

Annual Report

April 2022—March 2023



**Pollution
Probe**

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About Pollution Probe



Pollution Probe is a Canadian charitable environmental organization (Charitable **BN 108092701 RR0001**) founded in September 1969 by University of Toronto students and professors.

Over the past 5 decades, Pollution Probe has been at the forefront of progress on a range of environmental issues. Progress on many of these issues took decades of hard work to achieve.

We pursue environmental gains by working productively with governments, industry, and the public, with a steadfast commitment to **Clean Air, Clean Water, and a Healthy Planet**.

We engage people as thinkers to nurture and act on areas of consensus. Our niche in the environmental movement lies in our **systems approach**, which embraces three principal drivers for progress:

- > TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
- > RULEMAKING
- > BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

Our Vision

Canada is a place where all people live, work, and prosper in harmony with a healthy environment.

Our Mission

To find substantive and enduring solutions to pressing environmental issues.

Our Values

We are non-partisan and non-ideological and operate as follows:

- Use sound science
- Engage in productive partnerships
- Foster and facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration
- Listen respectfully and learn from others
- Seek solutions that are fair and equitable for all Canadians
- Maintain our independence in defending human health and the natural environment



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INTERNS 2022-2023

Daniella Mikanovsky – Research and Project Intern

Marc Saleh – Research and Project Intern



Statement from the Chief Executive Officer

2022-23 has been one of the most productive years in Pollution Probe's history. There are successes to celebrate, and to build upon.

The Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup, already the largest initiative of its kind in the world, expanded to 138 sites and more than 100 collaborators on both the Canadian and American sides of the Great Lakes. It is piloting new technologies, removing plastic debris, collecting valuable data, engaging people, and influencing policy and industry behaviour.

We advanced work on Canada's nutrient pollution challenges by mapping the phosphorus economies of both British Columbia and Quebec. In addition, Pollution Probe took the first step to establish a national nutrient recovery and reuse platform, including regional hubs to advance nutrient technology, policies, and practices in Canada.

Building on the learnings from our recent work on environmental equity, Pollution Probe released *Justice and Power: The Importance of Equity in the Energy Transition*, a critical component in the move to a net-zero energy system.

We successfully intervened at the Ontario Energy Board and helped stop a \$123.7-million proposed natural gas pipeline replacement project in Ottawa.

Providing more options for public charging is one of the best ways to accelerate EV adoption. Pollution Probe continues to be a leader in this space, adding roughly 200 new charging stations to Canada's EV charging network during the first half of the year.



To tackle climate change, air pollution, and children's health, Pollution Probe is focusing its attention on the iconic yellow school bus. We released our widely anticipated *Ontario Electric School Bus Strategy* and launched Calgary's first-ever electric school bus pilot project.

On the Great Lakes front, Pollution Probe used the 50th anniversary of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and Great Lakes Day on the Hill to advocate for increased funding and adequate protections from invasive species, pollution, and other stressors.

These are just a few of our 2022/23 successes. You will find many more in this report. Taken collectively, they result in an enduring, positive contribution to the environment and our well-being.

There is still a lot of work ahead of us. With your support, we will continue to make a difference.

As always, take good care of yourselves and one another. Thank you for your continued support of Pollution Probe.

Christopher Hilken, Chief Executive Officer



PROGRAMS | **Circular Economy**



Nutrient Recovery and Reuse in Canada

Phosphorus, nitrogen, and carbon are vital to all life, but their mismanagement can lead to considerable environmental, social and economic impacts. Nutrient pollution has been described as one of the most widespread, expensive and challenging environmental issues to address.

Excess phosphorus and nitrogen in the environment contribute to the overgrowth of algae, adversely affecting drinking water supplies and ecosystems by altering aquatic food chains, producing toxins, decreasing water transparency, and impacting fish populations and recreational opportunities. At the same time, carbon emitted into the atmosphere contributes directly to climate impacts.

