

# Making a Better Future

Max Bell Foundation

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# Max Bell Foundation

## OUR PURPOSE

MAX BELL FOUNDATION is the living expression of its founder's aspiration to improve Canadian society.

We seek better educational, health, and environmental outcomes for Canadians. We pursue these goals by supporting innovative projects that inform public policy change.

We support civic engagement and resilient democratic institutions. We are non-partisan.

We value inclusion and the application of reason to evidence.



# Better Public Policy

## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR



**Brenda Eaton**

Chair, Board of Directors  
Max Bell Foundation

2023 BROUGHT SEVERAL LARGE-SCALE CHALLENGES FOR CANADIANS.

More area burned in the 2023 wildfire season than in any year in Canada's recorded history. By October, six times as much forest had burned as the long-term annual average. Every province and territory was affected.

2023 also brought a new record in housing unaffordability. By the middle of the year, average home ownership costs in Canada approached two-thirds of median income. Rental vacancies dropped to historic lows across the country.

Inflation – while it had peaked in 2022 – continued at rates well above the longer-term norm. Prices for food, shelter, and health and personal care grew more quickly than other categories, meaning all households were impacted.

As anyone in the nonprofit sector would know, in all of these cases those with the least resources suffered the most.

Urgent responses to these events came from individuals, families, and civil society organizations across the country. Governments and their agencies mobilized resources to respond directly and to support the efforts of others. Many needs are yet unmet, but the collective commitment of Canadians to pull together and respond was and continues to be a source of inspiration.

Thoughtful reflection on these events has led some commentators to note that part of what caused them is how past public policy choices interacted in unforeseen ways.

Decades of forestry management and land use practices have interacted with the consequences of climate change. Declining support for non-market housing, encouragement of single-family dwellings, and significantly increased immigration have interacted with monetary policy. And as a backdrop to all of this, the pandemic-related spike in commodity prices and impaired supply chains have interacted with a tight post-pandemic labour market to drive up prices.



**We believe  
it's critical to  
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and coordination  
between civil  
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governments.**

In short, 2023 demonstrated clearly that many of our public problems are truly complex. It follows that there are no easy solutions. What, then, should be the approach to better public policy?

That's the guiding question that motivates the grant making of Max Bell Foundation. Like any organization attempting to respond effectively to current public issues, we're humbled by the challenge. That said, we believe part of the answer is to take time to understand how any particular public problem is embedded in systems. Solid evidence – related to both the problem and its potential solutions – is another critical factor. We also believe that methodically thinking through implementation can help mitigate unintended negative effects of otherwise positive changes.

We believe all of these are supported by a public policy process that involves not only governments, but also civil society organizations, who can bring their unique perspectives and critical expertise to the table. That's why the work of Max Bell Foundation is about supporting organizations who are willing to try new ideas – to take promising concepts and test them out in practice. It's why we support bringing together networks of partners with similar interests but disparate views for the shared purpose of tackling some of society's most intransigent problems. It's why we believe it's critical to support linkages and coordination between civil society and governments.

And so in spite of the challenges we faced in 2023, and those that are no doubt ahead of us, we remain optimistic. Canada is blessed with many organizations keen to make their contribution to pressing policy issues. It is a privilege to be able to help support them.

**Brenda Eaton**  
Chair, Board of Directors

# Making a Better Future

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



**Allan Northcott**

President  
Max Bell Foundation

IT'S BEEN SAID THAT DEMOCRACY is like a muscle: without use, it atrophies. It's strengthened when civil society organizations engage in the public policy process. It was our honour in 2023 to commit support for several such exercises, which are detailed in the pages of this report. Each one aims for a timely and important outcome:

- better wildfire mitigation achieved through collaborative policy development
- climate policies that include the perspectives of farmers and ranchers
- integration of newcomers into the workforce
- workforce transition policies that reflect local-level data
- effective implementation of policies intended to prevent intimate partner violence
- effective implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction in schools
- a public information ecosystem with less harmful content

In 2023, Max Bell Foundation invested \$2.7 million in grants to our partners. We expended a further \$333,000 delivering our own programs designed to educate and inform Canadians about public policy and policy issues. Included in those programs was our fifteenth annual Public Policy Training Institute (PPTI). The PPTI provides professional development to individuals employed by Canadian registered charities to help them more effectively contribute to public policy development. More than 330 individuals have now completed the PPTI.



**As ever, our  
partners inspire  
us to play our  
part in making  
a better future.**

We also hosted a public presentation in Vancouver on the issue of housing affordability. You can watch the video recording [here](#).

In reviewing proposals for support, Max Bell Foundation relies on anonymous expert reviewers. We thank them sincerely for their outstanding voluntary contributions, which are invaluable to our decision-making.

When Max Bell created his Foundation, he stipulated that 30% of the gifts the Foundation makes go to his alma mater, McGill University. Over the years, the Foundation and the University have partnered in a variety of ways to realize Max's wishes. Since 2018, this gift has gone to support the Max Bell School of Public Policy under the direction of Dr. Chris Ragan. In 2023, the fourth cohort of students graduated with their Master of Public Policy, and the fifth cohort began their studies.

As ever, our partners inspire us to play our part in making a better future.

**Allan Northcott**  
President

# Our Work

## GRANTS & PROGRAMS



## New Grants

The following new grants were initiated in 2023

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### Centre for Media, Technology & Democracy

Information Ecosystem Integrity and Citizen Resilience / \$312,570 over 12 months

Informed engagement with decision makers, system actors, and the public is necessary to help protect and build resilience within the Canadian information ecosystem.

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### Farmers for Climate Solutions

Prairie Farmer & Rancher Forum / \$100,000 over 12 months

Stronger collaboration with farmers and ranchers will result in better policy development to reduce emissions in agriculture.

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### Institute for Research on Public Policy

Informing Policy Decision for Low-carbon Workforce Transition / \$160,000 over 24 months

Better public policy related to low-carbon workforce transitions requires local and accessible community-level data on workforce vulnerability.

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### Simon Fraser University

Mitigating Wildfire: Resilient Futures for Communities & Forests in the Face of Climate Change / \$200,000 over 12 months

Stronger collaboration between jurisdictions in BC will result in better policy development and implementation to mitigate catastrophic wildfires and their effects.

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### University of Calgary | Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence

Moving Knowledge into Action: Policy Reforms for Primary Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence / \$300,000 over 24 months

Having developed a policy framework for prevention of domestic violence/sexual violence is the first step. The challenge now is to ensure it gets adopted and implemented.

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### Windmill Microlending

Operating Support / \$70,000 over 12 months

When skilled newcomers are equitably integrated into the workforce, they're better able to contribute their expertise to Canada's economic and social success.



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**York University**

Implementing Policy for Universal Literacy  
in Canadian Schools / \$180,000 over 39 months

The ultimate success of good policy for  
improving literacy in schools depends on  
successful implementation.

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## DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

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**Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada**

Exploring a Canada Wide Before and After School  
Care System / \$24,000 over 6 months

An exploration of how a Canada wide before and  
after school care system fits into the Canada Wide  
Early Learning and Child Care Program.

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**St. Boniface Hospital Foundation**

Manitoba Acute Coronary Syndrome Network:  
Establishing 911 Emergency Service in Northern  
Manitoba / \$45,000 over 6 months

Improving outcomes for heart attack patients.

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# Directors' Discretionary Grants

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**Barth Syndrome Foundation of Canada**

\$10,000

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**Canada West Foundation**

\$2,000

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**Family Enterprise Foundation**

\$10,000

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**Indspire**

\$5,000

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**McGill University**

\$5,000

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**Nature Conservancy of Canada**

\$5,000

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**North Central Family Centre**

\$250

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**Phoenix Residential Society**

\$6,000

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**Regina Sexual Assault Centre**

\$250

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**Regina Symphony Orchestra**

\$1,000

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**Regina YWCA**

\$500

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**The Study School Foundation**

\$5,000

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**United Way of Winnipeg**

\$10,000

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**The University of Victoria**

\$5,000

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**Victoria Hospice and Palliative  
Care Foundation**

\$5,000

# Ongoing Grants

The Foundation continued the administration of the following grants during 2023

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## **Brookfield Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University**

Job Pathways Project / [\\$125,000 over 12 months](#)

A well-designed job transition model can aid in the development of pathways to help workers move from disruptive or declining jobs into promising or high-growth jobs.

