



IMPACT REPORT 2023-24



SPECIAL OLYMPICS IS A BIG PART OF MY LIFE.

Your support makes an impact for athletes like Ariel.

Ariel Taylor has been making lasting friendships and memorable moments with Special Olympics BC for over 17 years. She first got involved in basketball and at the time, she did not know much about sports in general. Now, she is involved in multiple sports, including 5-pin bowling, bocce, soccer, and snowshoeing!

“Competing alongside my friends and fellow athletes makes me feel happy and proud. I love to have fun and laugh with my friends. Special Olympics is a big part of my life.”

– Ariel Taylor, SOBC – Coquitlam athlete

Ariel’s incredible efforts have propelled her to the national level of competition many times. She has been a part of Special Olympics Team BC in 2014, 2020, and most recently in 2024 at the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games Calgary 2024. Her hard work and training has paid off; Ariel has been named to the Special Olympics Team Canada 2025 Training Squad. This marks the first step in her journey to the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy and Grenoble, France in March 2025.

For athletes like Ariel, Special Olympics is an opportunity to find belonging, friendship, and empowerment through sport. Our year-round sport, health, and youth programs for people with intellectual disabilities would not be possible without the support of our incredible community of donors, sponsors, and volunteers.

A Renewed Sense of Purpose

As we reflect on the past year, we are reminded of the transformative power of sport in the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Sport is far more than just competition; it is a pillar of mental and physical wellbeing, a builder of confidence and a vital source of community connection. Special Olympics BC is not just about athleticism – it's about empowering individuals to live happier, healthier lives in inclusive and accepting communities.

The 2023-24 year has been one of rebuilding and growth. We are excited to see our numbers steadily increasing as athletes, coaches, and volunteers return to our programs. We hosted Regional Qualifiers across the province, marking the start of a new competition cycle that provides athletes with a renewed sense of purpose, and the motivation to work towards achieving their goals. The 2025 Special Olympics BC Summer Games in Prince George will once again offer athletes a chance to demonstrate teamwork, sportsmanship, and excellence.

Our commitment to expanding Special Olympics programs into more communities across B.C. is unwavering. With the support of donors, sponsors, and volunteers, we continue to advance the quality and reach of our programs and competitions. As we grow, so too does our need to build capacity. Volunteers are the backbone of Special Olympics BC, and we recognize the need to support them with the resources and training needed to succeed in their roles.

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to creating a thriving and supportive community where every individual has the opportunity to participate, compete, achieve personal bests, feel safe and welcome, and belong to a team – both on and off the playing fields.

This report features highlights from the life-changing programs and empowering opportunities that you made possible with Special Olympics BC in 2023-24. We are deeply grateful for your role in helping thousands of athletes with intellectual disabilities across B.C. to find joy, friendship and belonging. Thank you.

Dan Howe
President & CEO, Special Olympics BC



Dan Howe
Special Olympics BC
President & CEO



Colin Yakashiro
SOBC Board of Directors Chair



Donna Bilous
SOBC Leadership Council Chair



Matthew Williams
SOBC Athlete Input Council Chair

MISSION

Special Olympics BC is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport.

VISION

Sport will open hearts and minds towards people with intellectual disabilities and create inclusive communities all across British Columbia

VALUES

- Inclusion: We foster inclusive communities.
- Diversity: We honour what is unique in each individual.
- Empowerment: We create opportunities to pursue full potential.
- Respect: We operate in an environment of cooperation, collaboration and dignity.
- Excellence: We elevate standards and performance.



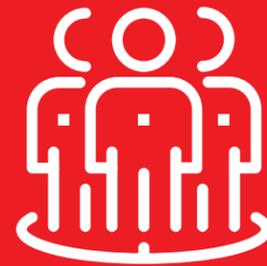
YOUR IMPACT IN 2023-24

54

Youth programs
across B.C.

370+

Coaches and volunteers
attended training and
development opportunities



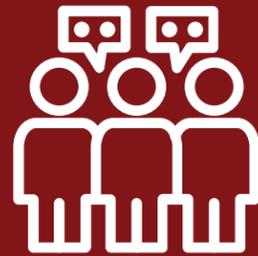
(10%↑)

3,270

Registered
Athletes

45

Regional Qualifiers
across B.C.



243%

Increase in the Bring a Buddy
recruitment initiative



(17%↑)

3,500+
Caring donors



(100%↑)

4

Healthy Athletes
screenings

1,839

Registered
Volunteers



THE JOURNEY TO PROVINCIAL GAMES BEGINS

From February to July 2024, Special Olympics BC Locals hosted summer Regional Qualifiers all throughout the province! As part of the Special Olympics BC competition cycle, Regional Qualifiers serve as a chance for athletes to compete for a spot to advance to the next Provincial Games.

While Regional Qualifiers bring out the competitive spirit in SOBC athletes, the shared friendships and memories created during these events remind everyone of what Special Olympics is about.

Lilli Wong is the parent of SOBC – Vancouver athlete Karina. Having recently become involved with Special Olympics in 2023, Lilli has already seen Karina find empowerment and belonging through sport.

“They’re happy and smiling, and that’s all you can ask for,” she said. “This has opened social doors for Karina as well as sport, giving her the ability to practice and be with some peers – so she’s very excited to have that.”

The 2024 Summer Regional Qualifiers mark the first major milestone in a new Special Olympics competition cycle. For many athletes, it will be their first step towards qualifying for the provincial, national, and even international level of competition.



ADDRESSING HEALTH INEQUALITIES IN B.C.



179
Athletes
screened



5
Disciplines
represented

Special Olympics BC is committed to providing year-round health programs that break down barriers in healthcare, and empower athletes with active living opportunities and advocacy training.

Around the province, SOBC’s Healthy Athletes screenings provided vital opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities to receive treatment and education on their health.

This year, SOBC held screenings in Terrace for the first time, as well as in Victoria. At Victoria’s event, 29 referrals were made back into the general healthcare system that athletes would continue to receive care.

“I really liked my experience – it was good! My hearing is now better than it was 10 years ago”, said SOBC – Prince Rupert athlete Michelle Keisman.

SOBC also ran a new pilot program for Opening Eyes this year, where athletes saw optometrists and received new prescriptions and glasses at an optometrist’s office instead of a regular screening location. This pilot program will set a new standard, allowing more flexibility in where optometry screenings can take place.

CONNECTING YOUTH IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Aalia Suran and her fellow youth program leader Kasey Walker are university students who dedicate their time and efforts to leading youth programs for young athletes with intellectual disabilities in Prince George.

For Kasey, she enjoys taking part in the growth and development of the athletes.

“Personally, I love watching the children grow both physically and socially during our time with them,” she says. “The amount of progress that our children make over the six-to-seven-week program is amazing.”

SOBC youth programs especially play a vital part in Prince George, as it creates strong connections within the community and northern B.C. as a whole. “Programs for youth with intellectual and neurodevelopmental disorders are hard to come by in northern and rural communities,” says Aalia.

At Special Olympics BC Active Start and FUNdamentals youth programs, participants ages two to 11 learn motor, sport, and social skills. These programs are essential for transitioning children with intellectual disabilities into community sport or regular Special Olympics programs.

 **We are extremely grateful for the tight knit community of SOBC and Prince George, and for all the participants that have attended our program.”**

– Kasey Walker, SOBC – Prince George Fundamentals and ActiveStart program leader



Susan Wang speaking alongside fellow SSGMs in Washington, D.C.

Susan’s involvement in the SOBC Athlete Leadership Academy over the years has empowered her to be an impactful voice in her community. She also serves as a member of the SOBC Athlete Input Council, Special Olympics Canada Board of Directors, and the Canadian Athlete Leadership Council.

“Special Olympics offers many leadership opportunities for athletes to be role models and develop confidence. Not only does Special Olympics help athletes with intellectual disabilities succeed in sport, it helps them in life,” Susan says. “Athletes can make a difference in their community.”

A STRONG VOICE FOR INCLUSION

Susan Wang, a longtime Special Olympics BC athlete, is currently serving as one of ten Sargent Shriver Global Messengers (SSGMs), a prestigious global spokesperson role for the Special Olympics movement.

In her role, Susan is responsible for conveying the urgency of inclusion, inviting people around the world to join the movement and demonstrate that Special Olympics is every day, everywhere, for everyone. She is joined by representatives from Argentina, Guatemala, Ireland, Malta, Mongolia, New Zealand, Oman, South Africa, and the United States.



Susan Wang, far left, pictured with all 10 SSGMs



135 MEDALS

54
GOLD

45
SILVER

36
BRONZE

10
SPORTS

14
MISSION
STAFF

50 COACHES

141
ATHLETES

TRIUMPHING TOGETHER AT NATIONAL GAMES

In February, after years of training and preparation, Special Olympics Team BC 2024 showed up to an unforgettable National Games! They gave it their all and achieved many personal bests and podium finishes.

Athletes embraced this year's National Games motto, "Together We Can", connecting with new and old friends across the country and creating countless lifelong memories.

From these Games, 21 athletes and 11 coaches from British Columbia will join the Special Olympics Team Canada 2025 Training Squad to prepare for the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy from March 8 to 16.



This is my first National Games, and I want to dedicate it to each and every single one of you – those who have helped me and been there for me. And I am also dedicating this to my family back home, because I know they're proud of me.