In 2021, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) provided funding for Pollution Probe to lead the first provincial

study of how phosphorus is used and its movement through Ontario's economy. This year, similar studies were conducted in two additional provinces, Québec and British Columbia. This research is a necessary first step for informing further discussions about the role for nutrient recovery and reuse technologies and solutions in nutrient management strategies.

In addition to the reports, Pollution Probe has taken further steps towards establishing a national nutrient recovery and reuse platform, including the development of strategic objectives for its regional hubs. The platform will aim to bring together a range of stakeholders including governments, industry, academia and environmental not-for-profit organizations by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices related to nutrient recovery and reuse, and the advancement of technology, policies and practices in a Canadian context.

Engaging the Community in Plastic Cleanup

With generous support from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks, Pollution Probe has been able to significantly grow the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup, a joint initiative with the Council of the Great Lakes Region that combines the deployment of plastic capture technologies, the collection of critical data and the engagement of local communities. This year saw new additions to the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup team with Community Engagement Coordinators stationed in locations of interest across the Canadian side of the lakes to increase data collection and engagement efforts. Through the coordinators' immense efforts, the amount of data collected increased significantly, contributing to a much greater understanding of the types and sources of plastic found across the Great Lakes.

Highlights from this year include the expansion of the network to include a total of 80 sites and more than 90 collaborators across the binational Great Lakes. This extensive network piloted new technologies and collected an impressive 600+ data submissions, pointing to 58,000+ pieces of plastic debris removed from the lakes, including plastic bottles, cigarette butts, and food wrappers. We know that the devices are collecting debris even on days when data is not reported, meaning that the amount of plastic they remove is actually far greater. The top three categories of debris collected were small foam, small hard fragments, and small film pieces. More than 20 volunteer waste characterization events were convened in local communities and through attendance at a wide range of events the initiative engaged over 1,500 people.



[Check out the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup website for more information](#)

Reimagining Plastic Waste at the Toronto Zoo

Pollution Probe partnered with The Toronto Zoo and GreenMantra on a new interactive "Plastics Pathway" for the more than 1.2 million people who visit the Zoo annually. Made possible through support from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the experience takes visitors on a journey along the plastics value chain, highlighting it can be a beneficial resource when treated responsibly each step of the way. The Honourable David Piccini, Ontario Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and MPP for Scarborough-Rouge Park, Vijay Thanigasalam joined the team to launch the initiative and for a tour of just some of the pathway elements.

The Pathway showcases important efforts underway to address plastic in the environment and educates about the need to transition to a more circular approach to their use. It includes educational displays and activities that inform how everyone can help reduce plastic pollution, and real-life examples of hard-to-recycle plastics that have been transformed into valuable products.

[Read more about the Plastics Pathway here.](#)

Ontario's Provincial Day of Action on Litter

On Tuesday, May 17, 2022, Pollution Probe celebrated the third annual Provincial Day of Action on Litter! Ontario's annual event encourages individuals, students, municipalities, and businesses across the province to work together to raise awareness about the impacts of litter and waste by participating in a litter cleanup. Learn more about this province-wide cleanup using the hashtag on Twitter [#actONlitter](#).

Circular Economy Events

This past Spring, Pollution Probe celebrated Earth Day at Downsview Park, promoting our circular economy and water work while also providing supplies for a local litter clean up. We were honoured to be a part of the Big Canoe Project's evening at Meaford Town Hall with special guest and professional explorer, Adam Shoalts. The organization was also part of the Cherry Beach Blossom Festival, a gathering organized by the Shoreline Revival Group, and the Kingston Waters Cleanup alongside friends Swim Drink Fish, the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes, and Neptune Salacias Diving. This extraordinary underwater and shoreline cleanup presents a remarkable opportunity to actively engage with the community and to create a positive impact together.



PROGRAMS | Energy



Promoting net-zero innovation

To get to net-zero target we need to change our energy systems. This will require innovation not only in technology but also innovation in new business opportunities and new ways of selling and organizing our energy systems.

