

**PROSPER CANADA REACHES NEW HEIGHTS**  
**2014-15: YEAR IN REVIEW**



2014-15 began on a high note for Prosper Canada. On the heels of an exciting brand launch, we started the year with a renewed commitment to our mission of expanding economic opportunity for Canadians living in poverty and a clear understanding of our role as Canada's leading champion of financial empowerment. This set the tone for a year of success and growth as we worked with partners in all sectors to develop and promote financial policies, programs and resources that are transforming lives and helping Canadians to prosper.

### **Supporting more newcomers and people with disabilities with new online tools**

This year was important in solidifying the organization's role in developing online tools to support vulnerable groups. Newcomers and people with disabilities are directly benefiting from this work with access to important financial information through two new and innovative, online products.

The **Money Management Tool for Newcomers**, developed in partnership with Citizenship and



Immigration Canada, provides people who are new to Canada, or planning to move here, with customized money management information to help ease their transition and set them up for success. The tool also supports settlement workers who are helping newcomers to settle, providing credible financial information to suit their clients' individual needs.

Similarly, the **RDSP Calculator**, developed in partnership with PLAN, enables Canadians with disabilities and their families and caregivers to calculate benefit entitlements and the impact of saving to better provide for their future. The RDSP Calculator has been added to PLAN's services.

We are committed to continuing our work to support newcomers and people with disabilities as we move forward. In the coming year, through funding provided by Employment and Social Development Canada, Prosper Canada has again partnered with PLAN Institute on a new initiative to develop an online **Future Planning Tool for People with Disabilities** and their families and caregivers. The tool will help Canadians with disabilities and their families make informed financial decisions that enable them to achieve their goals. We will also continue our **Financial Literacy for Newcomers** initiative, providing financial literacy training to almost 200 settlement service providers and supporting the delivery of financial education to over 1,000 newcomers.

## TD Financial Literacy Grant Fund - Seeding a national community financial education field

2015 marks the culmination of the **TD Financial Literacy Grant Fund**, which has awarded \$10.4 million in grants to 139 community organizations across Canada under Prosper Canada's administration.

Through the Fund, we have been able to help a wide array of nonprofit organizations deliver innovative financial literacy education in their communities, supported breakthrough research on indigenous financial literacy needs and effective practices, and planted the seeds of a rapidly growing community financial literacy field in every province and territory. We are grateful to TD Bank Group, co-founder and core funder of the Prosper Canada Centre for Financial Literacy, for making this investment in advancing the financial literacy of Canadians living in poverty and other financially vulnerable groups.

While our final round of grants was announced in July 2014 and the Fund will officially wind down in December 2015, its impact will continue to be felt as we prepare a final report on the Fund's impact, the financial literacy needs of the diverse communities it served and the learning generated from the many initiatives it supported. Research results will be shared at the **ABLE Financial Empowerment Conference** in Toronto in November 2015, and used to inform and animate further knowledge sharing, and dialogue on how to move financial literacy forward in Canada.

While a community financial education field now exists where it did not before, lack of ongoing funding for this work will challenge the sustainability of many community financial education programs. We are committed to finding solutions to ensure Canadians living on low incomes continue to have access to the information, tools and resources they need to improve their financial knowledge, skills and confidence.

To this end, we are extremely grateful for TD's renewed commitment of \$3 million in funding to support the **Prosper Canada Centre for Financial Literacy** over the next three years. This funding will enable us to make significant headway on our goal of building the financial capability of one million vulnerable Canadians by 2020.

