

2024 Annual Report

53

years of relentless  
determination

crohn's  colitis

# Reflection on 50 years of impact



Who would have thought that an April 1974 meeting of a handful of concerned parents would spark 50 years of remarkable impact for those affected by inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) in Canada. And yet, that is exactly what happened.

Since that meeting, the charity we now know as Crohn's and Colitis Canada has taken shape. Our relentless focus on finding cures and improving the lives of those affected has never wavered.

Since 1974, we have funded almost 400 grants, investing \$150 million into world-leading Canadian research - including projects that offer realistic hope for the cures.

We offer programs that improve quality of life and reduce the isolation of living with, or caring for someone with Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis - free apps; an online community; and trusted information on-line, in person or by webinar.

We are proud of our remarkable progress. Yet the realities we face are sobering. More

than 11,000 people in Canada are diagnosed with Crohn's or colitis every year - one every 48 minutes. And more than 322,000 people live with these diseases today. That is 0.8% of the population, expected to rise to more than 1% in the coming decade.

Our impactful history and track record over the past 50 years inspires us to face the challenges of today and tomorrow. Thank you for being part of our journey. We look forward to achieving even greater impact together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sylvain Chiasson'.

Sylvain Chiasson  
Interim President and CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Cowan'.

Susan Cowan  
Chair, Board of Directors

# Timeline

The term ulcerative colitis used for the first time

1859

First effective drug to treat Crohn's and colitis developed—sulfasalazine.

1940

The Grants-in-Aid of Research and Innovations in IBD Research granting programs begin

1976

First Gutsy Walk held—then called Heel 'n' Wheel-a-thon

1996

The first Impact of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) in Canada report is released—new editions come out every five years and provide a snapshot of the state of care in Canada

2007

The AbbVie IBD Scholarship Program is launched, offering students \$5,000 for postsecondary studies

2012

First Camp Got2Go held—an overnight camp experience for youth with IBD

2014

The GoHere® app is released, helping Canadians find washrooms on the go

2015

Crohn's and Colitis Connect—an online community for those living with IBD—goes live

2023

1932

Crohn's disease identified as its own disease

1974

The Canadian Foundation for Ileitis and Colitis is founded—now known as Crohn's and Colitis Canada—by families wanting to fund more research

1993

Organization changes its name to Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada

2001

First biologic drug, Infiximab, approved for use in Canada for Crohn's and colitis.

2008

The Genetic, Environmental, and Microbial (GEM) Project is launched, looking into the causes of Crohn's

2014

Gutsy Learning Series launched, offering a unique opportunity to learn directly from Canada's leading experts in IBD

2019

MyGut™, a free app that empowers users to track, understand, and manage their IBD journey, is released

2023

GEM Project research breakthrough finds a gut bacteria pattern that indicates signs of developing Crohn's—years before symptoms appear

2024

Celebrating 50 years of impact

50

Crohn's and Colitis Canada

# Impact Strategy

2023-2026

## Promise

We aspire to cure Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis and to improve the quality of life of everyone affected by these diseases.

## Live the Values



**Courageous**  
Be gutsy!



**Inclusive**  
Be open!



**Authentic**  
Be intentional!



**Collaborative**  
Do together!



## Collective Impact Goal

Crohn's and Colitis Canada collaborates with others to improve the quality of life of people with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

We measure and report publicly on the quality of life of people with Crohn's and colitis to account for the part we play in this collective impact.

# **Supercharging** **Crohn's and colitis** **research in Canada**

In Canada's health research ecosystem, Crohn's and Colitis Canada has a unique role, specifically that of supercharging the early careers of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis researchers. We have launched the career of dozens of researchers, helping Canada become a world leader in Crohn's and colitis research. The ultimate bottom line: those with these diseases benefit from the discoveries of the researchers we support.

Our Grants-in-Aid of Research (GIA) and Innovations in IBD Research (INN) grants programs are specifically designed to allow early career researchers to explore new ideas and build career momentum. That start to their research journey allows them to explore new ideas that can pay off over time in terms of better treatments, as well as a deeper understanding of the causes and triggers.

