



The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Office of the Premier
Legislative Bldg Rm 281
Queen's Park, 111 Wellesley St. West
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

March 13, 2020

Subject: Nonprofits must be included in COVID-19 relief plans and contingency fund

Dear Premier Ford:

On behalf of the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN), we are writing to express the importance of ensuring that nonprofits are expressly included in the government's contingency fund and in any provisions created to address COVID-19. We are pleased with the contingency fund announcement of \$100 million to address COVID-19. However, it is important that nonprofits are included and supported by this fund. From daycares to long-term care homes, shelters to food banks, Ontario's nonprofits and charities are on the frontlines supporting and serving communities during this unpredictable and tumultuous time.

We ask the Government of Ontario to consider the following recommendations.

Summary:

1. Establish a stabilization fund to provide financial support for nonprofits that are on the frontlines, especially for those organizations that cannot enforce social distancing for operational reasons.
2. Revisit employment standards policies regarding paid sick days and emergency leave for all employees in Ontario, as these policies provide nonprofits and other workplaces better support for their employees as they work to manage the impacts of COVID-19 on staff and in communities.
3. Clearly communicate flexibility measures to assist nonprofits that receive funding directly from government as they manage their transfer payment agreements and provincially funded program requirements. This could include allowing funds to be moved between budget categories, postponement of administrative deadlines, such as reporting, and recognition that program outcomes may shift.
4. Expressly include nonprofit voices at leadership tables established to ensure that the needs of nonprofits are explicitly addressed in emergency preparedness planning and that funds are allocated to nonprofits within the proposed contingency fund for COVID-19.

Further information

1. Stabilization fund

The nonprofit sector employs over one million workers, of which 80 per cent are women, has a volunteer base of five million people and has an economic impact of \$50 billion. The sector, its workers, volunteers and the communities they serve are all feeling the impacts of COVID-19 mitigation measures. Nonprofits such as food banks, homeless shelters, faith spaces, drop-in programs, seniors services, employment services, and others are being called on to support people whose lives may or continue to be disrupted by closures and illness. Amid the increase in quarantines, many community services will have to keep their doors open and cannot enforce social distancing and those that do not have the option of working from home as they are maintaining services for our community's most vulnerable members.

Nonprofits, like small businesses, will also feel the decline in economic activity that we are seeing in the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors. Nonprofits often convene communities through annual conferences or local community engagement activities, such as arts performances or fundraising events. A considerable number of jobs may be lost due to the cancellation of these events, in addition to lost revenues. Other revenue sources nonprofits count on, like sponsorships and donations may be at risk if programs or fundraising events are cancelled or postponed. **A stabilization fund would provide financial support for nonprofits that are on the frontlines.**

2. Employment standards policies regarding paid sick days and emergency leave

As employers, the nonprofit sector is taking steps to ensure that employees are supported and protected by building in decent work practices into their organizations. Decent work is a holistic approach to achieve fair, stable and productive workplaces. In a pandemic, there is an increased need for supportive human resources policies where employees are required to self-isolate or quarantine. It is critical that provincial funds are available to pay for the increased cost to support nonprofits, their employees and the communities they serve, as well as addressing critical gaps for a pandemic of this degree. **These policies provide nonprofits and other workplaces better support for their employees as they work to manage the impacts of coronavirus on staff and in communities.**

3. Flexibility measures

While nonprofit organizations will be focused on immediate concerns- keeping programs and services going, supporting staff and/or volunteers and keeping up-to-date with current information- they will experience additional pressures because of how nonprofits are often funded. Funding agreements may stipulate outcomes for the number of participants and these might not be met during a health crisis. There are serious implications for nonprofits if governmental and nongovernmental funders and donors reinforce expectations for outcomes or outputs, which may not be manageable, or even possible. It will be important for the government to remain flexible around its funding requirements for nonprofits on the frontlines. **Clearly communicated flexibility measures would provide much-needed assistance for nonprofits.**

4. Leadership tables include nonprofit voices

Ontario's nonprofit sector will continue to be on the front lines supporting communities across the province. Nonprofits are critical partners to the government in navigating these challenging times. It will be critical for any contingency fund to expressly include Ontario's nonprofit sector. **Nonprofit voices will help ensure that the needs of the nonprofit sector, including their volunteers, workers and constituents, are explicitly addressed in emergency preparedness planning and that funds are allocated for nonprofits within the proposed contingency fund.**

It is times of crisis that the sector is often needed the most, and the sector in turn requires the partnership of government to continue to serve communities.

We look forward to meeting with you or your representatives at your earliest opportunity to discuss these recommendations and how Ontario's nonprofit sector can be a part of the government's contingency fund and relief plans to address COVID-19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cathy" being more prominent than the last name "Taylor".

Cathy Taylor
Executive Director
Ontario Nonprofit Network

Cc:

The Honourable Rod Phillips, Minister of Finance

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, President of the Treasury Board

The Honourable Christine Elliot, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

The Honourable Todd Smith, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

The Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries