Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

2021 IMPACT REPORT

THE POWER OF OUR COMMUNITY

EVEN APART WE MADE A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

CONTENTS

WHO WE ARE

VISION

A world free of multiple sclerosis.

MISSION

To connect and empower the MS community to create positive change.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Our MS community understands that there is a collective strength and power in every action, big or small. While this past year of the pandemic continued to present the world with challenges, our community came together to find new and creative ways to act, reach out and bring people together.

Thanks to the generosity of so many people who made donations and volunteered, people affected by MS were able to find the connections and care they needed through the MS Society of Canada. When many people couldn't see their general practitioners, our MS Knowledge Network provided access to resources and expert guidance. Using technology, we were able to extend our reach to isolated areas of Canada and beyond transportation barriers to inform and connect with people who have never been able to attend our events or peer support groups. We advocated to have those living with MS receive some of the first COVID-19 vaccines, and worked to share expert information on the outcomes of vaccines for those living with MS.

Through the dedication and compassion of our partners and donors, we were also able to maintain our momentum in advancing MS research. When most other charities stopped investing in research during the pandemic, we invested over $2.6 million dollars in funding this year.

It is so important that we keep pushing for progress. Researchers are on the cusp of answering some game-changing questions, from advancements in available therapies and diagnostic imaging technologies, to the potential for stem cells to repair damage caused by MS. We're hopeful that the research we're investing in now can one day soon lead us to a cure.

Collaborations are where true change occurs. We see it every day in our research teams, and in the generosity of our donors, partners, and volunteers. When we work together, we can do incredible things. I hope you'll continue your support and help us achieve even more for our fellow Canadians affected by MS. I'm truly grateful and proud to be a part of this community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Pamela Valentine
President and Chief Executive Officer
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

2021 AT A GLANCE

$45,464,000
Raised
(combined Society & Foundation)

Leveraged
$904,137
in funding

96,533
meaningful connections

THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF OUR MS COMMUNITY

EVEN APART, WE FOUND A WAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER.

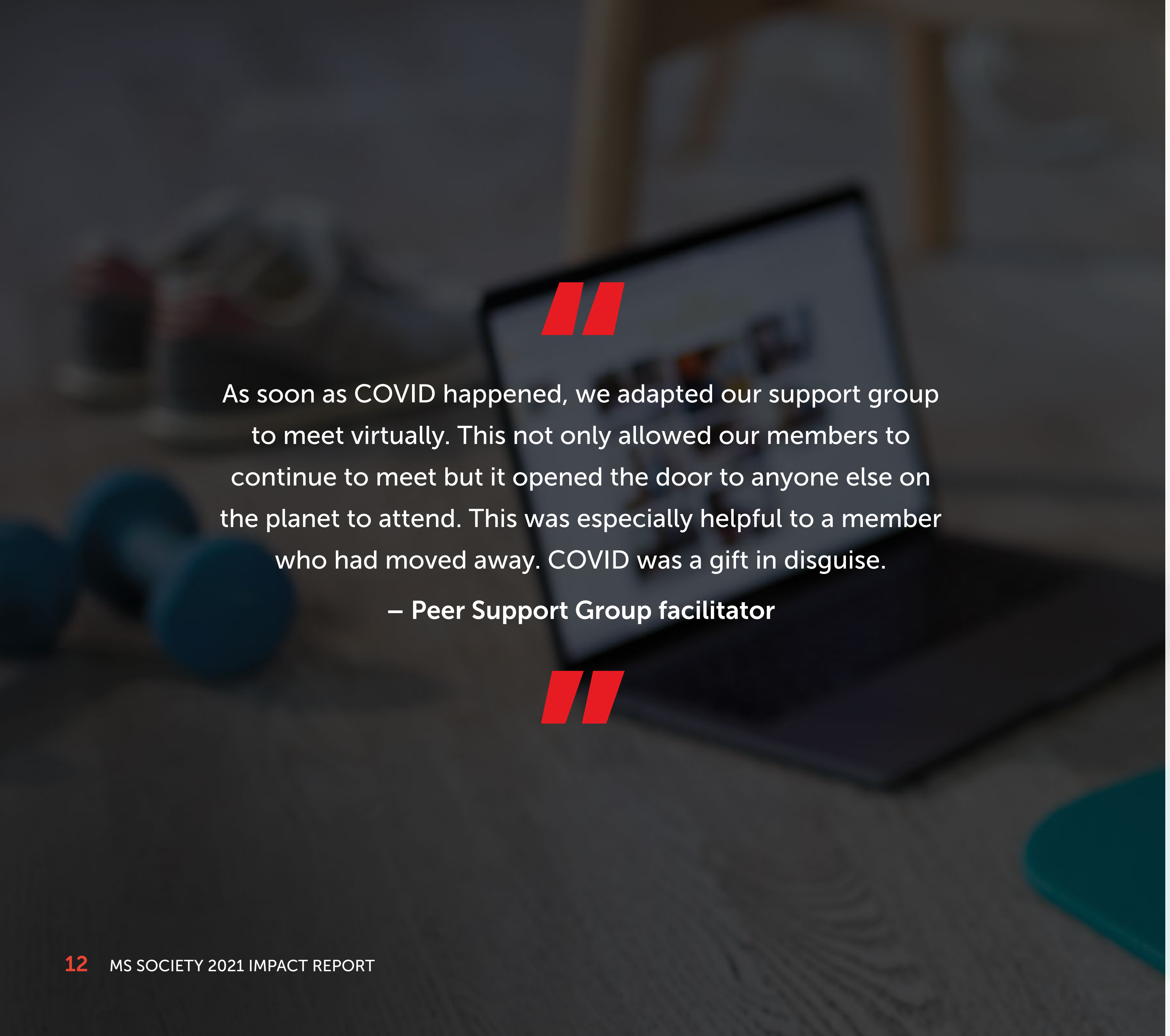
Another year of pandemic restrictions didn't stop our community from being a community. We embraced technology and found ways to have an impact, making even more meaningful connections and touching the lives of those living with MS despite all the challenges we faced.