Elena Verdú, MD, PhD, has received four GIAs and one INN over her career, and they were critical to start her research career when she was new to Canada in 2001. She is now Director, Farncombe Family Digestive Health Research Institute and Professor at McMaster University in Hamilton,

Ontario. The Institute focuses on understanding the causes of chronic inflammatory conditions of the intestine such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), irritable bowel syndrome and celiac disease.



Photo: Elena Verdú, MD, PhD

“One of the first grants I obtained was from Crohn's and Colitis Canada, which allowed me to establish a long-term program in IBD research. GIAs don't just fund me, they fund all the trainees nurtured and trained through our program. Dozens of students and postdoctoral fellows have become researchers and others have followed careers in clinical care, including gastroenterology. The impact of GIAs is

## What are GIAs and INNs?

**Grants-in-Aid of Research (GIAs)** support research projects aligned with Crohn's and Colitis Canada's priorities with funding of up to \$125,000 per year for three years.

**Innovations in IBD Research (INNs)** fund new approaches to research that may not fit within the boundaries of traditional medical research and are new territory in Crohn's and colitis research with grants of \$50,000 for one year.

enormous, it's more than the support of one project. It's an impact that branches out and multiplies over time.”

Dr. Verdú believes that Crohn's and Colitis Canada research funding is supercharging IBD research in Canada. She says: “What you are doing is funding a community that will lead to discovery and innovation in clinical care.”

### GIAs and INNs by the numbers:



**1976** GIAs and INNs started



**384** total GIAs and INNs funded



**\$89 million**—total invested in GIAs and INNs to date

### 2024 research investments by the numbers:



Supported 4 postdoctoral fellows conducting Crohn's and colitis research through the multi-partner TRIANGLE training program



Invested more than **\$6.6 million** in research in 2024, supporting **41 research projects**



Brought together close to **450 clinicians, scientists and partners** from across Canada for the Meeting of the Minds continuing medical educational and research conference

# Empowering the community through education



Another 2024 celebration was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Gutsy Learning Series (GLS). Since 2014, there have been 55 recorded sessions with more than 1,800 people attending live while 52,000 watched online.

What makes them unique is the unparalleled access to Canada's top Crohn's and colitis researchers and healthcare professionals. Participants can connect directly with leaders to strengthen their knowledge on a wide range of topics, including medication, emerging treatments, diet and nutrition, symptom and flare management, complications, health issues outside the intestinal tract, mental health, pregnancy and more.

Another important element is that registrants can ask the speakers questions during an interactive, live Q&A period.

In 2024, we covered the following topics:

The Mediterranean Diet for IBD

Cancer Risks in Crohn's and Colitis

Ostomy Care

Ask the Expert on Symptoms and Complications in IBD

Arthritis in Crohn's and Colitis

Pain in Crohn's and Colitis



**“I just wanted to say a massive thank you for putting together the excellent webinars you host. This one was timed perfectly with potential colectomy coming up, and it was excellent!”**

**- Ostomy Care GLS attendee**

## **Our programs by the numbers:**



**1,000+** members on Crohn’s and Colitis Connect, an online community launched in November 2023



Our online information was accessed over **1.7 million** times in 2024



**80 youth** attended Camp Got2Go in 2024



**154** postsecondary students have received a **\$5,000** AbbVie IBD Scholarship Program grant since 2012, including 15 recipients in 2024



**37** peer support events were hosted, with patient-focused, caregiver, and regional-specific sessions being offered

# Your donation drives research nationally

Crohn's and Colitis Canada is able to fund these important research activities and more, thanks to your support.

## Legend

**GIA** - Grants-in-Aid of Research: These are investigator driven research projects that fall under 4 domains: finding causes and triggers, discovering novel treatments, helping manage symptoms, and getting the best care.

**INN** - The Innovation in IBD grant aims to finance creative and original methods for conducting research on inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). It is designed to encourage and facilitate research that may not fit into the conventional framework of medical research.

