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By Lisa Lalande

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: Lisa Lalande, Mowat NFP

What current election issues might impact your work?

The decisions made by policymakers can have a profound and lasting impact on people's lives and the communities they live in. It is critical that social policy decisions are consistently and effectively guided by the best possible evidence. This means supporting the generation of evidence, as well as the process of putting this evidence in the hands of policymakers and practitioners. Especially given the current erosion of evidence in the public discourse, government has an important role to play in funding these critical activities. This will ensure that the knowledge generated and transmitted represents a breadth of non-partisan perspectives.

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

The sector is facing significant funding pressures. Charitable giving is declining and funding cuts from government are becoming the new norm. We need better data on how the sector – and the communities they serve – are impacted by these trends. Without it, policymakers risk proposing policy reforms that are outdated or ineffective.

The government should also explore strategies to incentivize giving and unlock new sources of revenue. For example, it can introduce regulations that would release funds from dormant bank accounts (in the UK, £400M was invested in community initiatives from dormant accounts).

These are examples of how the government can create an enabling environment for the sector. Following through with the Senate's recent study will ensure the best outcomes for Canadians.

Where can we learn more about these issues?

On building the evidence infrastructure, see Mowat NFP's *Committing to Action: Next Step's for Canada's Evidence Ecosystem*.

On enabling the charitable sector in Canada, see Mowat NFP's *Breaking the Inertia* paper.

On dormant bank accounts, see MaRS' *Investing Unclaimed Assets For Social Impact*.

On sector data needs, see CCVO's (Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations) submission to the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector.