening partnerships

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Birchway Niagara is also proud to be partnering with the YWCA Niagara Region and the Niagara Regional Native Centre as part of a new 39-bed transitional shelter being developed by the YWCA at Falls Manor.

Together, we are collaborating on the co-design and delivery of domestic violence services to support residents as they work toward long-term stability and independence.

This project represents an important step forward in strengthening the network of care for women and families in Niagara, and we are grateful to be part of this important project.

Thank you to our community partners:

- Bridges Community Health Centre
- Bridges Niagara Immigrant and Refugee Services
- CASON
- Family and Children's Services Niagara
- Fort Erie Public Library
- The Hope Centre
- Legal Aid
- Luke's Place
- March of Dimes
- Niagara Falls Public Library
- Niagara Regional Housing
- Niagara Regional Police
- Port Cares
- Public Health
- Victim Services Niagara
- Victim/Witness Assistance Program

Below: Members of the community gathered in April to celebrate the YWCA's announcement of the Falls Manor project.



You are investing in lasting change

STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2026

REVENUE	2026	2025	EXPENSES	2026	2025
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services – Annualized Funding	1,641,112	1,608,313	Emergency Shelter	2,195,135	2,034,203
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services – Other Funding	208,835	92,515	Legal & Housing Support Services	246,921	229,157
Ministry of Attorney General Funding	113,630	47,680	After Care Support Services	97,553	82,067
CEVAW*	30,119	30,119	Prevention & Public Education	79,972	79,454
Branscombe Family Foundation Grant	64,625	0	Special Projects	102,970	129,750
Donations and Fundraising	1,162,377	964,223	Fundraising	405,720	287,131
Federal Government	0	0	CEVAW*	30,349	30,119
Regional and Municipal Funding	33,350	34,850	Management & Administration	370,094	257,753
United Way of South Niagara	59,500	59,777		3,528,714	3,129,635
Niagara Prosperity Initiative	108,307	82,067			
Niagara Community Foundation	0	52,251			
Prevention & Public Education	74,967	53,140	Excess of Revenue over Expenses	89,194	61,409
Special Projects Funding & Revenue	65,513	27,885			
Miscellaneous Grants	52,171	44,574			
Investment and Miscellaneous Income	3,402	93,650	Allocated to Stabilization Fund	-89,194	-61,409
	3,617,908	3,191,043		0	0

*Birchway Niagara is the transfer payment agency for the Coalition to End Violence Against Women (CEVAW)

You are ensuring every bed stays open

THE 15 BEDS CAMPAIGN

Because of you, Birchway Niagara exceeded its goal of raising the funds needed to keep 15 community-funded shelter beds open for another year. These beds, which operate entirely through community support, would be at risk of closing without your generosity.

Thank you for helping ensure more women and children have a safe place to turn. As we look ahead, we invite you to continue this journey with us, helping keep these beds open so that survivors can find safety, compassion and hope when they need it most.



\$150

one night of safety and support for a woman or child

\$4,500

a month of sleeping without fear

\$55,000

a safe bed funded for an entire year

You are changing lives

HOW YOUR GIFTS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN 2025-26

222

Women
stayed in the shelter



1,246

support
calls were
received

We want a
community
without abuse.

138

Children
stayed in the shelter



You are helping services reach further

PROGRAMS

With your support, Birchway Niagara continues to expand the services available to survivors of abuse across South Niagara. Increased funding and community support are helping ensure that more women and families can access compassionate care, safety planning and ongoing support at every stage of their journey.

This year, funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services made it possible for Birchway Niagara to add a second Family Court Support Worker at our outreach locations across South Niagara. Survivors are receiving guidance and support as they navigate the family court system during some of the most difficult moments in their lives.

The generosity of the Niagara Region through the Niagara Prosperity Initiative has also allowed Birchway Niagara's After-Care Program to continue supporting survivors after they leave shelter. This ongoing connection helps women and families build stability and move toward lives free from abuse.