**PACE** - The Promoting Access and Care through Centres of Excellence (PACE) network brings together leading IBD centres from across the country to improve health outcomes, address gaps in care, and develop solutions that can create changes in the public health care system.

**Healthcare Excellence Awards** - Through a community nomination process, every year, Crohn's and Colitis Canada awards an exceptional IBD nurse and physician for their committed, empathetic care of individuals with IBD.

**Research Excellence Awards** - Nominated by their peers, these awards recognize the most innovative researchers in IBD for their outstanding contributions to the field. Award categories include Rising Star, Research Leadership, Women in IBD, and Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in IBD.

**CIRC** - The Canadian Inflammatory Bowel Disease Research Consortium is a network of clinician scientists working together to promote and conduct clinical research in IBD through collaboration of multiple Canadian centres.

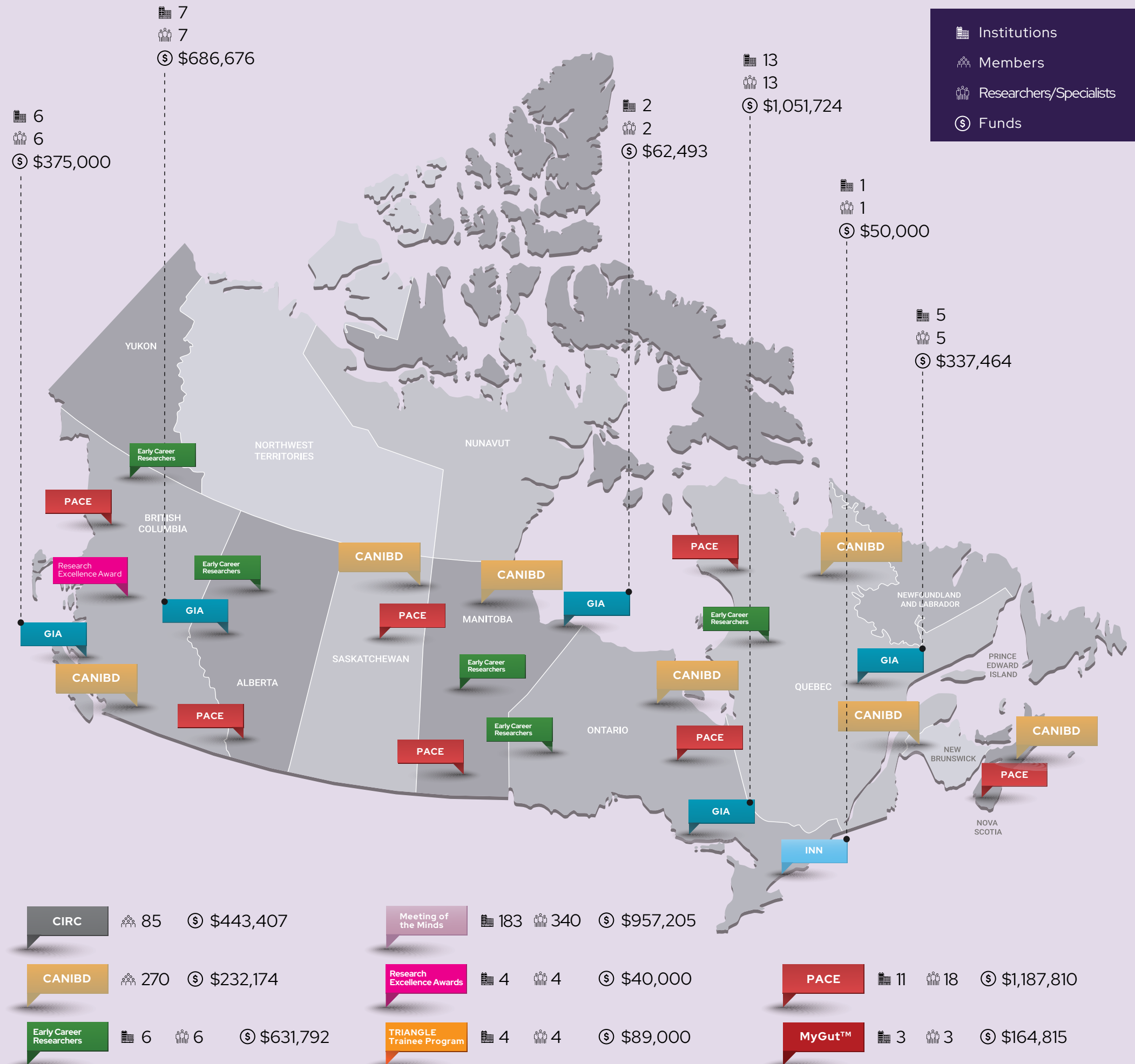
**CANIBD** - The Canadian IBD Nurse Association- A national organization of nurses dedicated to improving the quality of care for people living with inflammatory bowel disease across Canada.

