

THE GIVING SEASON

Thursday, December 14, 2023

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Philanthropy-funded research transforms cancer treatments

Advances at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre help all Canadians and patients around the world

Researchers are on the cusp of transforming cancer treatment, and now is the time to double down on investment in research, says Dr. Aaron Schimmer, research director, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, University Health Network, one of the top five cancer research centres in the world.

"We have made tremendous progress in cancer treatment over the last 20 years – even over the last five to 10 years," says Dr. Schimmer. "There's a way to go, but the investments that we made over this last period have led to new treatments and new diagnostic tests that are truly doing things that would not have been possible 20 years ago. I'm excited about the next 20 years, and we're going to achieve it with the help and support of our community."

Philanthropy through The Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation is critical for research, patient care and infrastructure at the cancer centre – and

Philanthropy also funds early-stage research ideas. They may be crazy out-of-the-box ideas, but if right, they will lead to paradigm changes in our diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

Dr. Aaron Schimmer
Research Director, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, University Health Network



the advancements made here help not only Ontarians but all Canadians and patients globally, he adds.

"If it were not for this support, the cutting-edge research we do at The Princess Margaret would not be possible," says Dr. Schimmer, who is also a professor at University of Toronto, Department of Medicine, Medical Biophysics, and Institute of Medical Science, Temerty Faculty of Medicine.

He notes that philanthropy supports the scientists and individuals on the front lines making breakthrough discoveries and ensures they have state-of-the-art research equipment and research infrastructure.

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ment of cancer," says Dr. Schimmer.

He points out that donor investments in research at The Princess Margaret can be leveraged to increase the funds tenfold. "If \$100,000 is invested in a cancer research project, our scientists will go out and turn that into \$1-million through external funding," he says.

See INFRASTRUCTURE on next page

REBUILDING LIVES

Fred Victor wants GTA residents to *Picture a Toronto Where Everyone Has a Home*

When Carlos lost his job, he also lost his home and found himself living on Toronto's unforgiving streets.

"During my times on the streets, I felt a level of desperation I never thought I would experience. It was a dark and lonely place," he recalls.

Carlos turned to Fred Victor, a Toronto charity focused on ending homelessness, for help. The programs and services he was able to access through Fred Victor enabled him to find a job and move into one of the charity's affordable housing units. He is one of Fred Victor's many success stories.

To help others like Carlos, the 128-year-old organization's campaign for the giving season urges people living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to *Picture a Toronto Where Everyone Has a Home* – and help Fred Victor work toward that goal.

"We have pictures of our family, our holidays, of people in places we love, on our walls. But if you don't have a home, you don't have those pictures," says Marie MacCormack, vice president, Philanthropy & Communications at Fred Victor.

The campaign profiles the stories of some of the people – like Carlos – Fred Victor has helped move to secure housing. While the coverage of homelessness and the housing affordability crisis could make people think it is an insurmountable problem, Ms. MacCormack says Fred Victor makes small gains every day, helping people go from the street



The Fred Victor holiday display at the Distillery Winter Village, Toronto. SUPPLIED

to shelter and ultimately to some form of affordable housing.

"It could be owned and operated by Fred Victor or another agency, or by Toronto Community Housing, or maybe it's just a room in a shared situation, but at least it is somewhere to call your own, where you can close your door and have a place to rest and put your things," she says.

The giving season is a time of caring and sharing, but some people have never experienced the true joy of making a donation, says Ms. MacCormack, who adds that Fred Victor serves more than 3,000 people every day.

"If you've never done it, try it," she says, adding that between

20 and 40 per cent of Canadians – who have the capacity – have never made a donation.

Ms. MacCormack says every year Fred Victor's fundraising team has to work harder to raise the same amount of money that it did the year before.

"The need is greater than ever; our shelters are overcapacity every night and the need for food far exceeds what we can provide, but please don't get overwhelmed and give up. It's thanks to thousands of caring people who step up and offer support that organizations like Fred Victor can help people rebuild their lives."

[Learn more: helprebuildlives.ca](https://helprebuildlives.ca)

ABOUT THE GIVING SEASON

The Giving Season – from GivingTuesday through to the end of December – is one of the most important times of year for many of the 86,000 registered charities in Canada. With the holidays – and the end of the tax year – approaching, this is often when many Canadians make donations to their favourite charities.

