

07 01 2024 – 06 30 2025

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT





“

*Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”*

Athlete Oath

# Contents

“

*[In Special Olympics]  
I just see my nephew's  
total enjoyment. He  
could have a place for  
him, something special  
that he does and looks  
forward to in his days.”*

– Kelina Leeks, monthly donor

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# About Special Olympics

## Our Reach



Athletes  
**40,000+**



Volunteers  
**20,000+**



Programs  
**6,000+**



## Our Mission

Special Olympics Canada is dedicated to enriching the lives of Canadians with an intellectual disability through sport.

## Our Vision

Our vision is that sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities all across Canada.

## Our Values

### EMPOWERMENT:

We create opportunities to pursue full potential.

### EXCELLENCE:

We elevate standards and performance.

### RESPECT:

We operate in an environment of cooperation, collaboration and dignity.

### DIVERSITY:

We honour what is unique in each individual.

### INCLUSION:

We foster inclusive communities.

## A Message from the Chair and the CEO

We are pleased to share with you the Annual Report and audited financial statements for Special Olympics Canada (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

The 2024/25 Annual Report highlights the incredible support of athletes, coaches, volunteers, supporters and donors like you. Reflecting on the past year, thanks to your support, community programs across the country have grown, re-bounding to meet or exceed pre-pandemic numbers. Despite challenges, we've connected nationwide, advocated for crucial initiatives, and fostered engagement across the country. Your support has amplified our impact, ensuring every athlete who wants to participate in a Special Olympics program has the opportunity, from grassroots local programming to competing at the World Winter Games in Turin, Italy. This report testifies to our team's dedication, our partners' commitment, and our donors' generosity.

This year saw the culmination of hard work with the World Winter Game in Turin, Italy. These Games brought together 90 athletes, 24 coaches, 5 mission staff and 14 leadership staff, competing in 5 winter sports. Special Olympics Canada took a meaningful step toward fostering inclusivity and cultural understanding by partnering with Indigenous educators and Elders to facilitate education and team building sessions rooted in cultural teachings and practices for all members of Special Olympics Team Canada 2025. These learnings were especially impactful when Special Olympics Team Canada faced a heartbreaking loss with the passing of speed skater Jordan Stevenson, and carried his goals and memory with them to the Games. The team brought home 39 Gold, 35 Silver and 42 Bronze medals and while these numbers are impressive, what is equally important are the unforgettable moments, the memories made and the friendships forged that will last a lifetime.

Outside of the World Winter Games, Special Olympics continued to deliver on our mission of building safe community spaces and ensuring athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities were given a chance to shine. The team developed new coaching and training modules to provide education and ongoing learning opportunities to coaches and volunteers across the country. October saw the launch of a new official sport Floorball, a highly accessible sport, even in more remote and rural communities.

We deepened our partnerships with our National partners, with the Tim Hortons campaign breaking records, raising over \$1.3million and Empire raising \$1.64million, both of which will support local programming across the country. We also announced a new National partnership with MNP to strengthen communities and fuel the heart and power of inclusive sport.

In closing, we extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to every athlete, coach, volunteer and supporter across the country. Together, we have achieved remarkable milestones, changed stigmas and perception and provided thousands of athletes a chance to find a sense of community and valued lifelong friendships. Thank you and we cannot wait to see what 2025/2026 brings.



**Niyousha Zarinpour**  
*Chair*



**Gail Hamamoto**  
*Chief Executive Officer*



# Our Strategic Direction

## Advancing Inclusion Through Sport and Leadership

Special Olympics Canada Pan-Canadian Strategic Plan marks a defining chapter in our mission to create inclusive communities across the country.

Built through collaboration with athletes, coaches, volunteers, and partners, it provides a clear path toward ensuring that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have equitable opportunities to experience belonging, achievement, and wellness.

The plan is anchored in three key pillars that guide our national efforts:

### Strategic Pillars

#### **GROW AND RETAIN ATHLETES:**

Foster and empower 'lifelong' athletes from all ages and diverse backgrounds by providing holistic programming centered on sport, health, and leadership

#### **GROW AND RETAIN VOLUNTEERS:**

Achieve social change by enhancing the volunteers' experience through communication, training, and opportunities that fit with capacity, while providing a sense of connection and recognition

#### **GROW HIGH-QUALITY SPORTS PROGRAMS AND EVENTS:**

Grow sports programming and remove barriers to inclusion by optimizing and diversifying programs based on growing participant needs (e.g., competitive sport, leadership development, health programs, etc.)

In addition to the three core strategic pillars, Special Olympics Canada's Pan Canadian Strategic Plan also includes seven identified enablers that span across the areas of strategy, operations and foundational components that are needed to effectively execute the strategic plan. Enablers represent the capabilities and resources that will contribute to the successful execution of the Strategic Plan.



“

*I've been active most of my life, and I think everyone should have the opportunity to compete.”*

– Micheline Alam

SCAN TO EXPLORE  
THE FULL PLAN:



## Enablers

### FUNDING:

Grow revenues from both National and Chapter led sources by targeting mission-driven partners.

### PARTNERSHIPS:

Increase breadth and depth of partnerships across schools, NSOs & P/TSOs, local sport orgs, and community groups

### BRANDING:

Capture hearts of potential athletes, volunteers, and partners by highlighting Special Olympics Canada's positive individual and community impact

### TECHNOLOGY:

Better support staff and volunteers through easier processes and modern engagement tools

### COLLABORATION & TALENT:

Strengthen way of working across shared goals, share best practices, and supporting Chapter / National talent

### IDEA:

Build representation of underserved communities by providing inclusive programming

### SAFE SPORT:

Embed into volunteer and athlete culture through continuous trainings and reinforcement

## Driving Organizational Excellence and Impact

We are committed to transparency, accountability, and measurable progress. The plan prioritizes strong governance, evidence-based decision making, and data systems that allow us to track results and continually improve how we serve athletes and communities.

At every level, this plan reflects Special Olympics Canada's commitment to equity, inclusion, and respect. It ensures that language, partnerships, and programs all align with our vision of a Canada where everyone is valued and empowered.

This Strategic Plan is more than a framework for growth. It is a national commitment to reimagining what belonging looks like through sport, leadership, and collaboration.

# Yuliia and Liliana's Journey into Special Olympics Canada

Yuliia Kondratska and her family lived in Irpin, when it was suddenly invaded by Russia during 2022. Irpin was one of the first cities in Ukraine to be attacked, so the immediate urgency of leaving their once peaceful home came completely out of the blue.

**"We lived our best life in Ukraine but because of the war, we needed to find a solution. My husband found [Miramichi, New Brunswick]. He chose Miramichi because it's a world famous fishing spot."**

A carpenter by trade, Yuliia's husband has found a true passion for fishing — a hobby that's not very common in Ukraine but holds special meaning in Miramichi. It's a pastime he shares with their daughter, Liliana, and together they've spent the past two years exploring various bodies of water across New Brunswick in search of the next big catch.

Further helping their adaptation to this new country are Monique and Mike Kettela: people who volunteered to help Ukrainian refugees in Canada, but have since become close family friends of the Kondratskas. This, combined with Canada's multicultural values, is one of the reasons why Yuliia felt her family could build a good life for themselves in Miramichi. However, there was one element missing. Her precocious and hard-working 10-year-old daughter Liliana has Cerebral Palsy, and needs accommodation due to her disability.

In 2023, a humble Facebook link began Liliana's involvement in Special Olympics. Through her internet searching, Yuliia started speaking with some volunteers who kindly helped her get her child involved with weekly sport practices. Nowadays, the 10-year-old Liliana is involved in Active Start, Bowling, and—her favourite—Swimming. Wanting to buy a pool in her family's backyard, Liliana is already planning of creating her own souvenir business and saving up money.



Part of Liliana's swimming motivation is a pair of twin boys she met in Special Olympics named Misha and Vaniia who have Autism. She enjoys spending time with them and is working hard to reach their level of skill. Liliana is also starting to find herself as a young athlete leader in Special Olympics, encouraging her teammates along their own journeys.

"She helps her best friend Theo," Yuliia said. "He uses a wheelchair and is non-verbal, but that's never stopped their interaction. She truly enjoys spending time with him during all kinds of activities."

Working as a Ukrainian Liaison Officer for R2 Employment Solutions, Yuliia also started volunteering in roles to support other new Canadians in much the same way that the Kettelas helped her family settle. As President of the Miramichi Multicultural Association, Yuliia is grateful for the opportunity she was given to nurture Liliana's growth, and is now paying things forward.