**TRIANGLE Trainee Program** - In collaboration with the TRIANGLE Program, Crohn's and Colitis Canada supports postdoctoral fellows in IBD research, to foster the upcoming generation of scientists.

**Meeting of the Minds** - An annual conference that brings together Canada's talented community of IBD researchers and healthcare providers to share best practices in clinical care and the latest research research in IBD.

**Early Career Researchers** - In 2024, Crohn's and Colitis Canada continued its commitment to fostering the next generation of IBD researchers by supporting young scientists establish independent research programs. A dedicated portion of funding through the Grants-in-Aid of Research (GIA) and Innovations in IBD (INN) programs was allocated to early career researchers.

**MyGut™** - MyGut is a free, easy-to-use app developed by Crohn's and Colitis Canada to help people living with IBD track their symptoms, manage their care, and better understand their condition.



# Locked ~~Out~~



Pedestrians on a busy downtown street in Toronto were surprised to see a portable toilet that was ‘Locked Out’ on November 26. It was our attention-grabbing visual to raise awareness during Crohn’s and Colitis Awareness Month.

This unavailable portable toilet represented the need experienced by people who rely on quick access to washrooms when out in public but often cannot find one. While everyone has experienced this, the need is more frequent and urgent for those with

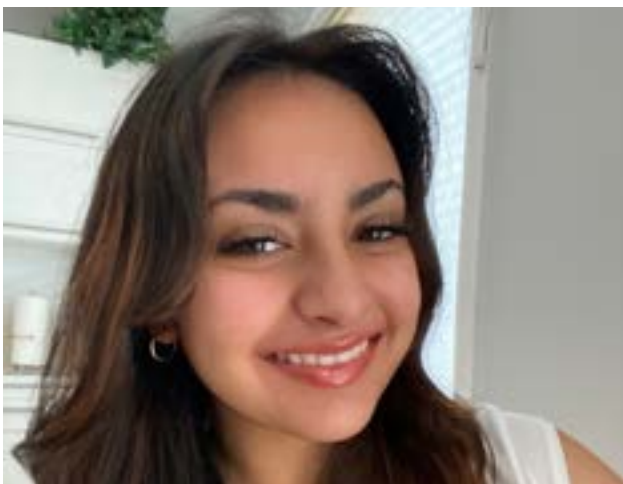


Photo: Leana Al-Ugaily

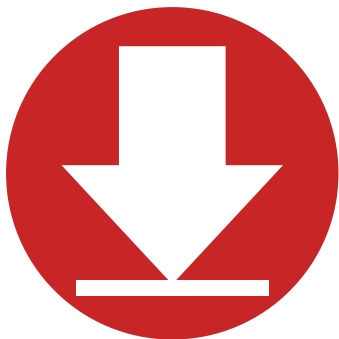
Crohn’s or colitis. Some choose to stay at home rather than leave due to the fear of not finding a washroom in time.

As a practical solution offered during the event, people were encouraged to download our free GoHere® app that helps quickly locate nearby available washrooms.

