

A person wearing a grey hooded coat and a black backpack is walking away from the camera across a crosswalk. The scene is set at dusk or dawn, with a soft orange and pink sky. In the background, there are power lines, a building, and a fire truck on the left. A white van is visible in the distance on the right. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

IMPACT REPORT 2023

THE
LOCAL



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND PUBLISHER

The Local had a productive year in 2023. The unexpected mayoral race required us to pivot quickly, and we did so with election coverage of unmatched breadth and depth. Our quarterly editions zeroed in on vital issues for seniors and those in Toronto's northwest, and examined the housing crisis from entirely new angles. *The Local's* reporting informed Torontonians and influenced policy action at City Hall and Queen's Park.

Organizationally, *The Local* is strong, and growing in modest and responsible ways. Our newsroom has one more full-time staffer than we did a year ago which, for an industry in persistent decline, is a hopeful sign. The Facebook and Instagram news block rocked the industry, but it also ignited our efforts to grow newsletter subscriptions and become less dependent on social media. In 2023, *The Local's* contributors—comprising nearly 50 writers, editors, photographers, and visual artists—were 79.5 percent non-white, more than three times as diverse as the Canadian journalism industry overall. And we continued to create opportunities for young journalists from communities under-represented in Canadian media through the fourth edition of our Local Journalism Fellowship. Our finances remain stable, thanks to the generosity of individual donors and foundations who continue to believe in the value of *The Local's* approach to community journalism.

As we approach *The Local's* five-year anniversary in May 2024, we are proud of what we've been able to accomplish thus far and excited about what's ahead.

Chris Ellis
Chair,
Board of Directors

Tai Huynh
Editor-in-Chief
and Publisher



Jane and Finch
**Walking tour with
community members**

OUR PURPOSE

The Local is a non-profit online magazine covering urban health and social issues in Toronto.

We are unabashedly Toronto, reporting from corners of the city that are too often ignored or misunderstood, with bylines as diverse as the city itself. We aim to fill a role that traditional media neglects—turning complex policy issues into compelling narratives, and addressing problems that are systemic and ongoing, even if they don't have a news hook.

We publish four quarterly issues a year, as well as regular one-off features and investigations tackling a range of social issues—from housing and transit to public education, labour, and urban health.



Spring 2023
The Rent Series

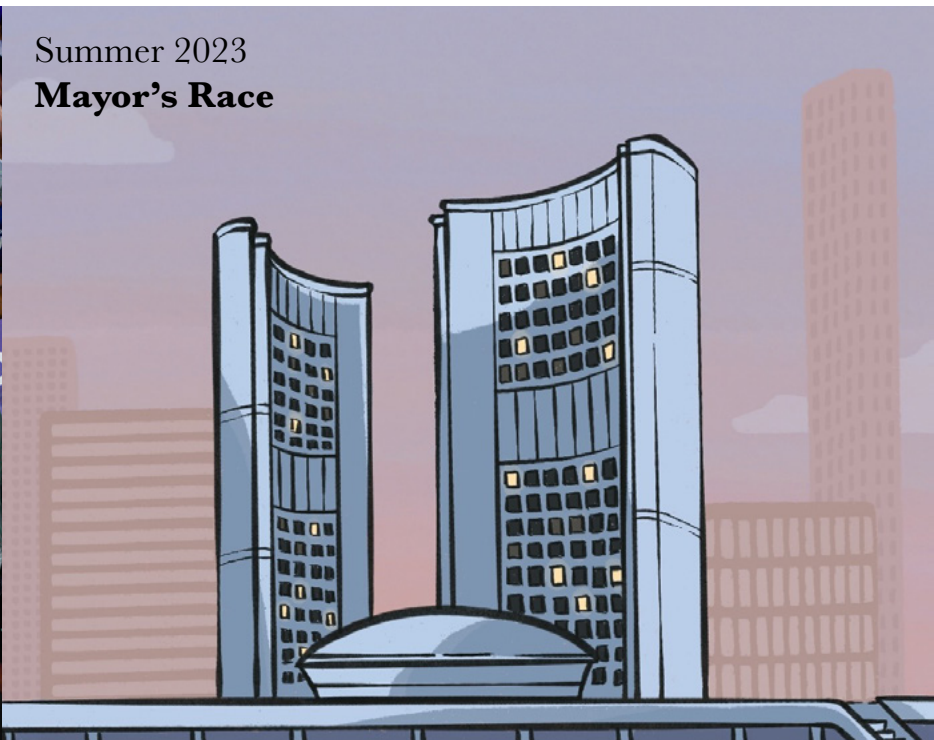
OUR JOURNALISM IN 2023

In 2023 *The Local* built on our success in previous years and solidified our place as a vital part of the Toronto media ecosystem—somewhere to read in-depth, timely stories you can't find anywhere else.

With an unexpected mayoral by-election called for June 2023, we decided to devote significant resources to covering the mayor's race with depth and breadth. Our series of candidate profiles, written by some of the best magazine writers in the country, were the most in-depth, probing stories about the mayoral hopefuls anywhere. At a time when disinformation is rampant, we believe that every single candidate running for political office deserves media scrutiny.



Summer 2023 Mayor's Race



We assembled a team of 10 reporters and fact-checkers to create Candidate Tracker, the only place to find fact-checked biographies and platform summaries of all 102 mayoral candidates. We produced thorough analysis of where leading candidates stood on critical issues, and published features like “How the Election Looks From the Suburbs” to ensure that the voices of Torontonians from all corners of the city were heard.

Beyond election coverage, in 2023 *The Local* doubled down on our strategy of telling revelatory long-form stories about social issues in the city. Our spring “Rent Series,” supported by a grant from Maytree Foundation, tackled the housing crisis from the point of view of Toronto’s renters. The series included investigations and essays on everything from “Renting While Black,” by Ashley Okwuosa, to Tahmeed Shafiq’s data journalism investigation, which found tenant complaints to the Landlord and Tenant Board took twice as long as those by landlords.

Our fall issue, on how the Finch West LRT is transforming northwest Toronto, brought sustained attention to an important story in the city’s suburbs. For that issue, as in much of our reporting, we did the slow, important work of engaging with the community through a series of walking tours and story-finding sessions with local leaders and residents. With additional funding support from United Way Greater Toronto and Metcalf Foundation, we were also able to upgrade our website with advanced visual storytelling capabilities, like scrollytelling and aerial photography, allowing readers to be transported into distant neighbourhoods like never before.



Fall 2023
The Finch West Issue



We then worked hard to assign stories to journalists who know those communities. The resulting stories—from Daysha Loppie’s [“Growing Up on the 36 Finch West”](#) to Kunal Chaudary’s [“The Apartments the Union Built”](#)—offered new, intimate perspectives on a subject that is usually only ever told from the outside.

The year ended with our Winter 2024 issue, [“The Aging City.”](#) The series offered a vital diagnosis of how the city is working for aging Torontonians—from deep dives on home care and the systemic issue of seniors who wander, to a personal essay about biking in your seventies, to a feature on the tragic phenomenon of LGBTQ2S+ seniors being forced back into the closet as they age. We took a critical look at two Toronto institutions, the TTC and Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and asked if they’re acting in the interests of Toronto’s aging population. And there was plenty of “news you can use” for older adults, including an extensive piece of service journalism that pulled together all the available seniors tax benefits and rebates that might otherwise be difficult to find.



Winter 2024
The Aging City

OUR IMPACT

In 2023, *The Local's* journalism reached every corner of the city, and landed on important desks in Queen's Park and City Hall.

In the lead up to the June mayoral by-election, we partnered with the Atkinson Foundation and Toronto Public Library to print and distribute copies of *Candidate Tracker* to all 100 branches of the city's public library system. Given the ban of Canadian news on Facebook and Instagram, we wanted to ensure that our fact-checked biographies and platform summaries made it into the hands of the Torontonians who needed them, particularly in neighbourhoods with historically low voter turnout.



While the housing crisis has become front-page news, there has been a lack of nuanced and critical deep-dives into the issues. With “The Rent Series,” we took a wide-ranging look at the barriers preventing the almost 50 percent of the population who are renters from making a life in Toronto. We examined potential policy solutions that went beyond building more homes. The reporting in our “Rent Series” led to direct action at Queen’s Park. Tahmeed Shafiq’s investigation into Landlord Tenant Board wait times was cited in a letter by the NDP MPP Jessica Bell to the Ontario Ombudsman as evidence of tenant wait times being high due to priority being placed on landlord hearings.

“Despite its size, *The Local* rises to the challenge of competing with Toronto’s plethora of larger media outlets to offer unique stories and seamlessly integrate one-of-a-kind data-driven projects to its audience.”

— Judge, 2023 Digital Publishing Award

Jason McBride’s superb piece of solutions journalism about land trusts, published by both *The Local* and Metcalf Foundation, was broadly shared by Olivia Chow and included in her election platform. Chow’s campaign promised to invest \$100 million into buying rental apartment buildings and transferring their ownership to non-profit owners, like the Neighbourhood Land Trust, to preserve the city’s stock of affordable rental units.

In 2023, *The Local*’s stories were republished in *The Walrus* and *Chatelaine*. Our publication was awarded the General Excellence (Small Publications category) prize at the 2023 Digital Publishing Awards for the third year in a row, as well as the silver award for Best News Coverage (Community). We also received the 2023 Media Award from the Alliance for Healthier Communities for our urban health reporting.