Physically separated since 2020, the Virtual MS Walk allowed me and my MS Buddies to unite under the umbrella of social media platforms and the event day live stream! The technology made it possible for me to connect with and curate a team of supporters from around the world and celebrate “in the moment” when we reached our fundraising goals. I walked proud and with the hope that each step forward will move us closer to a world free of MS.

– Karen Jacoby, MS Walk participant

As a caregiver, there can be a mix of guilt, frustration, grief, and fear that are inherent to the role. One of the best ways to alleviate these feelings is to simply talk about them. There is so much comfort in knowing that the experience is a shared one and that is why the National Virtual Caregivers Group has been so beneficial. People have referred to it as a safe space to bring everything that you’ve been struggling with and get advice, a new perspective, or a comforting ‘I’ve been there.’

– Shannon, National Virtual Caregivers Group participant



> As soon as COVID happened, we adapted our support group to meet virtually. This not only allowed our members to continue to meet but it opened the door to anyone else on the planet to attend. This was especially helpful to a member who had moved away. COVID was a gift in disguise.
>
> **– Peer Support Group facilitator**

> The TIME program is a program that I trust, unlike many other virtual exercise programs. The MS Society has done the leg work and helped make this free virtual program available to its participants. This program is very vital to the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of all persons living with MS, and all those around them!
>
> **– TIME program participant**

> The one silver lining with this pandemic is the discovery of virtual classes. As my mobility deteriorates, going virtual is perfect and I ultimately get more exercise in.
>
> **– Yoga participant**

ADVANCE TREATMENT AND CARE

Having access to a variety of effective treatment and care options for symptom management, wellness and self-care will help people on their unique MS journey.

We support a broad portfolio of research that leads to better understanding and new and more effective treatments, we advocate for access to medicine, and provide programs and services that support those living with MS to live their fullest lives.

BUILDING ON OUR UNDERSTANDING OF COVID-19 & MS

RESEARCHERS IDENTIFIED SEVERAL RISK FACTORS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO HOW PEOPLE WITH MS WILL FARE IF THEY CONTRACT COVID-19, through analyzing data captured in a global data-sharing initiative called COViMS (COVID-19 Infections in MS & Related Diseases).

Knowledge of those who may be at greatest risk for more severe outcomes helped people living with MS, their caregivers and clinicians identify those who require more intense monitoring. It also emphasized the need for prevention strategies such as COVID-19 vaccination and ongoing adherence to public health safety measures, such as wearing a mask and physical distancing.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH MS HAD ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL, EXPERT, FACT-BASED GUIDANCE ON THE SAFETY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF COVID-19 VACCINES. Together with our partners, we convened a global group of researchers and medical professionals to review evidence as it evolved, and ensured this information was available through web-based educational sessions.

PEOPLE WITH MS WERE PRIORITIZED TO RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE because of our advocacy efforts, which drew on evidence from global research efforts and data-sharing initiatives like COViMS.

EXPANDING TREATMENT OPTIONS

IN THE LAST YEAR, TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR MS HAVE GROWN FROM 17 DMTS TO 19 with Health Canada approval of 2 new drugs:

- Kesimpta (ofatumumab) RRMS
- Ponvory (ponesimod) RRMS

A pilot clinical trial is **INVESTIGATING THE USE OF METFORMIN AS A THERAPY TO ENHANCE REPAIR OF DAMAGED WHITE MATTER** in children and young adults with MS. If proven effective, this drug could provide a low-cost way to reduce disability in MS.