Leana Al-Ugaily, a nursing student at York University who lives with Crohn’s is a user. She explains how she benefits:

“I moved to Toronto for university in 2022. I have the GoHere® app and used it when I first arrived and still do when I’m in an unfamiliar part of town. It helps me avoid issues and plan my day with more confidence because I can see at my fingertips where available washrooms are.”

## The results of the campaign were stunning:



**6,000%**  
increase in daily  
downloads of the  
GoHere app on  
November 26-27



**9,000+**  
social media  
engagements—likes,  
comments, shares—  
and an audience  
of 1+ million



**130**  
articles published  
with a potential  
audience reach of  
more than 27 million



# About GoHere®

The GoHere® app helps users find over 3,500 publicly available washrooms across Canada and has been downloaded more than 55,000 times. Find out more at [gohereapp.ca](http://gohereapp.ca).



# Drive System Change

**Manitoba and Ontario expand job-protected leave**

In November and December, the Manitoba and Ontario governments passed legislation providing employees up to 27 weeks of leave without fear of losing their job.

These changes align their job-protected leave policies of the federal government's extended Employment Insurance (EI) sickness benefits. We celebrate this change as a much-needed safety net protection for those who temporarily take time off work because of a serious illness like Crohn's or colitis.

When a person with Crohn's or colitis can no longer work as a result of their illness, they typically want to find a way to continue working. This change makes it easier for them to take the time off they need without fear of losing their job.

The issue has been when job-protected leave policies of provincial or territorial jurisdictions are less than the federal EI benefit period, those eligible to access the federal EI sickness benefits who do access them do so at the risk of losing their job unless provinces and territories create complementary legislation to protect their employment.

Provincial policy changes like these take time to be assessed and implemented. Crohn's and Colitis Canada was involved along the way to ensure the voice of those affected in our community was heard.

In Ontario, our team spoke at a round table event looking at this change in April and then made a submission as part of the consultation initiated by the Minister

of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development in May. In October, our team presented to Manitoba's Social and Economic Development Committee. We also provided a written submission to the committee.

Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia—through its own initiative—have now joined Quebec in providing job protected leave for those experiencing serious illness.

People with other serious health conditions also benefit from this policy change. That is why we worked with other health charities as part of a team advocacy effort to inform and educate elected officials about the importance of this change.

## Our advocacy by the numbers:



Met with **27** government officials to advocate for the needs of people affected by Crohn's and colitis



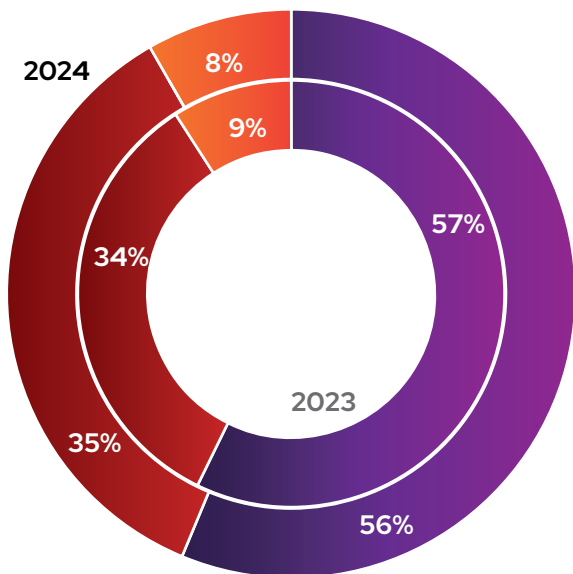
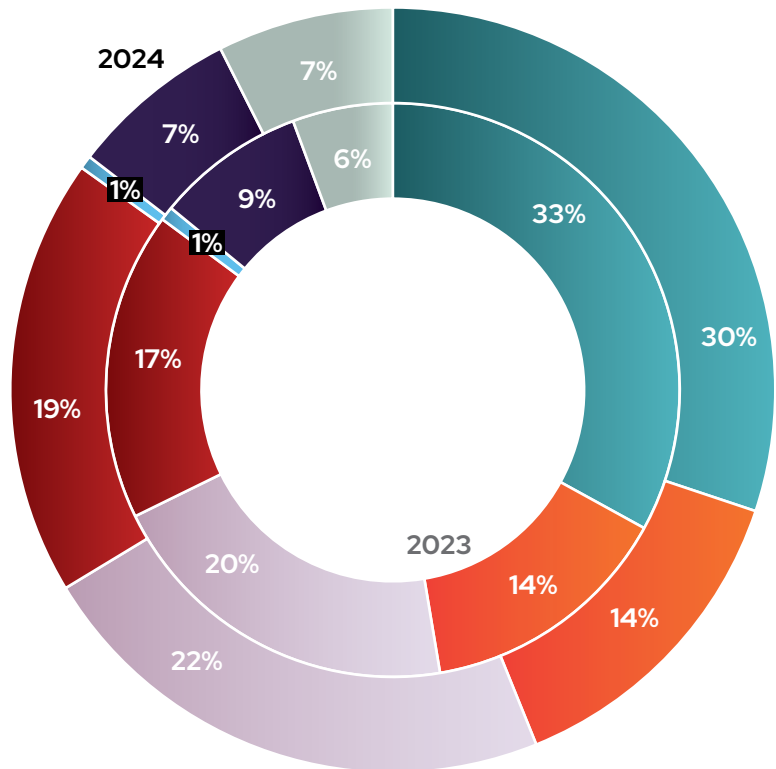
Provided the patient voice for **4** drug reviews, which were being reviewed by the Canadian Drug Agency on whether to recommend their listing for reimbursement by the provinces

# Financial highlights

Total 2024 Revenue: \$13.3 million

## Revenue Sources

- Corporate Philanthropy for Programs
- Annual and Workplace Giving
- Gutsy Walk
- Major Gifts
- Community Fundraising
- Investment
- Corporate Engagement



## Use of Funds

- Mission
- Fundraising
- General & Administration

# Thank you

We gratefully acknowledge donors who made a transformational gift, including donors who have chosen to remain anonymous. We are profoundly grateful for your support.

John, Dian,  
and Jennifer Bell

The Ross McMaster  
Memorial Fund

Federated Health  
Charities

The Lewis and Ruth  
Sherman Foundation

HealthPartners

TD Bank Group  
Ready Commitment



**DÉPART**

**gutsyenmarche.ca**  
pour Crohn et Colite Canada

**START**

**gutsywalk.ca**  
for Crohn's and Colitis Canada

“Most people associate philanthropy with financial support. To me, philanthropy encompasses giving through multiple facets including time, educating ourselves and advocacy, in addition to financial support.”

**Shannon Epstein**

Donor, volunteer, advocate

“Crohn’s and Colitis Canada has funded me for a number of years. I started off as a trainee, funded through a fellowship, and that’s the award that got me into studying IBD. That support allowed me to grow my research program. I’m very thankful for that support, it has actually changed my career.”

**Dr. Simon Hirota**

Researcher, University of Calgary

“Every year, family and friends get together to do Gutsy Walk, and it has become a family tradition. We are overjoyed to help this cause, which is not fully understood publicly, and be a part of the solution.”

**Sheldon Miller**

Gutsy Walk fundraiser for 20 years who has raised \$550,000 to date

“I discovered that Crohn’s and Colitis Canada is funding some of the most promising research in the world. This is why I decided to become a donor.”

**Pierette Dosanjh**

Donor

“I remember when I was diagnosed, I did not know where to turn. Crohn’s and Colitis Canada helped fill that void and made a scary diagnosis just a little easier to digest.”

**Darby Sieben**

Donor

crohn's  colitis

be a champion of hope  
to brave today and believe  
in tomorrow



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CANADA

The Standards Program Trustmark is a mark  
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by Crohn's and Colitis Canada.

To donate please  
call 1-800-387-1479 or visit [crohnsandcolitis.ca](http://crohnsandcolitis.ca)  
Follow us @getgutsycanada on



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