Announced in November 2014, TD's investment garnered the support of the Hon. Kevin Sorenson, Minister of State (Finance) and Jane Rooney, Canada's Financial Literacy Leader, who welcomed TD's commitment as a leading example of cross-sector collaboration that will accelerate progress toward our shared goal -- ensuring all Canadians have the financial information, education, advice and services they need to build their financial wellbeing. In the words of Linda MacKay, TD's Senior Vice President of Retail Savings and Investing:



*"As a co-founder and supporter of Prosper Canada's Centre for Financial Literacy, TD is delighted to renew its commitment and invest in the Centre's ongoing efforts to equip lower income Canadians with the*

*knowledge and skills they need to build a brighter financial future. We are excited to team up, once again, with an organization that has helped to empower so many Canadians to make good financial decisions.”*

### **Building capacity to meet the financial literacy need of Canadians with low incomes**

Over the past year, we completed development of our **Online Financial Literacy Facilitator Training** course, undertaken in partnership with Seneca College and the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI).

Designed to make financial literacy educator training less costly and more accessible, our seven-week online pilot was launched in March 2015 on the OCASI *LearnAtWork* platform. During pilot testing, 20 learners will explore modules on nine financial literacy topics, as well as adult learning, facilitation and workshop preparation and delivery. Learners will also participate in discussion forums and evaluation surveys throughout.

We will continue to test and refine the course in 2015-16, with a view to offering it nationally so that community service providers everywhere - particularly those in rural and remote communities -- have access to high-quality, interactive, accessible online training tailored to the needs of the low-income and vulnerable populations they serve.

### **Designing solutions to improve uptake of RESPs for families with low incomes**

In late 2014, we worked with award-winning design firm Bridgeable and Peel Children and Youth Initiatives (PCYI) to research and design **solutions to help families with low incomes to open RESPs** and take advantage of generous federal education savings grants and incentives.



Research has shown conclusively that even \$500 in an education savings account more than doubles the likelihood that a child in a family with low income will go on to post-secondary education. The federal government’s \$500 Canada Learning Bond (CLB) and Canada Education Savings Grant (CESG) are powerful incentives for families on low incomes to save for their child’s education, providing up to \$7,200 per child over their lifetime toward their education. While no contribution is required to open an RESP and access

the CLB, 97.2 per cent of low income families who have done so, have added their own savings (on average over \$1,005) totalling over \$3 billion.

To date though, only 31 per cent of eligible low-income families are taking advantage of these incentives, due to barriers that make it difficult for them to open an RESP. Our goal was to work with Bridgeable and PCYI to design solutions to these barriers.

After in-depth research and a co-creation workshop that brought together a wide range of stakeholders including frontline workers at community agencies, financial advisers at banks, and other key informants specializing in policy and financial literacy, two web-based prototype solutions were developed -- a simple, plain language, visual guide to help families understand the steps involved in opening an RESP and to plan their “RESP journey” successfully; and a related online tool to help frontline bank personnel understand the CLB and walk their clients successfully through the RESP process using plain language and visual guides. We will continue working to develop these prototypes into fully functioning online tools that everyone can access.

### **Advancing knowledge, Enhancing impact**

More and more community organizations, governments and businesses are looking to Prosper Canada to inform policy, ignite discussion, and catalyse financial empowerment innovation. We are meeting this challenge in a number of ways.

#### **Sharing knowledge**

In the past year, Prosper Canada has participated in a range of high profile events to share insights and knowledge on financial empowerment issues. We reached over 800 financial empowerment leaders from all sectors through our participation in the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada’s National Conference, Credit Education Week conference, and the City of Toronto’s Financial Literacy Day event.

Through the release of our ***Financial Counselling for People Living on Low Incomes: International Scan of Best Practices*** report, we shared leading-edge research on optimal financial counselling approaches to help low-income consumers tackle financial challenges like debt, difficulty accessing benefits, saving and planning for their financial future. Report findings were also shared in a webinar that enabled over 220 learners from across Canada to join the discussion.



Since the appointment of Prosper Canada CEO, Elizabeth Mulholland, to the **National Financial Literacy Steering Committee** in 2014, the organization has received extensive profile with sector leaders and journalists turning to Prosper Canada for expert financial empowerment input and advice. We were pleased to contribute to an article in the Toronto Star entitled, *Why You Should Consider Starting an RESP When Your Child is Still in Diapers* published in September 2014. Opportunities like this allow us to highlight considerations for people living on low incomes, too often overlooked in mainstream media.

