



**Bereaved Families of
Ontario - Toronto**

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Bereaved Families of Ontario - Toronto 2023 Annual Report



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Chair & Executive Director Message

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable journey we have undertaken together. In 2023, Bereaved Families of Ontario- Toronto continued to uphold its longstanding commitment to providing essential peer-based grief support to individuals and families throughout Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area.

Founded in 1978, Bereaved Families of Toronto has been a beacon of hope and healing for those navigating the complex landscape of grief. Over the past year, our dedicated team, volunteers, and supporters have worked tirelessly to ensure that our mission remains true and our impact heartfelt.

Amidst the challenges posed by the recovery from the global pandemic, our organization rose to the occasion this past year, adapting our programs and services to meet the evolving needs of our community. From peer support groups, one to one sessions and meaningful community events we remained consistent in our commitment to providing accessible and compassionate care and connection to all.

As we look to the future, we are inspired by the resilience and compassion of our community. Together, we remain committed to our mission of providing free, peer-based grief programming and events, ensuring that no one has to face their grief alone.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our donors, volunteers, partners, and supporters for their continued dedication and generosity. Through your unwavering generosity, we have been able to provide vital resources, programming, and community to those facing the profound challenges of grief.



With warm regards,

Sarah Garcia-Heller

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Allan Cole

CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Organization Overview

Our History

BFO-Toronto is the founding affiliate of Bereaved Families of Ontario, a provincial charitable organization, established in 1978 to support the grief a person, family, or group experiences from the death of a loved one. Now one of 10 affiliates, BFO-Toronto offers support within the city of Toronto.

Our Mission

Inspire hope and healing for those in grief through peer-to-peer support.

Our Vision

Create a community of support in the city of Toronto where no citizen is alone in their grief.

Our Report

This report documents BFO Toronto's work and impact through 2023. For more information about BFO Toronto please visit our website: www.bfotoronto.ca

