

# Annual Report 2023

Celebrating twenty-seven years of  
helping Canadians



We Help. We Educate. We Give Hope.  
[nomoredebts.org](http://nomoredebts.org)

# From the president

Reflecting on my initial year as CEO of the Credit Counselling Society, I am proud of the team's achievements during a year punctuated by considerable change. The transition to a new CEO, along with the implementation of several enhancements aimed at better serving Canadians, came against the backdrop of a significant increase in consumers seeking the Society's assistance. The team navigated this new environment graciously, all the while enduring the unexpected and heartbreaking loss of our founding CEO, Scott Hannah, who served CCS for 27 years.

Improving accessibility and reach for our clients, was a goal for this year, something we achieved through various initiatives. We implemented a new contact centre phone system that facilitates the efficient management of a higher number of calls and supports enriched, collaborative teamwork. We modernized systems to augment accessibility to our services by improving the live, online chat functionality on our website, and we prioritized an innovative approach to our counselling services, ensuring consumers have immediate access to a credit counsellor once they've gathered the courage to make that first call asking for help. We increased our focus on serving consumers in both English and French by hiring more bilingual staff, translating essential program materials, and launching a dedicated French website.

Financial literacy also remained a focus for CCS given its educational and preventative nature. We evolved our financial education services by introducing a modern, user-friendly platform that provides consumers with convenient, no-cost access to self-paced micro-courses on a variety of credit, budgeting, and popular money topics. For those who preferred in-person webinars and workshops, over 790 sessions were offered in 2023. Overall, we educated in excess of 22,500 consumers.

Our commitment to expanding the reach of our programs came at a pivotal time. The convergence of historically high inflation, elevated interest rates, and post-pandemic economic adjustments created a challenging climate for consumers overwhelmed by the rising cost of debt payments and living expenses. The subsequent graphs depict escalating demand for our services, where **clients served** and **counselling sessions held** rebounded dramatically throughout 2023. Given the time it takes to repay debt, the increase in client activity will be reflected in the **debt repaid** graph in the coming years.

Recognizing that current economic conditions are likely to persist and disrupt the financial lives of countless Canadian households, 2023 necessitated the creation of a refreshed 3-year strategic plan. This plan centres around raising awareness of our services by partnering with corporations that share our mission so that together, we can educate and empower their employees and clients to take action to regain financial health and stability.

With a successful year completed, I want to express my appreciation to the team at CCS and the Board for your unwavering confidence. To the credit granting community and our financial stakeholders, I want to thank you for your ongoing commitment to our counselling and education programs.

As we turn our attention to 2024, I look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead with a focus centred around strengthening and expanding external relationships. This, combined with continued operational efficiencies and the organization's strong fiscal position, ensures we have the resources necessary to support consumers on their journey towards long-term financial wellbeing.

Sincerely,  
**Peta Wales**  
President & CEO  
Credit Counselling Society

## Our Services

- Confidential credit counselling services
- Immediate help offered through standby credit counselling services
- Debt repayment and settlement programs
- Educational workshops and webinars on personal money management and resolving debt problems
- Credit and money management publications
- Online assistance and information
- Referrals to other community and professional services

Credit Counselling Society is the operating name of the Credit Counselling Society of British Columbia. We are a non-profit organization and a founding member of Credit Counselling Canada (CCC), a national association of non-profit credit counselling agencies.

Our Counsellors and Educators help tens of thousands of Canadians each year find solutions to their debt and money problems, learn new skills and regain financial stability.

For further information about our services and programs please contact:

### Peta Wales, President & CEO

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### Anne Arbour, Director of Partnerships and Education

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# 97.8%

of all clients surveyed report they would recommend our services to others



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*This organization is the real deal. Couldn't recommend them highly enough. No games, no hustle, just an altruistic, supportive non profit service to help you face tough times financially, consolidate debt and move on. Witnessed this first hand and it blew my mind. Kind of shocked everybody doesn't know about them.*

**- David R., Facebook**

*Very helpful, attentive, and kind. Those people are truly there to help. What an amazing organization.*

