



Annual Report

April 2023—March 2024



**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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Statement from the Chief Executive Officer

The 2023-24 year was another productive one for Pollution Probe. I am immensely proud of the strides we have made in addressing some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing our communities, our country, and our planet.

Our work in tackling plastic pollution has reached new heights with the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup (GLPC) now in its fourth season. This collaborative, bi-national initiative, with the Council of the Great Lakes Region and over 100 delivery partners, is the largest of its kind in the world, and our efforts in research, education, local action and advocacy have led to significant progress in identifying and eliminating plastic waste entering the Great Lakes.

At the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) meeting, Pollution Probe was the sole environmental organization invited to participate. We had the opportunity to share our successes and advocate for policy shifts towards a sustainable, circular economy for plastic. In tandem, our presence at community events—such as Earth Day celebrations and local litter cleanups—has us engaging directly with the public, raising awareness and driving collective action.

In the energy sector, our Low Carbon Energy Innovation project with QUEST Canada, has been instrumental to unlocking the potential of low-carbon energy solutions. The establishment of our Community of Practice marks a significant step forward in fostering low-carbon innovation across Canada. Our ongoing work related to decarbonizing residential heating and influencing regulatory decisions at the Ontario Energy Board are just a couple of examples of how we are shaping the future of energy.



We are also working to protect children's health and reduce greenhouse gases by electrifying the iconic yellow school bus. We released our pioneering report, *The Electric School Bus Strategy for Ontario*, which outlines a clear path for increasing the adoption of electric school buses across Ontario, highlighting both environmental and health benefits and setting us on a trajectory to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. Our ongoing, first-of-its-kind, electric school bus pilot in Calgary is helping fleet operators accelerate the roll out of electric buses across Canada!

These are just a few of our successes, and this report details many more. These achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our partners, volunteers, and donors. Your commitment to our mission fuels our work, and together, we are making a difference and building a sustainable future.

Thank you for standing with us on this journey!

Christopher Hilkene, Chief Executive Officer



PROGRAMS | Circular Economy



Making Progress in Addressing Plastic Pollution in the Great Lakes Region

The [Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup](#), a joint initiative of Pollution Probe and the Council of the Great Lakes Region, completed a successful fourth season with a focus on increasing community impact. Now operating at over 150 sites across the binational Great Lakes, our plastic capture technologies filtered close to 5 billion litres of water this year, removing more than 60,000 pieces of plastic debris. The 465 data submissions collected across our network pointed to microplastics, including small hard fragments, foam pieces, plastic film, and industrial pre-production pellets, making up the majority of the debris collected.

Highlights from across our Great Lakes network this year include:

- Reported the removal of over **60K pieces of plastic debris**, including bottles, cigarette butts, and food wrappers. Technologies are operating even when data is not reported, meaning that a much larger number of plastic pieces has been removed.
- Collected close to **500 data submissions**. This information helps us understand the sources and types of plastic pollution in the Great Lakes.
- Engaged over **13.2K people at outreach events**, connecting local communities with important information about plastic pollution in the largest freshwater system in the world.
- Operated at more than **152 sites** across the Great Lakes, including the St. Lawrence River and Lake Simcoe, working alongside our 100+ collaborators.
- Engaged more than **93K people in educational campaigns**, from webinars, media coverage, video series, and more. Created 14 community jobs! Local coordinators are strategically located in communities across the Great Lakes. Through these positions, the team works on-the-ground locally to educate about plastic waste in the region.
- Hosted **111 volunteer waste characterization events**. These events provide opportunities for the public to

experience plastic pollution firsthand and to gain hands-on experience sorting through the debris collected.

- Deployed **140+ plastic capture devices** across the binational Great Lakes region.
- Supported **510+ volunteers** in helping to quantify and characterize plastic debris collected by our devices.

