



# Redefining Inclusion



**autism**  
NOVA SCOTIA

Autism Nova Scotia | Annual Report 2018



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## Board Chair

- Ian Sutherland  
Partner | Stewart McKelvey

## Secretary

- Joan M. Craig, C.M.  
Founder | Autism Nova Scotia

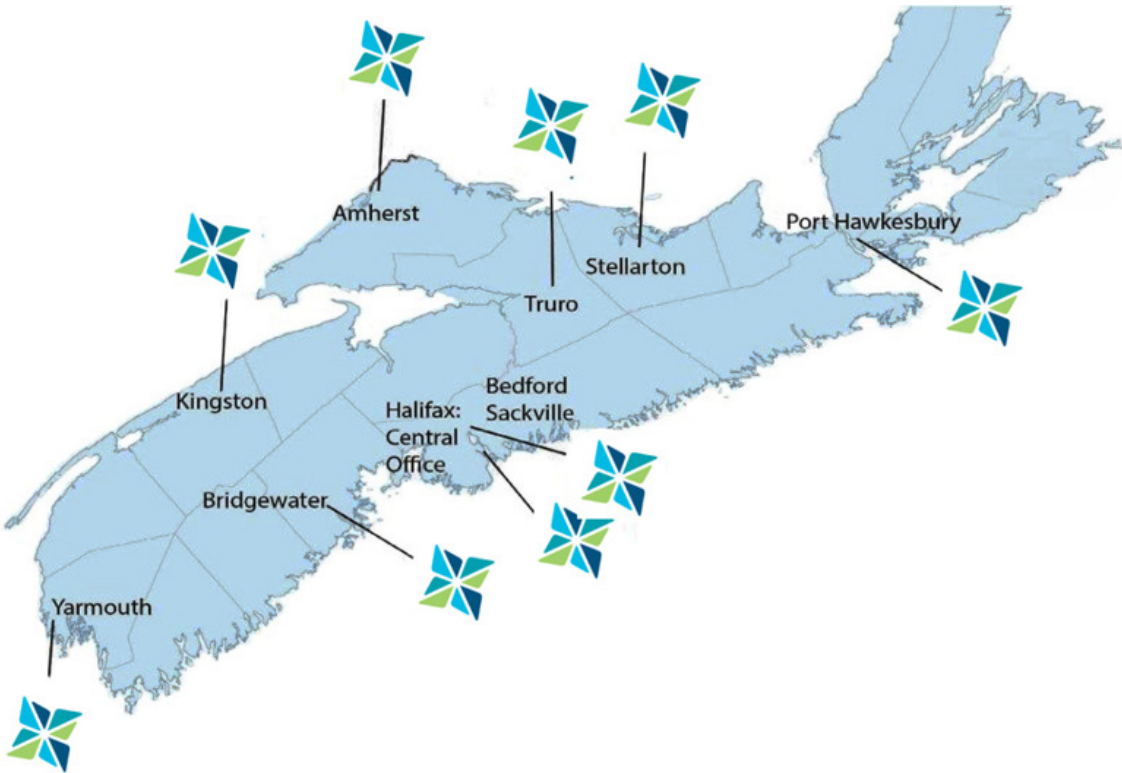
## Treasurer

- Greg Smith, CPA, CA  
Director of Finance | Ambassadors Gray Line

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- Dr. Robert Strang  
Parent
- Catherine Rahey  
Autism Consultant | South Shore Regional School Board

- Dave Nicholson, FCMA  
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- Allison Garber  
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- Kristie McAllister  
Parent
- Tracey Avery  
Parent
- Stephanie McGrath  
Senior Director | Content Strategy  
VERB Interactive
- Sarah Boyne  
Speech-Language Pathologist | Autism Services



[www.autismnovascotia.ca](http://www.autismnovascotia.ca)

Autism Nova Scotia is a community-based organization that fosters understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for those living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) throughout Nova Scotia. The generous support of donors, volunteers, and community members allows us to redefine the status quo and perceptions of autism in our province. Our organization strives to provide supports and services in every community of Nova Scotia.

