



The Honourable Doug Downey
Attorney General of Ontario
% Amanda Iarusso, Director of Policy & Legal Affairs
Amanda.Iarusso@ontario.ca

April 15, 2021

Re: Delaying the effective date of Bill 254, *Protecting Ontario Elections Act, 2021*

Dear Minister Downey,

You may recall that we copied you on our March 30 [letter to the Standing Committee](#) when it was considering Bill 254 two weeks ago.

We have just read the Third Reading version of the bill and were disappointed to see that our concerns for Ontario's nonprofit sector, with over 58,000 organizations, were not reflected in the Committee's amendments. While we asked for a lighter administrative burden, the Committee increased the burden on "third party advertisers" which will mean nonprofits will have to send a separate report every time they spend \$1,000 (with a \$100,000 penalty for non-compliance).

Bill 254 is proceeding rapidly through the legislative process and we are concerned that nonprofit stakeholders are unaware of the implications. This bill means that many nonprofits may have to register as third-party advertisers as early as May 5, 2021, as the "pre-election period" is being extended to 12 months before the election period begins. There is not sufficient time to educate the nonprofit sector about these changes before they are in effect. We do not want community nonprofits to unwittingly incur \$10,000 fines for engaging in activities that would, until this month, not be subject to third-party registration/regulation.

Consequently, we are asking you to delay the effective date of these changes until an awareness campaign has been launched by Elections Ontario. Nonprofits play an essential role in bringing the diverse voices of communities to the democratic process, including Black, Indigenous and racialized communities, low-income communities, and other marginalized groups. There is a real risk that many of them may decide not to engage in public policy advocacy if they are uncertain about the rules. This would be a disservice to many communities whose voices they bring to government.

While we have concerns about the impact of Bill 254 on small-spending community nonprofits, once it is in effect, we are prepared to work with your government to ensure that as many organizations as possible know about the rules. Please do not hesitate to put your officials in touch with us to ensure that there is clarity on the changes and rules of engagement.

Sincerely,

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

Cathy Taylor, Executive Director