The non-profit sector provides countless services and supports making a huge difference in the lives of Canadians, says Lisa Davey, vice president, Association of Fundraising Professionals Canada, and donations ensure that charities have the resources they need to deliver critical services and support in their communities.

"Fundraising, and the professionals who support giving by donors, has never been more needed," she adds. "There is always a gap in the needs in our communities and the funds available to address them, and this year is no exception," says Ms. Davey.

With high inflation, record levels of personal debt and high levels of social, health and economic distress, the need for and demand on charities is higher than ever. Even in the best of times, fundraising matters; however, in challenging times, there are increased pressures, says Ms. Davey adding the number of Canadians who expect to rely on charities to meet their basic needs is 22 per cent, which is more than 8.8 million people across the country.

With so many incredible charities across the country doing amazing work, it can be challenging to decide which ones to support. "The best advice for anyone wondering which causes to support is to give to a cause they are passionate about, and to learn about how the charity is making an impact for those they service," says Ms. Davey.

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Memories motivate generosity

Philanthropy supports programs and initiatives to protect shorelines

Remember those summer days – fishing in a river, cooling off in one of Canada’s many lakes or enjoying a walk along a shoreline? Memories of those balmy days are the inspiration to step up and support Watersheds Canada, a national charity that works to restore the country’s freshwater ecosystems, says Robert Pye, the organization’s executive director.

“People’s greatest connections with family and nature come from time spent on or near water,” says Mr. Pye, noting that like many other charities, this is a critical time of the year for Watersheds Canada.

“We need to bring in donations to set us up for all the work that people count on us for throughout the year,” he says, adding the organization’s projects include putting in native plants to restore riparian zones, improving fish and wildlife habitats, and providing expertise and programs for shoreline restoration.

“Philanthropy is at our core,” says Mr. Pye, pointing out that while the charity also relies on corporate and government grants, the day-to-



Watersheds Canada provides programs to communities across the country to enhance and protect the health of lakes and rivers. Many groups work to add native plants to shorelines to improve fish and wildlife habitats. **WATERSHEDS CANADA**

day operations of the organization depend on consistent funding from individual donors.

Mr. Pye says while big donations in the form of legacy giving and major gifts attract attention, for many people that level of giving is

not possible. However, he believes if everyone who can make a small donation to a charity this giving season, the cumulative effect is valuable.

“I am just so pleased when we get a \$10 donation because it shows that

people care and at least they’ve got something to contribute, and in a lot of cases it is a starting point. We are just as excited about the small gifts as we are for the bigger regular gifts because it does add up,” he says.

The biggest demand on Watersheds Canada’s resources is for its expertise and programs around bringing nature back to shorelines. For example, the organization’s Natural Edge program works with waterfront property owners to plant native trees, shrubs, groundcovers and wildflowers along the water’s edge as a nature-based solution to degradation of the shoreline, says Mr. Pye.

“The riparian zone – or the ribbon of life – is the most critical point of habitat in the entire lake ecosystem

because it’s home to almost every species of wildlife including turtles, birds and mammals,” he adds.

Healthy shorelines act as filters that help reduce and control runoff that would otherwise send pollutants into lakes and rivers, and they also help property owners manage soil erosion.

As the end of the year approaches, Mr. Pye says while Canadians are considering their options for charitable gifts and tax-deductible donations, staff at Watersheds Canada are hard at work planning programs and new initiatives to protect shorelines and support natural processes that are essential to a healthy watershed.

[Learn more: watersheds.ca](https://www.watersheds.ca)

INSPIRING HOPE AND IMPACTING COMMUNITIES

Being charitable is part of the Canadian mindset

While more than three-quarters of Canadians say they will buy fewer gifts this holiday season as challenging economic conditions continue to bite into their pocketbooks, at least a third plan to keep their donations to charities at the same level as previous years, according to a survey conducted for BMO Financial Group.

The survey, conducted by Ipsos, found the majority of Canadians who plan on giving back to their communities want to help people in need – 61 per cent – and support their preferred causes – 51 per cent – while 23 per cent indicated that giving back allows them to teach their children and family the importance of giving.