"God Blessed me with this girl," Yuliia said smiling, "she motivates me. She puts stickers on my desk, that say, 'Mom I believe in you.'"



# Why I Give

Brenda Smith

While many donors have a personal connection with Special Olympics, other generous people like Brenda Smith have found that it is simply an altruistic way to invest in their community.

"I just think it's a very worthy charity," she said over the phone, "and I like putting my money where there is good value."

A psychology professor at Trent University, Brenda spends her free time hiking and, "travelling with [her] sweetheart." She first heard about Special Olympics on the news, way back when she said it was first being established. Brenda believes that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in sports so they can have fun, be competitive, and improve their health.

"These are individuals who are worthy," she added, "of the time and resources to get involved in high-level sporting competitions."

# Project Summary

## A Collaborative Research Project with CAMH, HCARDD, and Special Olympics Canada

Over the past year, Special Olympics Canada has strategically evolved its research portfolio to prioritize knowledge mobilization, ensuring that health research is not only produced, but meaningfully shared with those who benefit most: athletes, families, coaches, volunteers, and Chapter staff. This shift reflects Special Olympics Canada's commitment to making research accessible, relevant, and actionable across its national community.

To advance this goal, Special Olympics Canada partnered with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and their Health Care Access Research and Developmental Disabilities (HCARDD) team, led by Dr. Avra Selick and Dr. Yona Lunsky. Together, they transformed health-focused research into practical, inclusive and bilingual knowledge products tailored to the needs and preferences of the Special Olympics community.

Through direct engagement with athletes, families, and coaches, five priority health topics were identified:

1. **Men's Health**
2. **Women's Health**
3. **Health Check-Ins**
4. **Mindfulness**
5. **Sleep**

The research team emphasized plain language, inclusive visuals, and multiple communication formats such as podcasts, videos, and tip sheets. By collaborating directly with athletes and caregivers in the development process, the research team ensured that health research could be understood and applied in meaningful ways within everyday programs and activities.



In total, 49 knowledge products were created, including a bonus episode on diabetes, aligned with concurrent Special Olympics health initiatives.

This project was transformational for Special Olympics Canada's knowledge-sharing efforts. It demonstrated the power of inclusive collaboration and the importance of tailoring health information to meet the diverse needs of the Special Olympics community. The partnership with CAMH was instrumental in helping Special Olympics Canada build a scalable, accessible model for future knowledge mobilization initiatives.



These products remain live and available for use and download. They can be accessed on the HCARDD website:



## Floorball: A New National Sport

A key milestone in advancing inclusive sport was the national introduction of Floorball, Special Olympics Canada's newest recognized sport.

Developed through extensive consultation and evaluation with partners across the country, Floorball offers athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities a new opportunity to participate in an accessible and adaptable team sport.

In collaboration with Coach+, Special Olympics Canada developed and launched a national coach

training program, an officials training program, and official rules of play. The sport's smaller roster sizes, minimal equipment needs, and flexible format make it easy for communities of all sizes to adopt, including schools and unified programs.

The introduction of Floorball reflects Special Olympics Canada's forward-looking approach to inclusion by expanding participation pathways and ensuring that more Canadians can experience the benefits of team sport. Recognized by Special Olympics International and offering a pathway to the World Winter Games, Floorball broadens access while reinforcing Canada's presence on the global stage.



# Limitless Gala

## Celebrating Potential and Possibility

In 2024, the LIMITLESS Gala united hundreds of supporters, athletes, and partners from across Canada for an evening dedicated to inclusion, empowerment, and community.

Held at the Fairmont Royal York in Toronto, the event showcased inspiring stories of perseverance and achievement while celebrating the transformative impact of Special Olympics programs. Guests participated in live and silent auctions, a gourmet dinner, and an engaging afterparty, collectively raising \$1.7 million in support of Special Olympics Canada initiatives.

The success of the Gala underscores the profound difference that collective generosity and shared purpose can make in advancing inclusion through sport. Funds raised directly support national and local programs that help athletes build confidence, leadership skills, and meaningful connections within their communities.





# Why We Give

Tim Hortons

"My husband and I are passionate about supporting Special Olympics Canada athletes because we believe in the power of inclusion, dignity, and opportunity for all. Special Olympics Canada's mission to enrich the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport deeply aligns with our values of equality, community involvement, and human potential. We are incredibly proud to have team members from Special Olympics Canada as part of our restaurant family. Their dedication, positive energy, and strong work ethic make a meaningful impact on our teams and our guests every day."

– Angela & Marwan Hage,  
Tim Hortons Restaurant Owners

"Support of the Special Olympics Campaign reflects our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and opportunity – values we live in our workplace and community every day! It's an opportunity for our organization to encourage and promote accomplishments of our athlete team members."

– Sarah Collie,  
Tim Hortons Restaurant Owner

# Special Olympics Canada 2024 National Award Winners



**Natalie Branscombe,**  
Special Olympics  
Nova Scotia



**Christian Gerro,**  
Special Olympics  
Nova Scotia



**Jenny Murray,**  
Special Olympics  
Alberta



**Christina Kendall,**  
Special Olympics  
Newfoundland &  
Labrador



**Rebecca Lavigne,**  
Special Olympics  
Nova Scotia



**Harvey Arcangeletti,**  
Special Olympics  
Ontario



**William Stanish,**  
Special Olympics  
Nova Scotia



**Morgan Jardine,**  
Special Olympics  
Prince Edward Island



**Denita Minoletti,**  
Special Olympics  
Ontario



**Team Saskatchewan  
Curling,**  
Special Olympics  
Saskatchewan



**Braylon Hyggen,**  
Special Olympics  
Alberta



**Carole Robb,**  
Special Olympics  
Ontario



## Jessica and Alex’s Enduring Bond

When Jessica Chapelski was just about to wrap up her career coaching figure skating, a colleague of hers made a simple suggestion that would go on to shape the next 20 years of her life: “I think I know an athlete you’d enjoy working with.”

“

*I used to coach in one way – and immediately, it challenged me to find new ways of teaching. I knew right away it was going to make me a better teacher and a better person.”*

– Jessica Chapelski, Coach

At the time, Jessica had just completed Teacher’s College and was preparing to start a new job as an elementary school teacher. She hadn’t planned on taking on a new athlete, but she agreed to attend a couple of sessions to work with the young skater her colleague had recommended.

That skater was eight-year-old Alex Pang, who was only in his first year with Special Olympics but already showing incredible promise. One session was all it took for Jessica to know she’d found something she’d never walk away from. Two decades later, Jessica and Alex are still on the ice together, their partnership as strong as ever.

Reflecting on their first session together, Jessica recalls, “He was this bumbling little 8-year-old that was pure chaos, but so endearing, and he instantly won me over.” She also knew that coaching Alex would push her to grow, saying, “I used to coach in one way – and immediately, it challenged me to find new ways of teaching. I knew away it was going to make me a better teacher and a better person.”

Alex has grown into one of Canada’s most accomplished Special Olympics figure skaters. He’s been named to Special Olympics Team Canada four times—competing at three Special Olympics World Winter Games (including the World Games in 2022 that were ultimately cancelled) and one Special Olympics World Summer Games. But in their 20th year of skating together, something special happened: for the first time ever, Alex and Jessica were both named to the same National Team.

For Jessica, it was a beautiful full-circle moment. “Getting to see the progress, not only in his skating skills but in his life – in school, in his community, seeing that difference made is what has kept me coming back all these years,” she said. “I knew I was providing a place where he feels free to express





himself, be proud of himself and accomplish extraordinary things.”

And in Turin, Alex once again delivered an incredible performance, taking home the bronze medal in Singles, Level 5, Mixed Division 1. Jessica couldn't have been more proud.

Alex's impact on the sport goes beyond his own performances. Inspired by Jessica and by working with the younger generation of Special Olympics figure skaters coming up behind him, he decided to step into a coaching role himself. He began as a CanSkate Program Assistant and quickly thrived in the position. Just last year, he was named CanSkate Program Assistant of the Year for all of British Columbia — an honour recognizing his dedication, work ethic, and potential as a coach.

Initially, Jessica had volunteered alongside him to help him get his bearings. But Alex proved to be a natural. He took the next step by earning his official CanSkate Teaching Certification,

allowing him to work with skaters from youth to adulthood. Drawing from his own Special Olympics experience with skaters of diverse abilities, he approaches each skater with a deep understanding of individual needs, patience, and encouragement.

**“Having a community has really changed the direction of his life, and I am just so happy to be a part of that,” Jessica shared.**

Fresh off his bronze medal performance at the Special Olympics World Winter Games Turin 2025, Alex isn't taking a break. He's jumping right back into his coaching sessions, where his students are eagerly awaiting his return. When asked if he'll wear his medal to his first session back, he simply smiled and said, “If I remember.”

