



Ovarian Cancer Canada
Cancer de l'ovaire Canada



Report to the Community

2017-2018

There is no reliable screening test for ovarian cancer,
and the disease is notoriously difficult to detect.

Every year
2,800
Canadian
women are
diagnosed



1 out of every **2**
won't live to see another five years

Here's to changing
the statistics and
saving lives

As the only national charity entirely dedicated to overcoming
this disease, **Ovarian Cancer Canada** provides support,
increases awareness, and funds vital research.

Messages from the Chair and CEO

My first year as Chair of the Ovarian Cancer Canada Board of Directors fills me with such pride. One of the greatest sources of this pride is that today our community is closer than ever to gaining federal government support of ovarian cancer research. Research is how we will make significant improvements to outcomes and to survival – improvements that we all want to see, soon.

It is not enough to fund and support research. Our rigorous strategic planning has refined our approach moving forward, with a deepening focus on advocacy as well as prevention. We are the organization that's going to ensure the voice of every person living with ovarian cancer is strongly represented within the corridors of power to bring about change and to save lives.



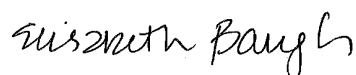
Theresa Marie Underhill
Chair of the Board



Together, as a community, we have come so far. This year was proof positive that we have the ear of government. It's up to us to remain vigilant in pressing for answers to our appeal for research funding. Canada's scientists need opportunities to work together on large scale, high calibre projects that show promise for having the most impact as quickly as possible. Our federal elected representatives have clear roles in creating these openings and we must continue to hold them to account in efforts to see progress that is already long overdue.

Meanwhile, with your help, Ovarian Cancer Canada is directly funding research that tackles major challenges such as chemo-resistance and treatment delivery. We are privileged to be guided by your insights as we champion these urgently needed initiatives and many more. In this way, your lived experience informs women's health decisions, and lights the path ahead for thrivers, survivors, and others who have been diagnosed.

I thank you every day for making Ovarian Cancer Canada a part of your journey.



Elisabeth Baugh
Chief Executive Officer



Because your voice matters

The pen is all the more mighty when thousands of people join forces to advocate for change. With your support, the Genetic Non-Discrimination Act became law in May 2017, enabling Canadians to pursue genetic testing without fear of reprisals from insurance companies and employers.

With this success in hand, you turned your attention to the federal government's track record for underfunding ovarian cancer research. And you haven't looked back since.

Thousands of Canadians signed petitions and wrote to their federal elected representatives to urge support. Many went so far as to connect face-to-face with the people representing them in Parliament.



4 women with ovarian cancer,

6 researchers and 7 Ovarian Cancer Canada representatives discussed the issues directly with 49 federal decision makers at an event on Parliament Hill that was hosted by the Parliamentary Women's Caucus and Speaker Geoff Regan

An immediate and additional federal investment of \$10 million would enable Canada's leading ovarian cancer researchers to improve research models, prioritize development of treatments and advance clinical trials to help fundamental discoveries reach women in treatment.

Because of you, the Standing Committee on Finance was convinced that steps should be taken by government to "Invest in ovarian cancer research to advance a personalized medicine platform for this cancer and to reduce the five-year mortality rate associated with it."

This recommendation was third in a list of 92 put forward for consideration in Budget 2018, a development that brought the community historically close to securing federal government support.

But while Budget 2018 did make mention of ovarian cancer, no funds were specifically allocated to addressing this disease. Steadfast in our course, the community is forging ahead in a continuing quest for answers.



Throughout the year, federal elected representatives and the Minister of Health received letters from

1,417
Canadians

all asking government to
invest in ovarian cancer
research

In the House of Commons,
MP John Oliver read a
petition signed by

12,703

Canadians calling attention to
the need for research funding

"We have to be on government's doorstep. It behooves those of us who are healthy enough and able enough to join with Ovarian Cancer Canada to press for the investment in research that is so sorely needed. They are going to need our backing, in whatever ways we are able to give it, to help ensure that lab research and clinical trials have a chance to take place in Canada and advance our knowledge of ovarian cancer."

Katherine Farris
diagnosed in 2011
Victoria, British Columbia

Because there's no time to wait

With government's response to the appeal for funding still looming, you've continued to step up with donations of your own to power year-round programming as well as urgently-needed research. That means that you're helping to keep the lab lights on and build scientific capacity on a daily basis, enabling Canada's leading researchers to do what they do best.

