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Policy Matters: Alexander Dirksen

By Alexander Dirksen

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 is asking non-profit leaders what public policy issues are top of mind for them.

Name and organization: Alexander Dirksen, Community Knowledge Exchange

What current election issues might impact your work?

CKX is committed to a growing movement of people and communities recentring and amplifying voices marginalized by the current power structures rooted in colonization, capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and all the toxic “-isms” that seek to divide us as peoples.

The rise of nationalist populist rhetoric seeks to slow the momentum of this movement — whether it be the Islamophobic Bill 21 in Quebec, the dismissal of Indigenous sovereignty as it relates to pipeline development, or xenophobic statements from across the political spectrum on asylum law and policy. Meaningful progress on issues of social and environmental justice that has been made over the past decade is being challenged, tested, and clawed back on a number of fronts.

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

As a country, we remain far too complacent around the ways in which our politics and our political discourse is just as susceptible to the toxic forces of misogyny, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia as anywhere else. As the election nears, we need to be actively aware and vigilant in resisting efforts by politicians to divide, “other,” or marginalize us from our friends and neighbours. And as we engage with candidates, we need to be critical of “solutions” to policy challenges (e.g. changing economic conditions, increasing energy needs) that come at the expense of/on the backs of historically marginalized voices and the next generations.

Where can we learn more about these issues?

Diversifying your news sources (what you read and who you follow) will provide a more nuanced perspective on policy issues in advance of the election. I would also recommend the following toolkits

(and supporting the organizations that created them!):

- Rivers of Hope Toolkit: riversofhopetoolkit.ca
- Indigenous Ally Toolkit (Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network): reseaumtlnetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Ally_March.pdf