Paving the Way for Circularity

The Plastics Pathway, an initiative of Pollution Probe, the Toronto Zoo and GreenMantra Technologies, located on-site at the Toronto Zoo and focused on highlighting viable solutions in support of a transition to a circular economy for plastic, introduced a number of new elements, including a mobile app. The app was developed in partnership with SSA Group and Attractions.io and is aimed at enhancing visitor experience. The mobile app helps guests navigate to different elements on the pathway while learning more about the plastic lifecycle, the important efforts underway to address plastic pollution and how they can be a part of the solution.

Expanding Community Outreach and Engagement

Pollution Probe continued to deepen its involvement across the communities we work in through various outreach and environmental initiatives. Participation in local events provides invaluable opportunities to engage with diverse communities across Canada. The following are just some of the key events we participated in this year:

- We were invited to present at the 2023 meeting of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) in Huntsville, Ontario. The meeting brought together federal, provincial, and territorial environment ministers to discuss critical issues, including a focus on advancing the circular economy and addressing plastic pollution in Canada. As the sole

environmental organization at the event, Pollution Probe highlighted our successes in combatting plastic pollution and advocating for a transition to a circular economy for plastics.

- Our team celebrated Earth Day at Downsview Park, where we discussed our initiatives aimed at addressing plastic pollution and provided supplies for a local litter clean up.
- We joined in on a memorable evening at Meaford Town Hall featuring Adam Shoalts, professional explorer and writer, in support of Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup partner, the Big Canoe Project.
- Our Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup Community Engagement Coordinators were active in hosting volunteer events and participating at art and music festivals, farmers markets, and community-organized events to spread awareness about the plastic pollution problem in our Great Lakes region.
- Pollution Probe participated in the Cherry Beach Blossom Event organized by the Shoreline Revival Group, and attended by Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Julie Dabrusin, and a range of local community organizations.
- Pollution Probe was invited to take part in the Kingston Waters Cleanup event with partners, Swim Drink Fish, the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes, and Neptune & Salacia Diving. This unique event provided an opportunities to engage with local communities and make a positive impact together removing plastic from Lake Ontario.
- Our team attended the 15th annual EcoFair Toronto at Artscape Wychwood Barns, celebrating local environmentally friendly businesses and organizations. The event provides an opportunity to connect with like-minded individuals and community groups to discuss our efforts to support a sustainable future and to protect our freshwater environments.

PROGRAMS | Energy



Bringing People together to Unleash Low Carbon Potential

Building on the success of the Innovation Sandboxes initiative, QUEST Canada and Pollution Probe are at the forefront of transforming Canada's energy landscape. The Low Carbon Energy Innovation project seeks to unlock the potential of low-carbon energy solutions and foster sustainable practices across the country.

This initiative achieved a significant milestone with the establishment of its Community of Practice (CoP) and the launch of its research component. The project aims to propel Canada towards low-carbon innovation through a comprehensive examination of regulatory, policy, and market conditions.

The establishment of the Community of Practice marks a significant advancement in the project's collaborative efforts. To date, we have successfully hosted eight meetings, attracting more than 200 participants from various regions of the country. We have had speakers from utilities from across Canada, including BC Hydro, Atco Gas, Eastward Energy, and Hydro Quebec. We have also had speakers from outside of Canada, including Ofgem, the UK energy regulator, speaking about their low-carbon innovation journey.

Assessing Low-Carbon Innovation across Canada

Pollution Probe and QUEST Canada's Low Carbon Energy Innovation initiative includes more than just bringing people together. We are working to assess Canadian jurisdictions on how well they support low-carbon innovation.

As part of this initiative, we conducted a jurisdictional scan of policies, programs, and factors promoting low-carbon energy innovation for every Canadian province and territory.

We then engaged with more than 100 stakeholders from all the provinces and territories to get more information and feedback on our findings. From this we prepared a database of low-carbon energy innovation policies and programs in Canada, which we will use to develop a national scorecard on low-carbon energy innovation, identifying best practices in each jurisdiction, next year.

Some key highlights of the engagements were:

1. A net-zero act has a more significant impact on the transition to net-zero than a general climate change strategy.
2. A cohesive plan for decarbonization, incorporating utilities and the gas distribution system's long-term roles, is necessary for transitioning to a net-zero economy.
3. There is a greater need for new business models than for new technologies to reach net-zero.
4. Political uncertainty regarding climate issues can hinder innovation.
5. Utilities significantly influence low-carbon innovation. The regulatory environment plays a key role in shaping utilities' innovation efforts. Outlining their role and creating a regulatory mandate are essential to allowing and encouraging their participation in innovation. Moreover, small utilities require a different approach than larger ones. Therefore, tailored policies can also help in promoting innovation.
6. Funding is key to promoting low-carbon innovation, but it is also essential to navigate existing funding options and understand their benefits.
7. Preparing safety regulations for new technologies that would not hinder their deployment, such as regulations addressing the safety of hydrogen and battery storage.



Dealing with the Challenge of Decarbonizing Residential Heating

The vast majority of energy used in Canadian buildings is for heating, and natural gas is the most common heating fuel, especially in dense urban areas. To attain a net-zero energy system by 2050, we must transition away from fossil fuels.

The decarbonization of space heating in Canada will present major challenges, given the deeply embedded natural gas infrastructure, extremely cold winter temperatures seen in many parts of the country, and the need to maintain accessibility, affordability, and reliability of heating services.

Electrification with heat pumps is the most common low-carbon solution promoted, but the effects on peak electricity demand, especially in areas with cold winters, could lead to major cost increases and will be technically and politically difficult.

Other potential solutions include low-carbon gases such as renewable natural gas (RNG) and hydrogen; a hybrid solution is likely to be the most successful in areas with cold winters. Read our [op-ed](#) in the Toronto Star and the [report](#). This paper was based on a book chapter that was recently published in [Sustainable Energy Transitions](#) in Canada, published by UBC Press



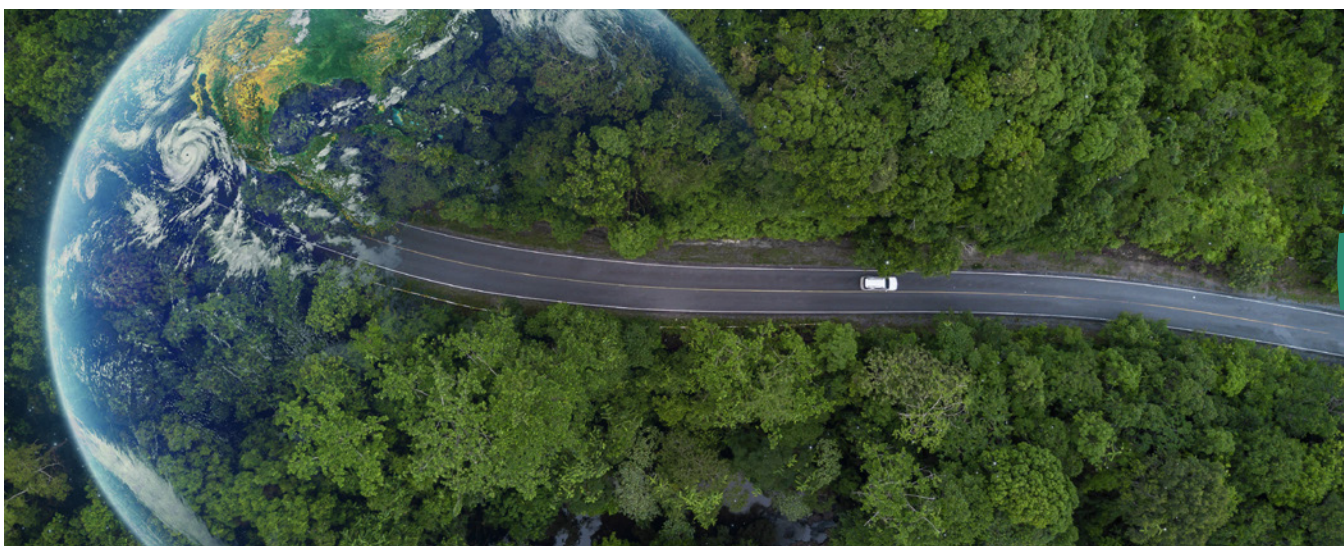
Participating in Decision-Making

Pollution Probe's energy work is not always seen in the reports and other information on our website. We try to engage with the energy system in all areas, to try to influence decisions on the future of energy in Canada. Pollution Probe staff actively participated in the Ontario Government's Electrification and Energy Transition Panel consultation. This far-reaching and critical consultations as a critical forum for shaping future energy policy and planning that aligns with a net-zero vision. Pollution Probe provided significant insights and recommendations that found their way into the plan's framework.

As always, Pollution Probe's energy group actively participates in regulatory decision making at the Ontario Energy Board. We were involved in an Ontario Energy Board consultation on how to integrate EV charging into utility plans. We were active on other consultations on improving connection procedures for small-scale energy systems, such as solar power, and we were influential in advocating for a method to better account for the benefits that such systems can provide to society and to other customers. Pollution Probe was also intervenor in many cases that led to savings for customers, such as with Enbridge Gas.



PROGRAMS | Transportation



Piloting a route to low-emission school buses

The Ontario Electric School Bus Strategy

Electrifying school buses reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions that harm our children's and the planet's health. In 2023-24, Pollution Probe worked on two main initiatives to speed up electric school bus (ESB) adoption across Canada. Pollution Probe, in partnership with Delphi and the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE), developed "The Electric School Bus Strategy for Ontario". The Strategy highlights the advantages of ESB adoption, ranging from environmental gains to health improvements and economic benefits. The Strategy also outlines priority initiatives to help speed up ESB adoption in Ontario – including guides and best practices to support fleet owners in transitioning to ESBs, the development of funding mechanisms to offset incremental capital costs and pilot programs to collect real-world data. The Strategy also includes a "Matrix of Actions", a comprehensive guide outlining the roles and responsibilities for regulators, educational boards and other key stakeholders.

Pollution Probe shared the strategy with various provincial-level policymakers. In coming years, this Strategy will represent a helpful resource for policymakers, regulators and others wishing to improve health and lower the carbon footprint of transportation in Ontario.

Electric school bus pilot programs

One priority initiative for putting more clean school buses on the road is pilot programs. Pilot programs that involve real-world data collection from electric school buses help generate energy consumption and maintenance cost data. This data can then be used by fleet operators to identify the electrification potential of their routes.

In 2023-24, Pollution Probe continued to run a first-of-its-kind electric school bus pilot in Calgary, uncovering valuable insights that will play a key role in accelerating electric bus deployments across Canada! Pollution Probe presented early results from this pilot program at the 2023 Calgary Climate Symposium and a December 2023 University of Toronto electric school bus seminar.

Surveying electric vehicle owners

Pollution Probe conducts an annual consumer electric vehicle charging infrastructure survey. These surveys provide first hand data to support the build out of a viable public charging network. We conducted our first survey in 2022, with the [report](#) based on that survey released in April of that year. Through conducting annual surveys we can identify strengths in current charging infrastructure that can be leveraged to maximize the benefits of future deployments. We can also raise awareness on the technological capabilities of charging infrastructure.

In 2023-2024 we continued full steam ahead on our annual surveys. Our 2023 survey received over 1,500 responses, with a resulting report, the *2023 Canadian Electric Vehicle Owner Charging Experience Survey*, published in January 2024. The report categorized results into four key areas – charging behaviour, network coverage satisfaction, network service satisfaction, and network payment systems.

In 2023-2024 we also launched our updated 2024 Electric Vehicle survey, to dive even deeper into the EV charging landscape. Following consultations with industry and government, this survey contains a new section with questions exploring the relationship between charging experience and future EV purchase decisions and additional questions on public charger reliability and motivations for public charger use by consumers.

We are excited to contribute to the build-out of a robust and accessible public charging infrastructure network in Canada through high-quality research.