## Strategic Priorities of Autism Nova Scotia

- Reach and serve more people
- Build community capacity
- Influence and shift public policy
- Long-term sustainability of programs and services





## Leading Change

Autism Nova Scotia has always been at the forefront of advocacy and action, both provincially and nationally. This year was no different. Thanks to the tireless work of our board of directors, staff, volunteers, and community partners, we continued our work of expanding the many ways in which autistic people are included and actively engaged in the communities they live, work and play in.

We have made great strides this year. A \$1.4 million investment by the Province of Nova Scotia in job supports will be administered through Autism Nova Scotia. This investment will remove previous support barriers and ensure jobseekers on the Autism Spectrum have access to the support they need to reach their full potential in the workplace. We recognize that life is not all about work and that important skills can be developed in fun,

less structured settings. Last fall, our Dungeons & Dragons program made national headlines by providing individuals on the spectrum the chance to develop new social skills in a collaborative, role-playing environment.

In 2017, Autism Nova Scotia was also awarded an annual grant from the Department of Health and Wellness to improve the capacity of our communities to deliver support across the province. With this funding, we have leveraged our existing chapter network to establish 8 Regional Autism Centres, where Autism Support Coordinators can build partnerships, host programs and offer enhanced support for autistics and their families across the province.

As a national leader in autism supports and advocacy, our work is never done. There are many challenges and service gaps that continue to affect the lives of of the community we serve. This past year we actively

participated in the consultations that contributed to the report of Nova Scotia's Inclusion Commission, released in March 2018, which presented a new blueprint for delivering education to students on the Autism Spectrum and improving their classroom experience. While there remains much work to be done the report's recognition of the need for appropriate, person-centred, needs-based supports will ensure all students have access to an inclusive, high quality public education.

From a lack of adequate crisis intervention supports to the hurdles both government and communities face in implementing real change to support and service delivery through our government institutions, this past year we have continued our work of highlighting the challenges faced by those with autism. We have advanced solutions that improve the lives of autistic Nova Scotians and change societal perceptions about autism.

As always, we draw strength and encouragement from the 15,000 individuals on the Autism Spectrum in Nova Scotia and the countless family members, professionals, and donors who support and promote understanding, acceptance, and inclusion every day.

Your support allows us to break down barriers and overcome limitations.

In 2018, we'll do it again.

Sincerely,

Ian Sutherland, Board Chair  
Cynthia Carroll, CFRE, Executive Director



Ian Sutherland, Board Chair



Cynthia Carroll, CFRE | Executive Director



“

I call on the government of Nova Scotia to right the egregious wrong that characterizes our treatment of children with autism in crisis and their families.

Carly Sutherland, Parent Advocate

”

## Why We Advocate

Autism Nova Scotia collaborates with the autism community to identify the most prevalent issues and priorities facing individuals and families living on the Autism Spectrum and works with identified stakeholders and partners to achieve meaningful, systematic change. Systemic change is not easy, nor does it always come as timely as we would like, but it is critical to ensure an integrated continuum of programs and service delivery across our province.

In 2017, the number of complex cases Autism Nova Scotia was asked to assist with increased by 100%. Some of these cases were followed in the media, while others were not, but represented

equally challenging . Their struggle illustrates the need for robust family services, short term crisis interventions, and housing supports for autistic individuals across the lifespan.

Developing and implementing solutions in conjunction with government and community partners continues to be a priority. Each of the 14,000 individuals on the Autism Spectrum and their families in Nova Scotia have a unique set of needs that requires an individualized approach.

We draw strength from the experiences and stories of self-advocates, parents, family members, and professionals who are courageous in confronting and challenging the status quo.

Their struggles, are our struggles.

# Education

## Supports for Success

Every individual on the Autism Spectrum is entitled to education that is responsive to their diverse learning needs. Autism Nova Scotia is committed to advocating for policies and structural changes to our education system that will ensure future generations of the autism community are provided with an inclusive and comprehensive education that will foster their full learning potential as they transition to community, post-secondary and/or employment.

The Commission on Inclusive Education released their report, Students First: Inclusive Education that Supports Teaching, Learning, and the Success of all Nova Scotia Students, on March 26, 2018. After receiving feedback from over 5000 Nova Scotians, the commission suggested the setting aside of approximately \$15 million, in the first year of a 5-year plan, to support the 36% of students that have a special need in Nova Scotia's public education system.

