



## 2023 Financial Transparency Report

### Introduction

Welcome to the Peterborough Currents financial transparency report for the year 2023.

As a business that relies on voluntary contributions from our community, we believe we have a responsibility to share with you how we are spending the money you contribute.

Secondly, as an independent, locally-owned news business, we are trying to forge a new path for sustaining local journalism. So we want to share our experiences for other news startups to learn from.

If there are any questions you have about this document, or if there is anything you'd like to know that isn't here, please get in touch. This report was written by publisher-editor Will Pearson.

## Company Profile

Peterborough Currents Media Inc. is a private business incorporated in Ontario on January 1, 2022. (We operated as a partnership before that.) The company has two equal shareholders: Ayesha Lye and Will Pearson.

Neither shareholder has withdrawn any of their equity; we reinvest profits back into the business to produce more journalism. When the budget allows it, we do pay ourselves as employees for hours worked. Ayesha stepped away from day-to-day involvement with the business on January 1, 2023. They are no longer an employee, but they remain on as a shareholder.

We prioritize serving our community through journalism and providing the best jobs we can more than generating profits. To that end, we operate more as a social enterprise than a for-profit corporation. It is a goal of ours to transition to a non-profit model in the future, but for now we appreciate the efficiency and simplicity afforded by existing as a private business.

## 2023: A Year of Stabilization and Visioning

We didn't share this with readers at the time, but the beginning of 2023 was the most precarious period in the history of Peterborough Currents. In the winter, we came closer to running out of money than we ever have — the balance in our bank account got as low as \$1,600.

Our founding co-publisher, Ayesha, had also just resigned to pursue other opportunities in life, leaving Will to take on the role of publisher-editor on his own starting on January 1, 2023. To survive, we temporarily cut our reporter's hours by a third. And we stopped paying our publisher-editor all together for a few months while things stabilized.

But stabilize they did. And then, a period of growth followed. We unlocked new revenue sources and almost 100 new people signed up to support us. By summer of 2023, we were able to pay our two employees (our publisher-editor and our reporter) for 15 hours per week again.

It's important not to sugarcoat this too much. We stabilized the finances of Peterborough Currents primarily by cutting our spending on editorial labour; that sometimes meant cutting back on the journalism we offered to our community and at times requiring significant amounts of unpaid labour.

The strategies that kept Currents alive in 2023 weren't sustainable. But by the end of the year, new funding opportunities were emerging that we'll share more information about elsewhere. For now, here's a look at what happened in 2023.

# Revenue Summary

## Audience revenue growth

Our monthly recurring audience revenue grew by 35 percent over the course of 2023. At the end of 2023, our monthly revenue from 261 community supporters totalled \$3,257. Thank you to everyone who has stepped up to pay for news at a time when it's more important than ever!

## Trent Radio partnership

Starting in April 2023, we partnered with Trent Radio to offer mentorship and support to their new journalist, the first one Trent Radio has ever had. In return, Trent Radio gave Currents \$1,000 per month. This arrangement was set to end in March 2024, which meant we had to plan for that revenue stream to dry up.

## Grants

Our grant revenue declined significantly in 2023: from \$25,000 in 2022 to \$6,282.50 in 2023.

## Advertisements

We did not make much progress in starting to sell ads in 2023. We sold two ads for a total of \$375. It remains a goal of ours to bring in more revenue through advertising.

## Sponsorships

We pursued several sponsorship opportunities but they all fell through. In the future, we would like to partner with organizations who want to sponsor independent reporting on topics they care about.

## Creek Week Sales

We sold the last copies of our Creek Week zine in 2023. Overall, this project turned a small profit of about \$300.

# Expenses Summary

We break our expenses down into four categories:

- *Editorial* — Expenses directly related to producing journalism. Almost entirely made up of journalists' wages and their associated benefits like CPP and EI contributions.
- *Operations* — Essential expenses that make our journalism possible. Everything from office rent to web hosting to our bookkeeping software.
- *Administration* — This is made up entirely of wages (plus mandatory benefits) for the administrative labour of our publisher-editor.
- *Marketing* — To build our brand and grow our email list. Mostly digital ads, but also some printing.

Our biggest expense by far in 2023 was the wages paid to our two employees: our publisher-editor and our reporter, who together produced almost all of the journalism we published.

