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## Sector News Digest - July 28, 2020

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In this week's News Digest: more on WE Charity, non-profits team up to fight youth unemployment, a feminist economic recovery plan for Canada, and health charities seek relief.

### **The WE scandal continues**

The sector's largest story continues to be the controversy surrounding WE Charity's ties to the families of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Bill Morneau. WE was to deliver the Canada Student Service Grant (CSSG), a \$900 million pool of funding intended to pay students to volunteer with non-profits across the country.

Two parliamentary committees and the ethics commissioner are investigating the decision-making process behind the agreement between the federal government and WE. The charity announced that it will conduct a review of its operations.

[Imagine Canada](#) issued a statement about the controversy: "What worries us most is that a story about one charity, its conduct, organizational structure, and relationship with politicians threatens to overshadow the incredibly hard work being done in communities under increasingly difficult circumstances."

While all levels of government frequently contract charities and non-profits to deliver programs and services, Imagine Canada said most are for very small amounts, often just a few thousand dollars. By contrast, WE stood to earn more than \$43.5 million to oversee the program. Read the [full statement](#).

[Policy Options](#) published an op-ed on the controversy. Written by Ilona Dougherty and Amelia Clarke, co-creators of the [Youth & Innovation Project at the University of Waterloo](#), it outlines

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best practices for administering a program like the CSSG, highlighting details that must be considered before the program is revived.

### **Fighting youth unemployment**

The [Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity](#), a non-profit supporting youth workforce development in Canada, and the [Tamarack Institute](#), which works on collaborative solutions to major community issues, partnered with a team of young people to craft [Virtual Work Is Here: A Guide for Youth](#).

The project was established in response to increases in the youth unemployment rate, which [spiked to 27.3% in April](#). Because of the pandemic, there are fewer in-person jobs than ever for youth.

The 42-page guide offers resources for youth looking for virtual work and tips to succeed once they find a job. It also provides information to employers and employment services on the benefits of hiring youth for a virtual workforce.

### **Women to the front**

YWCA Canada this week launches “[A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for Canada](#)” with a live-streamed panel featuring leading experts on the importance of a feminist economic recovery.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on women, two-spirit, and gender-diverse people, especially those who are Black, Indigenous, or people of colour. Women, who account for more than half of all COVID-19 cases and deaths in Canada, have faced disproportionate job losses, an increase in domestic violence due to lockdowns, and a rise in unpaid work.

[YWCA Canada](#) partnered with the [Institute for Gender and the Economy](#) at the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management to create a feminist economic recovery plan. It proposes that Canada’s economy shift to focus on changing the structures and barriers that made some groups more vulnerable during the pandemic.

Speakers include Gladys Okine Ahovi, executive lead at the [Canadian Council for Youth Prosperity](#); Margo Greenwood, academic lead at the [National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health](#) and adjunct professor at the University of Northern British Columbia; Fae Johnstone, principal consultant with [Wisdom2Action](#); and Armine Yalnizyan, an economist and [Atkinson Fellow on the Future of Workers](#). YWCA CEO Maya Roy will moderate, and Sarah Kaplan, director and professor at Rotman School of Management’s Institute for Gender and the Economy, will introduce the event.

The livestream starts at 3 p.m. EST today (July 28).

### **Scots step up**

Volunteer Scotland has released the results of a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on volunteering.

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More than 20,000 Scottish charities responded to the survey. Over 40% said they saw a decrease in volunteer numbers due to social distancing and the lockdown. Only 7% saw an increase.

While formal volunteering decreased, more than 50,000 people signed up for the [Scotland Cares campaign](#), which aims to support communities and the National Health Service throughout the pandemic.

This research is in clear contrast with the purpose of the Canada Student Service Grant that was to be administrated by WE Charity and would pay students a stipend to volunteer. Canadian charities say it's not volunteers they need immediately, but rather money to continue operating. In interviews on CBC Radio's [Ontario Today](#) last week, non-profit agencies expressed this view.

### **Health charities hard hit**

[CBC](#) News reports that while the pandemic has affected the entire philanthropic sector, Canada's health charities expect to raise less than half their normal funds this year because of cancelled annual fundraising events. Runs, walks, and other events raise about \$650 million annually.

The decline in donations has delayed getting mobility chairs, hospital beds, and ceiling lifts to help people with ALS, says Tammy Moore, chair of the board of the [Health Charities Coalition of Canada](#) and CEO of [ALS Canada](#).

"This has been so critical because caregivers are seeing an increased burden as the personal support workers are not able to go in the home in the same way," says Moore. "Making sure that people physically can stay safely in their homes is an important part of the equipment provision that we have."

### **Senate says COVID-19 relief is flawed**

The Standing Senate Committee on National Finance released [COVID-19: Relief in Times of Crisis](#) on July 14. The report makes 13 recommendations for the federal government to improve financial relief, its reporting, and public confidence in such measures.

Of particular note to those in the charitable sector:

\* **Recommendation four**, which advocates for "a progressive, or scalable, eligibility threshold for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)." The committee urged Ottawa to extend the duration of the subsidy for particularly hard-hit sectors.

CEWS provides employers that suffered a drop in gross revenues of at least 15% in March and 30% in April and May with a subsidy of 75% of employee wages, up to \$847 per week per employee. The report says CEWS uptake was not as high as expected, possibly because the revenue-eligibility threshold was too high.

\* **Recommendation six** asks the government to consider modifying the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) program to make it more effective and accessible to

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small businesses facing financial hardship.

Through the program, commercial property owners apply for forgivable loans to cover half of monthly rent payments for small businesses facing financial hardship from April to July. If the property owner agrees to reduce the small-business tenant's rent by at least 75%, the tenant will cover the remainder.

Again, uptake was slow and lower than expected. The committee stipulates that the eligibility criteria of a 70% loss of revenue was too high and that the program should be scalable to businesses of different sizes with different financial situations.

### **New ways to learn**

The [York Entrepreneurship Development Institute \(YEDI\)](#), a business accelerator linked to York University, is taking its Not-for-Profit Program online. Previously, the program was available only to those who could attend in person in Toronto.

Through the free 16-week program, leaders of non-profits and charities at any stage of their growth will learn from industry leaders and develop their vision. Topics include environmental scanning, finance, and fundraising. Apply online before August 31.

### **Upcoming events**

The Nonprofit Centers Network will hold its fourth annual Sharing Innovation conference on October 7 and 8. The virtual conference will feature six American and Canadian speakers and offer remote tours and networking opportunities. This year's theme is creating resiliency in communities and re-imagining the work of non-profits through shared space and shared services. [Click here](#) to learn more and register (early pricing of \$149 to \$199 runs until September 1). If you're interested in speaking, [click here](#) to apply by July 31.

Philanthropic Foundations Canada's next Webinar Wednesday topic is "[Building Pro-Black Institutions and Movements](#)." This two-part webinar aims to disrupt the ways anti-Black racism shows up in organizations and communities. It will include a facilitated workshop, interactive exercises, and an experiential dialogue using historical and contemporary information, institutional analysis, and collective action planning. Part one is on August 4 and part two is August 10. Both sessions run from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.