– SOBC – Quesnel snowshoeing athlete Scott Jonasson

FUNDRAISERS ACROSS B.C. MADE WAVES

The 2024 Polar Plunge for Special Olympics BC made a huge splash, raising \$310,000 to support SOBC's empowering sport, youth, and health programs!

Brave Plungers got bold and cold at in-person events across the province and found creative ways to take the Plunge from home. Funds raised will help play a vital part in helping athletes find purpose, friendships, and fitness through the Special Olympics sport, youth, and health programs that matter to them.

 Special Olympics is something very positive in my life for many reasons. I have made new friends, the travel opportunities, the support and awareness, the opportunity to try new sports, and gain more confidence.

– Christopher Lakusta, SOBC – Langley athlete



CHAMPIONING INCLUSION ACROSS THE COUNTRY

TIM HORTONS

As part of Tim Hortons' commitment to diversity and inclusion, the #ChooseToInclude donut fundraising campaign raises critical funds for Special Olympics programs across the country. The 2024 campaign raised \$845,000 nationally.

61
STORES VISITED



EMPIRE

Since 2018, Empire Company Limited has partnered with Special Olympics Canada and its Chapters to promote the health and wellbeing of athletes through several initiatives. Its 2024 national check stand campaign – including B.C. banner stores Safeway and Thrifty Foods – raised \$1.4 million.

57
STORES VISITED



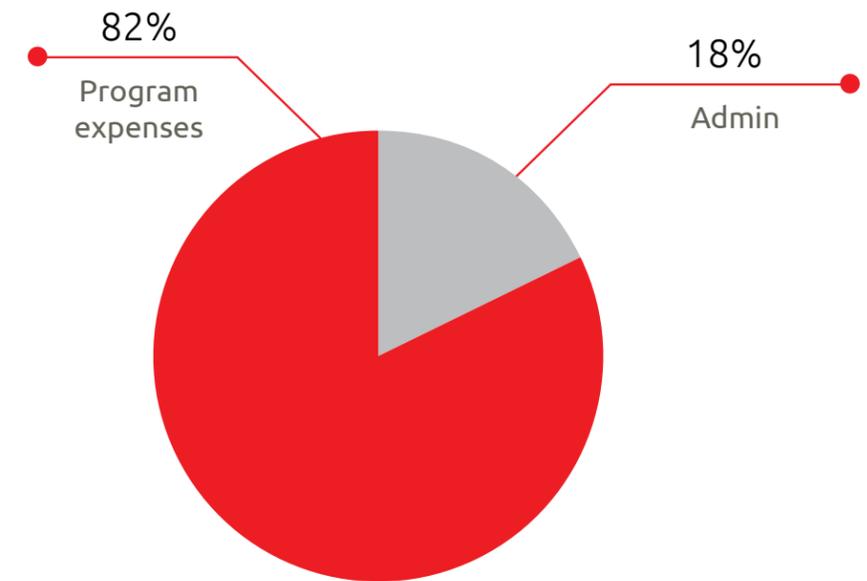


“Coming in as a coach, I get much more than I put in, I think ... Volunteering with these athletes, you’re going to make a very positive difference in their lives – not only with their physical health, but their mental, emotional, social well-being as well.”
 – Peter de Marchi, SOBC – Burnaby volunteer