## Indiegraf and its News Startup Fund

In the summer of 2023, we were accepted into Indiegraf Media's [News Startup Fund](#), a progressive granting program where we unlock increasing levels of support as our business grows. We entered at Stage Two, which came with \$5,000 of unrestricted funding in addition to dedicated marketing budget and in-kind technology services. At the very end of 2023, we advanced to Stage 3, which will unlock another \$15,000 of unrestricted funding, a bigger marketing budget, and another eight months of in-kind technology services.

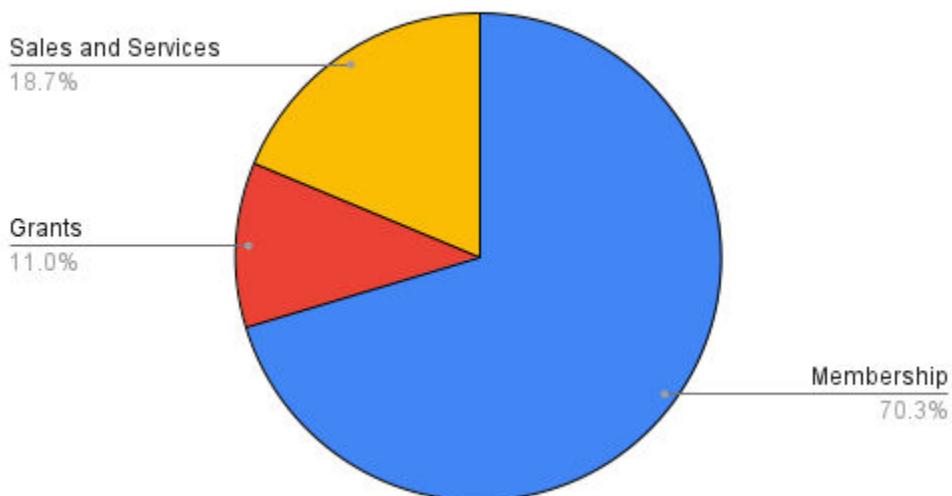
In order to remain eligible for the News Startup Fund program, we need to be a client of Indiegraf, which means we pay them a monthly fee. Indiegraf provides a lot of services in addition to the grant funding, so the arrangement is by far a net-benefit to Currents. Indiegraf has supported Peterborough Currents since 2020 and we wouldn't be where we are today without their help.

## The Numbers

### 2023 Revenue — Peterborough Currents Media Inc.

<b>Memberships</b> <i>(Gross contributions from our community)</i>	<b>\$40,114.23</b>
<b>Grants</b> <i>(One grant from Indiegraf)</i>	<b>\$6,282.50</b>
<b>Sales and Services</b> <i>(Advertisements, Creek Week sales, Trent Radio partnership)</i>	<b>\$10,703.47</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$57,100.20</b>

2023 Revenue



## 2023 Expenses — Peterborough Currents Media Inc.

### Editorial

<b>Editorial Personnel<sup>1</sup></b> ( <i>Editorial staff wages — incl. mandatory benefits</i> )	<b>\$ 32,899.03</b>
<b>Other Editorial Expenses</b> ( <i>Supplies, FOI fees, commissions, licensing</i> )	<b>\$ 593.61</b>
<b>Total Editorial Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 33,492.64</b>

### Operations

<b>Indiegraf<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>\$ 6,846.74</b>
<b>Office Rent</b> ( <i>Sadleir House</i> )	<b>\$ 2,350.40</b>
<b>Payment Processing and Consignment Fees</b> ( <i>Fees from Stripe for processing credit card transactions, and fees from retailers for selling Creek Week</i> )	<b>\$ 2,314.75</b>
<b>Digital Subscriptions</b> ( <i>Mailchimp, G-Suite, Wave Payroll, Etc.</i> )	<b>\$ 3,146.91</b>
<b>Misc. Office Expenses</b> ( <i>Banking fees, postage, etc.</i> )	<b>\$ 234.94</b>
<b>Total Operations Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 14,893.74</b>