As part of our Innovation Sandbox's initiative, and in partnership with QUEST Canada, we provided [recommendations to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia on how to accelerate low-carbon energy innovation](#). The recommendations followed from a series of interactive workshops in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia that brought together regulators, policymakers, utilities, industry associations and academics from across the provinces to both explore the barriers to energy innovation in each province and to collaboratively design Innovation Sandboxes for their respective jurisdictions.

Our Innovation Sandboxes initiative is now complete. But from that initiative we learned that regulation is not the only barrier, and there was more Canada needs to work on. As a result, Pollution Probe and QUEST Canada launched a new Low Carbon Energy Innovation Project that extends and builds on the success of the Innovation Sandboxes initiative. This new three-year project will look at how we can create the necessary regulatory, policy, and market conditions for deploying low-carbon innovation in Canada.

Innovative Solutions for Industrial Heat

Achieving Canada's 2050 net-zero target will require all sectors to have a pathway for full decarbonization. Given Canada's resource-based industrial structure, achieving net-zero emissions poses an enormous challenge for many sectors that require high temperature heat. It is a challenge so pressing that we need to consider all potential options that could help achieve Canada's net-zero emissions target. While policymakers or the public may not support any given option in the end, it is important that the options be examined and discussed.

Small modular reactors (SMRs) have been proposed by the federal government and by four provincial governments as a technological option to help in Canada's decarbonization efforts. Pollution Probe believes it is in the public interest to consider all potential options that could help achieve Canada's net-zero emissions target. To understand how SMRs could contribute to Canada's decarbonization, Pollution Probe commissioned modelling on their potential roles and impacts in industrial decarbonization and then convened a workshop that engaged a range of industries which might use SMRs to reduce their GHG emissions. Our report, [Potential of Small Modular Reactors in Hard-to-Decarbonize Industries](#), highlights many of the learnings from the modelling and workshop.

Working with Communities to Achieve Equitable Energy Future

Communities will be key to achieving the low-carbon energy future Canada needs. But communities and municipalities often do not have the resources or capacity to achieve the ambitious goal in the Community Energy Plans. It is crucial that communities are able to meet their energy needs to ensure that everyone has equitable access to a clean energy future. To assist communities in achieving their targets, Pollution Probe and QUEST Canada released our [Advancing Community Energy Planning Alignment & Implementation Framework for Ontario](#). The Framework, which was covered in Energy Manager Canada magazine, is intended to assist communities in implementing their energy or climate plan by providing an integrated approach that communities can use to align local stakeholders in achieving their community energy and emission goals, supporting them in the transition to net zero.

We also need to think about how we can ensure that no one is left behind. Pollution Probe looked at how we can achieve a more equitable low-carbon energy transition in a report, [Justice and Power: The Importance of Equity in the Energy Transition](#). An equitable transition is becoming a critical component of the move to a net-zero energy system.

PARTICIPATING IN DECISION-MAKING

Not all our work is in the public eye, and we often work behind the scenes advancing community interests and reducing emissions from our energy systems. This year, as a part of our Energy program, Pollution Probe was part of a group at the Ontario Energy Board, the energy regulator that successfully intervened against a \$123.7-million proposed gas pipeline replacement project in Ottawa, the [St. Laurent](#) pipeline. This decision has sent ripples throughout the province's energy sector, as this is the first pipeline project that the Ontario Energy Board has rejected on the grounds that the city of Ottawa expects to emit less greenhouse gas in the future.

Pollution Probe regularly intervenes at the Ontario Energy Board, and elsewhere, where we can help provide new perspectives and information so that the best decisions can be made. We are also frequent contributors to government consultations, including on the providing new perspectives on hydrogen development and energy planning in Ontario.



PROGRAMS | **Transportation**

Supporting new EV charging stations, calculating the climate impacts of teleworking, and driving adoption of electric school buses



In April, Pollution Probe released a report detailing findings from a first-of-its-kind national survey of EV owners on their experiences using public charging infrastructure. [The report](#) was profiled by national and local news media outlets and shared with thousands of EV owners and stakeholders across the country. The findings and recommendations from this effort will influence policies and best practices on EV charging station deployment for years to come. Probe also hopes to conduct similar surveys in future years, to keep tabs on what is and is not working well from the perspective of Canadian EV owners.