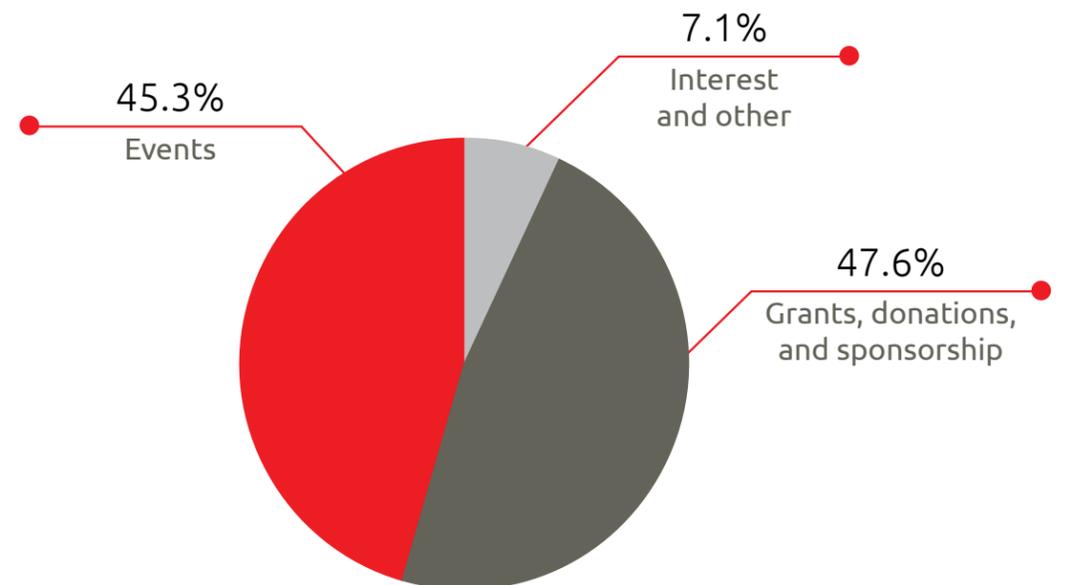
Financial Summary

The generous support of Special Olympics BC’s sponsors and donors is critical to our athletes, our year-round programs, and our empowering competitions. In 2023-24, Special Olympics BC’s valued sponsors and donors contributed **\$3.47 million** to make a difference for athletes with intellectual disabilities and the programs and opportunities that matter so much to them.

Expenses



Revenue



With Gratitude

Thank you to our valued donors whose contributions help enrich the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport.

\$1,000+ Donors

- 1258919 B.C. Ltd.
- Adam Beaudin-Ball
- Allen & Linda Tuningley
- Barbara E. Sims
- BC Association of Chiefs of Police
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- Stephen Scott
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- Tara Hassan
- TD Bank Group
- Teamsters Local 213 Golf Tournament
- Ted & Patti Hirst
- The CN Police Service
- The Giustra Foundation
- The Local & Farmhouse
- Valley Powdercoat
- Vancouver Police Community Fund
- Vancouver Wolfpack Landscaping LTD
- Ventana Construction Corporation
- Verna Wiens
- Versaterm Public Safety Inc.
- Windsor Plywood Foundation
- Wolf in the Fog

\$1,000+ Auction Donors

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- AutoTrader.ca
- BC Honda Dealers Association
- BC Lions Football Club
- Bell Media
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- Black Press
- Blue Grass Farm
- Canada's First Nations Radio
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Event Sponsors



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Community Partners



Media Sponsors



A NIGHT OF CELEBRATION AND INSPIRATION

For 25 years, the Sports Celebrities Festival has led the way in changing lives through the power of sport, setting an enduring example of inclusion and respect for athletes with intellectual disabilities. A heartfelt thank you to all the generous sponsors, donors, B.C. sports stars, volunteers, and supporters who made this annual gala a smashing success!



"I see the joy that our athletes bring to their sport. I see a commitment to overcoming challenges and a dedication to an extraordinary work ethic ... I feel lucky to be his dad."
– Michael Duhaime, SOBC – Delta parent and coach, at the 2023 Sports Celebrities Festival

"I enjoy being part of a team, where I am accepted for who I am, and I accept my teammates for who they are ... Together, we've learned that if we prepare a good training plan, work hard with our coaches, we can actually achieve our dreams. And along the way, we learn how to deal with adversity – even pain – and find a way to keep going."
– Corey Duhaime, SOBC – Delta athlete, at the 2023 Sports Celebrities Festival



ACCELERATING VITAL FUNDS FOR ATHLETES

The 2024 Auction for Athletes drove inspiring support for Special Olympics BC and the New Car Dealers Foundation of BC, raising over \$255,000 – our most successful auction yet! For over 35 years, B.C.'s New Car Dealers and their generous supporters have made a difference for Special Olympics BC raising over \$5.65 million in vital funds to empower Special Olympics athletes with intellectual disabilities and to help the New Car Dealers Foundation of BC award automotive industry grants and scholarships.

Auction for Athletes

Proudly supporting



Silent Auction Donor



Vehicle Donors



HONDA

\$20,000 Sponsor

PACIFIC TOYOTA DEALERS



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\$10,000 Sponsor



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Special Olympics BC CLASSIC

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Silver Sponsor



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Competition Sponsors



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- Surge Battery Metals
- Standard Building Supplies Ltd.
- StockScores.com
- The Trend Letter
- Venue Kings
- Victoria Gold
- Vision Capital Corporation

GOLFING FOR GOOD

The 2024 Special Olympics BC Classic golf tournament showcases the dedication and commitment of donors, sponsors, and community partners to empowering people with intellectual disabilities. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to everyone who comes together each year to help open hearts and minds to inclusion.



"With Special Olympics, I can do anything! Special Olympics has given me support, friendships, and most of all, confidence."

- SOBC - Richmond athlete Jason Gubbels



"We love hearing the athletes talk about their experiences ... it's our favourite golf event, and it's just lovely to help out those that may be forgotten. It really gives community to them."

- Queens of the Greens golf team members at the 2024 SOBC Classic



PROVINCIAL SPONSORS 2023-24





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