

## **Decent Work Charter (for members/board to sign onto)**

*\* this charter has been developed & tested with the help of Toronto Neighbourhood Centres (TNC)*

Developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the premise of decent work "involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all."<sup>1</sup>

A core component of promoting a decent work vision is committing to developing high quality jobs and working collectively to ensure the structures, regulations and practices are in place to support organizations and individuals in pursuing them.

[*Association/network/board*] member agencies aim to support inclusive, healthy and equitable communities, and we know that the provision of decent work is central to creating the economic and social foundations that underpin individual and community well-being. Our [*association/network/board*] members are therefore committed to championing decent work conditions and practices in our society, our local communities, and within our own organizations.

As **community organizations** committed to social justice we are signing this charter to confirm our commitment to advancing policy reforms needed to improve working conditions for all.

As **employers** we are signing this charter to confirm that we view decent work as an essential component of achieving our organizations' missions and intended impacts. And our understanding that the provision of decent work conditions in our organizations in turn benefits the well-being of community members and volunteers that we work with each day.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

As **leaders in our communities**, we will champion local economic practices that promote and sustain decent work, and will join with community groups, sector networks, unions, and funders to generate collective actions that expand decent work conditions.

To guide our efforts, this Charter will be based on the following value statements:

- Decent work is a central source of personal dignity, family stability, community cohesion, civic inclusion, economic vibrancy, and societal well-being.
- Decent work is an essential means of furthering the mission and impacts of nonprofit organizations by attracting, developing and sustaining the passionate, dedicated and skilled people who work in our sector.
- Decent work is complementary to our commitments to advance inclusion and diversity in our workplaces, and to renew and support our sector's future leadership.

**In signing this charter we commit to advancing decent work in our workplaces, communities, sector and society to address five issue areas of Fair income; Good benefits; Stable employment; Opportunities for development and advancement, and; Respectful and Inclusive Work Cultures.**

**Signed:**

**Dated:**

## **Charter Background and Action Plan**

*\*This section is where organizations can provide context and a better understanding of their commitment to decent work. The following sections are designed with the aim that this is the background knowledge that those who sign on need to know about the organization/network/board's vision for a decent work organization.*

### **1) Rationale for Neighbourhood Centres' Commitment to Decent Work**

[TNC] member agencies aim to support inclusive, healthy and equitable communities, and we know that the provision of decent work is central to creating the economic and social opportunities that underpin individual and community well-being. [Toronto Neighbourhood Centres] members are therefore committed to championing decent work conditions and practices in our society, our local communities, and within our own organizations.

Recent studies have documented the degradation of labour market conditions and their impact on individuals and families. Challenges associated with precarious work<sup>2</sup> contracts, inadequate and un-enforced labour standards, underemployment, a lack of opportunity for advancement, and insecurity are affecting more and more people in our communities. A 2013 McMaster/United Way research report found that across the Greater Toronto Area barely half of those working today are in permanent, full-time positions that provide benefits and a degree of employment security. The report also noted that precarious employment has increased by nearly 50% in the last 20 years.<sup>3</sup>

As **community organizations** committed to social justice we are signing this Decent Work charter to identify our commitment to the principles of Decent Work, and to inform our individual and collective advocacy efforts for policy reforms that aim to improve work conditions. This includes efforts to create stronger labour market standards, improved minimum wages, adequate benefits, and the provision of robust social supports that enable people's labour market participation, including affordable childcare, transit, unemployment insurance, pensions, and expanding healthcare to include pharmacare and dental care.

As **employers** we are signing this Decent Work charter to confirm that we view decent work as an essential component of achieving our organizations' missions and intended impacts. Ensuring that the passion, dedication and skills of the people attracted to our sector are effectively appreciated, developed and sustained directly benefits the well-being of community members and volunteers that our staff work with every day.

As **leaders** in our local communities we will also use our Decent Work charter to guide our efforts to champion local economic practices that promote and sustain decent work. And we

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<sup>2</sup> we use a definition of precarious work as non-standard [employment](#) that is poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and cannot support a household

<sup>3</sup> "It's More Than Poverty; Employment Precarity and Household Wellbeing: Summary", McMaster University Social Sciences and United Way Toronto, February 2013, pg 5

will work with other networks (e.g. Ontario Nonprofit Network) and key stakeholders (e.g. unions, local business associations) to generate collective actions that expand decent work conditions.

## 2) Defining "Decent Work"

Developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the premise of decent work "involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all."<sup>4</sup>

A core component of promoting a decent work vision is committing to developing high quality jobs and working collectively to ensure the structures, regulations and practices are in place to support organizations and individuals in pursuing them.