Ahoy, Sustainability! Pollution Probe Celebrates IMO Success

Pollution Probe commends the Government of Canada's leadership at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in achieving historic commitments to combat climate change in the maritime sector. The IMO's

commitment sets a clear end date for the use of fossil fuels by setting the target of net-zero GHG emissions by 2050, with indicative checkpoints for reducing GHG emissions by 20% (striving for 30%) by 2030 and 70% (striving for 80%) by 2040. Part of the Canadian delegation, Pollution Probe will support Transport Canada in its work with the IMO's Marine Environmental Protection Committee to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping by mid-century.

Unleashing the Power of CHARGED

Pollution Probe's CHARGED program is Natural Resources Canada's leading delivery agent in their Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program (ZEVIP), which funds up to 50% of eligible costs for businesses to install EV charging infrastructure in Canada. The Government of Canada is committed to having Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs) comprise 50% of new passenger vehicle sales by 2030 and 100% by 2035, and to help meet this goal, Canadians will need access to significantly more EV charging options than are currently available. CHARGED supported the installation of roughly 650 chargers across Canada by March 31, 2024, with many more chargers to follow!

With a solid commitment to sustainable transportation solutions, Pollution Probe is working to address one of the main reasons for public resistance to EV adoption – accessibility to EV charging. CHARGED has, since its inception in 2021, successfully established a solid and extensive network of charging stations, accounting for approximately 6% of all charging stations available across the country. Pollution Probe is leading the charge towards cleaner air, and cleaner health, for all Canadians, and our CHARGED program is helping to pave the way to more accessible charging infrastructure across the country.

Read our latest news release on [CHARGED](#) here.



PROGRAMS | Water



Informing Flame Retardant Use in Canada

This year, we worked to raise awareness about the widespread use and potential impacts associated with flame retardants, with a particular focus on camping tents. Flame retardants are often used to meet flammability standards in consumer products and have been a subject of concern due to their potential adverse effects on human health and the environment.

Our campaign and video series, **#InformedFRUse**, was launched in response to proposed updates to Canada's *Tents Regulations* under the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act (CCPSA), aiming to inform the public about potential changes and to encourage informed participation in discussions on flame retardant use. The campaign highlighted how flame retardants can have long-term environmental and human health impacts, emphasizing the importance of minimizing their release and exploring alternative solutions.

Pollution Probe also hosted an Information and Engagement Session on Flame Retardants in Tents in Canada, bringing together multi-sector representatives from academia, environmental NGOs, the fire safety community, health professionals, researchers, scientists, testing laboratories, and the outdoor industry to increase dialogue and collaboration around the issue and to better understand how to effectively contribute and explore opportunities for collaboration. Outcomes from the session were presented to Health Canada with an update on proposed amendments to the *Tents Regulations* expected next year.

Making Progress on a Novel Watershed Management Solution

This past year, we continued our multi-year project developing a decision-support tool for proactive planning and informed management of our local watersheds. Led by Pollution Probe and the Council of the Great Lakes Region, the project is made possible through generous support from the RBC Tech for Nature program.

Proactive, evidence-based planning and decision-making is critical for achieving more sustainable community and industry practices and ensuring healthy ecosystems. However, decision-makers and communities may face challenges in navigating the sheer volume of information about climate change, development, pollution and biodiversity loss and their associated impacts on our water.

With the help of big data and machine learning, our platform will allow users to explore and visualize data related to known stressors contributing to poor water quality, to predict future trends and to apply different mitigation strategies to improve long-term environmental outcomes.

Outreach and Engagement in Protecting our Critical Water Resources

In 2023, Pollution Probe actively engaged in a range of initiatives highlighting the critical importance of Canada's Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River systems. Co-hosting the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Day on the Hill in Ottawa on May 1st, we participated in roundtable discussions with key stakeholders and government representatives to address pressing issues such as freshwater preservation and restoration funding. The event culminated in a joint statement applauding Canada's historic investments in Great Lakes protection and outlining shared priorities for revitalization and resilience in the region.

During Plastic Free July, we launched our #MeasureofThings video series to raise awareness about protecting our Great Lakes from plastic pollution. The global Plastic Free July movement inspires millions worldwide to reduce plastic consumption, aligning with our Water Program's focus on protecting Canada's water resources.