## Informing policy

Prosper Canada continues to provide input and advice to governments across Canada on the barriers people with low incomes face when it comes to financial inclusion and wellbeing, proven financial empowerment solutions, and ways we can leverage existing government programs and policies to do a better job of supporting Canadians' financial wellbeing in a sustainable way.

We provided two important submissions to governments this year -- one in response to the Ontario government's consultation on its proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, and the second in response to the federal government's consultation on strengthening the financial literacy of priority groups -- ***Toward a National Strategy for Financial Literacy Phase 2: Priority Groups.***

The second submission was developed jointly with the Asset Building Learning Exchange (ABLE), a cross-sectoral collaborative of practitioners, financial institutions, researchers, academics, policymakers and funders dedicated to reducing poverty through financial empowerment initiatives. Prosper Canada currently chairs the ABLE Steering Committee and, whenever possible, seeks to obtain guidance and feedback from its members in the preparation of advice to governments.

## Driving change



Prosper Canada is honoured to be the host of the **2015 ABLE Financial Empowerment Conference** which will take place in Toronto in November 2015. This two-day conference will bring together leading stakeholders from across Canada committed to fostering financial empowerment for people with low incomes. Supported by members of the ABLE Steering Committee, Prosper Canada began planning this year and aims to engage over 300 conference participants from all sectors in conversations, information sessions