In pursuing a Decent Work agenda in our workplaces, communities, sector and society, [Toronto Neighbourhood Centres] will seek to address five key issue areas:

- **Fair income:** One of the most commonly discussed aspects of decent work is the need to provide a fair income, through the adoption of minimum wage and living wage policies and standards that promote income fairness within and between workplaces.
- **Good benefits:** Health, retirement and other benefits are another critical element of decent work. Many see our ability to provide workers with these benefits as a key driver of dignity in the workplace and an essential part of making our non profit sector the site of a career path of choice. In one recent study, non profit employees with access to health and retirement benefits were significantly more likely to report themselves as being satisfied with their jobs and were less likely to report that they were searching for a new position outside of their organization<sup>5</sup>.
- **Stable employment:** Stability is another key factor for promoting decent work. This includes thinking about employment protections and also about specific policies and mechanisms that can be put in place to support sectors that are characterized by high turnover, seasonal or unpredictable work. Job loss has significant effects on both individuals and organizations<sup>6</sup>. For individuals it can mean increased stress and poor health outcomes, reduced retirement savings and benefits coverage, and if kept out of the job market for longer periods, loss of human capital and skills devaluation<sup>7</sup>. For organizations, it also means the loss of organizational knowledge and skills, weakened community networks and potential service interruptions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector, *Job Satisfaction and Employee Retention: What's the Connection?*, 2008, [http://hrcouncil.ca/documents/LML\\_satisfaction\\_retention.pdf](http://hrcouncil.ca/documents/LML_satisfaction_retention.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Richard Anker et al., *Measuring Decent Work with Statistical Indicators*, *International Labour Review*, vol. 142, 2003, 38.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 142:34.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*; Donna Baines et al., "Not Profiting from Precarity: The Work of Nonprofit Service Delivery and the Creation of Precariousness 1," *Just Labour: Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 22, no. Autumn (2014): 74–93.

- **Opportunities for development and advancement:** Beyond structural requirements, decent work also requires thinking about the opportunities for training, learning and advancement that are available to workers. This may include formal training and advancement opportunities, but it also includes having a workplace and sector culture that is focused on learning and the development of its employees.
- **Respectful and Inclusive Work Cultures:** The ability for people to express their concerns, participate equally and feel included in the workplace underpins all aspects of decent work. This includes strong employment standards, developing proactive policies for diversity and inclusion, respecting the mental and physical health of employees and ensuring that employees have the right to organize and speak up about workplace concerns.

### 3) Values to Guide Our Action

In promoting the five issue areas above, [TNC] members will be guided by the following values statements:

- Decent work is a central source of personal dignity, family stability, community cohesion, civic inclusion, economic vibrancy, and societal well-being.
- Decent work is an essential means of furthering the mission and impacts of nonprofit organizations by attracting, developing and sustaining the passionate, dedicated and skilled people who work in our sector.
- Decent work is complementary to our commitments to advance inclusion and diversity in our workplaces, and to renew and support our sector's future leadership.

### 4) TNC Commitments and Actions

In pursuing our Decent Work Agenda, [Toronto Neighbourhood Centres] will act on three levels:

- societal:** working in collaborations with our sector colleagues, local communities, unions, funders and other stakeholders, to create the conditions needed to support Decent Work
- network:** using our [TNC] network to pursue collective innovations, and provide leadership
- individual organizations:** supporting [TNC] members to identify and expand their decent work practices

**A. [TNC], in collaboration with sector partners and stakeholders (agency networks, unions, funders, community members), will promote:**

**A1) Labour-Market Policies needed to support Decent Work in Ontario, including:**

- fair minimum wages and employment standards
- labour market legislation and enforcement needed to protect our most vulnerable workers
- public pharmacare and dental care policies
- expanded public retirement plans

- increased access to and supports from Employment Insurance
- improved training and retraining supports for displaced workers
- affordable childcare
- affordable and accessible transit

**A2) Sector Funding Reforms:** To ensure decent wage levels, benefits and cost of living increases, adequate administrative resources, more predictable and flexible funding contracts, and evaluation practices that strengthen our capacity for improving community wellbeing

**A3) Improved Sector Profile:**

- Championing our sector's capacity to promote and sustain Decent Work practices, as a "sector of choice" for prospective and current employees
- Raising the profile of our sector in ways that increases people's awareness of the value and impact of our sectors' day-to-day contributions to individual and community well-being

**A4) Nonprofit Labour Market Data Collection:** Advocating for systems to collect accurate labour force data, including comparable wage and benefit levels in our sector, to support the decision-making of individual organizations, as well as the development of sector-level strategies to support decent work practices.

