Strategic plan 2021 - 2023
We stand at the dawn of a brighter future. A Canada where all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and two-spirit youth (LGBTQI2S) youth are validated, engaged, and empowered to lead better lives. A reality that will be fast tracked by our strategic plan and by the unique combination of integrated and tailored services in mental health, social support, and housing that we do at Friends of Ruby.

An independent registered charity since November 2019, Friends of Ruby has been supporting LGBTQI2S youth since 2014, when it was founded by Egale Canada, to whom we are grateful for paving the way.

Our impactful counselling modalities, therapeutical groups, social activities, and practical supports address multiple aspects of a youth’s life, from health and education to employment, with an integrated transitional housing model to support youth towards independent living. And our safer, welcoming spaces have been designed to help build community, emotional well-being, and confidence.

Every service and program we offer is informed by LGBTQI2S youth, grounded in evidence, supported by research. Equally as important, they’re led and facilitated by highly-skilled LGBTQI2S individuals who reflect the diversity of the youth we serve. Here, nobody is an outsider.

**BY THE END OF 2023, WITH THIS STRATEGIC PLAN, WE WILL HAVE:**

+ Strengthened organizational capacity
+ Diversified and strengthened our mix of programs and services
+ Continuously improved our model for mental health, social and housing services.
+ A strong sustainable funding stream for the organization.

We invite you to join us in the path towards our vision of better lives to LGBTQI2S youth.

Carol Osler, she/her    Ed Clark, he/him
Executive Director    Board Chair
On behalf of the Board of Directors
Our guiding principles and assumptions

Discussions about the youth we support, our mandate, strengths and weaknesses complemented with research on the sector landscape, and the impact of current events led us to these guiding principles and assumptions:

**LGBTQI2S YOUTH FACE UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND HAVE UNIQUE NEEDS**

LGBTQI2S youth face disproportionately high rates of family rejection, violence, homelessness, suicidality, and trauma – especially for those who also belong to other vulnerable communities such as Black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrants, and refugees. Therefore, our mandate and strategic decision focus on a tailored approach that considers intersectionality.

**LGBTQI2S YOUTH WELL-BEING INCREASES WHEN SERVICES ARE INTEGRATED**

Currently, there is a gap in the sector for integrated mental health, social and housing services for LGBTQI2S youth. Friends of Ruby is unique in its comprehensive and progressive understanding of well-being.

**NEED AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICES IN MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING TO LGBTQI2S YOUTH WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE**

Rapid health and social changes worldwide have created an unprecedented demand for a broad range of mental health, social and housing services for LGBTQI2S youth. Friends of Ruby sees this an opportunity to innovate, adapt and grow programs and services to address unique and changing demands.

**THE NEED FOR SUPPORT IS GREATER THAN TORONTO**

We’ve seen increased interest outside the GTA, from youth wanting to access our services and organizations eager to understand our model. We see this as an opportunity for sector leadership, additional community partnerships, and expansion of our services and programs.
Our vision
A Canada where all LGBTQI2S youth are validated, engaged, and empowered to lead better lives.

Our mission
Friends of Ruby is dedicated to the journey and well-being of LGBTQI2S youth through mental health services, social services, and housing.

Our values

People-focus
We value the dignity, strengths, and contributions of all individuals.

Respect
We are validating, respectful and welcoming, and exercise diversity, inclusion and equity through our interactions and practices.

Accountability & transparency
We strive to build and sustain trust with our partners, operate with integrity and sustainability with the highest possible ethical standards.

Continuous learning
We promote a culture of adaptability, embrace change and opportunity, encourage and motivate development, and always seek to improve.

Collaboration
We work together and foster strong and trusting relationships with our community partners, youth, staff, contractors, and volunteers.
5 Steps To Improve The Well-Being Of LGBTQI2S Youth

The problem

LGBTQI2S youth are more likely to be rejected by their families, homeless, and victims of violence, suicide and trauma because of — and sustained by — systemic barriers that affect their journey and well-being.

Our impact

Through Friends of Ruby, LGBTQI2S youth will be able to access mental health, social and housing programs and services that are tailored to their needs at any moment in time, improving their overall well-being.