Pollution Probe continues to serve as one of the third-party delivery organizations providing funding through Natural Resources Canada's [Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program](#) (ZEVIP). This funding covers up to 50 per cent of the purchase and installation costs of [new EV charging stations](#) at a wide range of eligible locations across the country. In the first half of 2022, Probe's program supported the installation of roughly 200 new charging stations. Providing more options for public charging has been proven to be one of the best ways to accelerate EV adoption.

Our transportation team is also leading a project on behalf of the City of Toronto that will assess and quantify the climate impacts of teleworking for the City's more than 30,000 staff. An all-staff commuting and teleworking survey was conducted in June and will provide the data needed to calculate potential GHG (greenhouse gas) benefits from teleworking in the GTHA (Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area) region.

Our team is also working to advance the adoption of electric school buses (ESBs) in Ontario through the development of a provincial ESB Strategy. This work has gathered emerging evidence on the environmental, human health, and economic impacts of ESBs in an Ontario context, and provided actionable advice to leading decision-makers in the sector such as school boards, school bus fleets, bus and battery manufacturers, and government.

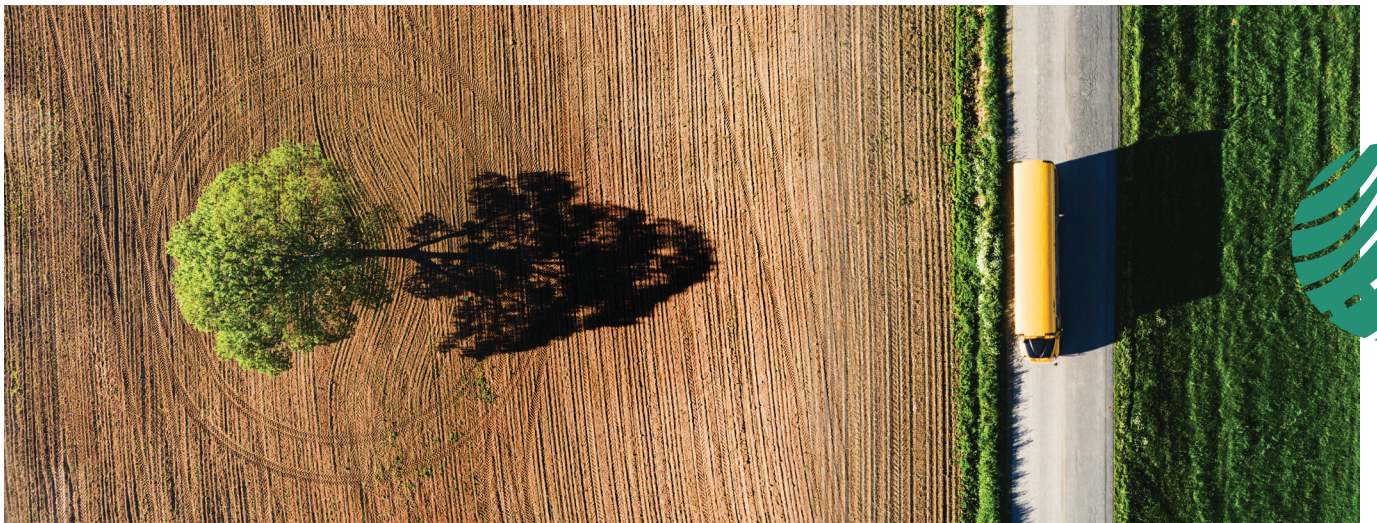
Overall, the thrust of our transportation program continues to be filling knowledge gaps to accelerate efforts to achieve a net-zero national transportation network by 2050. We know this is possible. We also know there are many challenges that need to be overcome to get there. By working collaboratively with all key stakeholder groups, from government, industry, academia, and the public, we are developing and implementing solutions that are aggressive yet practical, ambitious yet achievable, and that will ultimately make Canada a more sustainable, vibrant, and prosperous place to call home.

