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AUTISM CANADA

# ANNUAL REPORT

47 YEARS OF ADVOCATING  
ALONGSIDE AND SUPPORTING AUTISTICS  
AND THE AUTISM COMMUNITY

# ABOUT AUTISM CANADA

For over four decades, Autism Canada has stood at the forefront of addressing the complex challenges faced by individuals on the Autism Spectrum and their support networks across the nation.

Established in 1976, our organization has been unwavering in its commitment to enhancing the quality of life and well-being of those on the Autism Spectrum. We achieve this through robust education, targeted advocacy, and steadfast support.

Rooted in a rich history of service and excellence, Autism Canada delivers elite programs and resources that resonate within the community. Highlights include our annual Au-Some Conference—an event crafted by and for those on the spectrum—a cornerstone of our educational outreach. Our devoted Family Support team, alongside over 20 literacy programmes, empowers individuals with the tools for social awareness, inclusion, and behaviour recognition.

As we continue to expand our offerings with a comprehensive catalogue of educational resources for both public and private sectors, Autism Canada remains a beacon of hope and progress. Celebrating over 45 years of dedicated service, we continue to forge paths toward a more inclusive and understanding Canada, making a profound and lasting impact on the autism community.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the spirit of reconciliation and working together, Autism Canada is thankful for this land, the country of Canada, and our connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to the Elders past and present and extend that respect to all today.

## A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

Autism Canada recognizes that there are a variety of language preferences within the autism community. Out of respect for these preferences, Autism Canada utilizes both identity-first and person-first language interchangeably in our communications.

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERS

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In reflecting on 2023 at Autism Canada, we celebrate a year of significant achievements and strengthened commitments towards inclusivity and understanding within the autism community.

This year, our impactful initiatives, such as the Au-Some Conference and the Sharing the Spectrum newsletter, continued to elevate voices and provide essential support to individuals on the Autism Spectrum nationwide. Our Literacy Program, launched in early 2023, fostered inclusivity across various environments, enhancing accessibility and understanding in educational, workplace, and community settings.

A highlight of the year was the announcement of the inaugural Sachs Family Award of Excellence, presented to Emilyn Golden in recognition of her courageous and community-spirited rescue of a young autistic boy.

As we move forward into 2024, we are committed to continuing our advocacy and support with a leadership approach that is deeply informed by our own experiences on the Autism Spectrum. We are proud that Autism Canada's team reflects substantial autistic representation, enhancing our mission with authenticity and firsthand insight.

We extend our deepest thanks to our donors, volunteers, staff, and board members. Your ongoing support and commitment enable us to make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

Together, we look forward to continuing our journey towards a more inclusive society where every individual on the Autism Spectrum can thrive.

Thank you for standing with us.



**Jamie McCleary**  
*Executive Director*



**Paul Finch**  
*Board Chair*

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## **Our Mission:**

To advocate for and support individuals with autism, their families, and caregivers living in Canada.

## **Our Vision:**

That people on the Autism Spectrum have full, healthy and happy lives

## **Our Mandate:**

- See the Spectrum Differently
- See Potential in People Living on the Autism Spectrum
- See & Respect the Person & Individual First
- See the Opportunity to Work Together to Make a Difference
- See & Understand Behaviour as a Form of Communication

*“The comprehensive information and empathetic support I received from your team has been incredibly helpful, significantly enhancing my brother's access to necessary resources and improving his quality of life.”*

*-C & K from Mississauga*





# OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**PAUL FINCH**  
CHAIR

**DR. SUZANNE LEWIS**  
VICE-CHAIR

**SALLY GINTER**  
DIRECTOR/GOVERNANCE &  
NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE,

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HEAD OF FUND  
DEVELOPMENT

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(TO MAY 2023)  
TREASURER/FINANCE &  
AUDIT COMMITTEE

**MILENA NAZARUK**  
(FROM JUNE 2023)  
TREASURER/FINANCE &  
AUDIT COMMITTEE

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DIRECTOR

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DIRECTOR

**PHILIPPA ST. C. HOOD, M.A.**  
DIRECTOR



*“Thank you for your thoughtful response and understanding during my stressful assessment process, not only once but twice.”*

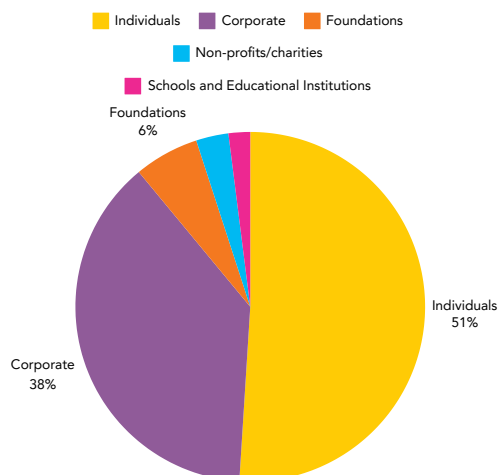
*-S from Switzerland*

# AUTISM SOCIETY CANADA TREASURER'S REPORT

From a financial perspective, it is important to note that Autism Society of Canada has gone through some organizational changes. With the introduction of an interim Executive Director (Jamie McCleary) in August 2023, who has now been hired into the full time role as of January 2024, the organization is evaluating options to be more effective in sourcing revenue and managing expenses.