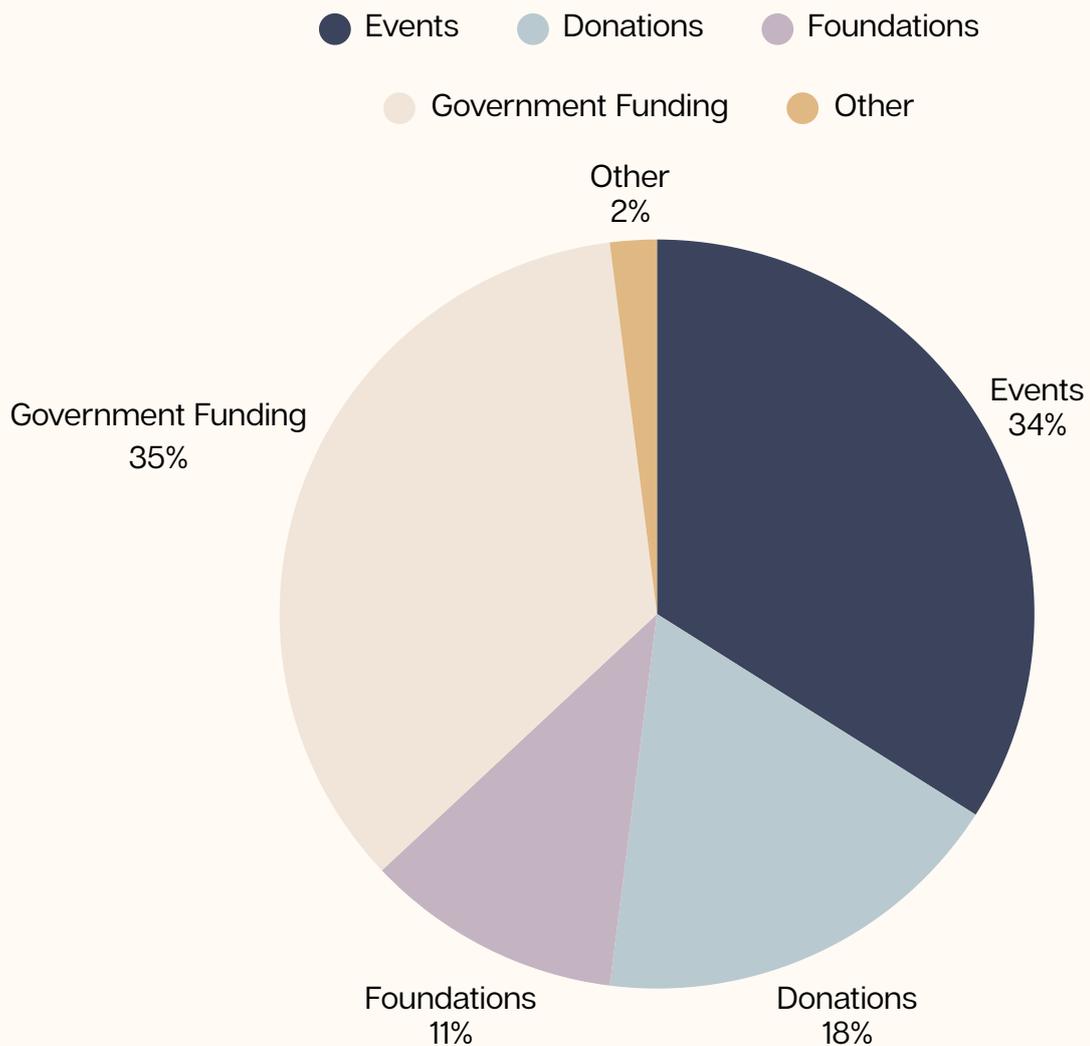


Financial Report

The following information explores the revenue and expenditures of BFO Toronto in 2023.

Total Revenue: \$357,601.66

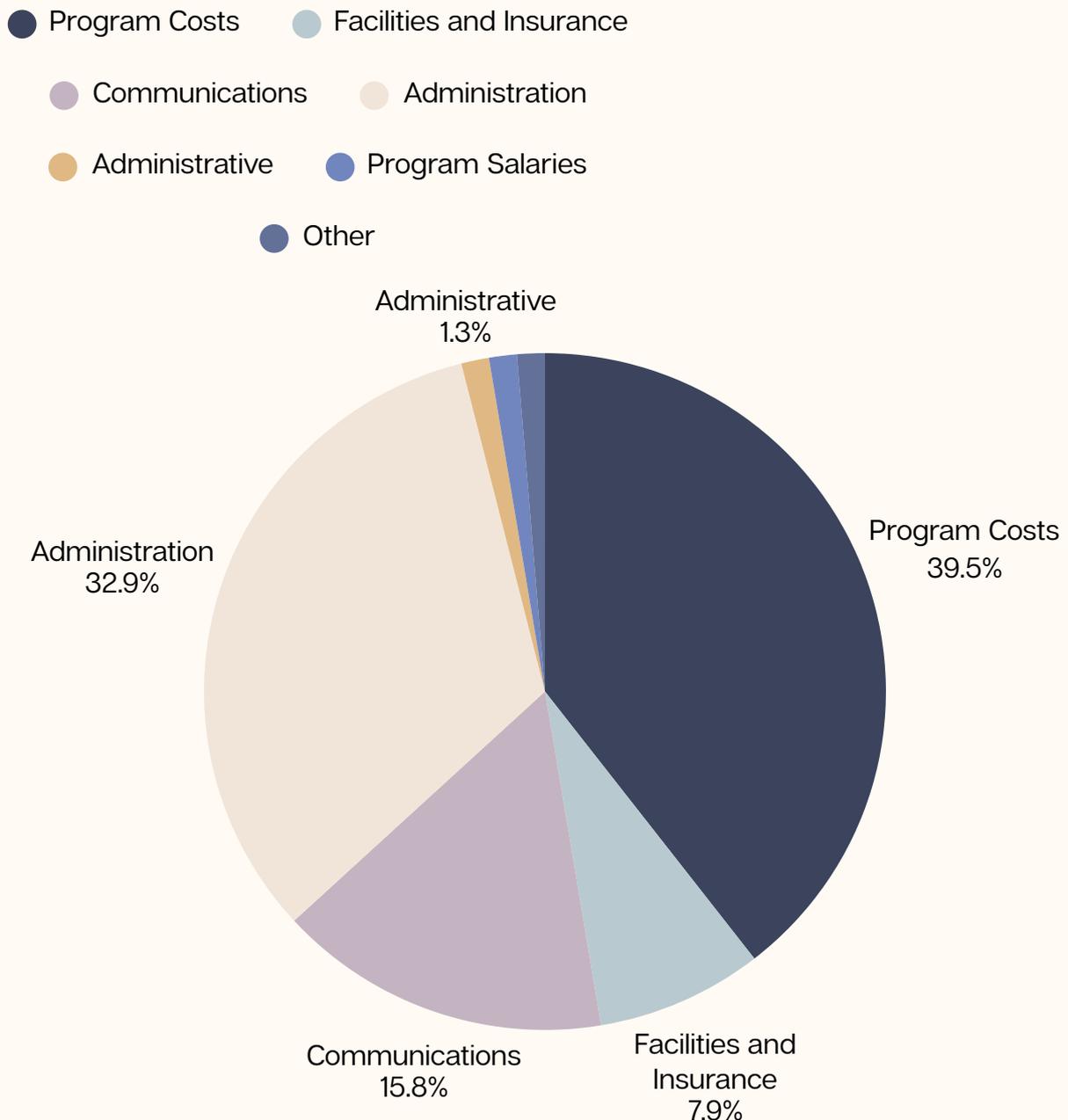
BFO Toronto was successful in maintaining revenue levels in 2023 and maintaining a resilient financial position. We continued to have generous support from both corporate and individual donors. Community and fundraising events contributed significantly while other income streams, including grants from municipal and provincial governments helped provide us with a solid foundation. Overall, the revenue is well-balanced and healthy providing stability and a good financial foundation for programs.



Financial Report

Total Expenditures: \$368,692.00

BFO Toronto had the support of several students and staff (permanent, contract and interim) over 2023 to help to meet the on-going demand for programming and administrative support. While our rent increased over this last year, it did so in a small increments and we expect that to continue for the duration of our lease. Being in this office has allowed for partnerships and collaboration that have reduced our overall expenses on facilities and space.





Impact Report

BFO Toronto’s reach and the need for its services continued to grow this past year. Between the end of 2022 and the end of 2023, enquiries for support had grown by 87% to over 2,750. The need for our services was apparent and we met it by expanding and increasing support groups, outreach activities and offering volunteer training 3 times over the course of 2023, resulting in 27 new volunteers for our organization. Together, we were able to support group participants within the GTA (90% of whom live in neighbourhood improvement areas).

	2020	2021	2022	2023	Growth from 2022 to 2023
Number of Enquiries for Support	847	1024	1466	2752	87%
Hours of Individual Support	335	544	668	913	36%
Number of Support Groups Held	197	270	313	568	81%
Number of Active Facilitators	87	112	119	130	9%

In 2023, we also began prioritizing our online communications by increasing our engagement on social media. The response has been very positive with many people finding our services through these channels and engaging with our posts online.

Total accounts reached on Instagram in 2023: **5.9K (+49.5% from 2022)**

Total accounts reached on Facebook in 2023: **11.9K (+121.8% from 2022)**

Total Instagram profile visits last year: **2.5K (+134% from 2022)**

Total Facebook profile visits last year: **2.7K (+263.6% from 2022)**

Number of new followers on Facebook last year: **109**

Number of new followers on Instagram last year: **192**

BFO Toronto 5K Memorial Walk and Silent Auction

This was the fourth annual Memorial Walk and silent auction and the second time partnering with the Centre for Grief and Healing (BFO Halton-Peel). The 5K Walk to Remember was held on September 30th at Lakeside Park in Mississauga. Approximately 200 community members attended the event on a beautiful fall day. We were happy to be able to offer a raffle, face painting by volunteer Rachelle Allen, beautiful wire art by volunteer Tom Shields as well as yoga sessions and a photo booth. Through individual, team and corporate sponsorship efforts, \$50,000 was raised to support our on-going efforts to provide much needed peer based grief support to others.



Photos by A. Yates photography



Trees of Light

2023 marked our 32nd Annual Trees of Light and we were able to return to the City Hall rotunda. Being able to gather again in person was truly special and we were thrilled to welcome back past and newer BFO-T community members and sponsors. The evening was filled with candle lighting, an opening ceremony from Elder Cindy White, music, and poetry and the unveiling of our 2023 Tree of life and light. We were fortunate to raise \$20,000 from this meaningful event. The trees remained up into the first week of January and were visited several times by family members and friends who were touched to find their loved ones tags.

Thank you to our Financial Supporters

BFO Toronto's vision is to create a community of support so no Torontonian is alone in their grief. To move towards this we need to provide a diversity of programs that are free of charge and accessible to all residents. This would not be possible without the support we received from foundations, government, corporations and generous individuals. We thank every one of them for their contribution this past year.