How we get there

WE BELIEVE THAT BY:

1. **Building** on the experience of LGBTQI2S youth and staff...

2. **Focusing** on the youth and their journey towards well-being...

3. **Creating** welcoming and safer spaces...

4. **Providing** comprehensive services & programs in mental health, social services, & housing...

5. And **working** in collaboration with community partners...

WE CAN:

Improve the journey and well-being of LGBTQI2S youth in Canada, and ultimately help create a Canada where all LGBTQI2S youth are validated, engaged, and empowered to lead better lives.
The twin pillars of our philosophy

Well-being


IT IDENTIFIES SEVEN AREAS AS KEY TO YOUTH WELL-BEING:

+ Health and wellness
+ Strong, supportive friends and families
+ Education, training and apprenticeships
+ Employment and entrepreneurship
+ Diversity, social inclusion and safety
+ Civic engagement and youth leadership
+ Coordinated and youth-friendly communities

We use these buckets to guide the development of programs and services that are also tailored to meet the specific needs of LGBTQI2S youth.

Journey

The road to well-being is a journey that evolves over time. That’s why our services and programs meet LGBTQI2S youth where they are to help them along their journey. That means prioritizing basic needs like housing, food, safety, physical health, and mental health, before moving to other practical or social needs. As results are achieved and a youth’s needs shift, we help them build on that progress by moving on to new areas of focus.

WE ALSO FAVOUR APPROACHES ALIGNED WITH JOURNEY AND WELL-BEING. AS A RESULT, OUR SERVICES AND PROGRAMS ARE:

+ Youth-focused
+ Trauma-informed
+ Anti-oppressive
+ Anti-racist
+ Harm reduction
+ Sex-positive
+ Strength-based
Strategic priorities

Closely aligned with the expression of our organizational values, our strategic priorities are a roadmap for accomplishing our goal of improving the well-being of LGBTQI2S youth. Over the next three years, we will focus on strengthening and structuring the organization for growth.

**Strengthen organizational capacity**

+ Incorporate anti-racism and anti-oppression (ARAO) best practices through our culture and service delivery.
+ Modernize our HR processes to support adaptability, resilience, agile outcomes, and performance management.
+ Expand the diversity and intersectionality in our hiring and retention practices.
+ Clarify organizational policy and governance, strengthening processes and engagement routines.
+ Build a financial reporting and risk compliance framework.
+ Explore how to incorporate technology for business enhancement and service delivery.

**Offer a comprehensive mix of programs and services**

+ Diversify and strengthen our well-being offering, with a focus on three key areas: health & wellness; education & employment; and diversity, social inclusion & safety.
+ Diversify and strengthen our housing offering, with a focus on three key areas: advocacy, second-tier housing and partnership.
+ Address the needs of specific communities and intersecting identities, such as black & queer or trans and newcomer.
+ Increase capacity for consultation and need assessments with diverse populations.
+ Expand our reach, including new alternatives for housing navigation services focused on moving homeless youth towards independent living.
+ Partner with other stakeholders to build community and strengthen support for LGBTQI2S youth wellbeing.
Strategic priorities continued

Promote innovation and service excellence

+ Continuously improve our evidence-based model for mental health, social, and housing services for LGBTQI2S youth.
+ Advance a strong evaluation and impact measurement framework for the organization.
+ Build quality assurance processes that facilitate continuous improvement.
+ Explore new partnerships, collaborations, shared services models, and merger opportunities.
+ Expand our team’s capacity to provide ARAO thought leadership at all levels and implement ongoing evaluation of our ARAO initiatives.
+ Articulate and promote our identity, leadership capacity, and internal knowledge.
+ Amplify youth narratives and data to facilitate systemic change through education and public awareness.

Ensure a strong, sustainable organization

+ Increase sustainable base-funding, allowing for rapid growth and enhancement of our financial reserve funds.
+ Strengthen engagement and stewardship with key funders to increase opportunities for multi-year.
+ Enrich transparency and communication, leveraging social media strategies to increasingly reach community and funding partners.
+ Increase awareness of our programs and services with youth, supporters, and donors.