### Administration

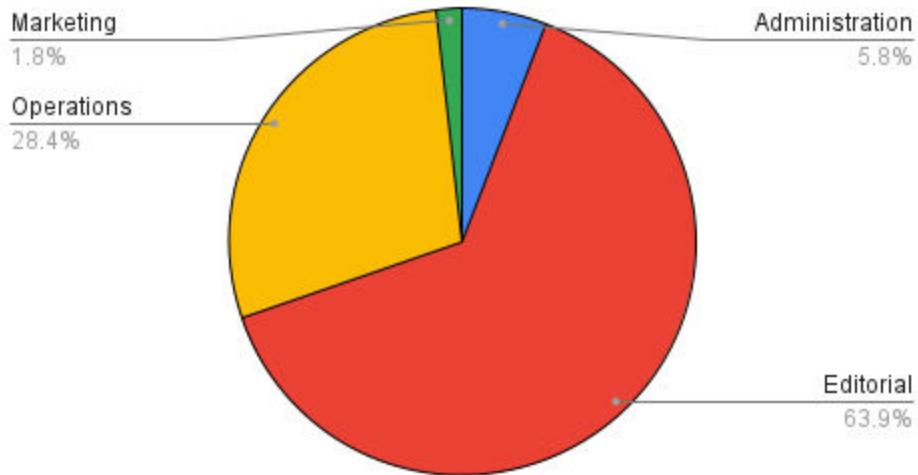
<b>Administrative Personnel<sup>1</sup></b> ( <i>Admin staff wages — incl. mandatory benefits</i> )	<b>\$ 3,060.03</b>
<b>Total Administration Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 3,060.03</b>

### Marketing

<b>Marketing</b> ( <i>Digital advertisements, printing, event participation</i> )	<b>\$ 963.57</b>
<b>Total Marketing Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 963.57</b>

<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 52,409.98</b>
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## 2023 Expenses



### Expenses Notes

1. Tracking our publisher-editor's administrative vs. editorial labour was inexact. Will constantly shifted between the two. To estimate the split, we assume Will spends three-quarters of his paid time on editorial tasks, and one-quarter on administrative tasks. Will's editorial labour is included in "Editorial Personnel" and his administrative labour is included in "Administrative Personnel"
2. Indiegraf is a Canadian company that supports journalist entrepreneurs in a variety of ways. They provide our wordpress theme, our email service provider, our payments infrastructure, an audience growth strategist, and more. They also connect us with grant opportunities. In return, we pay Indiegraf a monthly fee.

## Total Profit and Opening/Closing Balances

Here's the simplest encapsulation of how our business did in 2023. We started the year with \$2,277.34. We earned a profit of \$2,451.09. So that means we ended the year with \$4,728.43.

Total Equity as of December 31, 2022	\$2,747.16
2023 Revenues	\$57,100.20
2023 Expenses	\$52,409.98
2023 Profit	\$4,690.22
Total Equity as of December 31, 2023	\$7,437.38

# Despite Small Profit, Currents Didn't Reach Sustainability in 2023

On paper, this looks like a healthy business. Peterborough Currents took in slightly more than it spent in 2023.

But this overlooks something important: hundreds of hours of unpaid labour. That is not what sustainability looks like. At the end of 2023, we started budgeting for 2024 and we asked hard questions about whether it was worth continuing. To be honest, the answer seemed to be no — at first.

Then, an opportunity arose, and we took it. We'll share more about this in a separate announcement. But suffice it to say, 2024 is going to look very different from 2023. Starting in the spring and for one year only, we will have new resources to expand without relying on unpaid labour, and we hope we can use the coming year to grow our membership revenue to a point where it can sustain us in the long-term.

By the end of 2023, we were surviving. By the end of 2024 the goal is to be thriving. But this will require more community members to sign up as monthly donors, and we'll have to earn that support by producing more great journalism. If you want to help us grow, [please sign up as a supporter here.](#)

## Conclusion

The above information is solely financial. It doesn't touch on the impact we had in 2023, including the 100+ articles, podcasts and newsletters we published or the 48,000 people who visited our website.

More than money, we are motivated by our love for Peterborough and our belief that everyone deserves access to high-quality journalism so they can understand their city and feel connected to their community.

“Peterborough Currents is inspirational, aspirational, and transformational,” one reader wrote to us in 2023. “It’s deep, and meaningful, and hard-hitting, and sometimes fun and playful. The amount of time and effort and work that must go into this is astonishing. Thank you for everything.”

That kind of feedback motivates us more than money can. Still, we need money to make the business run. I hope this document has helped you to understand a little bit more about what it takes to run an independent, locally-owned journalism business.

Take care,  
Will Pearson  
Publisher-Editor