Commenting on the survey results, Lydia Potocnik, head, Estate Planning & Philanthropic Advisory Services, BMO Private Wealth, said the holiday season often inspires Canadians to spread hope to communities, and strategic giving allows them to be part of the change they want to see.

“For those who have the resources and would like to make meaningful contributions that will support progress in their communities, working with professionals will allow Canadians to be more thoughtful with their giving activities, donations and volunteer work,” says Ms. Potocnik.

“While some charities may have survived on reputation alone in the past, in this day and age you have to be front and centre in people’s thinking.

Stephen De-Wint
CEO, The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award - Canada



Stephen De-Wint, CEO, The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award - Canada, says the survey findings illustrate that being charitable is very much part of the Canadian mindset.

“There are a huge number of charities in Canada, and they are all relatively well supported. While we would all appreciate even more

support, the fact that so many charities exist tells me that Canadians are charitable,” says Mr De-Wint. Charities such as The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award - Canada that rely mainly on high-net-worth donors are not as negatively impacted by tough economic conditions as those that depend on general public fundraising, he adds.

Nevertheless, increasing demand on their resources means that even the generosity of high-net-worth donors is being spread thin, and it is becoming more difficult to find and recruit them, says Mr. De-Wint.

“We recently started approaching a larger group of what might be called smaller donors who we found were able to give at a lower level who were willing to do so,” he says. “It’s what many charities are doing – broadening out their fundraising into a bigger pool of potential donors.”

Maintaining brand awareness is also important, adds Mr. De-Wint.

“Research shows that the knowledge and awareness of your name and what your name stands for in a particular location is vitally important,” he says. “While some charities may have survived on reputation alone in the past, in this day and age you have to be front and centre in people’s thinking.”

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

INFRASTRUCTURE: ENHANCING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Dr. Schimmer says the odds of surviving some types of cancer today are close to 100 per cent better than they were a generation ago.

For example, he recalls a childhood friend who died suddenly a week after they played together from what was likely childhood acute leukemia. At the time, treatments were extremely limited.

“If he was diagnosed today, he would have a 90 per cent chance of cure – and that’s all due to research,” says Dr. Schimmer.

Similarly, when he was a medical student, the two-year survival rate of patients with a rare subtype of acute leukemia, acute promyelocytic leukemia (APL), was about 25 per cent – even if a patient got through the life-threatening early stages of the disease.

Today, remission rates for APL are 98 per cent, and patients’ long-term survival is 95 per cent, he says.

While philanthropy enables cancer research, the physical environment in which patients receive care is also vitally important, he says.

“Princess Margaret Cancer Centre was built many years ago, and we are now seeing three times

the number of patients that it has capacity for, due in part to the aging population and better treatment for cancer,” says Dr. Schimmer. “We did renovations to expand capacity so that we could see more patients, but we also wanted to ensure the design of our new lobby would enhance the patient experience – from the lighting and landscaping to the art on the walls – as they move from one part of the facility to another.”

In addition to infrastructure improvements, donors also fund some of the supports patients need in their cancer journey, ranging from patient education materials to the hospital’s Magic Castle, a place where children can be cared for while their parent undergoes treatment.

“At the end of the day, for me, The Princess Margaret is a story about people,” says Dr. Schimmer. “It’s about the early childhood educators providing care for children and patients. It’s about the nurses, the health professionals and the physicians providing world-class care, and it’s about scientists making breakthrough discoveries.”

[Learn more: thepmcf.ca](https://www.thepmcf.ca)



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The Princess
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If 22-year-old Julianne had been diagnosed today, she would have seen her 30s.

In 2016, Julianne Misk was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer called osteosarcoma. While receiving treatment, she bravely became an advocate and fundraiser for cancer research, participating in the Ride to Conquer Cancer. Four years later, at just 22 years old, Julianne passed away. Her legacy continues to live on through her loved ones who continue to raise funds for life-saving research at The Princess Margaret. Today, thanks to donor support, we've drastically improved outcomes for osteosarcoma patients. If Julianne had been diagnosed in 2023, she would have had more time with her loved ones. The research we do today saves lives tomorrow.



Support The Future of Cancer Breakthroughs
and donate today at thepmcf.ca

Bernadette & Joe Misk,
Cancer Advocates & Parents of Julianne

