
Policy Matters: Melanie Redman

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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: Melanie Redman, A Way Home: Working Together to End Youth Homelessness in Canada

What current election issues might impact your work?

There are many factors that contribute to homelessness, many of them structural. Key structural factors that contribute to homelessness include social and economic conditions like poverty, violence, inadequate education, underemployment, and lack of affordable housing. Other contributing factors include discrimination in the form of homophobia, transphobia, racism, bullying and the experience of colonialism. These structural factors not only contribute to housing precarity for individuals and their families, but can manifest at the community level as well. Current election issues that tie to these factors include:

- Affordable housing
- Mental health
- Provincial health transfers
- Child benefits
- Human trafficking
- Law enforcement

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

The approach we take to homelessness must be proactive, rather than reactive, given that research consistently shows that even a brief experience of homelessness is extremely harmful. Across Canada, we must focus on intervening quickly and effectively when people are at risk of homelessness, rather than waiting until they are in crisis. The absolute only way we can achieve reductions in chronic homelessness, and ultimately push towards eliminating homelessness as we know it, is to move upstream and prevent youth homelessness before it begins. We also need to rapidly intervene to ensure youth experience with homelessness is brief and nonrecurring.

Where can we learn more about these issues?

[*A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention*](#)

[*The Roadmap for the Prevention of Youth Homelessness*](#)

[*What Would It Take? Youth Across Canada Speak Out on Youth Homelessness Prevention*](#)

[*Preventing Youth Homelessness - An international review of evidence*](#)