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# Policy Matters: Laurence Therrien

By Laurence Therrien

*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:** Laurence Therrien, Imagine Canada

## **What current election issues might impact your work?**

The sector is a critical part of the Canadian economy. Newly released statistics show a sector employing some 2.4 million people, comprising 8.5% of GDP and involving approximately 13 million volunteers every year.

The traditional financial underpinnings of this sector are undergoing a dramatic change. Our Chief Economist Brian Emmett has coined the term “social deficit” to describe the gap between the demand for services from charities and non-profits and the ability of society, primarily government, to pay for them. By 2026, Emmett predicts that the social deficit could be as large as \$23 billion — and will result in longer wait times, a strained labour force, and a decreased ability of charities and non-profits to serve their mission.

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

As we prepare for the 2019 federal election, it is time for local, provincial, and national organizations to come together and ensure that issues affecting this sector are part of the national dialogue. We must ensure that elected leaders include and engage with charities, non-profits, social enterprises and other forms of social purpose organizations when they articulate their vision of Canada.

Imagine Canada is proposing a simple, three-part framework for inclusion in each of the party platforms for 2019:

1. A “home” in government, where a federal department, minister, agency, or secretariat is charged with promoting the sector as a whole, and where the unique impacts of federal policies on charities and non-profits are considered before decisions are finalized.

2. Enabling policies that will benefit both government and the sector, such as: better employment and economic data about charities and non-profits, social procurement, and community benefit agreement policies, and better access for charities and non-profits to existing government programs that support social enterprise, tech, and innovation.
3. Financial sustainability for organizations, which could include working with us to find ways to revitalize philanthropy, to ensure that organizations can take on social finance, and improve the way grants and contributions are administered.

**Where can we learn more about these issues?**

Join our efforts to embed these priorities into the mandate for the next federal government by emailing your MP in just a few clicks.