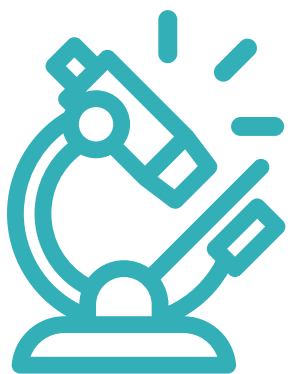
Following a nationwide call for submissions, Ovarian Cancer Canada and the Cancer Research Society jointly funded operating grants to support two projects. Every dollar Ovarian Cancer Canada invested in this research is matched by the Cancer Research Society to double the impact of your donations.



Improving treatment delivery

Dr. Jim Petrik, Researcher and Professor at University of Guelph, and his team aim to increase the effectiveness of treatment by enhancing blood circulation within tumours. Because treatment depends on the quality of tumour blood vessels, improving circulation supports better uptake of drugs.

The team collaborated with Harvard University researchers to develop a peptide, or small protein, that eliminates defective blood vessels. Work underway tests a combined approach that introduces the peptide to the tumour and then treats the tumour with viruses that destroy cancer cells. If this approach enables treatment to be absorbed more effectively, it may mean that smaller quantities of drugs can be used to achieve similar results, making way for reduced toxicity and fewer side effects.



With the help of generous donors, like you,
Ovarian Cancer Canada has contributed over

\$6 million
to support research

Tackling chemo-resistance

Dr. Trevor Shepherd, Translational Oncology Scientist, and his team at the London Regional Cancer Program are exploring whether a coping mechanism called autophagy enables cancer cells to survive chemotherapy. Autophagy normally occurs when cells placed under stress work to sustain themselves, but the response can be used by cancer cells to increase tumour growth and aggressiveness.

Focused on identifying which parts of the autophagy response support chemo-resistance, the team will analyze tumour samples from ovarian cancer patients and look at ways of blocking these responses to inform development of treatments that override chemo-resistance. Results may also support a Phase I clinical trial for women with late stage ovarian cancer.



Current research investments directly benefit high calibre projects, inspire emerging talent, and sustain valuable resources that advance studies around the world. Among these resources is the Ovarian Cancer Canada Tissue Banking Network, which encompasses sites in Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa and Montreal. This year, hundreds of women with ovarian cancer entrusted biological samples and data to the Network, which in turn makes these materials available to scientists and physicians studying ovarian cancer.



One of the studies drawing from the Network is based out of BC Cancer. It reexamines the subtypes of ovarian cancer with the aim of explaining why some cases respond to standard treatment while others do not. The design of experiments was led by Yikan Wang, recipient of the inaugural Anita Unruh Prize.

Founded by Patrick McGrath in memory of his wife, the Prize recognizes excellence in trainee research on ovarian cancer and encourages trainees to establish careers in research related to this disease.

7,000 new biological samples

from women with gynecological cancer were contributed to the Ovarian Cancer Canada Tissue Banking Network this year. To date, materials from the Ovarian Cancer Canada Tissue Banking Network have been used in 450 studies throughout the country and internationally.

Because connecting with one another is vital

An ovarian cancer diagnosis can bring feelings of isolation. It may surface unique concerns - such as fear of recurrence, the role of genetics, and impact on sexuality - that can only be understood by someone who has been there. At the same time, it can be challenging to find people who can relate to what you are going through firsthand.

Launched in September 2017, OVdialogue is a new online community where women with ovarian cancer can get to know one another and band together for support in confronting this disease. Because the need for support isn't defined by time or place, you're taking control by reaching out to others on OVdialogue whenever and wherever you choose.

As part of this community, you are sharing your stories, asking questions, and offering insights. In doing so, you're meeting women with experiences that ring similar to your own and you're building a safe space for these empowering connections.



"One of the first things I found myself needing to do, the day the recurrence was confirmed, was to seek support from my OVdialogue online community. I re-read the posts pertaining to recurrence. I felt less alone. I've been connecting with my friends in the community and it is helping me to adjust to this new reality."

Gail McIntosh
diagnosed recurrence in 2018
after a year with no evidence of disease
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Because of you, OVdialogue is bridging vast distances to form a circle of trust where hundreds of women are getting and giving advice as they face the ups and downs of living with ovarian cancer.

"You learn new things by reading what other people do to cope with treatment and side effects. If you find anything particularly relevant, you can bring the information to your doctor to see if it's right for you."