INDUSTRY AWARDS

2020

Digital Publishing Awards



2021

Digital Publishing Awards



2022

Digital Publishing Awards

National Magazine Awards



Press Freedom Award



2023

Digital Publishing Awards

Alliance for Healthier Communities Media Award



STAYING RESILIENT IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The Canadian journalism landscape was severely harmed by Meta's banning of news sharing on its social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) in response to Bill C-18, the Online News Act. When *The Local* launched in 2019, close to 40 percent of our website traffic came through the sharing of our links on Facebook. By the end of 2023, this traffic was reduced to zero. Of course, *The Local* is not unique in this regard—all news outlets in Canada have been negatively affected. What's most concerning to us is that while fact-based journalism is no longer allowed to exist on these platforms, disinformation is simultaneously taking off. This is a major threat to local democracy that should worry all of us.

“Journalism is crucial to our democracy, to civic life, to countering injustices and corruption.”

— Tai Huynh, in *The Philanthropist Journal*

At *The Local*, we've taken steps to ensure that our journalism continues to reach readers in this new world. In 2023, we increased our newsletter subscriptions by 17 percent, sending more of our stories directly into readers' mailboxes. In addition to covering the mayoral election with a booklet of mayoral candidate bios, we also covered the Scarborough Southwest by-election in a similar manner—with pamphlets that we distributed to local community organizations for sharing.

GROWING OUR TEAM

In 2023 *The Local* hired another full-time staff reporter: Wency Leung. Wency is a veteran journalist who joins *The Local* after spending nine years as the health reporter at *The Globe and Mail*. Wency's experience spans the world. Having started as a young reporter working at *Reuters*, she then found herself in a Cambodian newsroom working for a small English-language paper called *The Cambodia Daily*, where she grew from a reporter to the managing editor. Since then she has reported from publications all around the world, from *The Vancouver Sun* to *The Prague Post*. After such a wide-ranging career, we are proud to have Wency join our team as a staff reporter covering health and education.



Nicholas Hume-Brown, Inori Roy, Craig Madho, Wency Leung, and Tai Huynh (left to right)

OUR EQUITY COMMITMENT

As a publication focused on the issues affecting Toronto, our goal is to make sure our contributors reflect the diversity of this city, and that the people we platform are also connected with the communities on which they report.

That’s why every year, *The Local* conducts a diversity survey among our staff and freelance contributors as part of our ongoing commitment to race, representation, and diversity. In 2023 we sent our survey to 48 contributors and received 39 responses, an 81 percent response rate.

In 2023, 79.5 percent of our respondents identified as “Non-White.” This is more than three times higher than the Canadian industry average of 24.5 percent.

Beyond racial diversity, 41 percent of our contributors identified as “Male,” 48.7 percent identified as “Female,” and 10.3 percent identified as “Non-Binary” in 2023.

The Local's 2023 Contributors and Staff, by Race

	The Local	Industry Average
White	20.5%	75.5%
Non-White	79.5%	24.5%

The Local's 2023 Contributors and Staff, by Gender

	The Local	Industry Average
Male	41.0%	47.6%
Female	48.7%	52.0%
Non-binary	10.3%	0.4%

The Local is also committed to creating scholarships and mentorship opportunities for aspiring journalists of colour. In 2023, we held the fourth edition of our Local Journalism Fellowship—a paid 13-week opportunity for aspiring and emerging journalists from communities underrepresented in Canadian media to learn the craft of magazine-style community journalism and make important industry connections. Thanks to the generous support of the Inspirit Foundation, we were able to offer fellowships to Khadija Alam, Mobólúwajídide (“Bo”) D. Joseph, Daysha Loppie, and Sakeina Syed.

WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2024?

2024 is *The Local's* fifth anniversary, and we'll mark the occasion by revisiting the core thesis from our very first issue—by combining data and storytelling to reveal truths about Toronto that are otherwise invisible to the naked eye. Other quarterly issues will explore important questions like “how viable is Toronto’s arts sector,” “what’s the relationship between Bay Street and climate change,” and “can new immigrants make a life in Toronto in 2024?”

Readers can also expect more inter-issue content from us in the form of one-off features and investigations on beats like housing, education, transit, and health. And to stretch our limited resources farther, we'll be partnering with other newsrooms for increased content production and distribution.



FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS IN 2023

As a non-profit, *The Local* relies on various sources of revenue to pay our staff and contributors, and to offer high-quality content that is freely accessible to everyone. Vital to keeping *The Local* operating as an ad- and paywall-free publication is our growing community of generous supporters who believe in what we do.

As part of *The Local's* transparency policy, we make public all sources of funding above \$5,000 per year.

\$25,000 or more

Inspirit Foundation
Maytree Foundation
Metcalf Foundation
SE Health
Toronto Foundation
United Way Greater Toronto
Vohra Miller Foundation
Wellesley Institute
YMCA of Greater Toronto

\$5,000 to \$24,999

Ben and Hilda Katz Charitable Foundation
Canadian Periodical Fund
Omar Khan

Up to \$4,999

In addition to the major financial contributors above, *The Local* is supported by hundreds of individual readers who have generously donated various amounts—one-time, monthly, or yearly.

THE TEAM

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Nicholas Hune-Brown, Senior Editor

Inori Roy, Associate Editor

Wency Leung, Staff Reporter

Craig Madho, Manager of Operations

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