Launching first ever electric school bus (ESB) pilot project in the City of Calgary

Pollution Probe and its partners launched the first ever electric school bus (ESB) pilot project in the City of Calgary. The project has involved monitoring key performance and cost data from the ESB as it is used in regular service over the course of the school year. Outputs will include a business case for ESBs in Canada, a technical brief for school bus fleets, and a research report. Piloting ESBs in real-world conditions is a logical next step to complement our research into ESB costs, environmental impacts, and human health benefits. Our team is excited to have worked with school bus fleet operator Southland Transportation in Calgary and would like to thank project funders at the Alberta Ecotrust Foundation and Scotiabank Net Zero Research Fund for their support. We look forward to releasing findings from this pilot.

Riding the Rails Towards Net Zero

Rail has always been a highly effective method of transportation. But now is the time to go further with rail's decarbonization efforts to meaningfully contribute to Canada's GHG reduction goals. Pollution Probe, the Railway Association of Canada and the Delphi Group have created the ["Rail Pathways Initiative – Developing a Rail Decarbonization Roadmap for Canada,"](#) which lays out a clear path forward in rail decarbonization efforts. Read the full story [here](#).



PROGRAMS | Water



Improving Watershed Management

This year, we reached a major milestone with the completion of a working prototype of a novel solution that leverages big data and machine learning to support an enhanced approach to watershed management and adaptive decision-making in watersheds. Made possible through generous support from the RBC Tech for Nature program, this innovative watershed management solution is being developed as part of a multi-year project led by Pollution Probe and the Council of the Great Lakes Region.

Watersheds in the Great Lakes Basin and around the world are facing increasing pressures from population growth, economic development, pollution, and a rapidly changing climate. Pressing socioeconomic and environmental challenges are growing at a rate that often outpaces our ability to understand them. Decision-makers face challenges in predicting the complexities and unintended consequences of development and in making timely decisions to reconcile growth, prosperity, individual well-being, and environmental protection. The DeX-Terity platform will enable decision-makers

in public and private sectors to develop unique hindsight, insight, and foresight into the complexities of watershed health, contributing to informed protection of watersheds and promoting sustainable development by cities and industries through proactive, evidence-based policies and planning.

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

April 15, 2022 marked the 50th anniversary of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) — a binational framework to coordinate efforts to manage and protect the Great Lakes, signed by Canada and the U.S. in 1972. The Agreement's purpose is to “restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Waters of the Great Lakes.” Pollution Probe has a legacy of working to advance progress on the GLWQA's objectives. Most recently, the organization completed a comprehensive review of the current and previous versions of the Agreement for the International Joint Commission's Great Lakes Water Quality Board 50th Anniversary Work Group. The findings of the report and its recommendations informed the

discussions at the 2022 Great Lakes Public Forum and focused on the state of the lakes, progress made under the Agreement and proposed priorities to guide science and action over the next three years.

Engaging Youth on Plastic Pollution

Secondary students from across Ontario participated at the 2022 Lake Ontario Student Conference at East Beach in Port Hope, hosted by Ganaraska Conservation Authority and Curve Lake First Nation. Participants spent the day learning about the Great Lakes, conservation, and stewardship. Pollution Probe met students on the beach to discuss plastic capture technology and how they can contribute to ending plastic pollution in local waterways and the environment. Participants learned about macro- and microplastics, and even got to sort through plastic waste collected by Seabins installed at a marina participating in the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup. Encouraging stewardship of the Great Lakes through hands-on opportunities can empower individuals and communities to take action and make the connection between their daily lives and pollution in their local environment!

Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Day on the Hill

In May 2022, Pollution Probe co-hosted the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Day on the Hill with the Council of the Great Lakes Region, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, Invasive Species Centre and the Ontario Commercial Fisheries Association. The organization participated in a series of roundtables with MPs and political staff to discuss important issues, including the federal government's election promise to invest \$1 billion over 10 years to protect and restore large lakes and river systems, with a priority focus on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

An evening reception was also held, providing an opportunity to further engage MPs and political staff, including those from the office of the Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change. To support these important discussions, the coalition developed a set of Shared Priorities for the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River that highlighted the need for improved binational collaboration, enhanced coordination of domestic freshwater management, increased funding and adequate protections from invasive species, pollution, and other stressors.