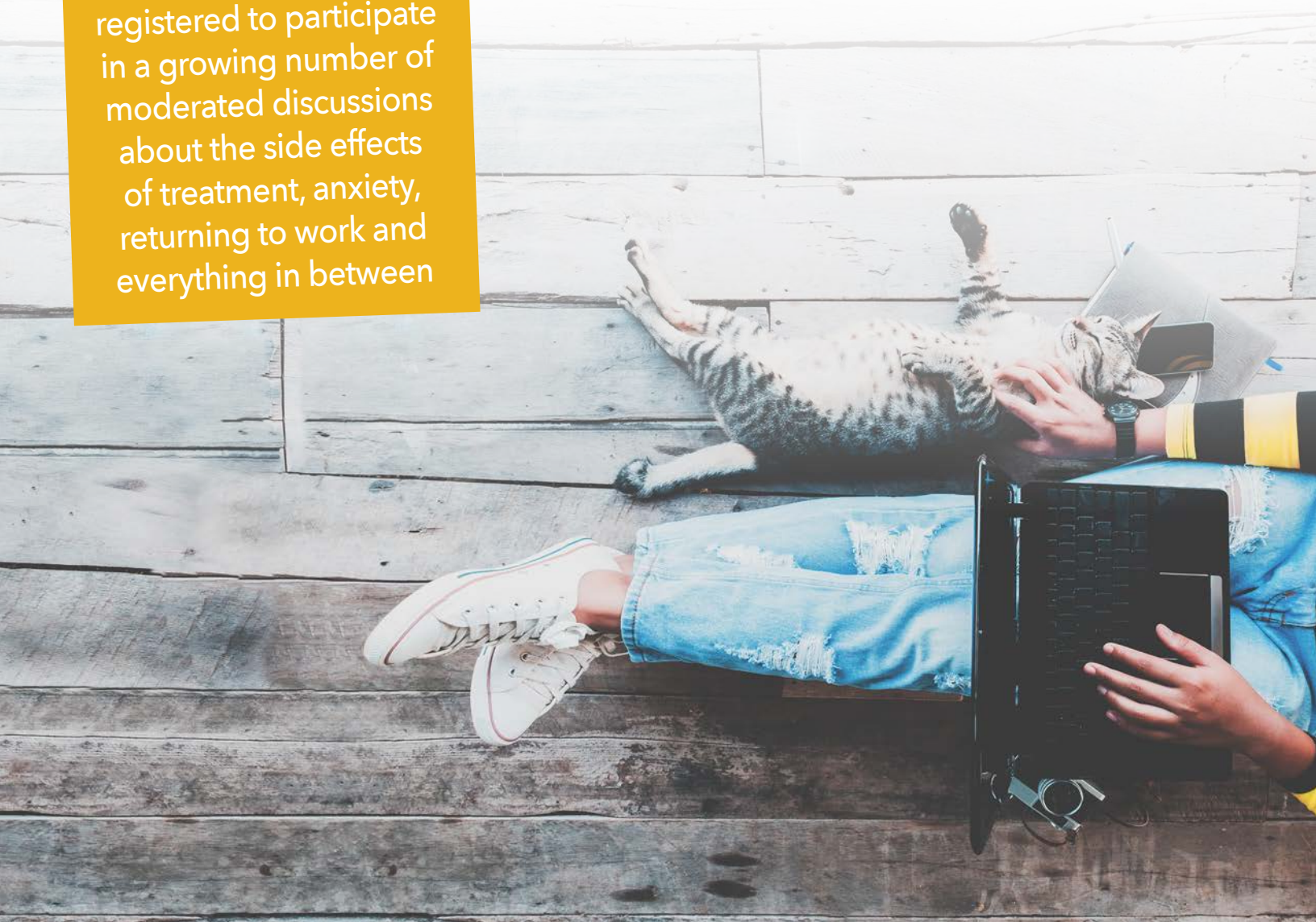
Ana Cardoso
diagnosed in 2016
Quebec City, Quebec



Within months
231
women

registered to participate
in a growing number of
moderated discussions
about the side effects
of treatment, anxiety,
returning to work and
everything in between

As the number of active contributors on OVdialogue continues to climb, the community draws ever closer to ensuring every woman with this disease always has someone by her side who understands what it's like to walk in her shoes.



Because one day can change everything

This year, for you and more than 7,000 concerned Canadians, September ushered in time to come together at the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope, the country's most powerful day-long event to direct all fundraising and attention to this disease.