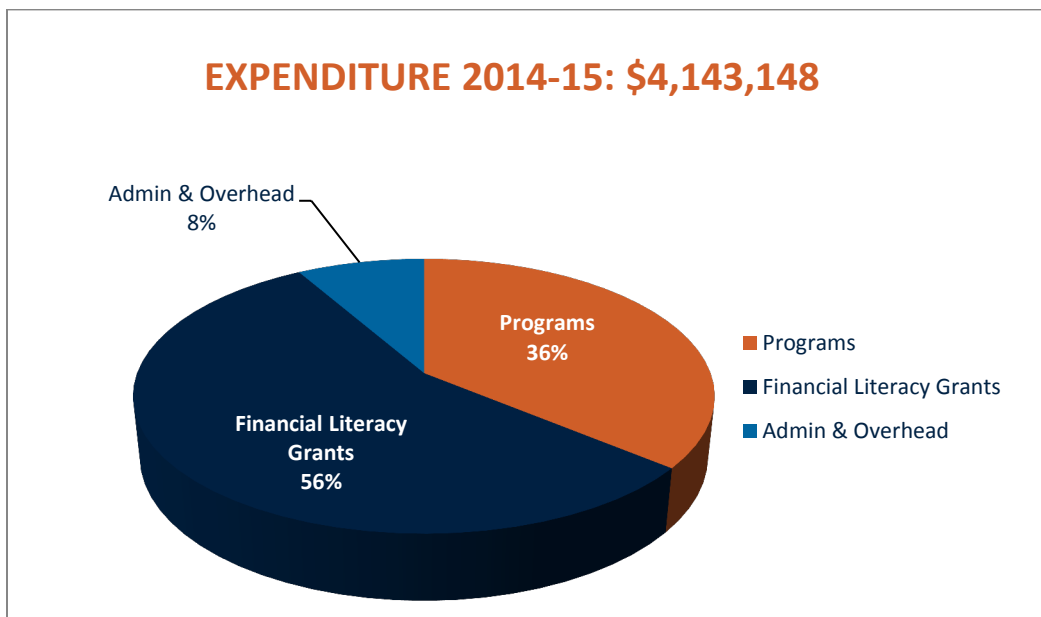
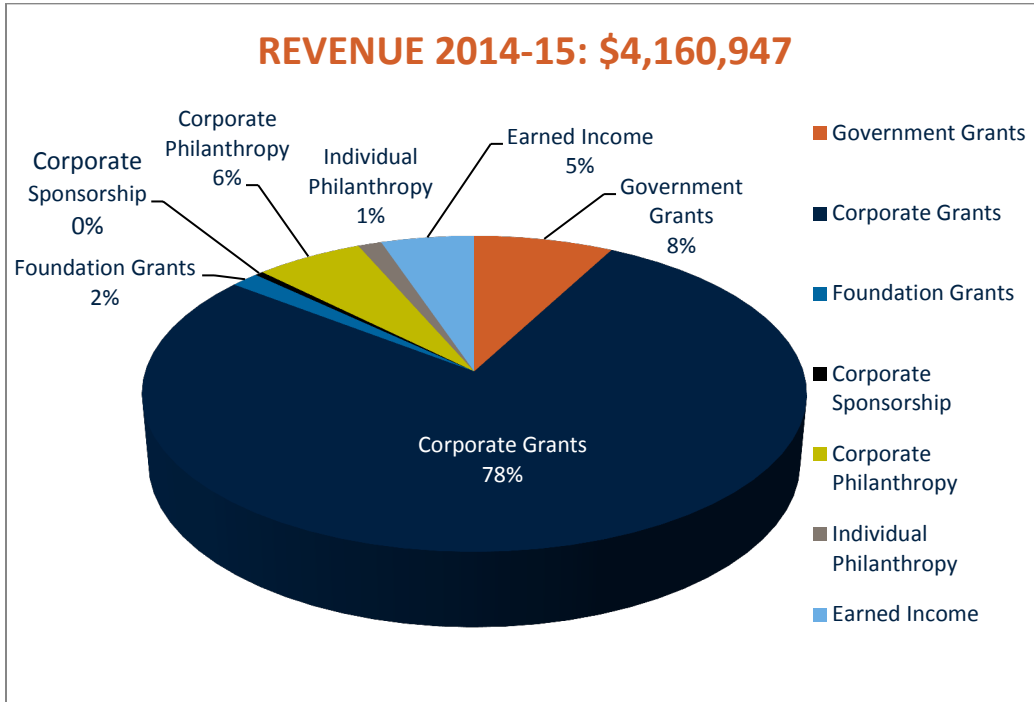
and interactive workshops that will help move the dial on financial empowerment in Canada. This year's conference theme is *Aligning for Impact*, reflecting our goal of aligning participants from all sectors in support of a financial empowerment vision and priorities that we can move forward together.

## Growing and diversifying our funding base for long term sustainability

We continue to pursue aggressive strategies to ensure the further growth and financial sustainability of the organization. As a result, we are pleased to report that we raised \$4,666,440 in new funding in 2014-15 -- some of this for the current year, but the majority for future years.

As of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015, Prosper Canada's financial position was sound with the strong financial management practices in place. Our total audited revenues were \$4,160,947 and we ended the year with a modest surplus of \$17,799.

Steps taken to diversify our funding base have begun to bear fruit. Once heavily dependent on government funding, we now have a more balanced revenue portfolio with the majority of our funding now drawn from the private sector and modest but notable growth in our earned income and donation revenue.



## Growing support for our work

Prosper Canada's work would not be possible without the support and collaboration of businesses, governments, non-profit organizations, and individuals across Canada that share our desire to promote financial policies, programs and resources that will transform lives and foster the prosperity of all Canadians.

We are deeply grateful for the support of our funders and donors, whose investments are helping to expand economic opportunity for low-income Canadians.

AGF Investments Inc.  
Brandes Investment Partners & Co  
Canadian Council on Social Development  
Citizenship and Immigration Canada  
City of Toronto  
Dynamic Funds  
Financial Consumer Agency of Canada  
Franklin Templeton Investments Corp.  
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Intuit Financial Freedom Foundation  
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Margaret and Gordon Fleming Flowthrough Fund at the Toronto Foundation  
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