Our commitment to water stewardship was further underscored by our participation in World Water Day 2024, celebrating global efforts to ensure water security and prosperity. Through initiatives like the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup, Pollution Probe continues to make tangible contributions to preserving Canada's water resources and enhancing ecosystem health.



Events



**Right Here, Right Now:
Readiness for a Clean
Economy**



POLLUTION PROBE CONFERENCE & GALA

The Pollution Probe Conference and Gala, held on November 23, 2023, at the Toronto Reference Library, was a pivotal event that brought together influential voices under the theme “Right Here, Right Now: Readiness for a Clean Economy.” This gathering served as a platform to address pressing questions about Canada’s and the world’s preparedness to transition to sustainable energy, transportation, and materials management systems.

The conference posed critical questions about our readiness, the sufficiency of our successes, existing gaps, and the challenges ahead. It emphasized the urgency of progressing at a pace and scale that aligns with our environmental targets. The event celebrated our environmental milestones while recognizing the ongoing challenges.

Distinguished Speakers and Panelists:

- The Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, M.P.P., Ontario Minister of Finance, delivered opening remarks, setting a tone of fiscal prudence in the pursuit of environmental goals.
- Melanie Debassige, MBA, ICD.D, provided the keynote address, offering insights from her role as Executive Director of the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation.

A panel discussion featured Pat Dalzell, Bob Masterson, Céline Vaneeckhaute, and Andrew Van Iterson, who brought diverse perspectives from industry and academia.

At the Gala The Hon. Andrea Khanjin, M.P.P., and Julie Dabrusin, M.P., delivered remarks that underscored the government’s commitment to environmental conservation and climate action.

Award Recipient

Bob McDonald, an officer of the Order of Canada, was recognized for his enduring impact on science journalism and public engagement. His most recent publication, “The Future Is Now: Solving the Climate Crisis with Today’s Technologies” explores how we can achieve a greener future. His commitment to making science accessible has inspired many to embark on their own journeys of discovery.

The conference and gala were a testament to the collaborative spirit needed to foster a clean economy. It was an opportunity for cross-sectoral engagement, where attendees left with a renewed commitment to environmental stewardship and a clearer vision of the path forward.



Bob McDonald

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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, clean water and a healthy planet remain high on our national agenda.

Here are the different ways you can choose to give:

- > Join the **Environmental Protection Team** with hassle-free pre-authorized monthly contributions, providing steady support for our vital work.
- > Ignite change with a **one-time gift** and help us achieve measurable environmental progress.
- > **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.
- > Check if your employer offers a **Matching Gift Program** to maximize your philanthropic efforts. Every dollar matched means twice the impact for Pollution Probe's initiatives.
- > Donate your old car through **DONATE A CAR CANADA**. Receive a tax receipt and allow your vehicle's value to revitalize our efforts towards a cleaner world.
- > **Honour** a loved one's special occasion or memory by donating in their name.

WEBSITE: www.pollutionprobe.org/donation

EMAIL: donations@pollutionprobe.org

TELEPHONE: 416-926-1907 x 247

TOLL FREE: 1-877-926-1907 x 247



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now**

[» www.pollutionprobe.org/donation](http://www.pollutionprobe.org/donation)

Financial Information

The Pollution Probe Foundation

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

March 31

	2024	2023
Assets		
Current	\$3,944,087	\$3,641,392
Capital and Intangible	64,297	85,432
	\$4,008,384	\$3,726,824
Liabilities		
Current	\$3,420,627	\$2,936,623
Loan Payable	—	40,000
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	97,757	400,201
Reserve fund	490,000	350,000
	\$4,008,384	\$3,726,824

The presentation of the fiscal 2023/2024 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.

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

Year ended March 31

	2024	2023
Revenues		
Program contributions	\$4,581,423	\$4,257,256
Donations and other income	392,092	464,255
Total revenues	4,973,515	4,721,511
Total Expenses	5,135,959	4,293,949
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$(162,444)	\$427,562

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Toronto, Ontario M5A 0P6

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Web: www.pollutionprobe.org

Our charitable registration number is 10809 2701 RR0001

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