We continue to advocate to **ENSURE CANADIANS LIVING WITH MS HAVE ACCESS TO ALL HEALTH CANADA APPROVED DISEASE-MODIFYING THERAPIES (DMTs)** through our digital advocacy, submissions to consultations and meetings with relevant decision makers.

USING AI TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF MS

Through the power of artificial intelligence (AI), researchers can now examine and test large sets of real-world MS data, which helps them make better predictions on the risk of future relapses and increases in disability. With this information, they are developing **A DECISION-MAKING TOOL THAT WILL HELP PEOPLE MAKE BETTER, PERSONALIZED TREATMENT DECISIONS THAT COULD SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGE THE TRAJECTORY OF THEIR DISEASE.**

BY THE NUMBERS

$1,622,103
dollars invested in
10
research grants to advance treatment and care

Supported
20,079
people through our programs

ENHANCE WELL-BEING

We help remove physical and social barriers within communities to ensure access to opportunities and supports for people affected by MS.

HELPING CHANGE POLICY

OUR ADVOCACY EFFORTS LED TO:

EXTENDING BEREAVEMENT LEAVE BY AN EXTRA FIVE DAYS for federally regulated workers through Bill C-220, which passed unanimously in both the House of Commons and the Senate of Canada in June 2021.

INCREASING EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (EI) SICKNESS BENEFITS FROM 15 WEEKS TO 26 WEEKS of benefits, which was listed in the 2021 Federal Budget and expected to be implemented in summer 2022.

BY THE NUMBERS

949
individuals accessed
$442,892
in Quality-of-Life grants

27,887
letters sent by
10,049
supporters in the lead-up to the federal election during our #TakeActionForMS digital advocacy campaign to inform candidates about the issues and concerns of Canadians living with MS

$44,000
dollars invested in
2
research grants to enhance well-being

2,353
actions taken to support our advocacy priorities, including holding meetings with elected officials, constituent correspondence and submissions

76%
success rate for income support applications, resulting in
$1,031
a month in direct financial aid

UNDERSTAND AND HALT DISEASE PROGRESSION

Understanding the complexities of MS progression will help effectively stop MS in its tracks.

We continue to invest in research and support world-wide efforts to better understand how and why MS progresses.

GLOBAL COLLABORATION TO ADVANCE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRESSIVE MS THERAPIES

AS A FOUNDING PARTNER AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRESSIVE MS ALLIANCE (ALLIANCE), WE'RE HELPING DRIVE THE RESEARCH AGENDA IN PROGRESSIVE MS. BY WORKING COLLECTIVELY ACROSS MANY DISCIPLINES, THE ALLIANCE CAN ACCELERATE RESEARCH IN WAYS NOT POSSIBLE BY ONE COUNTRY ALONE.

In 2021, the Alliance funded 19 Research Challenge Awards, with the goal of understanding mechanisms and identifying new pathways to support the development of new MS treatments that will ultimately slow or stop disability progression. Representing 13 countries around the world, the projects range from identifying novel insights into axonal loss in progressive MS, to molecular pathways that promote neuroprotection and myelin repair.

One of the recipients is Canadian researcher, Dr. Jennifer Gommerman, whose team will use the funding to investigate the changes that occur in the brains of people with progressive MS and how it correlates with clinical disability. Using a powerful imaging technique called IMC (imaging mass cytometry), the project will focus specifically on how a part of the body's immune system (called the complement system) and glial cells (cells that support, protect and repair neurons in the brain and spinal cord) communicate with each other to change neuronal circuits.

BY THE NUMBERS

$721,072
dollars invested in
29
research grants to
understand and halt
disease progression

90%
of total
participants
recruited to
CanProCo

PREVENT MS

Stopping MS before it starts will reduce the number of people who develop the disease.

We continue to invest in research that examines the factors that could lead to MS and how people might shape their lives to reduce their risk of getting the disease.

ADVANCING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE MS PRODROME

(early symptoms and health issues that precede the diagnosis of MS)

Through a partnership with the National MS Society we are funding **NEW RESEARCH LED BY DR. HELEN TREMLETT TO UNDERSTAND THE FEATURES OF THE PRODROME AND HOW THEY DIFFER IN RELATION TO KEY SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS.** They will also look at how these features impact disease progression and use artificial intelligence to help identify predictors and patterns from this data.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO BEST HARNESS THE MS PRODROME TO BENEFIT PEOPLE WITH MS, WE BROUGHT TOGETHER A SMALL AND DIVERSE INTERDISCIPLINARY GROUP of researchers, clinicians, organizations and people affected by MS. They shared current evidence, established common terminology, and identified the key research gaps, opportunities and priorities for this emerging area.