When you decided to participate in the Walk, you became a community champion. With every donation you asked for, you invited a conversation about ovarian cancer and the impact it's had on your life, bringing your friends and family closer to understanding an overlooked issue in women's health.

On Walk day, with every shared glance and warm hello, you told someone affected by this disease about your commitment to changing the course of ovarian cancer and improving outcomes. And ultimately, with every step you took, you furthered your legacy and made good on a promise to your supporters and to the women wearing teal shirts that day. The promise that we will keep pressing forward until ovarian cancer is stopped, once and for all.





"When ovarian cancer came into our lives, it was like being teleported to a foreign land with a foreign language. But the Walk was like our translator. It was our beacon of light. Our commitment to the Walk continues to grow strong because all women with ovarian cancer deserve to have positive stories like ours."

Jean Storey
Calgary, Alberta

Powered by local volunteer committees, the Walk is where many women with ovarian cancer meet one another in person. For many, it is the first time they come face-to-face with someone who knows what they are going through based on personal experience, someone who can truly relate to how they are feeling and what they are thinking. The community of support that gathers at the Walk inspires a sense of solidarity that compels many teams and individuals alike to return year after year. This year's Walk raised \$1.8 million to fund year-round programming and ovarian cancer research.



"As I reach my fifth year in remission, I find hope in other women and hearing their stories. Hearing from someone who was diagnosed 10 to 12 years ago is inspiring. I want to see more women out there walking with us."

Joanne Rivest
diagnosed in 2013
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

Named after the founder of the Walk, the Peggy Truscott Award of Hope was presented to Houda Moussallier in honour of her volunteer efforts to support the mission of Ovarian Cancer Canada.

"It confirms that behind any negative there is positive, as cancer gave me strength that I never knew I had. Volunteering is a priceless experience and the patients I meet through my volunteer work become part of my life - I share the Award with them."

Houda Moussallier
diagnosed in 2009
Montreal, Quebec



Because you are not alone

1,058 more women

are benefitting from firsthand insights from others living with ovarian cancer and the best available advice from professionals encompassed in *By Your Side* and *Still By Your Side*. These informative resources continue to support and inform the journeys of women who have received a new diagnosis or are facing recurrence of ovarian cancer.

264 people heard directly

from subject matter experts about the latest developments and information related to this disease during series of webinars. Topics addressed the specific concerns of women and families living with ovarian cancer, such as the role of genetics in cancer and treatment for recurrence. Webinars like these were presented live, offering opportunities for audience members to ask questions in real-time. Recordings are available online.



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By Your Side



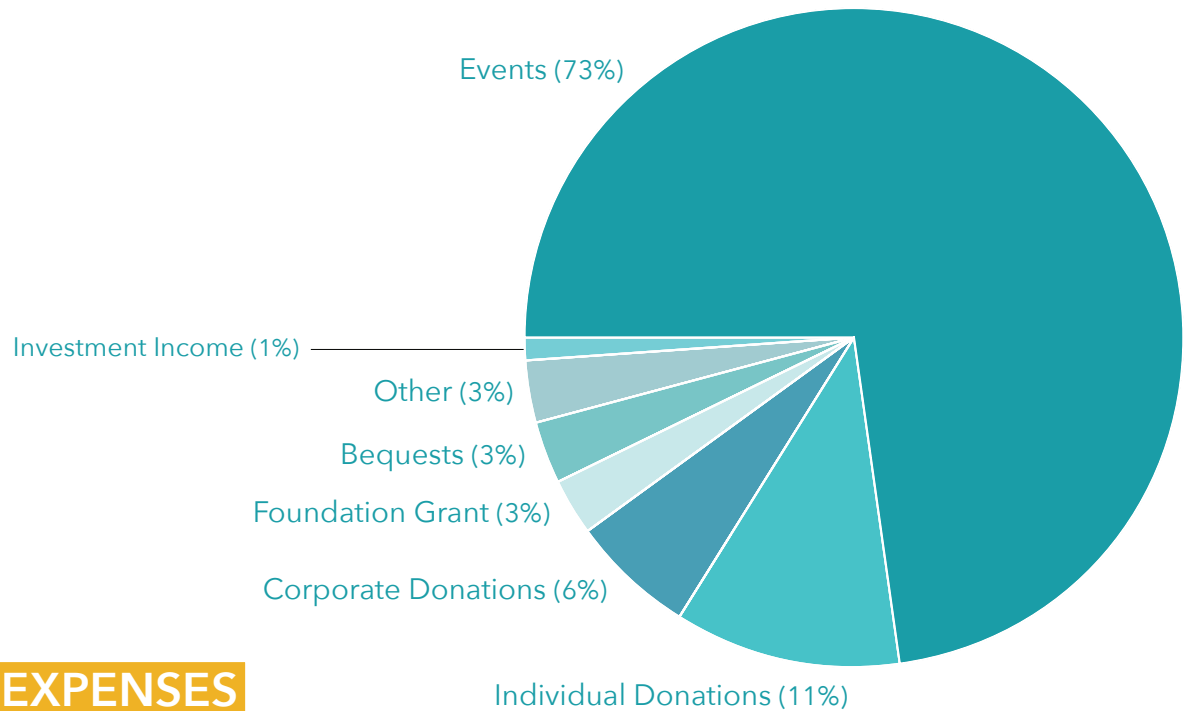
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Still By Your Side

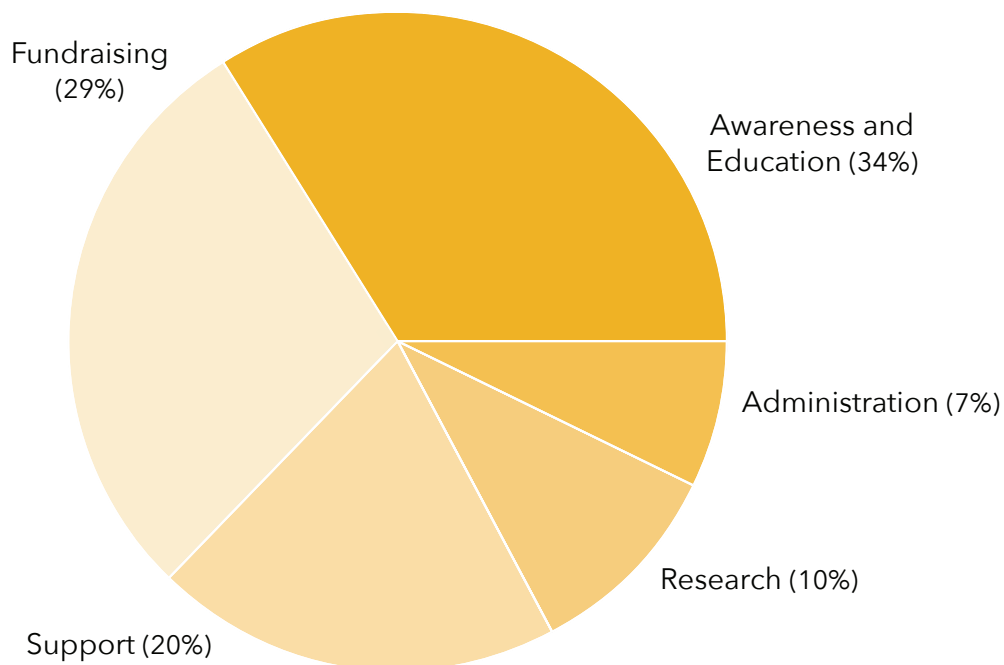
Because you give generously

The impact Ovarian Cancer Canada is making in your community is powered entirely, and every day, by the donations and contributions of people like you. Each dollar you entrust to this organization is put hard to work in the community, to push for progress further and faster.

REVENUE



EXPENSES



Where possible, your gifts are maximized through strategic partnerships, however Ovarian Cancer Canada is not a subsidiary of any other charity.

Looking ahead

To affect bold changes that save lives, Ovarian Cancer Canada is working with you to propel research, improve quality of life for those diagnosed, and advance prevention efforts. These pillars guide the organization's work to enable women with ovarian cancer and others at risk of developing the disease to live fuller, better and longer.



PROPEL SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES AND RESEARCH BREAKTHROUGHS

Increase research investments, through advocacy and direct funding, to lead coordinated efforts against ovarian cancer.



ENSURE WOMEN WITH OVARIAN CANCER CAN THRIVE

Improve care so that every woman who is diagnosed has timely access to effective treatments and support resources.



STOP THIS DISEASE FROM DEVELOPING IN THE FIRST PLACE

Inform women about preventive action, while affecting system changes that help reduce risk and bring down incidence.

ULTIMATE IMPACT

Women with ovarian cancer and those at risk of the disease live fuller, better, longer lives.



Our mission calls for a focus on research. For scientific progress, significant funding will need to be invested both directly and by government. At the same time, women living with ovarian cancer must see improved care and support offerings so they can live their best lives. Beyond this, information about prevention has to reach women who are at a high risk of ovarian cancer and others who have opportunities to reduce their risk.