Special Olympics

# World Winter Games 2025

In March 2025, sport became the great equalizer in Turin, Italy.

Beneath the Italian Alps, with the roar of the crowd and the crisp winter air, Special Olympics Team Canada's 90 athletes stepped onto the world stage and delivered a performance that captured hearts and headlines.

They gave everything on the ice, the slopes, and the trails, returning home with 116 medals: 39 gold, 35 silver, and 42 bronze.

Yet the most meaningful victories were not counted in podium finishes. They were seen in the determination of an athlete striving for a personal best, the encouragement shouted from the sidelines, and the late-night team huddles where lifelong friendships began.

From the first start gate to the final finish line, Special Olympics Team Canada competed with pride and resilience. Turin 2025 was more than a competition. It was a celebration of connection, inclusion, and community. Athletes, coaches,



and mission staff from across the country came together not just as a team, but as a family.

As the Games concluded, the moments that mattered most did not stay behind in Italy. They returned with the athletes, carried in memory and spirit, continuing to shape futures and inspire communities across Canada.

Today, the legacy of Turin 2025 lives on. It stands as a testament to what is possible when opportunity meets determination and reminds us that the power of sport can unite, uplift, and transform.



# Why I Give

Joseph Perera

Joseph Perera, now an anesthesiologist, first heard about Special Olympics as a teenager in Orleans, a suburb on the outskirts of Ottawa. Compared to his current home in Toronto, Joseph described Orleans as “on the smaller side,” but still full of people eager to come together and build a strong sense of community.

“One of my friends’ uncles,” Joseph said, “was one of the organizers for Special Olympics events. I remember him volunteering back when I was 15 or 17, and when I got older, I was like, ‘Hey, can I join as well?’”

In 2009, Joseph starting coaching weekly at a local bowling club, finding it fit in well with his work schedule at the time. Later on, he convinced a couple of friends to join him as volunteers on the team. He described it as a way to go out and be social while “having a blast” teaching people.

“Although the purpose is to help people develop a skill,” he said, “I really felt it was positive for the community. Everybody was coming together; there were a lot of positive feelings. I can’t say enough good things about it.”

Even though Joseph stopped coaching in 2013 when he left Orleans for Toronto, he still looks back on his time with the team fondly and continues to make monthly donations to our movement.

Before joining Special Olympics, Joseph coached youth in Canadian football. His volunteer work also extends to supporting terminally ill children at Roger Neilson House.

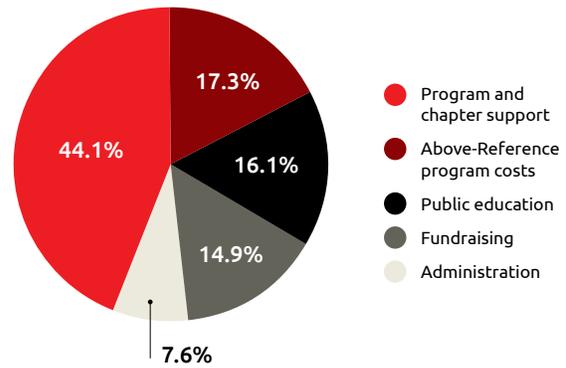
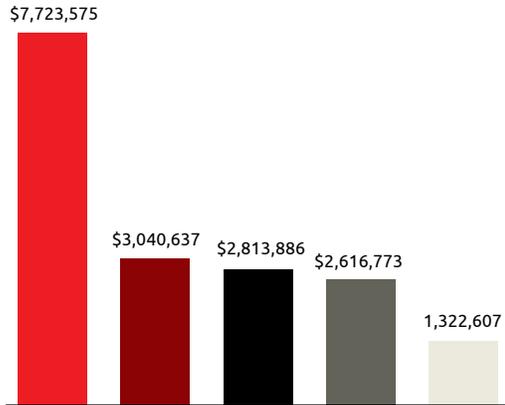
# Statement of Financials

(Revenue vs Expense)

Special Olympics Canada Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets For the year ended June 30 2025

