



January 18, 2023

REMARKS for Provincial Pre-Budget Consultation with Minister Bethlenfalvy

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I'm Maureen Cassidy, of Pillar Nonprofit Network, an organization representing hundreds of nonprofits, charities, and businesses in the London region with thousands of workers and volunteers. Nonprofits make up the core of our membership and, as you know, play a key role in Ontario's continued recovery and growth.

Right now, in London, all sectors are engaged in a whole-of-community response to a homelessness crisis that no single sector can solve on its own. Nonprofits, naturally, will play a central role in delivering solutions. But beyond this local and immediate crisis, nonprofits have always worked to build strong, connected, and prosperous communities in good times and in bad. We've been ready partners, delivering on public priorities and we look forward to continuing these partnerships, working together with you to build an environment that fosters collaboration and innovative solution-making.

There are three areas in particular where we believe the Ontario government can set the stage for improved collaboration and innovation:

The first is creating a "home in government" for the non-profit sector;

This will enable a whole-of-government approach for Ontario's 58,000 nonprofits and charities. It could be an Associate Ministry, as proposed by the Ontario Nonprofit Network, or the Alberta model, which is a Premier's Council on Charities and Civil Society.

Secondly, you could allocate funds from the Skills Development Fund or some other mechanism to help us to build a resilient nonprofit workforce.

Together with our regional workforce development board, we analyzed local data, and found that nonprofits are facing disproportionate difficulty in attracting, hiring, and retaining workers. Nation-wide data reveals the precarity in the sector at a time when both demand for and cost of services continue to grow. A strong, resilient nonprofit workforce is essential to ensuring strong, sustainable solutions in Ontario.

And finally, you can help us to rebuild volunteerism in Ontario.

Half of Ontario's nonprofit sector is completely volunteer-driven. Pre-pandemic, 42% of Ontarians contributed 612 million volunteer hours annually but the pandemic has decimated this volunteer base. The sector desperately needs a provincial strategy to help us to continue on our road to recovery even as we prepare for future emergencies.

The nonprofit sector is ready, willing and able to work with our provincial government and with all Ontarians in an all-hands on deck approach towards sustainable economic recovery. At Pillar Nonprofit Network, we know when the three pillars of government, business, and nonprofit work together, the result is impactful and positive change within our community.

[Notes to follow]

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

1. Enable a whole-of-government approach for Ontario's 58,000 nonprofits and charities by creating a "home in government" for the sector.

As you know, Ontario nonprofits deal with more than 16 ministries for policy planning, program delivery, regulatory compliance, and transfer payment agreements administration, and it's often the case that nonprofits are an after-thought in new services. We are hopeful that this government will make more meaningful, innovative, and inclusive collaboration possible by creating a home in government for the sector. Establish a home in government for the nonprofit sector. This could take the form of an Associate Ministry, as proposed by the Ontario Nonprofit Network, a secretariat or directorate. Or, as a stepping stone, establish **a council of the community sector responsible to the Premier through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services on the Alberta model**. Such a council could help advise the Premier on the sector's readiness as a partner in addressing government priorities and help advise on policy to increase the capacity of civil society to make Ontario a place where all people can succeed.

2. **Ensure Ontarians have high-quality services by building a resilient nonprofit workforce.**

- **Allocate funds from the Skills Development Fund or other appropriate mechanisms** to support the development of a sector-wide labour force strategy and workforce development plan. The strategy will include promoting careers in nonprofits and creating opportunities for workers to attain in-demand skills.
- Phase in wage parity with annual installments for similar groups of frontline workers across municipalities, hospitals, schools, and community settings to achieve equal pay for equal work in four years. Wage parity will lead to better talent recruitment and retention, resolving the HR crisis in community-care and taking the pressure off institutional care.
- Transition to stable, long-term, and flexible operational funding for nonprofits that reflects the true cost of delivering services and programs, keeps pace with inflation, responds to emerging needs, is on par with the public sector delivering similar services, and reduces administrative burdens.

3. Strengthen Ontario's spirit by bolstering volunteerism.

Ontario and can be rightly proud of their volunteerism. In 2018, 41.5% of Ontario residents volunteered, contributing a total of 612 million volunteer hours annually. Nonprofits have a special relationship to volunteerism. Half of Ontario's nonprofit sector is completely volunteer driven. However, the pandemic has had an enormous impact on the capacity of the nonprofit sector to convene this community powerhouse. A sector survey this year showed that 62 per cent of organizations have lost volunteers, and Stats Can reports that 68 per cent of Ontario nonprofits intend to recruit volunteers but 36 per cent of them lack time and resources to do so.

- Create a provincial volunteer recovery strategy in consultation with volunteer centres and the broader nonprofit sector to address the negative impacts of the pandemic on volunteerism and prepare for future emergencies.
- Build on recent removal of fees for Criminal Record Checks and Judicial Matters Checks by removing fees for vulnerable sector police record checks.