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## **Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation**

A Path Forward for Early Literacy Advocacy / [\\$21,333 over 4 months](#)

Improving Children's literacy in Canada.

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## **Child Welfare League**

Better Transitions to Adulthood and a Just Recovery for Youth in Care / [\\$127,453 over 18 months](#)

Encouraging governments to adhere to a set of standards for equity will improve outcomes for youth in care transitioning to adulthood.

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## **CIVIX**

Improving Digital Media Education in Canada / [\\$200,000 over 24 months](#)

Wider use of an evidence informed teaching tool helps students get better at evaluating information online.

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## **MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions at St. Michael's Foundation**

Informing Primary Care Reform / [\\$300,000 over 24 months](#)

Primary care reform inevitably requires trade-offs, and those should be informed not only by experts and practitioners, but also by patients themselves.

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## **Martin Family Initiative**

Early Years Cost Benefit Analysis / [\\$110,000 over 12 months](#)

Community-driven program models for Indigenous children and families respect sovereignty, can generate better outcomes, and can be more efficient.

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## **Max Bell Foundation**

Policy Collaborative Evaluation / [\\$133,500 over 36 months](#)

To evaluate collaborative public policy advocacy compared to single-organization approaches.

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## **Ontario Nature**

Building the case to permanently protect Forest Stewardship Council designated conservation lands / [\\$50,000 over 23 months](#)

Developing a policy pathway can make it easier to move voluntarily conserved lands to permanent legislatively protected conservation areas.

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## **Ophea**

Healthy Schools Certification / [\\$254,307 over 21 months](#)

Supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive School Health Framework will improve health and education outcomes for students in Canada.

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**Partners for Action at the University of Waterloo**

Effective Property Buyout Programs to Reduce Flood Risk in a Changing Climate / [\\$134,825 over 24 months](#)

Well-designed property buyout programs are a viable option for responding to climate-induced flood risk.

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**Prosper Canada**

Closing the Financial Help/Benefit Gap for People with Low Incomes / [\\$450,000 over 33 months](#)

Low-income Canadians should have barrier-free access to filing their taxes.

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**Sage Seniors Association**

Community-Based Senior Services / [\\$200,000 over 24 months](#)

When seniors receive services in properly supported community settings, they can achieve better and more cost-effective outcomes.

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**Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society**

Building an Alberta Primary Prevention Framework: A Public Policy Collaborative to Prevent Domestic and Sexual Violence / [\\$566,940 over 24 months](#)

An updated primary prevention framework will reduce the impacts of domestic and sexual violence in Alberta.

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**Smart Prosperity Institute, University of Ottawa**

Circular Economy Policies / [\\$260,000 over 24 months](#)

Circular economy approaches can improve the competitiveness and sustainability of Canada's critical minerals strategy.

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**The Natural Step**

A Public Policy Collaborative / [\\$525,200 over 24 months](#)

Innovation in finance will help enable a transition to a low-carbon emissions economy.

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**United Way Halifax**

East Coast Public Policy Training Institute / [\\$30,000 over 7 months](#)

Providing professional development to leaders in non-profit organizations helps them become more effective public policy advocates.

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**University of Alberta**

Policy Ready Youth Mental Health and Schools Briefing and Advocacy for further Dissemination of Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide / [\\$59,980 over 12 months](#)

To scale up more widely across Canada a guide and accompanying online teacher training program addressing youth mental health literacy.

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**Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Canada**

Key Biodiversity Areas for Land Use Planning in Manitoba and Newfoundland / [\\$140,000 over 12 months](#)

Taking a rigorous evidence-based approach helps policy decision makers identify the most important habitats for conservation.

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# Ongoing Internal Programs

The foundation continued the administration of the following ongoing programs in 2023

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## **Public Policy Training Institute 2023-2026**

\$623,800 over 4 years

Support for Max Bell Foundation's Public Policy Training Institute.