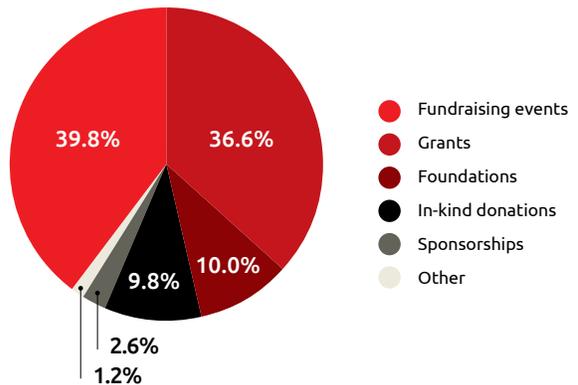
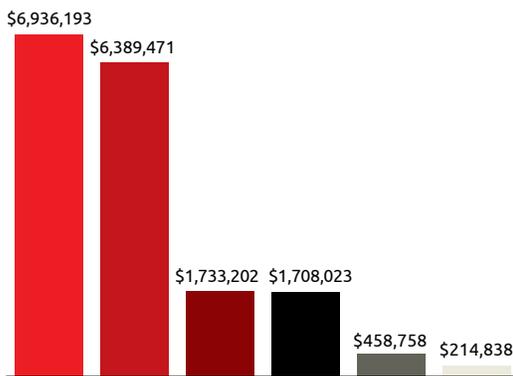
## 2024/2025 Expenses

**TOTAL EXPENSES: \$17,517,478**



## 2024/2025 Revenue

**TOTAL REVENUE: \$17,440,485**



# Thank You to Our National Partners

Special Olympics Canada is grateful for the support and involvement of many organizations and individuals. We are proud to partner with the following organizations, who help us provide daily sport opportunities and competitions to over 40,000 individuals with an intellectual or developmental disability across the country.

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## DIAMOND

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## COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

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## GOLD

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## SILVER

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## BRONZE AND FRIENDS

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# Donors

## \$10,000 +

1000271454 Ontario Inc.  
1962827 Alberta Inc (Burwood Distillery)  
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Samantha Kohn  
Sandra Sanderson  
Shawn Redmond  
Special Olympics Ontario  
Stewart McKelvey  
Susana Petti  
Suzana Lobos  
Suzanne Court

“

*I work with a Canadian charity that works with people who have special needs, people who are gifted. Gifted in ways that we, as normal people, don't see. That's why I'm a donor, I understand the impact these small donations have, how far they go in helping people who need it.”*

– Iftikhar Shaikh Ahmad, Donor

Tim Hortons Inc.  
Tru IT Solutions Inc.  
Wolseley Canada

## \$1,000 – 10,000

Cassels Brock & Blackwell LLP  
Cineplex Entertainment  
Citibank Canada  
David Cornell  
Deloitte LLP  
Deloitte Management Services LP  
Element Fleet Management  
Elliot Kohn  
Equitable Life of Canada  
Eve Charest  
FanDuel Canada ULC  
FCB  
Funding Innovation Inc.  
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Beverly Hammond  
Brittany Lengauer  
Bruce Etherington  
Canadian 5 Pin Bowlers' Association  
Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police  
Charles Bordeleau  
Charles Phillips  
Chris Barrington Foote  
Chris Harding

The Sharbot Group Limited  
Tom Benson  
Wayne Hawthornthwaite  
Wendy Mitchell

## \$500-1,000

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Catherine Potin  
Chris Biegler  
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Darryl Sittler  
David Boone  
Diane Relyea  
Donna Carbell  
Doris Sawatky Dickson  
Elaine Pamela Wright  
Gail Hamamoto  
Gordon Goulden  
Greg Phillips  
Heidi Arbeau-Wood  
Ian Fish  
Ian Wood  
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Linda Bartlette  
Lois Adams  
Lucrecia Lowenstein  
Lukus Rowntree  
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Modern Age Plastics

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Special Olympics Nova Scotia  
Stefan Sieber  
Sylvia Takacs  
The Rawson Group  
Thomas Sobotka  
TRI-V Custom Manufacturing Inc.  
Wynberne Hackett  
Yona Lunsky

“

*My son in Calgary was a swimming coach. These are different people who helped with Special Olympics. He said they're always short of money. It's only 20-25 dollars a month, but I thought "I can do that."*

– Peggy Malcolm, Donor



# 07 01 2024 – 06 30 2025

## ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

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Charitable Number #11883 6337 RR0001

**Special Olympics**  
**Olympiques spéciaux**  
Canada

