

Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Ontario Student Nutrition Program (OSNP)

“This program helps students every day. They can focus on learning instead of being hungry and unfocused during the day.” - Student Nutrition Program Coordinator, Grey-Bruce



2024/25 IMPACT AT A GLANCE

VON's Ontario Student Nutrition Program (OSNP) aims to make sure that no child learns on an empty stomach. Along with our community partners, donors and volunteers, we work to ensure that every student has access to nourishing food at school, without stigma or barriers. Student Nutrition Programs are not just about food, they're about care, community and connection. It's a snack or meal a student can count on, a positive start to the day, a chance to come together and celebrate culture and tradition, or comfort to a child navigating change.

Access the full 2024/25 Impact Report at: <https://osnp.ca/about/impact/>

BUILDING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS & ENHANCING STUDENT WELL-BEING

OSNP is proud to contribute to Ontario's broader effort to support student success. By promoting safe, inclusive spaces and using food as a tool for connection, Student Nutrition Programs contribute to improved student health, engagement, and readiness to learn.

STRENGTHENING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES THROUGH CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE FOODS

In 2024-25, OSNP continued to advance equity by integrating culturally diverse, inclusive foods in student nutrition programs. This approach helped foster belonging, celebrate identity, and strengthen the connection between students and their school communities.

CONTINUED COLLABORATION WITH ST. CLAIR COLLEGE

In partnership with St. Clair College in Windsor and supported by an NSERC grant, OSNP tested the feasibility of a school-wide lunch program with integrated food literacy. ECE students helped deliver food literacy lessons, connecting learning with nutrition in a hands-on, meaningful way.

EXPANSION OF THE SCHOOL FOOD DELIVERY PROGRAM

Building on a pilot project in Lambton County, OSNP expanded its school food delivery service to reach more students in rural and underserved communities. This model helps streamline access to fresh, nutritious, affordable food for schools.

PRIORITIZING CANADIAN AND LOCAL ECONOMIES

OSNP continues to invest in Canadian agriculture and trusted local suppliers, ensuring at least 20 per cent of products are sourced from Ontario. This commitment strengthens local food systems while maintaining high quality standards for student snacks and meals.



2024/25 IMPACT REPORT

Victorian Order of Nurses
Ontario Student Nutrition Program



Foreword

Today in Canada, nearly one in four children experience food insecurity. Too many students start their day at school without the nourishment they need to learn, grow and thrive. Food insecurity continues to affect families in every community, and the impact on children is profound, from difficulty concentrating in class to the effects on physical and mental well-being.

There are a number of reasons children may be hungry at school that extend beyond affordability and income inequality; lack of time or getting ready on their own in the morning, long bus rides to school, early morning extracurricular activities, lack of appetite upon rising, or they're growing and just hungry again.

VON's Ontario Student Nutrition Program (OSNP) aims to make sure that no child learns on an empty stomach. Each day, we work to ensure that every student has access to nourishing food at school, without stigma or barriers.

Student Nutrition Programs are not just about food, they're about care, community and connection. It's a snack or meal they can count on, a positive start to the day, a chance to come together and celebrate culture and tradition, or comfort to a child navigating change.

This important work is only possible because of the incredible commitment of our donors, volunteers, school staff and community partners. They are the heart of this program. Their time, generosity and belief in the power of nutrition to fuel learning are what drive our success.

Thanks to our amazing network of supporters and our dedicated team, thousands of children across Southwestern Ontario are ready to learn, connect and grow into their full potential.

Ontario Student Nutrition Program (OSNP) Southwest Region

MISSION

To work with youth, educators, and community to provide universal school food access and promote a school food culture that enhances student wellbeing and success.

VISION

For all students to have access to nourishing food, providing the fuel they need to succeed at school and beyond.