Supports and services for the autism community feature prominently in the report. Of those students identified as needing additional resources and learning supports, at least 13% are on the Autism Spectrum. Government has invested in

switching the current system from a program-driven model to a student needs-based model. This includes recognition that additional professional services are required to accommodate the specific needs of individuals on the Autism Spectrum.

The report names Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as an exceptionality, and that's a first for Nova Scotia. This recognition reflects the growing prevalence rates of autism and the need to develop policy that addresses the unique needs of the student population.

Autism Nova Scotia will continue to work and collaborate with government to ensure timely and effective implementation of the report as it relates to the autism community.

## In the Spotlight

### Ally Garber

Ally Garber is a member of Autism Nova Scotia's board of directors, but more importantly, she is the mother of an autistic child named Hugh, who is currently enrolled in elementary school.

Through her advocacy efforts, Ally works tirelessly to ensure that Hugh has access to the best supports and resources available in the education system. She is one of the many trail blazers in the autism community who guide our mandate and shape our values.



It's not the end of the story, either. It's the beginning of the supports that are coming into play

— Zach Churchill, Minister of Education



# Employment

## Breakthroughs in Policy and Inclusion

Autism Nova Scotia has provided employment supports and services to the autistic community for over 8 years. We offer a comprehensive service system and a scope that spans the Atlantic provinces, and believe it is crucial that appropriate and evidence based skills development programs are delivered throughout the Maritimes.

In 2017, the provincial government announced a \$1.4 million investment in job supports and services. This is an historic investment and shift in policy that will help autistic individuals secure, retain, and remain in the workforce.

Through programs like Worktopia and Ready, Willing and Able, we will continue to provide

individualized job training, coaching for employees and employers, hands-on work experience, and much more.

Secure employment is a pillar of economic inclusion, as well as community and inclusive living. Employment has a positive impact on the quality of life for autistic individuals, while creating the conditions needed for the full participation in and contributions to the local and provincial economy.

**Quick Fact:** Autistic participants have spent 4328 hours volunteering and giving back to the community through the Worktopia program



# Ready, Willing and Able Employment Successes Spotlight

In 2017, our Regional Autism Coordinator continued to work with autism and disability partners in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, and Newfoundland, giving our organization Atlantic reach in employment supports and ASD.

Thank you to the following employers for supporting inclusion in Nova Scotia's economy:

- Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources
- Value Village Dartmouth
- Kitchen Door Catering
- Shannex Parkland at the Gardens
- Bramoso Pizzeria
- PepsiCo
- East Coast Mobile Medical
- Halifax Regional Municipality
- Subway
- Murphy's on the Water
- Pete's Grocery
- Atlantic Bottling Company
- UPS
- Cineplex Dartmouth
- Purolator
- Public Service Procurement Canada
- Nova Trucks
- Gogii Lighthouse Games
- Dartmouth Heritage Museum

- IKEA
- Shannex Caritas
- Hinduja Global Solutions
- Safety First-SFC Ltd
- O2 Wellness
- The Westin Hotel

306

Registered participants on the autism job seekers database

Employers engaged by RWA throughout Nova Scotia

43

NEW

Autism Employment Outreach Coordinator hired for New Brunswick



# Nothing About Us, Without Us

Self-advocacy and inclusion are priorities for Autism Nova Scotia. The voice of autistic individuals and families shape the culture of the organization. Their ideas, interests, and opinions impact the programs we offer and the causes and issues we advocate for on a provincial and national basis.

## The Coast—Holly Nauss #3 crafter in Halifax

Holly Nauss has worked as program assistant and crafter for The Pearl for over 5 years. The Pearl is a social enterprise that supports programs and services offered by Autism Nova Scotia through the sale of jewelry and accessories. In her role as crafter, Holly shapes the vision of The Pearl through the jewelry she creates and helps define the strength, beauty, and promise of the autism community.

In November 2017, Holly was voted the 3rd best crafter in Halifax by The Coast. This award speaks to her creativity as a crafter and her desire to shape the public image of autism in Nova Scotia. Holly's award stands in testament to her unique contributions to the Autism Nova Scotia community and the important role she plays in redefining understanding, acceptance, and inclusion.

**Did you know?** In 2017, The Coast voted Autism Nova Scotia the 3rd best activist organization in Halifax!



# Autistics Aloud

Nothing About Us Without Us

Look at what we accomplished in the past year!

**Inaugural Summer Edition - 18 pages**

**Autumn Edition 36 pages**

**Winter Edition 48 Pages**

**102** pages of content ranging from poetry to reviews; feature articles covering topics like Autism & addiction, making a case for an Autistic Neanderthal, & Autistic identity! We've highlighted artists, woodworkers, bakers, photographers, plumbers, original music, & original cartoons as well as signal boosting organizations that promote autism friendly events, inclusion and accommodation.

- **31 Unique** Autistic contributors from all around the world with a strong focus on **Nova Scotia**, the Atlantic Provinces, & Canada.
  - New subscription mailing list
  - Highlighted as benefit of a membership with Autism NS.
  - 250+ paper copies distributed @ CONNECT Summit, Shediac, NB '17, CASDA Leadership Summit, Ottawa '18

**Contact:** autisticsaloud@autismns.ca
- Copies were personally presented to MP's, Senators and Leaders in various Autistic & Autism Communities

We sure have accomplished a lot in the past year. Autistics Aloud is showing an incredible capacity to grow.

**Thanks for all the support! Stayed tuned! More to come!**

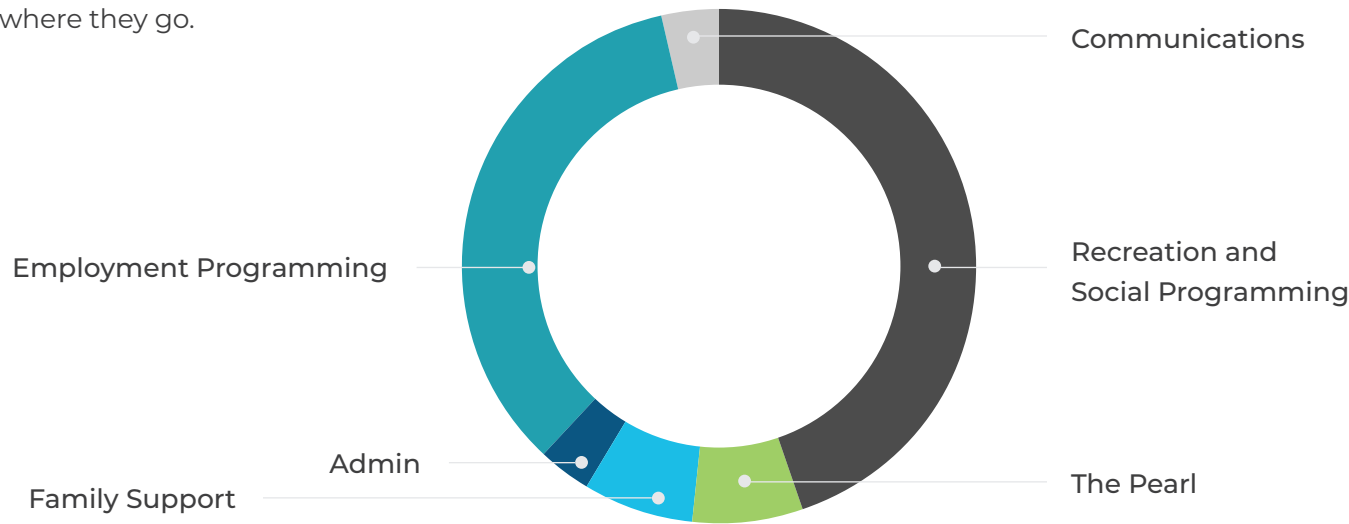
-- **Patricia George-Zwicker**
- Your Editor



Students/Volunteers

Students and volunteers play a crucial role at Autism Nova Scotia. The diversity of our programming and unique cross-section of services attracts a variety of students for placement opportunities. Volunteers gain valuable experience in a workplace that is diverse, flexible, and provides meaningful opportunities to learn. Working closely with Autism Nova Scotia staff, students and volunteers hone their skillsets in an engaging non-profit environment. Their ideas and enthusiasm keep our programs innovative and our services cutting edge.

These students and volunteers will leave Autism Nova Scotia as agents of change. Taking their knowledge and experiences with them, they will incorporate the skills they learned into their daily personal and professional lives, promoting understanding, acceptance, and inclusion where they go.