**A5) Sector-Level Solutions to Improve Benefits**

- Working with ONN and other stakeholders to exploring the feasibility of a non-profit sector retirement plan
- Strategies to expand access to EAP supports

**B. [TNC], acting as a network, will strive to promote Decent Work practices by leveraging the diversity and scope of our membership, and taking on shared initiatives that strengthen our member agencies' capacity to implement decent work practices, including:**

1. Creating ongoing opportunities for TNC member agencies to discuss, highlight and popularize decent work practices across their diverse workplaces
2. Pursuing joint training, policy sharing and other strategies to strengthen human resource management expertise among all TNC members
3. Sharing salary scales, identifying compensation floors for positions in our organizations that typically receive the lowest wages and benefits, and pursuing shared advocacy with funders to ensure improved minimum levels are agreed to in all contracts
4. Connecting agencies' hiring, training and promotions activities to expand staff's opportunities for advancement (i.e. job "ladders") across the TNC network
5. Connecting part-time positions across organizations to create full-time opportunities
6. Exploring the feasibility of standing employment pools that could sustain people between contracts, and which TNC members could draw upon for emergency and short-term assignments

**C. Individual [TNC] Member Agencies will strive to implement Decent Work practices that promote:**

**Stable Employment** (for example by):

1. Addressing the challenges associated with temporary part-time contract positions by limiting the use of such contracts to short-term projects and initiatives that require them, and providing temporary, part-time employees fair wages and health/ extended benefits
2. Addressing the challenges associated with multi-year programs supported by funding contracts that must be renewed/renegotiated each year by providing permanent employment contracts that are conditional on funding, rather than renewable year-to-year contracts

**Fair Income & Good Benefits** (for example by):

3. Providing [living wages](#) to ensure the wellbeing of people taking on our sectors' lowest-paid positions
4. Adopting higher than minimum compliance of employment standards and occupational health policies
5. Containing ratios between the highest and lowest earners in our organizations so that they are competitive and sustainable, such as the 8:1 ratios promoted by [Wagemark](#)
6. To the extent possible, assessing the purchasing of external goods and services using a Decent Work lens (e.g seek to contract with, and buy goods from companies paying living wages and fair benefits)
7. Assessing agency restructuring efforts (integrations, mergers, consolidations, contracting-out) using a Decent Work lens and resist actions that will generate more short-term and precarious employment conditions

**Respectful and Inclusive Work Cultures** (for example by):

8. promoting communications, team-building, decision-making and staff appreciation practices that strengthen inclusive, creative, collaborative and safe work cultures
9. Ensuring that accessible complaint and dispute resolution practices are clearly articulated and consistently implemented.
10. Ensuring that job descriptions within organizations are clear and consistent
11. Sharing and popularizing effective HR practices and policies with TNC members to promote decent work

**Opportunities for development and advancement** (for example by):

12. Linking internal hiring, training and promotion systems to external organizations in ways that will generate opportunities for advancement (i.e. job "ladders")
13. Promoting pathways to stable employment by offering temporary, part-time employees training and networking opportunities

**Decent Work practices in our communities, our sector and in society** (for example by):

14. Publicly championing and promote decent work practices in our local communities, and with key stakeholders
15. Endorsing and supporting relevant campaigns and initiatives striving for reforms that would promote decent work (e.g. minimum wage campaigns, employment standards reforms, pension plan and EI reforms, community benefit agreements, living-wage procurement policies)
16. Supporting collaborative strategies with other TNC members to champion and expand decent work practices

**5) Moving Forward - A [TNC] Decent Work Action Plan**

In adopting this Decent Work charter [TNC] members are starting a process by articulating their intentions to support a decent work agenda in our society, communities and organizations. To move these charter commitments forward, [TNC] members will now seek to:

- obtain the adoption of the [TNC] Decent Work charter by their individual boards of directors
- provide capacity-building support for members to develop their own decent work action plans, including:
  - implementation and evaluation processes and templates as a resource for members to identify areas of focus and strategic goals to advance decent work in their organizations and communities
  - effective mechanisms for member agencies to document and share their successful decent work practices with each other
- ensure that [TNC] continues to engage with relevant stakeholders and policy process to advance collective efforts to promote decent work in our society
- evaluate our Decent Work charter, action plans and efforts on a periodic basis to improve their clarity, respond to emerging challenges and opportunities, and evaluate the impacts of our individual and collective efforts to advance decent work practices
- assemble a "TNC Decent Work Action Team", composed of [TNC] member EDs and board volunteers to help guide the implementation of our Decent Work commitments, and to pursue funding opportunities to support [TNC's] ongoing networking and capacity-building efforts around our decent work agenda.

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[5] HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector, *Job Satisfaction and Employee Retention: What's the Connection?*, 2008, [http://hrcouncil.ca/documents/LMI\\_satisfaction\\_retention.pdf](http://hrcouncil.ca/documents/LMI_satisfaction_retention.pdf).

[6] Richard Anker et al., *Measuring Decent Work with Statistical Indicators*, *International Labour Review*, vol. 142, 2003, 38.

[7] *Ibid.*, 142:34.

[8] *Ibid.*; Donna Baines et al., "Not Profiting from Precarity: The Work of Nonprofit Service Delivery and the Creation of Precariousness 1," *Just Labour: Canadian Journal of Work and Society* 22, no. Autumn (2014): 74–93.