LEAD AGENCY
VICTORIAN ORDER
OF NURSES

- Administers funding to schools for programs
- Delivers fresh and affordable food to programs via the School Food Delivery Program
- Invests in evidence-based research on health and academic outcomes associated with programs
- Provides ongoing support for programs and assist with the start up of new programs



STUDENT NUTRITION ONTARIO

- Supports lead agencies build communities across their networks
- Streamlines the distribution of funding and resources to all parties delivering Student Nutrition Programs on behalf of national and provincial partnerships



MINISTRY OF CHILDREN,
COMMUNITY & SOCIAL
SERVICES

- Distributes funding to lead agencies
- Establishes provincial policy standards and guidelines
- Helps build the capacity of lead agencies to support effective program delivery

OSNP's Southwest Region

2024/25 SCHOOL YEAR TOTALS

21,207,672+

Meals/Snacks served in 2024/25

122,937+

Students

465

Programs

GREY-BRUCE

61 Schools

18,086+ Students

3,255,480+ Snacks/meals served

HURON-PERTH

62 Schools

11,176+ Students

1,927,152+ Snacks/meals served

LONDON-MIDDLESEX

91 Schools

23,527+ Students

4,180,032+ Snacks/meals served

OXFORD

39 Schools

13,908+ Students

2,259,432+ Snacks/meals served

SARNIA-LAMBTON

48 Schools

10,108+ Students

1,753,488+ Snacks/meals served

ELGIN

29 Schools

7,634+ Students

1,373,472+ Snacks/meals served

CHATHAM-KENT

41 Schools

10,440+ Students

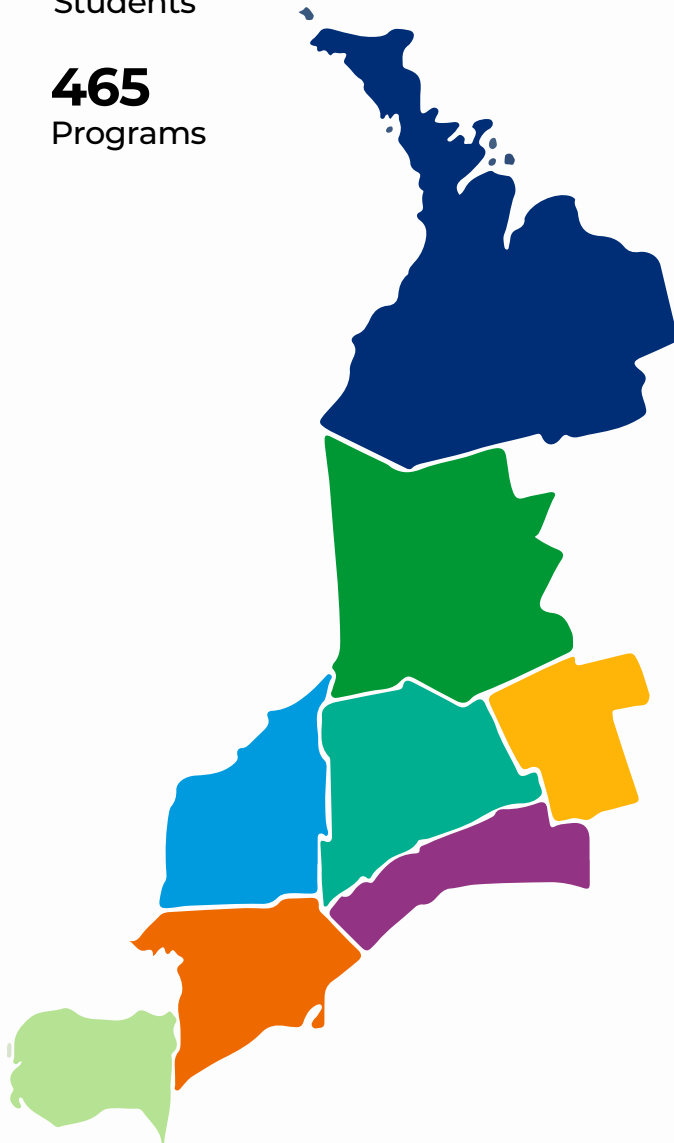
1,870,560+ Snacks/meals served

WINDSOR-ESSEX

95 Schools

28,058+ Students

4,588,056+ Snacks/meals served



Donor Spotlight



SOLCZ FAMILY FOUNDATION

SOLCZ FAMILY FOUNDATION – FUELING STUDENT SUCCESS

OSNP is grateful to the Solcz Family Foundation for their remarkable contribution of \$130,000 to support student nutrition programs across Windsor-Essex. Their generous donation directly supported the expansion of the Ontario Student Nutrition Program's (OSNP) emergency delivery model, a critical initiative at a time when demand for food programs continues to grow due to inflation and increased family budget pressures.

Thanks to their support, OSNP was able to deliver two additional food groups (whole grain and protein) to participating students once per month throughout the 2024-25 school year. These deliveries amounted to over 125,000 emergency units, helping to ensure that students received the nourishment they need to thrive at school.

The Solcz Family Foundations' investment helped strengthen a model that focuses on bulk purchasing and negotiated wholesale pricing, making it possible to provide nutritious, fresh food to students in 43 schools in Windsor-Essex identified with a priority need. Their contribution enabled OSNP to scale a proven system that emphasizes safe procurement, reliable transportation, and sustainable food delivery all while supporting local relationships and improving food access for thousands of students.



By helping bridge the gap between program funding and actual food costs, the Solcz Family Foundation has played an essential role in removing the barrier of hunger at school.

We applaud the Solcz Family Foundation for investing in the health, well-being and success of students across Windsor-Essex.

“One of the most significant benefits we have observed is that fully bellies help students give their full effort. The enhancements provided by the Solcz Family Foundation have ensured that our students have access to nutritious choices, which greatly impacts their concentration, energy levels, engagement and overall academic performance. When students are well-nourished, they are more engaged in their studies and able to participate actively in classroom activities.”

– Principal, Windsor-Essex

Donor Spotlight



STEELWAY BUILDING SYSTEMS

At the heart of every strong community is a shared commitment to supporting its most vulnerable populations. In Elgin County, Steelway Building Systems demonstrated that commitment this year by stepping up in a significant way to support VON's OSNP.

Through their generous contribution, Steelway helped ensure that children in local schools had access to nutritious snacks and meals during the school day – a foundational step in supporting students' health, focus, and overall well-being. Their support played a critical role in offsetting rising food costs and helping schools meet growing demand as more families experience food insecurity due to inflation and economic pressures.

In addition to the company's contribution, Steelway employees also selflessly contribute as donors. Together, they have provided financial assistance, volunteered to serve breakfast and assisted OSNP with

other fundraising campaigns. Steelway's investment has allowed OSNP to continue providing fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein items to students across Elgin County. Delivering more than just food, this additional nourishment helped ensure students were ready to participate and learn. For some, it meant not having to worry about trying to concentrate on an empty stomach.

Thanks to community minded donors like Steelway, we can continue to remove barriers and give every student the opportunity to succeed.

Steelway Building Systems has long been a champion for strong foundations, in both the buildings they design and the communities they support. We are proud to spotlight their generosity and thank them for helping us build a healthier, brighter future for children in Elgin County.



Strengthening school communities through culturally responsive foods

Food is a powerful tool for connection. It brings people together, preserves tradition and enhances celebrations and life's milestones. During the 2024-2025 school year, OSNP expanded its efforts to ensure that meals and snacks served in schools reflect the diverse cultures, communities and lived experiences of students. What started as a pilot project in the London community along with 'Growing Chefs! Ontario' has led to the integration of more culturally responsive menu items across the Southwest Region.

From Moroccan stew to plantain crisps, feta, pita and more, schools are beginning to incorporate culturally relevant food into student nutrition programs as a reflection of their school community. These initiatives were guided by feedback from students, families, educators, food leaders and cultural experts.

Beyond cultural representation, OSNP's approach to equity focuses on removing barriers that prevent students from accessing nutritious food with dignity. This includes:

- *Universal access:* Programs are open to all students, reducing stigma and reinforcing that students are hungry for many reasons and everyone is welcome.
- *Creating opportunities for connection:* Culturally responsive food items are often provided in tandem with cultural

"Through our cultural food initiatives and unwavering commitment to inclusion, OSNP is making sure every student feels nourished, body, mind and spirit. Our students really enjoyed the multicultural options provided this year. Some students who don't usually eat much came back every day to have the snacks they recognized from their culture!"
– Program Coordinator, Windsor

celebrations. When students see their own cultural foods reflected in school meals, it fosters a sense of pride, belonging and inclusion. At the same time, it invites others to experience and appreciate different traditions through shared meals, encouraging curiosity and dialogue.

- *Authentic design:* Across the region, OSNP has partnered with newcomer service providers and cultural groups to inform our work.
- *Student voice:* Encouraging student leaders to help shape menus and plan program related activities that reflect the unique makeup of their school communities.

By creating Student Nutrition Programs that are not only nourishing but culturally meaningful, OSNP is contributing to school environments where students feel safe, respected and connected – which research shows leads to better focus, engagement and mental wellbeing.

Building supportive environments & enhancing student well being

OSNP's impact goes far beyond hunger relief. By removing barriers to food access and ensuring all students are included, regardless of background or circumstance, the program is providing meaningful contributions to the Ministry of Education's goals of promoting equity, mental health, and overall student well-being. OSNP is helping create safe, inclusive, and supportive school environments.

- *Positive learning environments:* When students are well-fed, they are better able to focus, self-regulate and participate in learning. Evidence shows that programs contribute positively to classroom behavior, mood and engagement. Student Nutrition Programs become a building block of a more focused and caring classroom culture.
- *Mental health and social-emotional well-being:* Food Insecurity is a growing concern, with many families experiencing rising grocery costs and financial strain. By ensuring students do not go hungry, and by offering food to all students without judgment, schools are helping to reduce stress and stigma. Nutrition programs also create opportunities for social connection and belonging, especially when meals and snacks are shared in a communal setting.

OSNP is proud to be a partner in Ontario's broader effort to support student success. As schools continue to emphasize the importance of wellness and supportive school culture, nutrition programs remain a foundational piece of that puzzle – nourishing bodies, minds and the entire learning environment.



“It not only provides students with the nourishment they need to fuel their learning but also fosters a sense of belonging and care. By ensuring every child has access to healthy food, we are building stronger minds and a brighter future.”

– Teacher, London

“Our volunteer team has witnessed increased engagement in the staff and students re: positive culture surrounding nutrition & healthy eating habits. It has also allowed us to form relationships within the community that help to bridge gaps in nutrition & food security on a greater scale.”

– School Administrator, Oxford County

Feeding futures: OSNP and St. Clair College collaborate to strengthen student nutrition programs

During the 2024-2025 school year, OSNP continued its partnership with St. Clair College's Research and Innovation department on a project funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC).

The continuation of the pilot project evaluated the feasibility of a school-wide lunch program that delivers healthy, vendor-prepared meals twice each week to roughly 300 students. The meals were paired with bi-weekly food literacy lessons that teach children how nutrition fuels learning, growth, and their overall well-being.

"A child's relationship to food is more than nourishment – it's an unfolding story of connection, culture, and care," said Dr. Karamjeet K. Dhillon, the Director of Research and Innovation at St. Clair College. "When we attune ourselves to children's voices about food, we begin to understand how their embodied experiences – sourcing ingredients, learning about biodiversity, and engaging in daily food rituals – shape their sense of self and community."

"The NSERC CCSIF Grant School Nutrition Project enables us to assess the feasibility of implementing a comprehensive school-wide lunch program in our local schools," said David Potocek, a Project Research Manager in the Research and Innovation department. "As the needs of our students continue to evolve, it is more important than ever to ensure they have



May 1, 2025. (Rich Garton/St. Clair College)

consistent access to nutritious meals, providing the fuel they need to learn, grow, and thrive."

Students also gave the program rave reviews:

"I like the food program because everybody can get food and there's so many different foods. And there's vegetables in them too, so you can eat healthy still," said one student.

"You can enjoy your meals without having to worry about food," said another student. "The meals helped me focus more because when I'm hungry, I focus more on my stomach and not the learning," another student said.

The project also featured involvement by a St. Clair College Early Childhood Education (ECE) student, who visited the school weekly to deliver the nutrition-based curriculum which complemented the fresh food.

OSNP and St Clair College gleaned important insights into logistics and impacts through this intervention, which will help inform future student nutrition programming.



School Food Delivery Program expands in Lambton County pilot project

This past year, OSNP launched an innovative pilot project in Lambton County aimed at improving the way schools access and manage food for student nutrition programs. The goal was to make it easier to provide nutritious food, reduce administrative and volunteer burden and increase access to fresh, local products.

All participating schools in Lambton County were placed on the School Food Delivery Program, replacing the traditional model where volunteers or staff are required to shop for food and submit regular reporting. With scheduled deliveries of fresh and nourishing food, schools could focus more on feeding students and less on logistics.

By shifting to the coordinated delivery model, the pilot significantly reduced the time and effort required of the school volunteers or staff. This helped address ongoing challenges in volunteer recruitment and burnout – particularly important in rural and under-resourced areas. Volunteers were able to spend their time where it matters most, preparing and serving food and connecting with students.

Standardized deliveries and consistent food quality can also allow for better planning, reduced over-purchasing and less food waste. OSNP was able to gather more consistent data to support future improvements in programming and supply chains.

Initial feedback from schools has been overwhelmingly positive. The pilot's success is being reviewed to inform future planning across the Southwest Region.

"The vendor and our co-ordinators do an excellent job. The processes are extremely efficient. The food delivery program makes my job as Principal and leading the nutrition program very easy to manage."

– Principal, Lambton

"At [our school], the OSNP has made a real difference in small but powerful ways. Every morning students from all backgrounds start their days with healthy snacks that help them focus, learn, and feel cared of. One student once said, "The snacks help me think better in class". It's a small moment but it shows how important this program is. We've seen shy children become more engaged, and friendships grow over shared meals. We're so grateful to the donors whose kindness fills not just stomachs but hearts. In our small school, this kindness reaches every corner."

– Student Nutrition Program Coordinator, Lambton

Prioritizing Canadian & Local Economies

OSNP is proud to support the Canadian economy by sourcing food from a network of trusted Canadian suppliers. By prioritizing relationships with local and national producers, distributors and growers, the program helps sustain Canadian agriculture and food businesses while ensuring students receive high-quality items. These partnerships not only contribute to regional economic stability but also strengthen the local food system and foster community connections. Through these efforts, Student Nutrition Programs demonstrate a strong commitment to investing in Canada's food industry and creating a lasting, positive impact.

OSNP supports students, Canadian farmers and suppliers with a 20% local benchmark

OSNP continues to lead the way in building stronger, healthier, communities. Over the last year, OSNP proudly upheld and often exceeded its 20 percent local procurement benchmark, ensuring that at least one-fifth of all produce purchased for school nutrition programs was grown right here in Ontario.

This commitment isn't just about geography, it's about impact. Choosing Ontario grown produce means fresher, more nutrient – dense fruits and vegetables for students, fewer miles traveled and greater support for the local economy. The closer food is grown to home, the less time it spends in transport and storage, preserving both flavour and vital nutrients.



VON Directors celebrating local food with the National Great Big Crunch

For students, this freshness directly translates into better fuel for learning and development.

From an environmental standpoint, buying local helps reduce the carbon footprint associated with long distance food transport and minimizes the need for excessive packaging or refrigeration. It also supports more resilient food systems by strengthening the connection between local farmers and schools and keeps dollars circulating within Ontario communities.

OSNP's local procurement benchmark aligns directly with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' 'Grow Ontario' Strategy¹, which calls for increasing the consumption of Ontario-produced food and strengthening agri-food supply chains across the province. By embedding this target into program delivery, OSNP is not only nourishing students but also contributing to a broader provincial vision for a more sustainable and food secure Ontario.

Together with farmers, partners and donors, OSNP is helping students succeed while supporting the long-term vitality of Ontario's agricultural sector. Every produce item sourced locally is a small step towards a larger impact, for students families and the future of food programming.

¹<https://www.ontario.ca/page/grow-ontario-provincial-agri-food-strategy>



Harvest of the Month: Partnering with local growers

OSNP's Harvest of the Month series helps to increase the amount of Ontario grown produce that is brought into Student Nutrition Programs. By showcasing local farms and farmers, we hope to shine a spotlight on the bounty of nutritious goods grown by our neighbours and allow students to feel more connected to the food that they eat. When we support local we:

- Fuel our bodies with nutrition;
- Build our communities;
- Reduce greenhouse gases; and
- Put food on our own tables, and also support our local farmers!

We are so fortunate to live in a region that has such an abundance of farm fresh food. In October, OSNP sourced Fuji apples from Sunrise Orchards. Sunrise Orchards is a 200-acre farm located in Arkona, Ontario. Sunrise has been family owned and operated by the Veen Family for close to 60 years.

Located east of London between Dorchester and Thorndale, Derewlany Mini Carrots Ltd is run by Darrin, his wife Marion, and their young son. The Farm has been in his family for four generations. Schools received baby carrots in November.

Testimonial: "Local food is important in so many ways; it is important to know where your food comes from and appreciate the impact that local food has in our own areas. Local food is sustainable and is beneficial to our economy, our health, and our environment." - Darrin Derewlany

Great Lakes Greenhouse (GLG) has been family-owned and operated for over 40 years. Founded in 1983 and located in Leamington, ON, they began with just 2.5 acres of greenhouse space. Over the next 30 years, founder Paul Dyck expanded the operation to an impressive 118 acres. With a focus on innovation, sustainability, and quality, GLG continues to lead the way in greenhouse agriculture. In December OSNP procured cucumbers from Great Lakes.

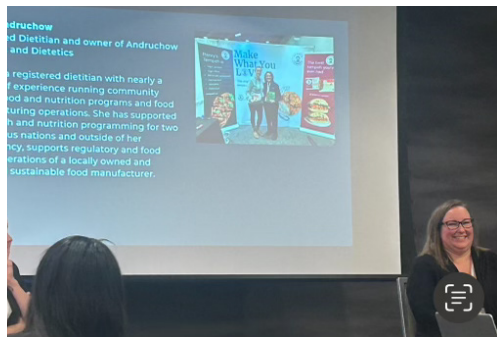
Nature Fresh Farms® is a pioneer in greenhouse-grown produce, committed to nourishing people and the planet through innovation and sustainability. Based in Leamington, Ontario, with facilities across North America, they are not just growers; they are innovators. They build their own greenhouses, meticulously grow their produce and, market produce of their partner growers to deliver fresh, flavourful and high-quality products. In February, Nature Fresh supplied OSNP with English cucumbers

OSNP is a proud supporter of Ontario growers, we look forward to expanding on our Harvest of the Month initiative during the next school year.

"We live in a very agriculturally based community so it is great to be able to teach the students about local connections"

- Principal, Elgin

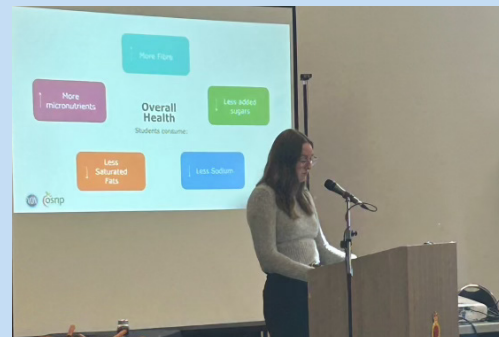
Sharing our expertise



STUDENT NUTRITION ONTARIO VISION CONFERENCE

October 2024

- Presentation: 'Cultivating Equitable, Inclusive & Diverse School Food Programs'
- Panelist: Interactive Panel discussion



GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD SYSTEM VICE-PRINCIPAL MEETING

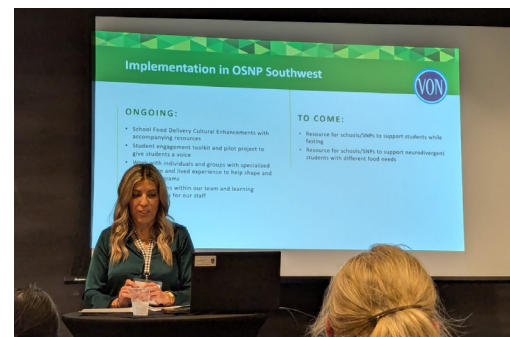
November 2024

Presentation: 'School Food Culture'

OSNP INFORMATION WEBINARS

September 2024 – June 2025

Virtual learning sessions and resources provided to participating schools focusing on MCCSS Nutrition Guidelines and Best Practices pertaining to risk management, waste management, program support, capacity building, student engagement and experiential learning opportunities.



ONTARIO FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

March 2025

Presentation: 'Local Food Procurement in Schools'

Help Us Make A Difference!

Your support ensures we can keep up with increased demand. To make a donation or to inquire about individual or corporate volunteering opportunities, please contact us.

Amy Donaldson
Regional Manager
Email: amy.donaldson@von.ca
Phone: (226) 235-4977

OSNP Southwest
Victorian Order of Nurses
100-1151 Florence St.
London, ON
N5W 2M7



www.osnp.ca



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