6768

In 2017, 29 students completed over 6768 hours of placements at Autism Nova Scotia

349

349 volunteer positions are available across the province.

3500

Our volunteers clock in 3500 hours of participation in program planning, implementation, and management every year.





“

Through my placement at Autism Nova Scotia I learned about the value of a positive attitude in the non-profit industry and saw inclusion and diversity put into practice.

Yeily Lee, occupational therapy student

”

“

Autism Nova Scotia provided me with the opportunity to practice developing my professional identity in a fun, supportive environment.

Dina Salih, occupational therapy student

”



# Redefining Inclusion Provincially

## Regional Autism Centres

Autism Nova Scotia recognizes the need for equitable delivery of service throughout the province. We are committed to advocating for an increase in the capacity for supports and services available to Nova Scotians, no matter where they live.

In 2017, the provincial government announced it would provide Autism Nova Scotia with a \$300,000 annual grant to further expand our supports and services across the province. We have opened 8 regional autism centres in the last several months in collaboration with our chapter staff

and volunteers. These regional centres provide a base of operations in the rural regions of the province, allowing for equitable access regardless of location. Autistic individuals, families, and community partners have rallied around these locations and they operate as integral components of our provincial strategy. At each location, regional autism coordinators provide part-time, frontline services to help coordinate everything from family support to programming.

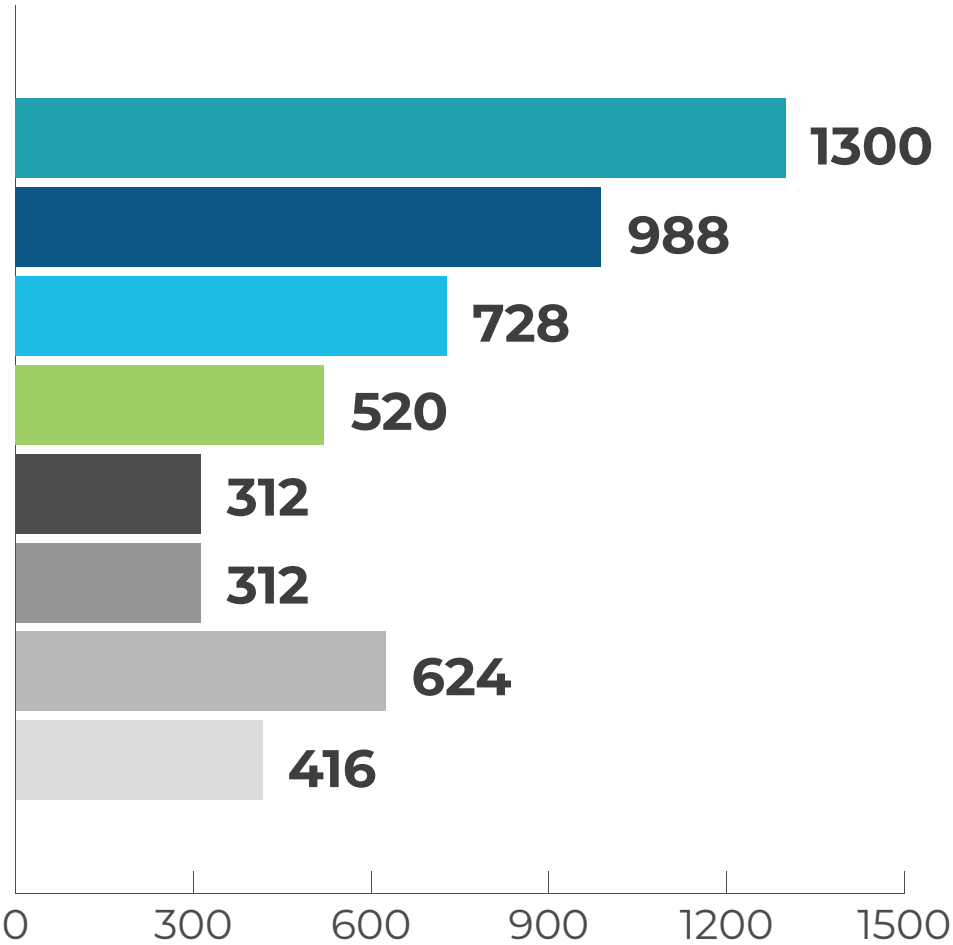
This annual support will ensure equitable access to programs and services where Nova Scotians live, work, and play.