This progress is only possible with your help and support. It will take the efforts of the entire community to reach further and radically shift the course of this disease for good. Together we can make it happen.



Board of Directors

Comprised of people who have been impacted by the disease, community champions and leaders in research, healthcare and business; the Board of Directors provides governance that supports Ovarian Cancer Canada in achieving its mission.

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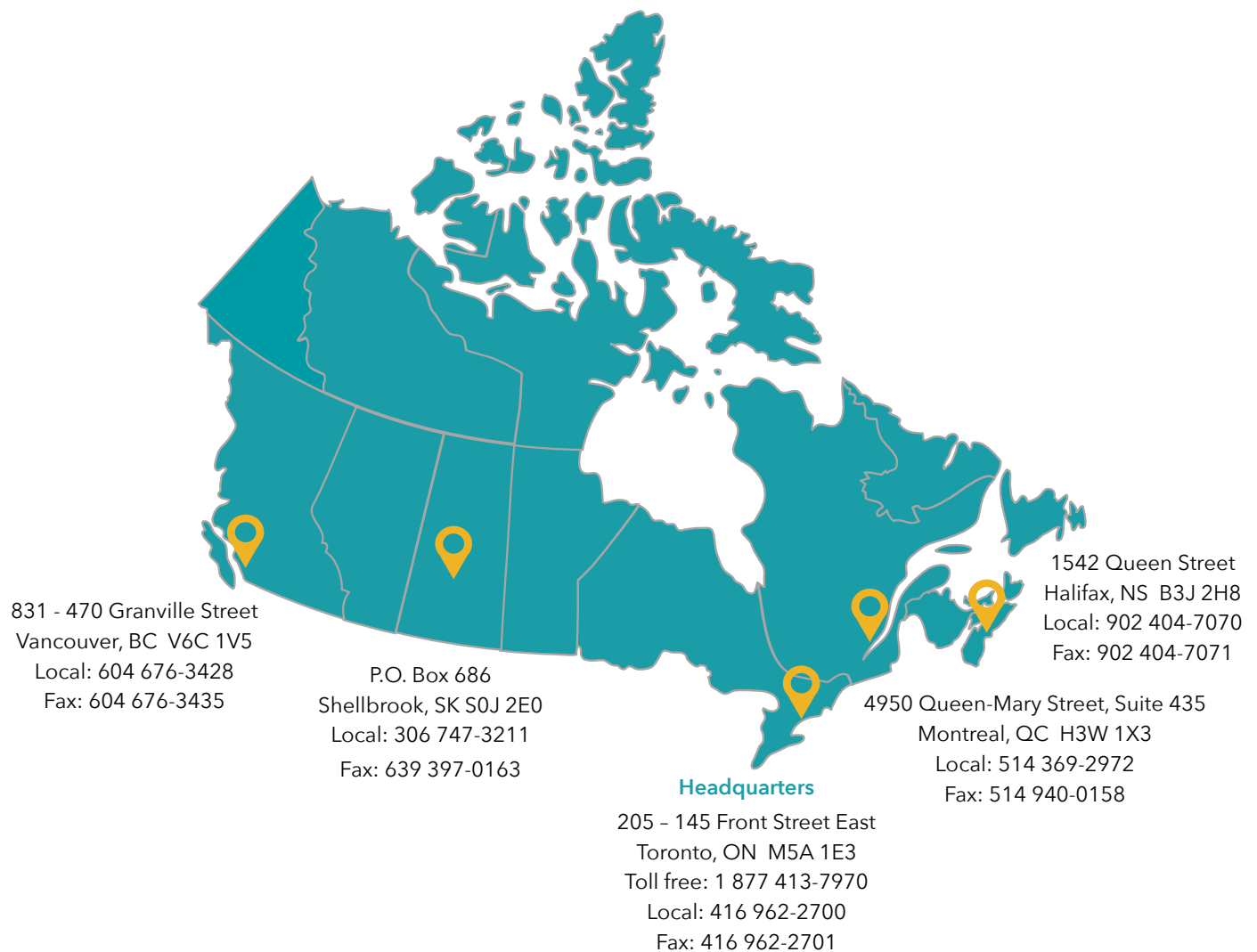
Operations

Roxana Predoi

Director, HR and Operations

Here for you

Ovarian Cancer Canada provides programs and resources from coast to coast to coast. To speak with a representative, or to donate, please get in touch.



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