



INFORMED
OPINIONS

Annual Report

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024

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Promise to Reconciliation

Informed Opinions acknowledges that the territories on which we work are the homeland of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples who’ve lived here for millennia.

We recognize the genocidal policies implemented against Indigenous peoples by settlers and many elected governments acting on citizens’ behalf.

We profoundly regret that historical and contemporary policies continue to disenfranchise Indigenous communities.

We commit to ongoing education and reconciliation and to implementing measures in the context of our work that will help address the intergenerational trauma still playing out in this country.



We're a respected national charity at the forefront of bridging the gender gap in Canada's public conversations for 15 years.

Mission

Informed Opinions amplifies the voices of women and gender-diverse people to ensure their experiences, ideas and insights help shape a more equitable, inclusive and democratic Canada.

Vision

A Canada where the perspectives and priorities of women and gender-diverse people influence every important decision that gets made.

We were first to:



Develop training programs for women's public commentary writing



Build the first and only comprehensive online database of Canadian women and gender-diverse experts



Introduce a real-time analysis tool of how effectively Canadian news media represent gender diversity

Our Work



Training

We equip women and gender-diverse individuals with media and communication skills through specialized online and on-site workshops, boosting their confidence and strategic communications capacity to increase their profile and impact.



Keynotes

We deliver inspiring and informative presentations on topics such as gender equity, media representation, women's empowerment, and how change gets made.



Expert Database

We recruit and feature women and gender-diverse individuals in our comprehensive directory of more than 2,000 experts available for media inquiries and interviews, positioning them as go-to sources.



Research

Our innovative Gender Gap Tracker and Radar de Parité harness the power of AI to measure in real-time how well women's voices are represented in Canadian media.



Mona Ghiami

Chair's Message

Embedding equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) into every aspect of our work is fundamental to our mandate. To that end, this year, we introduced an anonymous EDIB benchmarking survey to help us ensure our board truly represents the diversity of the nation we serve, increasing our effectiveness.

Our newly established Governance Committee has focused on identifying strengths and gaps. We're actively seeking new members with diverse perspectives to enrich our discussions and strengthen our decisions.

Recognizing the importance of succession planning and leveraging our strong fiscal health, the board supported the Catalyst in recruiting a new senior colleague who will enhance our competencies and position Informed Opinions for long-term impact.

Finally, I was immensely proud to accept the Veritas Foundation's award to Informed Opinions alongside board colleague, Scott White. This recognition underscores the significant research we undertake in delivering on our mandate and advocating for systemic change.

We remain dedicated to amplifying diverse voices and driving meaningful impact in all that we do.



Shari Graydon

Catalyst's Message

I was mad. It was 2009 and I had counted up the number of columns and op-eds authored by women vs men in one of Canada's most influential newspapers to discover that women's voices represented less than a quarter of those featured.

Because I'd already been publishing and broadcasting commentary for almost two decades, I understood the benefits of having an amplified voice. My efforts had led to speaking invitations, board appointments and book contracts.

I believed Informed Opinions could give other women tools to open similar doors. And we have!

Thousands of those we've trained in workshops, featured in our database and amplified to journalists have shared their insights through thought leadership. In the process they've changed policies and influenced spending decisions.

But in search of systemic change, we've expanded and adapted our research, training and advocacy initiatives significantly in recent years. This report documents the progress we've made just in the past 12 months.

We're expanding our programming and impact in Quebec

This year we were delighted to recruit respected Montreal-based journalist Gabrielle Brassard-Lecours to lead our work in Quebec and French Canada more broadly. An early supporter of our database of Francophone experts, Gabrielle also participated last year on a panel we convened to launch the French counterpart to our Gender Gap Tracker, the Radar de parité.

Gabrielle's journalism has appeared in most Quebec publications and on major broadcast networks in the province. She led the Association des journalistes indépendants du Québec from 2018 to 2022, taught at Concordia University for three years, and co-founded Ricochet and Pivot Media, an independent online media cooperative delivering news and investigative reporting.

In her first six months with us, she has delivered training in both official languages to teachers, business professors and leaders, journalists and academics. She was the featured speaker at an internal Radio Canada event focusing on the importance and practicalities of diversifying sources. She also networked with universities and unions to amplify Femme Expertes' work in different events.

Together with journalist Katia Gaïd, Femmes Expertes' part-time communications officer, who promotes French-speaking experts from our database, Gabrielle will continue to expand the impact of our work in Quebec.

Gabrielle Brassard-Lecours, Director of Femmes Expertes



Gabrielle speaking at Radio Canada event

We're equipping experts with critical insights to share their knowledge more accessibly

From lawyers to PhD students, teachers to physicians, engineers to gender-based violence advocates... This year, Informed Opinions' facilitators supported a broad cross-section of experts in delivering more compelling thought leadership to reach and influence the Canadian public.

Of the 41 training sessions we delivered, eleven were open to individuals and 30 were booked by organizations from across sectors. Repeat clients dominated both cohorts – a testimony to the value they experience.

Participant evaluations make it clear: providing practical skills, tailored to clients' contexts and needs, and delivered in an engaging and supportive way helps them to achieve measurable results in their professional lives.



We taught them skills needed to...



Translate their insights into publishable commentary



Increase their ability to persuade others



Feel ready to relay key messages in media interviews



Enhance their capacity to engage and inspire an audience

...and their evaluations confirmed these outcomes:

100%

Feel better equipped to engage policy-makers than they were previously

100%

Feel better equipped to respond to interview requests than they did before the training

90%

Certain they would write commentary in the next three months to a year

Our grads and experts are shaping public conversations

Although the news and social media environment continues to evolve, legacy outlets still wield significant influence. Much of the content shared on social platforms incorporates or responds to stories they publish first.

Research finds that thought leadership in such vehicles can shape public opinion, impact government policies and influence spending.

This year, we featured another 82 new experts to our database of sources able to add value to public conversations on a growing range of topics.

The erosion of newsrooms continues to affect the number of journalists working in Canada and we saw a corresponding reduction in the reporters and producers who subscribe to our database of sources.

2,527
Database
Experts

1,730
Journalist
Subscribers

1,725
Media
engagements
amplified

We're giving journalists new insights to report on tough issues more responsibly

From the #MeToo movement to #BlackLivesMatter, many prominent stories have reinforced the importance of journalists bringing a nuanced understanding of complex social issues and how they intersect with gender.

Supported by funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada, we created a resource for practicing and aspiring journalists. The resulting online [Guide to Better Reporting Through a Gender Lens](#) offers practical insights, applied exercises and relevant current examples to encourage greater nuance and more responsible reporting.

We're making the guide available to newsrooms, journalism schools and freelancers for free, confident that the two hours of investment required to review the contents will deliver enhanced capacity to report on an increasingly diverse society.



“This should be a foundational course for all journalists.”

Kasia Mychajlowycz,
Special Project Producer,
The Globe & Mail



“I will absolutely recommend this course to my colleagues as well as students who are interested in journalistic approaches to their research and writing.”

Laila Ferreira,
Assistant Professor,
School of Journalism,
Writing and Media, UBC

We're equipping GBV advocates with tools to spread their message more broadly

Women advocating against gender-based violence have lots of reasons not to speak to journalists:

They're too busy with front-line service work or fundraising to keep shelter doors open... discouraged by persistent sexist frames and stereotypes that influence the questions they get asked and the headlines that result... and protective of the survivors they support.

We collaborated with the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children ([CREVAWC](#)) on media relations tips specially written with GBV advocates in mind. We were grateful to work with partners at the University of Western Ontario to **create a tailored resource to support 35,000 advocates.**



[Click here to view GBV Resource](#)





We're nurturing and inspiring young change-makers

“I want my daughters to experience this!”

That's what Calgary advocate, Hanita Simard thought upon participating in an Informed Opinions workshop back in 2018. Making Waves is the result. It encourages young women and gender-diverse people to see themselves as agents of change and involves them in an intergenerational community that supports them in becoming informed and exerting impact in the world.

Every element of Making Waves is created by, with, and for young people. The programming reflects the issues they most care about, from the climate crisis, LGBTQ2s+ rights and mental health, to housing, public education and women in politics.

Sponsored by the Calgary Foundation and Bennett Jones law firm, and supported by local volunteers and donors, this year's event featured panels of “wave-makers” speaking about the impact they had on critical issues by speaking up, and a collective strategy session for being heard by decision-makers.



"I'm just mad, and I didn't know what to do with my anger until Making Waves."

Young Wavemaker

"I wish I'd had Making Waves when I was young."

Multiple Adult Wavemakers

"Made me feel empowered and proud to share my opinion."

Young Wavemaker

We're mobilizing Canadians to insist on more equitable political representation

We complemented the research and thought leadership activities we invested in last year by focusing on more grassroots activity aimed at engaging citizens in direct action.

In the process, we formed alliances with 22 like-minded organizations that share our vision of the urgent need for elected bodies to more effectively represent the diversity of the people they serve.



We're making it easy for everyone to actively participate

Leading advocates joined us for a bilingual streamed event that offered diverse and compelling insights into why Canada must act to make politics more equitable, how other countries have made gains, and what difference doing so will make to tangible outcomes.

Supporters used an automated tool on our Balance the Power website to email their concerns and encouragements directly to municipal, provincial and federal representatives at once. And allies shared our toolkit of social media resources to amplify the campaign's insights online.



“A great event! Great speakers, lots of good information...Thanks for the great work you’re doing! This is an important initiative, and such a good launch!”

Bev Foy, Balance the Power launch participant

Our Board



Mona Ghiami
CHAIR

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion
and Belonging senior
strategist



Jennifer Laidlaw
TREASURER

Country Head,
30% Club



Mary Moran
CHAIR, GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEE

Strategist, Corporate Director
& Community Builder



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Julie Miville-Dechêne

Senator & former journalist



Evelyn Guidon

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Samira Levesque

Senior Consultant,
Rubicon Strategy



Dr. Nadia Naffi

Associate Professor, Chair in Educational
Leadership, Laval University

Our Team



Shari Graydon
CEO and Catalyst



Samantha Luchuk
Manager,
Administration & DEI



Mabel Weng
Communications
Officer



Jacky Habib
Media Workshops
Facilitator



Gabrielle-Brassard Lecours
Director of Femmes Expertes
& French
Workshops Facilitator



Katia Gaïd
Femmes Expertes
Media Engagement
Co-ordinator



Dawn Bowles
Director
Partnerships & Growth



Amanda Parriag
Policy Impact Workshop
Facilitator

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We are grateful to the people above for having financially supported our work this year, in addition to others who've done so anonymously.

