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Policy Matters: Saeed Selvam

By Saeed Selvam

Later this year, Canadians will vote in the 43rd federal election. Many non-profit organizations, networks, and coalitions see elections as a critical opportunity to raise relevant public policy issues. Recently, the rules for charities engaging in public policy have become a prominent source of debate and discussion in government and the sector. As we countdown to the next election, The Philanthropist will be asking non-profit leaders what public policy issues are top of mind for them.

Name and organization: Saeed Selvam, manager of public policy at Laidlaw Foundation.

What current election issues might impact your work?

The National Youth Policy is an important step forward but like any progressive piece of legislation, it's all about how and when it gets implemented. Execution of any piece of policy is an art, it requires intentional urgency, deadlines, and top-down directives. Unfortunately, issues that young people face are rarely prioritized by governments unless a crisis strikes. This is due to the perceived and sometimes factual notion that youth don't turn out to vote in comparison to older voters. The global shift to populist rhetoric without facts or planning not only threatens youth development work but the work of many others in the social policy realm.

What issues would you like to bring more attention to in the election?

Ongoing cuts to critical social services in Ontario are presenting growing challenges to the work and well-being of young people. The federal government has recently made some excellent investments in youth-led organizations which they deserve credit for. What is still lacking however is access to race-based data and data-tracking. We can't be afraid to have critical conversations on race and equity as they play key roles in furthering divisions which have broader economic impacts.

Where can we learn more about these issues?

Nikki Knows: a Toronto-based grassroots initiative elevating knowledge and understanding of issues affecting and affected by the Canadian Justice System (CJS).

Youth in Care Canada: a national charitable organization driven by youth and alumni from child welfare authorities across Canada.

Laidlaw Foundation Briefing Notes: briefing notes for elected officials on policy issues affecting youth.