Total revenue for the year was \$514,541, a decrease of 2% over 2022 revenue of \$524,852 (much smaller decline than 17% the year prior). As the organization looks for more predictability in revenue streams, the evolving team was able to increase reliance on grants which allows for easier planning. Grant revenue of \$262,082 accounted for 51% of total revenue (up from 30%) while donation revenue accounted for \$232,474 or 45% of total revenue (down from 67%).

## Where Our Donations Come From



Operating expenses of \$534,844 were 11% lower than 2022 primarily driven by lower staff expenses (exit of previous Executive Director and interim internal replacement) and lower professional fees. The Society ended the year with a lower deficit than in 2022 (at \$20,303 compared to \$77,926 in 2022) and we see overall more efficient use of resources given a lower cost revenue ratio. This is also indicative of an evolving team and approach to more predictable fundraising efforts under new management.

Autism Society Canada received a qualified audit opinion for 2023. This is because the organization receives revenue from fundraising initiatives and donations, which are not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification. This is common amongst charities that receive revenue from donations and fundraising events.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation for the diligence of the Autism Society Canada's Staff for effectively managing organizational funds as well as the Members of the Audit and Finance Committee of the Board, who are responsible for oversight of the financial affairs of the Society. Both ensure the organizational funds are well managed and dispersed to maximize value for the end stakeholders.

Milena Nazaruk, MBA

We couldn't have done  
it without your  
generous *support.*

## Thank you

to all our donors.

With thanks to our  
anonymous donors, although  
you are not recognized on  
these pages, we are truly  
grateful for your support.

### TENACITY \$10,000+

CIBC  
OPTA INTEL

### RESILIENCE \$5,000 +

B.C. GENERAL  
EMPLOYEES UNION  
DIANNE & RICARDO DE  
SOUSA  
JAY GOLDENBERG  
MR. PETER MCCAWLEY  
SHOWCASE

### INTEGRITY \$3,000+

EARL & DOROTHY LONG  
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION  
LEDCOR INDUSTRIES INC.  
MURRAY & SHERI RADOUX  
FAMILY FOUNDATION  
MILENA NAZARUK  
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FOUNDATION  
VANCOUVER MUSEUM  
SOCIETY  
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CONSTANT LAKE INC

### EMPATHY \$1,000+

APLIX FASTENERS INC  
ARYON CONSTRUCTION LTD  
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BRIGHT FUNDS FOUNDATION  
CHERYL BURT  
JANET CARVER-SMITH

## EMPATHY \$1,000+

JESSE CLARKE  
NANCY ANNE DE CARIA  
MARK DYMOND  
FERN HILL SCHOOL  
ALFRED AND MADELEYNE FILLION  
LUIS FRANCISCO  
GOOGLE  
SHELDON GRIFFITH  
IG WEALTH MANAGEMENT  
INCA GOLD ORGANICS -  
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UNITED WAY EAST ONTARIO  
VINCENT AND KATIE LENARDUZZI  
FOUNDATION  
WOHLER CANADA INC  
WORLD OF SPAS



## ADVOCACY \$500+

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ARVEY & JANET BRENNER  
ROSS CROOKS  
RONGXUAN DU  
FILIPE FRANCISCO  
SHELDON GRIFFITH  
MR. SHEMSEDIN HOXHA  
FABRICE JAUBERT  
JOHN KEANEY  
ASHLEY KRUYNE  
LASALLE COMMUNITY  
COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOL  
LEDBURY PARK ELEMENTARY AND  
MIDDLE SCHOOL  
ANNA LONDERO  
MICHAEL MCINTOSH  
MERCADO RESTAURANTE  
RICHARD MILLETTE  
NIMA MOSTAGHIMI  
MURRAY OXBY  
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SEAWAY VALLEY THEATRE CO.  
CLARA STOLL  
TARANG THAKRAL  
UNITED WAY GREATER TORONTO  
UNITED WAY SAINT JOHN, KINGS  
AND CHARLOTTE  
VMWARE FOUNDATION  
ELEANOR WHYTE





# OUR HIGHLIGHTS

You made all  
of this possible  
in 2023.

At Autism Canada, we are committed to empowering the autism community locally and nationally through focused training and community engagement. Our innovative programs and strategic collaborations aim to foster inclusivity. Here are some key highlights from our recent initiatives:

## THE AU-SOME CONFERENCE

The Au-Some Conference features presentations created and delivered by individuals on the Autism Spectrum. The 2023 event, focusing on creativity and advocacy, successfully engaged over 5,000 digital interactions.

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## SHARING THE SPECTRUM NEWSLETTER

Our newsletter, contains stories, poems, articles and insights from our Autism Ambassadors, who are all on the Autism Spectrum. Our goal is to share different perspectives and to celebrate the diversity and richness of the autistic community.

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## OUR CONSULTATIONS AND TRAININGS

In 2023, we launched our Literacy Program and expanded our Search and Rescue for Autism (SARA) trainings, reaching thousands across Canada and collaborating with various national organizations to enhance inclusivity for those on the Autism Spectrum.

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## SACHS FAMILY AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

In 2023, Autism Canada introduced the Sachs Family Award of Excellence, honouring Emilyn Golden for her brave rescue of a young autistic boy in B.C. This award highlights commitment to the autism community, promoting understanding and inclusion.

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# OUR AUTISM AMBASSADORS

ANANTHA K.  
ANDREW S.  
BRUCE PETHERICK  
C.E. CHAPPLE  
CHERYL LIEN  
D.

DAVID BERESFORD  
HENRY BOCKSTAEEL  
JAVIER A. HERRERA  
JASON OLDFORD  
KARA DYMOND  
MARGAUX WOSK

MICHAEL TANZER  
MINNI ANG  
NICO B.  
THERESA SOMERTON  
WILLIAM CARUANA  
YVONNE SPICER

Autism Canada's Autism Ambassadors are volunteers who work to inspire social change on issues that matter to their community and the families, caregivers and allies of individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

They write articles and make videos on relevant topics for our Sharing the Spectrum Newsletter, speak to the media on behalf of the community and advise the Autism Canada team on how better to support our clients and the autism community in Canada.

Our Ambassadors are invaluable to us, and we appreciate their ongoing commitment, assistance and involvement.





## OUR STRENGTH IS OUR FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

2,102

PHONE CALLS AND EMAIL INQUIRIES

5,407

HOURS OF DIRECT ASSISTANCES

In 2023, Autism Canada dedicated 5,407 hours to directly assisting over 2,102 individuals. Through our support, networks of care are strengthened. This results in a ripple effect across the communities that surround every autistic person, their families, and their caregivers. This ripple is estimated to reach over 31,530 people across Canada each year.

*"It is truly rare to find a team who takes their time in responding with such kindness and with such comprehensive resources for someone who is awaiting a diagnosis. "*

*-G from Quebec*

Autism Canada's Family Support Program has been operational for over a decade and serves as our front-line connection to individuals and families in need. Our dedicated staff and volunteers receive and respond to thousands of inquiries annually, providing resources, referrals, services, and advocacy for youth, adults, and seniors on the Autism Spectrum.



# OUR GROWTH

Autism Canada significantly expanded its digital, community, and national presence in 2023. This growth was achieved through a robust social media strategy, engaging media interviews, strategic community partnerships, extensive consultations, and our literacy training programmes.



## OUR PARTNERS



### CONSULTS

- VIA RAIL
- ABLE AND AVAILABLE JOB BOARD
- NATIONAL ART CENTRE
- CANADIAN BLOOD SERVICES
- BEST BUY CANADA LTD
- FORMEDON EDUCATIONAL SERVICES INC.

### LITERACY PROGRAM RECIPENTS

- MUSEUM OF VANCOUVER
- MOTHERS MATTER CENTRE
- RIOCAN
- CANADIAN FORCES MORALE & WELFARE SERVICES
- VANDUSEN BOTANICAL GARDEN
- LENOX ADVISORS INC.
- CANADIAN OPERA COMPANY
- EARLYON CHILD & FAMILY CENTRE OF KANATA & WEST CARLETON
- DOGTOPIA FOUNDATION CANADA



[Autism Canada Family Support Manager Dominique] said the organization is contacted often by families who are struggling with lengthy waits, including many who have remortgaged their homes and have taken out loans while they wait for the necessary diagnosis and funding for their children.



-The Globe and Mail. (2023). 'Pediatricians Call for Improved Access to Autism Diagnosis in Canada.' Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-autism-diagnose-pediatricians/>

For adults with autism like Bruce Petherick, financial independence can feel elusive. "I would never get involved in the bank without somebody else beside me," says Mr. Petherick, 59, an advocate with Autism Canada where he runs family support programs.



-The Globe and Mail. (2023). 'Banks Can Do More to Help Customers with Disabilities, Expert Says.' Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/investing/personal-finance/household-finances/article-banks-can-do-more-to-help-customers-with-disabilities-expert-says/>

## IMAGINE CANADA COMPLIANCE

Imagine Canada's Standards Program awards accreditation to charities and nonprofits that demonstrate excellence in five areas of operations. The standards are designed to build strong and trusted charities and nonprofits. Autism Canada is Imagine Canada Standards compliant.

## ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was enacted to expand the government's mission to offer full accessibility to all disabled Ontarians by 2025. All Autism Canada staff and Board Directors are certified compliant with AODA.





**AUTISM**  
**CANADA**  
**AUTISME**

See The Spectrum Differently  
Le spectre autrement

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[www.autismcanada.org](http://www.autismcanada.org)

Registered Charitable Number: 13160 7657 RR0001