
Sector News Digest: June 30, 2020

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In this week's News Digest: calls for more diversity, WE controversy, the international response to COVID-19, and more.

Addressing the lack of diversity in the sector

In an [open letter](#) released June 20, Senator Ratna Omidvar urged government, charitable, and non-profit leaders to take action to increase diversity in the philanthropic sector. The first step: better tracking and reporting on diversity at board and management levels.

Omidvar cited research from Ryerson University's [Diversity Institute](#) that paints a concerning picture: while racialized minorities made up 54% of Greater Toronto's total population in 2017, only 38% of charitable and non-profit boards analyzed had at least 20% racialized minority leaders, and 19% had none. Similarly, only 38% of senior management teams had at least 20% racialized minority representation, while 52% had none.

Omidvar urged the Canada Revenue Agency to adopt a recommendation made by the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector to track diversity representation on boards of directors through added questions on the T1044 and the T3010 forms. And she recommended that sector associations prioritize tracking and reporting on diversity at the member level.

Meanwhile, a [two-day summit](#) for philanthropists and donors held in mid-June investigated how the philanthropic sector can promote and enact racial equity and justice in its work, governance, and funding initiatives.

The Racial Equity & Justice in Philanthropy Funders' Summit was hosted by The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada; LEVEL, a youth engagement initiative at the

Vancouver Foundation that's committed to the advancement of racial equity for Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities; and the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, which works to advance sustainable land use. Speakers included Jara Dean-Coffey, director of the Equitable Evaluation Initiative; Vu Le, founder of Nonprofit AF; and The Circle's Kris Archie. Resources from the summit can be found [here](#).

Canada Student Service Grant controversy

The federal government announced on June 27 it would outsource the administration of the Canada Student Service Grant, a program for student volunteers, to WE Charity, an organization for which Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's wife, acts as an "ambassador and ally." WE will receive \$19.5 million to administer the \$900 million program.

The government denies a conflict of interest, but the move, which was recommended by the Department of Labour, [drew sharp rebukes from](#) MPs and sector leaders, with critics asking why the government would recommend outsourcing the program in the first place and whether the program might replace paid work for students.

On that last point, the Canadian Federation of Students also points to the fact that, under current guidelines, students will earn less than \$10 an hour for their work. The grant program will pay students up to \$5,000 for volunteering a minimum of 500 hours between now and October 31. Cara Eaton at Volunteer Toronto also worries the program could "redefine volunteerism for an entire generation." The government will pay WE based on "uptake for the program," [according to the Toronto Star](#).

Meanwhile, the federal government released volunteer data on Thursday showing that close to three quarters of Canadians engage in some sort of volunteering. [Volunteering in Canada: Challenges and Opportunities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) presents data from the 2018 *General Social Survey: Giving, Volunteering and Participating* – not data collected during the pandemic. But it provides a snapshot of who volunteers in Canada: while people 73 and older gave the most time, "iGens" – people born after 1995 – had the highest rates of volunteerism, at 52%.

More new data on the impacts of and responses to COVID-19

A [flash survey published by Environment Funders Canada and the Sustainability Network](#) offers insights on the impact of COVID-19 on environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) across the country. Of 248 respondents, 57% believe their revenue will be affected by between 20% and 60% over the next year. From the survey: "The biggest shocks to the environmental sector may actually be felt next year, once the short-term support measures are lifted or as reserves start to dry up with reduced revenue to replenish."

ENGOS are also struggling to access federal benefits. More than four in 10 of those surveyed said they weren't sure how to demonstrate financial need for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, and 34% had a similar concern about the Canada Emergency Business Account.

Meanwhile, an online [survey of 50 private and public Canadian foundations, non-profits, and charities](#) by Philanthropic Foundations Canada found that these organizations have together committed \$99.5 million to support COVID-19 responses, with the bulk of those dollars — \$85

million — coming from private foundations. Just over half of respondents said they increased disbursements, and 79% reported that the pandemic hasn't stopped them from accepting applications from new grantees as well as existing grantees. Shifts on granting and reporting guidelines were less pronounced, with about a third saying they've removed or relaxed restrictions on existing grants.

Canada's international response to COVID-19

A [new campaign](#) launched by Results Canada and the ONE and Global Citizen campaigns is urging the Canadian government to commit at least 1% of its COVID-19 response to international aid. According to the campaign, 99.85% of Canada's COVID-19 funding response has been focused domestically. The #LeaveNoOneBehind campaign is asking the feds to invest \$1.2 billion to support health responses and strengthen fragile health systems, and to commit \$300 million to increase humanitarian funding.

The Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH), which represents organizations working on women and children's health issues, warns that the domino effect of the pandemic is leading to rising poverty, gender-based and sexual violence, food insecurity, and increased transmission of infectious diseases. In the [100 Days of a Pandemic](#) report, the partnership observed that unreliable or missing data, already-fragile health and governance systems, and missing information could roll back hard-fought gains made on women and children's health.

Organizations working with refugees worldwide have also voiced concerns about the severe impacts COVID-19 could have in dense refugee and displaced person settlements. Many advocates, including Bob Rae, Canada's special envoy on humanitarian and refugee issues, argue that the only effective response to COVID-19 is an international response. A [new poll commissioned by World Vision](#) found that 97% of Canadians believe density makes COVID-19 riskier for people living in refugee camps. And 82% agree that until COVID-19 is controlled in all parts of the world, Canadians won't really be able to return to normal life here.

Pre-budget consultation process is open

The House of Commons Finance Committee has launched its [pre-budget consultation process](#). It is asking for written submissions from Canadians on measures the federal government could take to restart the Canadian economy as it recovers from COVID-19. The deadline is August 7.

Keep an eye out for...

- a new study from The Charity Report on the makeup of the boards of Canada's 20 largest private foundations. The preview [provided here](#) says that these boards are "almost homogeneously white, with 13 of the 20 under the control of family members only." No release date has been announced for the survey at this time;
- the report on a new IPSOS survey conducted by Volunteer Canada and Statistics Canada, *The General Social Survey: Giving, Volunteering and Participating in Community Engagement*, to be released this summer; and
- a [July 8 webinar](#) by Philanthropic Foundations Canada on working with non-qualified donees.

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