
Sector News Digest — November 19, 2019

This column is part of a new editorial feature in The Philanthropist – a bi-weekly digest of news items from, and about, Canada’s charitable and non-profit sectors. It will appear on both the website and in this email to our subscribers. You can subscribe for free [here](#). If you have tips or story ideas, please contact contributing editor John Lorinc, john@thephilanthropist.ca.

Alberta’s non-profits urged to increase policy advocacy

Against a backdrop of growing western alienation and polarization, the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO) released its ninth annual [State of the Alberta Nonprofit Sector 2019 report](#) in early November, less than two weeks after Alberta premier Jason Kenney announced a \$1.3 billion spending cut that will affect many families in the province.

Titled *Reflections on Civil Society*, the report examines the present social role of nonprofits and concludes that Alberta’s voluntary sector – which comprises 26,000 non-profits employing 450,000 people – must go beyond service delivery to play a more active role in advocating for progressive social and economic policy.

As the authors note, “The nonprofit sector plays a necessary role in helping to protect the public interest by challenging norms, structures and trends that may threaten our democracy. As such, the inclusion of nonprofits in public policy development is essential to civic engagement and a robust civil society.”

However, the report found that fewer than one-third of the 561 organizations that completed the survey had a staff person dedicated to public policy. Only 64% of respondents had been invited to participate in a government consultation at any level in the past year.

The focus of the report was prompted by the framing of the voluntary sector in the United Conservative Party’s election platform. In a section titled “Harnessing the Power of Civil Society,” the UCP platform stated that “one of the first principles of conservatism is that civil society should come before government and that voluntary groups are generally more effective in preventing and reducing social problems than a big bureaucratic state.”

The report sets out concerns from nonprofit leaders about the downloading of responsibility from government to the social services sector, and about an overly simplistic and out-of-touch framing of the role of the sector. The UCP philosophy, the CCVO observed, “could be used to justify further offloading of responsibilities to the nonprofit sector without adequate resources to meet the needs of the community.”

Wealthy Canadians seek more help to plan their philanthropy

High net worth (HNW) individuals increasingly expect that financial advisors be trained and knowledgeable in strategic philanthropic planning.

According to a [2018 survey](#) conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit on behalf of Royal

Bank of Canada Wealth Management, two-thirds of HNW Canadians born between 1965 and 2000 believe that societal causes have become more important in defining a legacy than wealth accumulation. "While investment and portfolio management remain a priority, increasingly, we find that our high-net-worth clients are asking us for guidance and support in the areas of tax strategy, wealth preservation, estate planning and philanthropy," Tony Maiorino, Head, RBC Wealth Management Services, added in a more [recent survey](#) showing a high demand among clients for "future proofing" portfolios.

In terms of the philanthropic piece, donors increasingly want to understand when, what, and how to give – directly, via private foundation, or through a donor-advised fund – as well as how to integrate charitable giving into their overall financial plan.

A new [Master Financial Advisor - Philanthropy \(MFA-P\) designation](#) offered by the Canadian Association of Gift Planners (CAGP), in partnership with Spire Philanthropy and the Knowledge Bureau, aims to meet the need by providing participants training on how to integrate giving with client-focused planning, and strategic philanthropy, among other topics.

According to [Keith Thomson](#), founder and managing director of Stonegate Private Counsel and member of the CAGP: "If you want to work in the high-net worth space and you consider yourself a financial advisor or financial planner, it completely behooves you to bring up the subject. Because here's the thing: if you're not bringing it up to your clients, I guarantee your competitors are or will."

Funding cuts and sudden policy shifts challenge Ontario non-profits

The news from nonprofits in Ontario isn't much better than in Alberta. The Ontario Nonprofit Network's [Sector 360 Report](#), released on November 12, describes a growing climate of uncertainty in the province's nonprofit sector. The causes, according to ONN's survey of its members: the Progressive Conservative government's lack of consultation and transparency, as well as the speed and volatility of their decision-making process. Respondents also expressed concern about funding cuts and resulting precarity fuelled by the province's austerity budget.

The ONN solicited feedback from 450 nonprofits across the province. Close to 30% had experienced funding cuts and 11% said they worry about possible budget cuts coming months after the tabling of the provincial budget. Many reported that the uncertainty limits their ability to plan and effectively deliver services. A further 30% of nonprofits said they think their capacity to meet community demand would decrease in 2020. And 23% said they anticipate having to cover additional expenses as a result of the 2019 budget and related policy decisions, e.g. program wind-down costs, severance, or self-funded client services.

"[Non-profits] are struggling with how to have enough resources to do the work that they need to do in their communities and to keep on top of all the changes that are happening in the public policy area of the provincial government," ONN Executive Director Cathy Taylor said in [an interview](#) on CBC Radio's Metro Morning. ?