Our Funders

Informed Opinions' work benefits from the generosity of many donors, large and small, who share our commitment to amplifying the voices of women and gender diverse people.

This year we are especially grateful to:

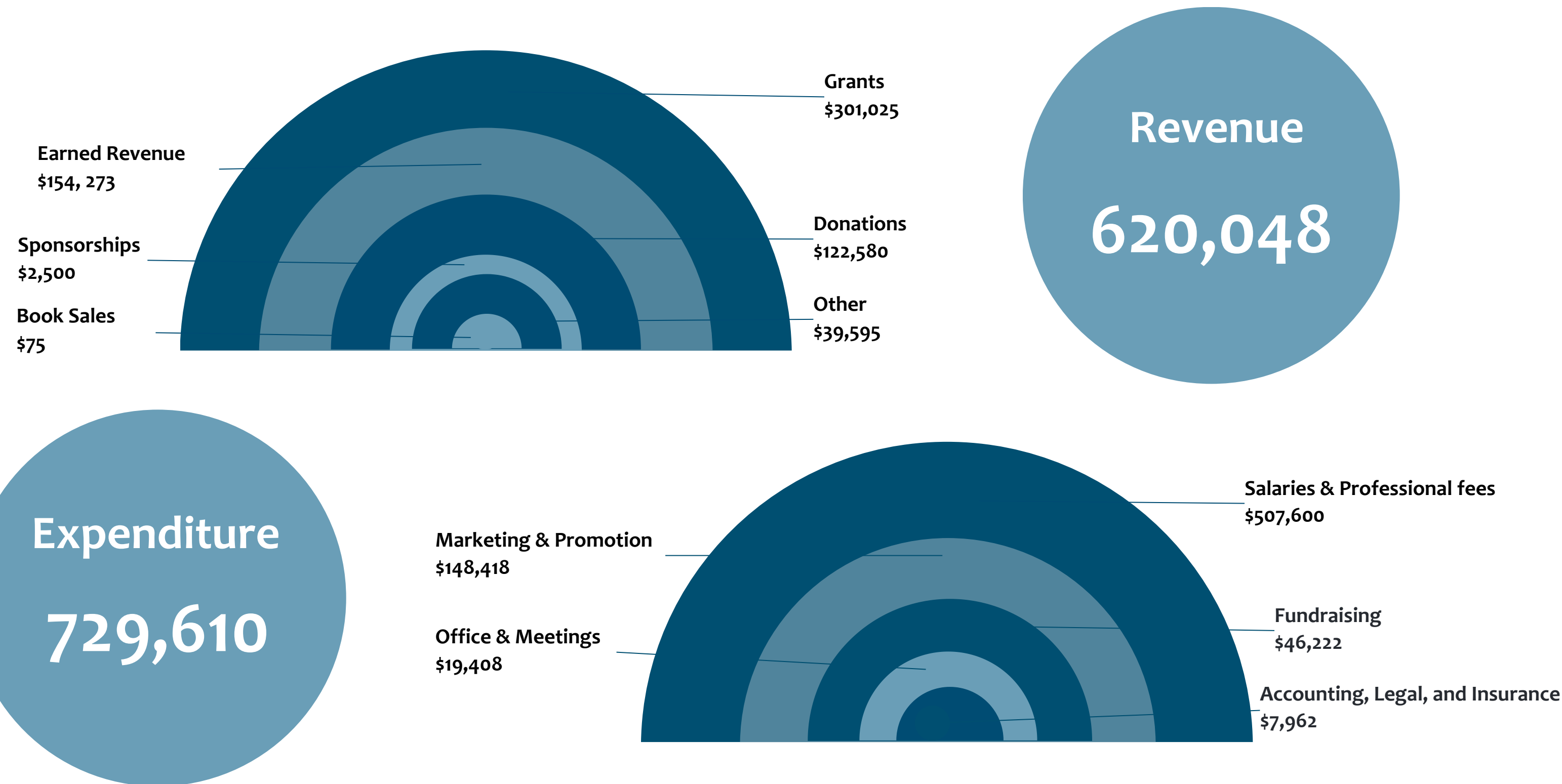


Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



Financial Overview



[Download Full Financial Report](#)



*Informed Opinions was founded in recognition of
the untapped value of the insights available from women
and gender diverse people across disciplines and sectors.
The amplification of their perspectives benefits us all.*

Our work is made possible through the generosity of our donors

As a mission-driven charity, all of Informed Opinions' service offerings support our aims and are developed and priced to be accessible to as many women and gender-diverse participants as possible. All revenue goes back into advancing gender equity in Canada.

[Donate Today.](#)

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