BY THE NUMBERS

$274,570
invested in
4
research grants
to prevent MS

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

OF THE $45,464,000* RAISED IN 2021:

$15,416,000
(34%)
funded life-saving research, programs and advocacy

$14,497,000
(32%)
invested in community fundraising activities

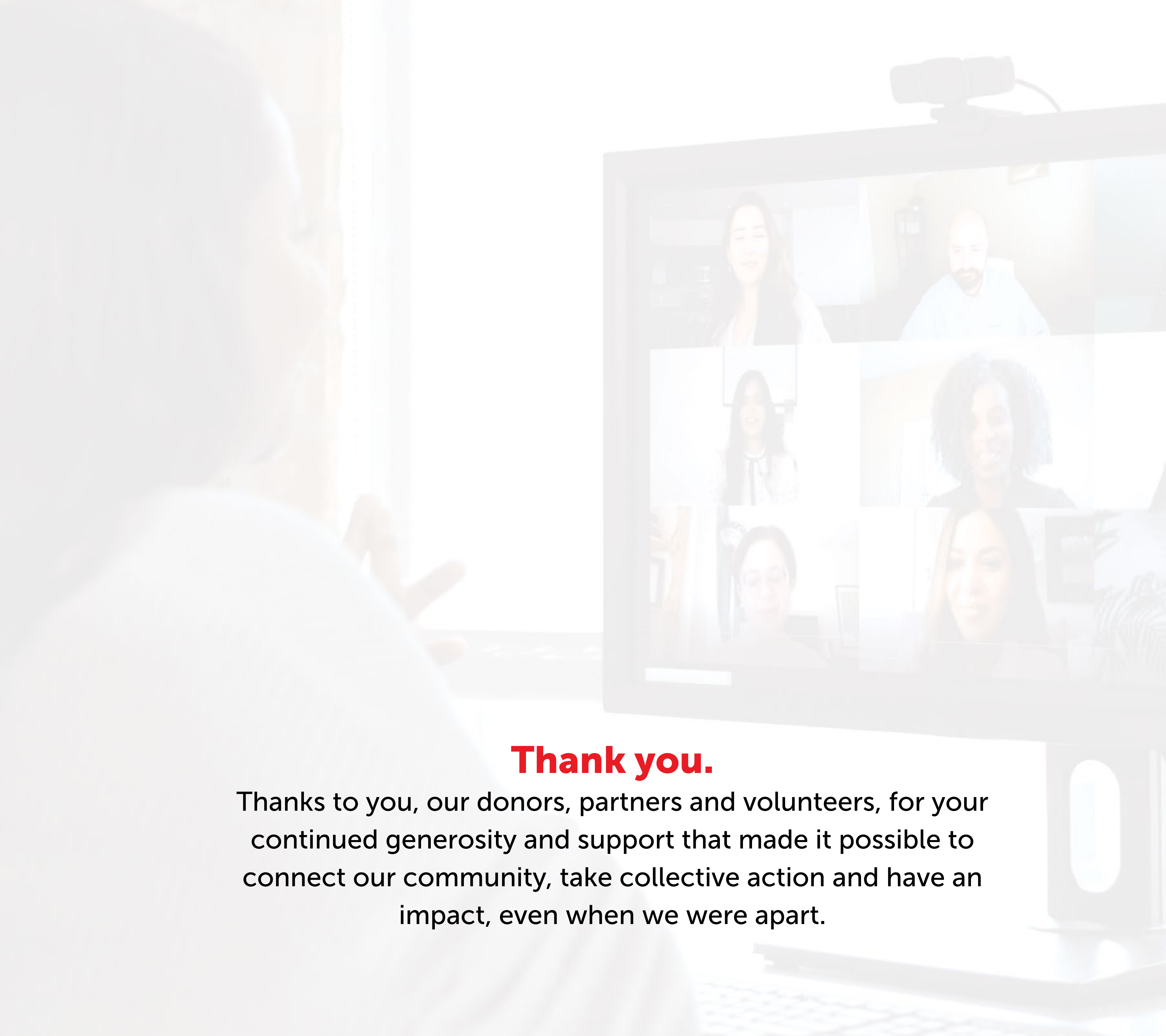
$3,869,000
(9%)
went towards administration

$11,682,000
(25%)
surplus to be invested in community**

** Combined Society & Foundation*

*** Thanks to the generosity of donors and other circumstances which resulted in expenditure savings due to COVID-19 in 2021, we were fortunate to have an unexpected surplus which we look forward to reinvesting in research and programs for the community in 2022.*

View the full financial report at mssociety.ca.



Thank you.

Thanks to you, our donors, partners and volunteers, for your continued generosity and support that made it possible to connect our community, take collective action and have an impact, even when we were apart.

Multiple
Sclerosis
Society of
Canada

mssociety.ca