One step at a time, we're breaking down barriers and redefining inclusion across Nova Scotia.



## 5200 Calls Broken Down by Topic

- Family support inquiries (including families in crisis)
- Services available to the autism community
- Existing service providers looking for autism training and support
- Information on navigating the education system
- Accessing respite
- How to get an assessment/diagnosis
- Adult needs, including housing, programs, and employment
- Other





# Pictou County Swimming Program

The Autism Swim program has run out of the YMCA Pictou County Wellness Centre since 2014, providing one-on-one swimming instruction to individuals with ASD. According to recent studies, 91% of accidental deaths for children with autism involve drowning. The program focuses on developing essential swimming and water safety skills in a sensory-friendly, instructive setting.

The swim is limited to 8 participants at a time in the pool, with 56 total participants in each session. Each participant is assigned an instructor whose sole focus is on skill development for that

individual. The instructors are all trained in autism-specific education best practices and can offer visuals or other learning techniques as needed. The result is a comprehensive swimming instruction program where participants develop strong relationships and strive to do their best in a fun, inclusive environment.

The program was conceived and implemented entirely by Autism Nova Scotia: Pictou County staff and volunteers. These trailblazers are a source of inspiration and demonstrate the possibilities that exist when a community rallies around a program or cause.



# Social Media

We keep you informed. From the latest Autism Nova Scotia events and program updates to provincial and national advocacy news, our social media keeps you in the loop. Building inclusion and acceptance, one like at a time.

# Follow Us



20,000

More than 20,000 people engaged in 2017





# WALK THE WALK

STEPPING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

# FOR AUTISM

Saturday, June 16, 2018

IN 2018 WE HAD OUR MOST SUCCESSFUL WALK EVER.  
THE 1800 PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED PROVINCE WIDE  
HELPED RAISE OVER

## \$270,000

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AMHERST RAMBLERS  
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MACCULLOCHS TRUCK SERVICE  
MACFARLANDS  
MEMBERTOU  
MICHELIN  
NOVA AUTOMOTIVE  
NS POWER  
OAK ISLAND RESORT & CONFERENCE CENTRE  
OPEN HEARTH PARK  
PAUL DAVIS  
PRACTICALLY PHOTOGRAPHY  
PUZZLE PIECE TRUCKING  
STELLARTON ROTARY  
SUBWAY  
TRURO MEDI SPA  
TUSKET FORD  
TUSKET TOYOTA  
WILSONS  
XEROX

**FRIENDS**  
A1 PIZZA  
A1 REFUSE  
AMHERST FIRE DEPARTMENT  
AMHERST PRESCHOOL  
ARMOUR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS  
BDC CONCRETE  
BIG B BEVERAGES  
BRIGHT BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE CENTRE  
CANADIAN LINEN & UNIFORM SERVICES  
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MCDONALD'S RESTAURANT - AMHERST  
THE MEDICINE SHOPPE  
MONEY MART  
MOORE'S FABRICATION  
MURPHYS FISH AND CHIPS  
NORTHWINDS CONSTRUCTION  
NS RADIATOR & HEATING EXCHANGE  
O2 WELLNESS  
PARTS FOR TRUCKS  
POWER, LEFFE, REDDY & RAFUSE  
SAM'S RESTAURANT STELLARTON  
SAM'S NO FRILLS  
SHOELINE LUBE DISTRIBUTION INC  
SOBEYS TRURO  
SOBEYS AMHERST  
SPEEDY GLASS  
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THEBRICK - NEW GLASGOW  
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For a full list of our generous donors, please visit our website:  
[www.walkthewalkforautism.ca](http://www.walkthewalkforautism.ca)

## Best of Local

### November 3, 2017

The Fourth Annual Best of Local was a tremendous success. Taking place at historic Pier 21, we were joined by sponsors, guests, and friends of Jack and Joan Craig who raised over \$67,000 in support of Autism Nova Scotia. A special thank you goes out to Scotiabank, our Presenting Sponsor, as well as all our other sponsors, donors, and attendees.

We hope to see you all at Best of Local 2018, taking place November 8 at the Seaport Farmers Market. Tickets available soon!

Presented by

**Scotiabank**

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