

Our Letter to the Prime Minister

Blog
Alison Brewin
June 12, 2020
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Culture: People First



letter



TRANSFORMING NOT-FOR-PROFIT LEADERSHIP

Rt. Hon Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

June 10, 2020

Subject: Increasing Federal Government Support for the Charitable and Not-for-Profit Sector

Dear Prime Minister,

We are joining colleagues across Canada to emphasize the urgency of a federal proposal to support and strengthen charities and nonprofits across the country.

In the face of our global emergency, BC's not-for-profit and charitable sector has been called on to provide a soaring level of support to the Government of Canada, its businesses, and the public. From the provision of front-line essential health services, to supporting victims of domestic violence, and deploying volunteers safely, the not-for-profit sector is vital to the safety and wellbeing of our country. **But the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the not-for-profit sector needs your urgent attention and action.**

Vantage Point exists to uplift and support nonprofits across BC. One of our core principles is to meet nonprofits and their leaders where they are at, adapting programs and services to reflect the capacities of the organizations we serve. We see ourselves as representing portions of the sector often left out of conversations - smaller organizations, volunteer-run or with small staff teams, organizations facing all the pressures of other business.

The not-for-profit sector in British Columbia

British Columbia's not-for-profit sector is vast in size, scope, and impact. It consists of over 25,000 societies providing immeasurable value to the economy and lives of people across British Columbia. These organizations also provide a crucial source of employment for more than 86,000 people and contributes up to \$6.69 billion in programs and services across the province.[\[1\]](#)

Despite the fundamental impact on the quality of life for Canadians, not-for-profit organizations languish under economic policies and regulations which undermine our efforts. In 2019, the Senate report on the Canadian charitable sector found that while community-based organizations are resilient and innovative, our potential is limited by complex, outdated rules and a lack of coordinated government support.[\[2\]](#)

Here in British Columbia, we released the [No Immunity](#) report to highlight the early impacts of COVID-19 on BC's charities and nonprofits. At the time of data collection in April, of the 1,119 respondents, 23% did not think they can stay open past 6 months and 74% were experiencing reduced revenue from fundraising. As overburdened not-for-profit employees experience increasing difficulties delivering essential services, our deep concerns for the sector also grows. Our colleagues at Imagine Canada estimate the projected financial losses for registered charities alone to be between \$9.5 billion and \$15.7 billion.

Here is what is at stake for our sector and the Canadian public:

- **Services to racialized populations and social justice support.** Urban Indigenous, Black, and immigrant communities have been particularly affected by the pandemic. Our sector is the primary provider of skills, language and literacy training, justice and social equity support, anti-racism resources and programs as well as advocacy for these communities.
- **Support for women.** Charities report that domestic violence is intensifying under lockdown, with additional support needed to engage children who are experiencing violence at home. Women and their families will need additional support to find safety and support.
- **Mental health services.** Whether by directly providing mental health services, or providing Canadians with a semblance of normalcy (e.g. through amateur sports or arts), our sector will be at the forefront of helping Canadians cope with the experience we have all shared.
- **Services to people with disabilities.** Charities and nonprofits ensure people with disabilities have a voice through advocacy efforts and a valuable place within society through career support, social activities, training, accessibility workshops, and more.
- **Childcare services, after school programs, and day camps.** These are vital to ensure parents are able to return to work. If charities and nonprofits are unable to offer these services, there will be disproportionate impacts to women and single-parent families.
- **Services to seniors.** Services provided by these organizations help seniors deal with isolation imposed by the pandemic and the resultant deleterious mental and physical health consequences.
- **Environmental sustainability.** These organizations are crucial for creating the kind of recovery Canadians want. From the preservation of ecosystems, to the protection of threatened species, and the development of sustainable solutions for communities, their work needs to continue.
- **Health services and support.** These organizations play an important role in preventative care, matching individuals to the right services, and providing support that enables individuals experiencing health problems to enjoy a higher quality of life.

At the outset of the pandemic, our sector identified the need for a grant program to ensure that organizations can survive, adapt to changed circumstances, and position themselves to actively contribute to the recovery. The financial measures announced so far have met a portion of what is required for those who are eligible, but much remains to be done. **We urge you to work with your colleagues - primarily the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development - to finalize and implement a grant program that recognizes the unique situation facing charities and nonprofits**, the efforts they have continued to make to serve their communities in unprecedented circumstances, and the role that they can and must play in Canada's recovery from COVID-19.

We urge you to expand the criteria used to make policy and investment beyond a narrow focus on business and employment growth. Our current policies make sense when the metrics for economic success are based on GDP growth. But if the measure of success was to maximize public wellbeing, then the focus of infrastructure stimulus investment would look very different. Under this lens, it is clear that our sector is here to support common government objectives and that we need to work closer together. [Our sector is Society's Partner in Wellbeing](#). We encourage you to call on our expertise to inform and improve public policy decisions in ways that maximize public wellbeing. We urge you to engage in conscientious dialogue with our sector and to work together to recover from the pandemic, build healthy communities, and a resilient economy. Investing in, working with, and supporting the sector improves the lives of all people all Canadians. We encourage you to work with our sector to develop and incorporate a national wellbeing strategy to the stimulus spending that will be required to recover from the crises our nation is facing.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Alison Brewin
Executive Director
Vantage Point

cc: Hon. Bill Morneau, PC, MP
Minister of Finance
Hon. Ahmed Hussen, PC, MP
Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development

[1] Please see infographic attached.

[2] Mercer, T., Ratna Omidvar. (2019). Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector. Ottawa, Ontario: Senate Special Committee on the Charitable Sector. 190.

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