

October 8, 2020

Open letter: Why volunteer centres, nonprofits and charities should be included in Alberta's recovery plan

As part of the Alberta nonprofit/voluntary sector, civil society groups (nonprofits/charities) provide an effective and efficient model for delivering essential services and programs to nonprofits in our community, volunteers and Albertans.

Our sector is a key driver of Alberta's economy and contributor to economic diversification. More than 26,200 Alberta nonprofits contribute roughly \$10 billion in GDP to the Alberta economy annually and employ more than 450,000 Albertans.

However, up to 20% of nonprofits and charities may be facing closures within the next 6 months due to the pandemic¹. Additionally, 79% are facing a significant decrease in funds or donations² while there's been a 73% increase in demand for services since March 2020³.

The provincial government's continued support means job security, job creation, and the provision of essential services that make life better for Albertans.

The value and impact of Albertans and volunteerism

On average, 1.6 million Albertans volunteer more than 262 million volunteer hours⁴. That is, Albertans contribute \$5.6 billion in free human resources to support civil society every year⁵. Without the support of these volunteers, the majority of nonprofit organizations (civil society groups) would not be able to sustain their operations and initiatives at the cost of many Albertans in need of services.

The value and impact of volunteer centres and FCSS

Volunteer Centres (VCs) and Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) in communities across Alberta play an essential role in building nonprofit sector capacity by facilitating the exchange of skills, opportunities and knowledge between volunteer-seekers and nonprofit organizations. We support effective volunteer engagement and build nonprofit sector capacity for volunteer managers, board, paid staff and volunteers through programs like:

- Support, consultation and training related to volunteer screening, recruitment and engagement.

¹ Bill Kaufmann, [Calgary Herald article](#), *As many as 20 per cent of Alberta's non-profits could fold due to the pandemic*. September 16, 2020.

² Alberta Nonprofit Network [Pulse Survey](#), *From Response to Recovery*. June 2020.

³ Bill Kaufmann, [Calgary Herald article](#),

⁴ [2013 Statistics Canada General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating](#)

⁵ Statistics Canada, *Satellite Account of Nonprofit Institutions and Volunteering*, 2019



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- Volunteer manager meetings that bring together volunteer managers to connect, collaborate and learn from one another.
- Board leadership and support, consultation and training for strategic planning, revenue diversification, change management and more.
- Community-wide celebrations supporting, applauding and thanking community volunteers for their contributions to civil society in April each year.

Since the pandemic, the nonprofit voluntary sector has had to adapt volunteer positions, shift to virtual programming, find ways to continue engaging volunteers in new ways, and adapt the way we screen and onboard volunteers with reduced funds and staffing. The provincial government's continued and enhanced support of Volunteer Alberta, VCs and FCSS will provide security and maintain operations to continue to screen, recruit, engage and retain volunteers.

How the Alberta government can support the nonprofit/voluntary sector

Our efforts align with the provincial government's commitment to build and sustain a healthy, resilient future for communities across Alberta. We know that Alberta's finances are tight as we look to balance the budget within a few years. Here are a few different ways the GOA can include VCs, FCSS, nonprofits and charities in Alberta's economic recovery plan:

- Include diverse nonprofits/charities in consultations on issues that impact our sector.
- Develop and/or provide resources for the sector, including leveraging the GOA's professional networks, to connect nonprofits with corporate partners or pro-bono expertise and training.
- Carefully consider and include the nonprofit/voluntary sector in the provincial budget. This could include more funding/grant opportunities with flexible eligibility and reporting requirements.

We ask that the Alberta government continues to partner and foster positive working relationships with our sector; and, that the government be a champion of civil society groups like volunteer centres and family and community support services who take the lead in making Alberta a compassionate society.

Sincerely,

The undersigned organizations



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