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## **Public Policy Training Institute Master Class 2024**

\$238,150

Support for Max Bell Foundation's Public Policy Training Institute Master Class.

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## **Partner and Public Events**

\$368,200 over 5 years

Support for Max Bell Foundation's partner and public events.

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The work of Max Bell Foundation is about supporting organizations who are willing to try new ideas – to take promising concepts and test them out in practice.

— **Brenda Eaton**, Chair, Board of Directors

# Financial Report 2023

**\$2.72M**

Disbursements in grants

**\$333,000**

For charitable projects

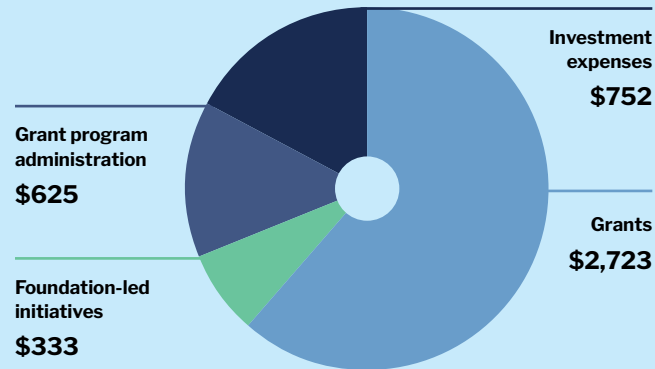
**69%**

Combined grants & projects of

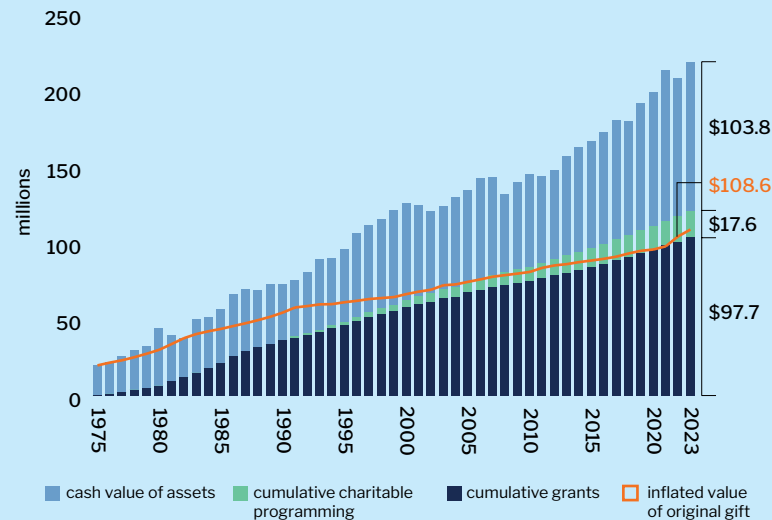
**\$4.43M**

Annual total expenditure

## 2023 EXPENDITURES (000s)



## Max Bell Foundation | Invested in the Community 1975 to 2023



In 2023, Max Bell Foundation made disbursements for grants totaling \$2.72 million, and undertook charitable projects costing \$333,000. Combined, these account for 69% of the annual total expenditure of \$4.43 million.

## 2023 Expenditures (000s)

During calendar 2023, the Foundation's investments funded the expenditure categories above and their value increased from \$91.3 million to \$97.7 million. Had the growth of the Foundation's asset base kept pace with inflation since 1974, it would be valued at \$108.6 million at the end of 2023.

Since the Foundation's inception, it has invested \$104 million in grants to improve Canadian society, and has invested \$17.6 million in identifying, helping develop, and administering those grants as well as directly delivering charitable programs.

# Directors

**Brenda Eaton**

Chair

**Ken Marra**

Vice Chair

**Paul Boothe**

**Donna Miller**

**Doug Moen**

**Christopher Manfredi**

**Margaret-Jean Mannix**

# Our Team



**Allan Northcott**

President



**Kim Ah-Sue**

Program Manager



**Margaret Herriman**

Program Officer



**Doug Broadhead**

Program Specialist



**Sibelle El Labban**

Program Officer



**Arlene McCarry**

Grants Coordinator/  
Administrator

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