Platinum (Over \$20,000)

Darren Farwell and the Farwell Group
 - Scotia Wealth Management
 Parklawn Corporation
 Ontario Trillium Foundation
 City of Toronto

Gold (\$5,000-\$20,000)

Bereaved Families of Ontario
 Government of Canada
 RBC Foundation
 Mattamy Homes Limited
 Cormark Securities Inc.
 TD Corporate Citizenship
 National Bank
 Canaccord Genuity
 Allan Cole and McKinnon and Bowes

Silver (\$1,000-\$5,000)

Jay Branton and Dignity Memorial
 Arbor Memorial Inc
 New Haven Funeral Centre
 Muldoon's Coffee
 Barbara Gill-Lazroe
 BMO Nesbitt Burns
 E. Ann Westlake
 Evergreen Crematorium
 Waratah Capital Advisors
 Linden and Associates
 Jane Smart
 Lydia Novak
 Ralph Hicks

Bronze (Under \$1,000)

Every dollar donated contributes to the work we do. We are fortunate that there are too many individual donors to be named here. We thank you all!





Thank you to our Staff, Students and Volunteers

Thank you to our staff and students for their tireless work and dedication.

STAFF:

Amelia Chan
Ashley Mathew
Eve Kasakevich
Javier Espinoza
Nancy Howson
Sarah Garcia-Heller
Shweta Mishra
Sophia Yang
Sidney Davidson Muhammad
Taya Mikado

Claire Nyiti
Dan Rotstein
Dana Kousman
Dana Dodge
Derek Seguin
Diana Colangelo
Donald Eckler
Douglas Grynol
Elana Lewis
Emily Fu
Emma Foran
Farah Choudary
Geoff Sicilia
Grace Duong
Gilda Akler- Sefton
Gretchen Bingham
Ed Shawl
Georgette Marsh
Greg New
Gulshan Singh
Hana Snir
Heather Thompson
Heather Hewitt
Helene Vosters
Janet Shacter
Jason Smith
Jen Marini
Jenn Soutar
John Bacon
Judith McCaffery
Judy Kane
Judy Fantham
Julia Hu
Julian Greer- Oullette
Juno Zavitz
Karen Crowell-Neufeld
Karima Joy
Kayla Gumiran
Kelly Broadhurst
Kevin Chen
Khadija Ismail

Larry Konyu
Laura Durrant
Laura Foran
Laurie Taniguchi
Lesley Parrott
Lily Leung
Lisa Bontje
Lish Francoeur
Lori- Ives-Baine
Lynn Humphries
Magdalena Diaz
Margot Marcus
Marigold Kingrey
Marlee Novak
Martha Kryvonis
Michael Lum
Michael Loader
Michael MacKenzie
Michael Chiu
Monica Vera
Moody Shabeeb
Myrna Talbot
Nancy Shortell
Natalia Rotondo
Natasha Eck
Nicole Farrel
Oonagh Reeve
Patrick De Belen
Peggy-Gail DeHal Gunraj
Philip Jessop
Qaid Silk
Rachelle Allen
Rebecca O'Toole
Rena Arshinoff
Ryan Kram
Sandra Turner
Sanjay Yagnik
Sany Guest
Sara Peat
Shetuji Daulah
Shelley Challenger

Sophie Blaikie-Sloan
Tanya Barbon
Taya Mikado
Tom Shields
Tyler Mathers

STUDENTS:

Krishna Goswami
Makaela Burton

VOLUNTEERS:

Aimee Bruner
Allan Cole
Alyson Robertson
Amy MacFarlane
Abigail D'Souza
Ali Wise
Alyssa Kryger
Allison Earl
Amy Manisov
Andrea Prescott-Cornejo
Andrew Chunoo
Aaron Nielson-Belman
Arienne Reid
Arielle Sugarman
Barbara Gill-Lazroe
Benjamin Thorek
Brendan Burke
Cammie Szorady
Cari Ferguson
Carmit Kordov
Christine Raissis

What's in Store for 2024

In 2023 we focussed on stability and growth in the areas staffing, programs, partnerships, organizational capacity building and volunteer engagement. We continued to offer programs and services both online and in person ensuring as wide a reach as possible.

This past year we worked on an ambitious three-year strategic plan called “How to Thicken the Ice” or how to solidify our foundation. Looking ahead to 2024 our top three challenges are staffing expansion and overall stability, improving database management and metrics, and securing additional Board members with deep knowledge of fund development and programming.