Because of the generosity of our allies, Birchway Niagara also introduced a Residential Case Supervisor role. By strengthening case planning and service coordination within shelter, this position has helped our residential team support more in-shelter clients than ever before.



clients received transitional & housing support



clients worked with our Family Court Support Workers / Legal Advocate



clients were supported by our Child & Youth Intervention Advocates



women and children participated in our After-Care Program

You are turning community into action

FUNDRAISING EVENTS



BIRCHWAY BOOK RIOT

\$194,843



**ALLIED AGAINST ABUSE
DAILY RAFFLE**

\$65,820



BRUNCH, BID & BOWL

\$165,243

Thank you to our committee members, volunteers, participants, sponsors, donors and community partners for making ALL of this year's Birchway Niagara fundraising events the most successful ones to date. Together, you raised enough to operate nearly eight safe beds for an entire year!



You are rallying community

THIRD-PARTY FUNDRAISERS



Thank you to everyone who hosted, supported or participated in one of the 28 fundraisers hosted by our community allies. Your success raised enough funds to support 3.5 safe beds for an entire year!



THIRD-PARTY
FUNDRAISING TOTAL:

\$193,370



Every event raises critical funds to support survivors of abuse and awareness to help end the cycle of violence in your community.



You are turning your time into impact

VOLUNTEERS

Birchway Niagara's work simply would not be possible without the dedication of over 300 volunteers who donated their time this year.

Whether supporting clients in shelter, serving on committees, gardening, providing administrative support, attending third-party events, sharing expertise as board members, or helping at fundraising events, volunteers strengthen every aspect of Birchway Niagara's work.

This year also marked the addition of a third bingo volunteer team, helping expand critical fundraising efforts through Delta Bingo locations in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and now Welland.

As Birchway Niagara's Volunteer Speaker's Bureau continues to grow through training and experience, volunteers are also taking on an increasing role in community outreach. Their ability to represent Birchway Niagara at events has helped expand both awareness and fundraising support across Niagara.

Thank you for giving your time, compassion and leadership to help survivors and families in our community.



HOURS DONATED BY
VOLUNTEERS

6,500+



You are going above and beyond

INTRODUCING OUR 2026 OUTSTANDING ALLY AWARD WINNERS



OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY PARTNER -THUNDERING WATERS GOLF CLUB

Thundering Waters' support of Birchway Niagara spans more than two decades. Longtime supporters of Brunch, Bid & Bowl as prize donors and participants, the club has continually found creative ways to support survivors of abuse. By partnering with their network of golfers and celebrities, Thundering Waters has helped raise thousands of dollars through hole sponsorships at golf tournaments and celebrity events. They have also supported Birchway Niagara's youngest clients during the holidays by encouraging partners, including hockey great Doug Gilmour, to give back alongside them.



OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER -ANNE BULSTRODE

Anne started donating her time through a third-party event that supported our agency long before she officially became a Birchway Niagara volunteer. Since then, she has gone above and beyond, supporting our Speaker's Bureau in a leadership role, serving on the Brunch, Bid & Bowl and Allied Against Abuse Daily Raffle committees, picking up donations, and lending a hand wherever help is needed. She is a strong public speaker, a thoughtful leader, and always willing to engage in conversations that strengthen our agency and its fundraising efforts.



OUTSTANDING STAFF MEMBER -IVY GWENA

In 2026, Ivy will mark 20 years of service with Birchway Niagara. Throughout these years, and currently as our Transitional Housing Support Worker, she has approached her work with deep compassion. She genuinely invests in the people she supports. Her ability to walk alongside clients through both triumphs and challenges reflects the heart of true allyship. She also has an exceptional ability to create teamwork, building strong relationships with staff and the community organizations that support our clients, earning her a strong reputation as a trusted and valued partner.



Want to learn more about your impact?

Visit our website at birchway.ca or reach out to Birchway Niagara's development department to learn more about how your gifts are changing lives. You can also explore other ways to support survivors such as legacy or monthly giving. Thank you for being an ally against abuse.



Amanda Braet, CFRE
Director of Development
& Stewardship



905-356-3933 ext. 240



amandab@birchway.ca



Teagan Foord, CFRE
Fundraising &
Events Manager



905-356-3933 ext. 241



teaganf@birchway.ca

8903 McLeod Rd, Niagara Falls ON L2H 3S6

Charitable Registration #131135717RR0001

Allied against abuse.

@birchwayniagara
birchway.ca