**- Ryan W., Google**

*They listen, they care, they know what they're talking about, and they really truly help. If you're in debt and need help, these are your heroes, call them!*

**- Jason K., Google**

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*The presenter was very gracious, with practical information and patience in passing across information. She was knowledgeable and funny and made the workshop interesting.*

**- Webinar Participant**

*The facilitator definitely has a great knowledge of the subject matter and even though it is a finance course, she broke it down to the level of those of us that are not finance inclined. I totally enjoyed the class.*

**- Webinar Participant**

*[The presenter] presented to a group of employees that range from experts on the field to beginners; his presentation was exactly as we expected. What I mean by that is that his presentation fit with the description, but, we did not account for how dynamic [he] was. He is an expert in his subject but kept the presentation fresh and relatable to the varying employees knowledge that were present.*

**- Webinar Participant**

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# From the board chair

2023 was a year of change for Credit Counselling Society's (CCS) Board of Directors. Along with its core responsibilities of governance, long term strategic planning, and risk management, the Board worked to support the successful transition from the Society's founding CEO, Scott Hannah, to its first new CEO in 27 years, Peta Wales.

Sadly, Scott's retirement plans were cut far too short with his sudden passing in June 2023. The loss of Scott deeply affected the Board and an initiative to honour his legacy became a meaningful additional responsibility during this time. After consulting with his family, the *Scott Hannah Memorial Scholarship* was announced in January 2024.

To honour Scott's life's work, CCS remained resolute in its mission to help people across Canada improve their financial well-being. This included a refreshed, Board-approved 3 year strategic plan, focused on enhancements to further raise awareness and reach of the organization's services and guide it forward in line with its vision and values. On behalf of the Board, congratulations, Peta and the senior leadership team, on this significant accomplishment.

The efforts of staff did not go unnoticed; from the adoption of new processes and technology designed to improve support provided to consumers, to the commitment of staff to ensure we could successfully meet the increased demand, the Board extends its sincere appreciation to all employees for their outstanding contributions during CCS's year of immense change. Individuals and families are fortunate to have a dedicated CCS team working hard to help them navigate these economically challenging times.

Lastly, I want to express the Board's gratitude to all our financial stakeholders for their unwavering support of the Society. Without your commitment to the work of CCS, achieving our mission to help, educate, and give hope, would not be possible.

In closing, I want to recognize the Board of Directors for willingly sharing their exceptional experience and skills in the delivery of strong governance and oversight; an increasingly critical role as CCS further evolves to support Canadians from every walk of life.

## Susan Ryan

Chair, Board of Directors  
Credit Counselling Society

## Officers and Board of Directors

**Susan Ryan**, CPA, CMA, FCPHR, ICD.D  
CFO, Nanaimo & District Hospital Foundation  
*Public Member and Board Chair*

**Adebiyi Adeniran**  
*Public Member and Vice Chair*

**Jan Sampson**, FCPA, FCA  
Strategy and Governance Officer Chartered  
Professional Accountants of BC  
*Public Member and Treasurer*

**Stephen Rotstein**, BA, LL.B  
*Public Member*

**Jennifer Sondergaard**, ICD.D  
President, J Delta Management Solutions  
*Public Member*

**Jeffrey Morton**, FCA, ICD.D  
*Public Member*

**Richard Austin**, LL.B, MBA  
Financial Services Advisor, Richard Austin  
*Public Member*

**Ron Friesen**, CPA, CA, ICD.D  
Senior Advisor, Economist,  
Government of Canada,  
Department of Finances, Tax Policy  
*Public Member*

**Loree Gray**, BA, ICD.D  
Chief Strategy & People Officer, Alberta  
Central Credit Union  
*Public Member*

**Peta Wales**, BA, DipIT, CFP\*  
President & CEO  
Credit Counselling Society

**Isaiah Chan**, BA  
Vice President, Programs & Services  
Credit Counselling Society

## Office Locations

### Head Office

225 - 625 Agnes Street  
New Westminster, BC



Additional office locations conveniently  
located throughout British Columbia, Alberta,  
Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario

\*CFP previously held



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2023 Consumer Choice Award  
Winner for Vancouver