As we reflect on our achievements in 2023 and embark on the journey into 2024, we are optimistic about our ability to tackle our top three challenges head-on, propelled by our steadfast commitment to stability, innovation, and community impact.



Volunteer Opportunities

BFO Toronto consistently receives recognition from participants and funders alike, who acknowledge our remarkable impact, especially considering our size. The driving force behind this success lies in our dedicated volunteers. Our volunteers derive fulfilment from their contributions and foster a sense of community among their peers. While the role of a volunteer facilitator is often highlighted, there are numerous other opportunities available! We welcome individuals who are eager to join our team and lend their talents and invite you to reach out to us.

Board & Committee Members

BFO Toronto has a working board and the expectation is the same of each committee. Our Board and Committees are made up of individuals with a variety of professional skills and personal experiences who roll up their sleeves and help take fundraising, events, and programs forward. The Board and Committees meet monthly. We are often looking for new members so if this interests you, please keep an eye out for opportunities via our newsletter or social media.

Volunteer Facilitators

Peer volunteer facilitators participate in a 25-hour training program that provides information on grief, mental health and self care, as well as exercises to develop skills in active listening, conflict management, and communication. Our trained facilitators provide one-to-one support and group facilitation. To ensure that we can effectively support grieving Torontonians we welcome peer volunteers with lived experience.

Event Volunteers

Our three flagship events allow over 500 people to honour their loved ones. This year they are targeted to raise over \$80,000, allowing us to deliver our services free of charge. There is always a team of volunteers behind these events to make them a success! Get in touch to find out more about everything from finding sponsors to event planning to mailing out packages.



Support BFO Toronto

BFO Toronto is able to provide its service free of charge in large part due to financial support that comes from our community and we are so incredibly grateful for those that consider giving in one of the following ways :

- **One-time donation through our website or by phoning the office**
 - **Monthly donation to help us plan for the year ahead**
 - **Workplace matching donation programs**
 - **Purchase a dove or butterfly tag in honour of their loved one(s) at one of our annual events**
-

Participate in our Walk to Remember

Participate on your own or start a team in memory of your loved one. It is a beautiful day with friends, family or coworkers and the BFO-community at-large. This has the added bonus of letting more people know about BFO Toronto!

Donations In-Kind

BFO Toronto welcomes donations that can either be prizes at events or as a part of our silent auction. This could be a gift card from a favourite local business, a product that has been purchased or procured through a workplace, or a service that can be donated. Programming & office supplies and snacks are always a welcome addition as well.

Introduce Us!

BFO Toronto is keen to build sustainable corporate support. This might be through donations, sponsorships or partnerships. If you work for, or have a connection with a company that you think might be interested, please consider making an introduction. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Sarah Garcia-Heller at sarah@bfotoronto.ca.

Engage with Us Online

Follow our social media accounts and engage with us online to spread information about our organization and events!

Scan for Socials



Sharing Our Impact

"I remember loving coming to the group because I was surrounded by kids with similar experiences. In other parts of my life, I was the "odd one out" but at BFO I was normal. This group really helped me talk about and express my feelings surrounding grief. Twenty years later, I still have fond memories of the group."

"I think it's so important to have groups like these, to connect to people going through similar journeys, and ultimately to learn how to grow after grief."

-

"My mother died of cancer when I was 27 years old. I was completely blindsided by my grief and didn't know how to process all that I was feeling at the time. I can now honestly say that BFO Toronto changed my life. Each week, I slowly worked through my grief with a group of like-minded strangers in an authentic and judgement free space, and together we moved through the process of accepting great loss in our lives. BFO Toronto offered me a safe haven when I needed it most, and I will be forever thankful to the volunteers and my courageous group for their compassion and humility."

"Validation, companionship and strength: I would have struggled to find these grief management tools without my BFO support group. Even though we met virtually, my support group was a safe space where I didn't have to be brave for my kids. The faces on the screen became friends and my grief became a journey I wasn't making alone."

"The power of shared experience cannot be underestimated... just hearing my group members express sentiments that resonated with me had the same effect on my stress levels as getting a hug from a friend"

"We cried, laughed and asked each other the hard questions without fear of judgment. Having this outlet allowed me to more effectively parent my daughters through their grief and steer our family through that first year of loss. Three years later, I can still tell members of my group when I'm having a bad day and I know that they understand what I mean. I am incredibly grateful to Bereaved Families of Ontario for helping me move forwards through my grief and live the life that my husband would have wanted for me."



Thank you for reading the

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2023 Annual Report



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