Flame Retardants in Tents in Canada

Flame retardants are used with the intent of slowing the spread of fire in various materials such as clothing, furniture, construction materials, and camping equipment. However, mounting evidence has linked these chemicals to harmful effects on the environment and human health. To address this issue, Pollution Probe is working to improve public knowledge around flame retardants and their use in camping tents in Canada.

This January, the organization convened an information and engagement session on flame retardants in tents, bringing together representatives from academia, environmental NGOs, health professionals, researchers, and the outdoor industry. The purpose of the session was to increase engagement on the issue and to discuss potential amendments being made to the federal government's *Tents Regulations*, which will have an impact on flame retardant use. Outcomes from the session will inform the development of a public engagement campaign on flame retardants on tents.



Events



POLLUTION PROBE CONFERENCE & GALA

In Canada and around the world, there are many examples of progress being made to tackle issues like climate change, clean energy, transportation decarbonization and plastic pollution. We still have a long way to go, however, on our journey to a net-zero circular economy and a greener future. In this era of disruption and rapid change, how can Canada position itself to address emerging challenges and leverage opportunities for continual environmental gains?

Our 2022 Gala & Conference offered participants a chance to reflect on environmental achievements and challenges over the past year and how we can keep environmental issues at the forefront of everyone's agendas.

The Pollution Probe Award Recipient

A highlight of our annual gala is the Pollution Probe Award, which celebrates the extraordinary achievements of individuals or organizations working toward positive, tangible environmental change. This year, we were delighted to present the Award to Edward Burtynsky - one of the world's most accomplished contemporary photographers. His remarkable photographic depictions of global industrial landscapes represent over 40 years of his dedication to bearing witness to the impact of humans on the planet. Burtynsky's photographs are included in the collections of over 80 major museums around the world.

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Support Pollution Probe Today!

By giving your financial support to Pollution Probe, you join thousands of committed Canadians who are helping to ensure that clean air and clean water remain high on our national agenda.

Here are the different ways you can choose to give:

- > Join the **Environmental Protection Team** by making pre-authorized monthly contributions to provide ongoing financial support.
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- > **Preserve the Future** by leaving your own legacy to the environment by supporting an organization that you know and trust **Give a Gift of Securities** and pay no capital gains tax. Securities must be transferred, not first cashed in, to be eligible for this tax benefit.
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- > **DONATE A CAR CANADA** accepts vehicle donations for Pollution Probe. Donate your old car and we will gratefully send you a tax receipt.
- > **Donate in Someone's Name** to celebrate a special occasion or to honour the memory of a special person.

WEBSITE: www.pollutionprobe.org/donation

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Financial Information

The Pollution Probe Foundation

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

March 31

	2023	2022
Assets		
Current	\$3,641,392	\$2,098,835
Capital Assets	85,432	110,282
	\$3,726,824	\$2,209,117
Liabilities		
Current	\$2,936,623	\$1,846,478
Loan Payable	40,000	40,000
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	400,201	122,639
Reserve fund	350,000	200,000
	\$3,726,824	\$2,209,117

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

Year ended March 31

	2023	2022
Revenues		
Program contributions	\$4,257,256	2,517,470
Donations and other income	464,255	425,699
Total revenues	4,721,511	2,943,169
Total Expenses	4,293,949	2,760,874
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$427,562	\$182,295

The presentation of the fiscal 2022/2023 Condensed Statement of Financial Position and Condensed Statement of Operations is derived from the Audited Statements of The Pollution Probe Foundation, as audited by Welch LLP.

Complete audited financial statements, including related notes to the financial statements, are available on Pollution Probe's website.

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Our charitable registration number is 10809 2701 RR0001