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## Sector News Digest: August 11, 2020

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This week: The Ontario government and others sever ties with WE, new report predicts dire future for Canada's faith buildings and the Canadian Black Policy Network launches.

### **Week three of the #WEScandal**

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his chief of staff, Katie Telford, appeared before the House of Commons finance committee on July 30. Both claimed to have learned of WE Charity's involvement in the Canada Student Service Grant program only on May 8. Trudeau also said that he was aware there would be problems with perception over the government's decision to retain WE to run the program but that he didn't believe there was a conflict of interest because his family wouldn't benefit. Two House committees – finance and ethics – continue to study the issue. On August 11, Ministers Bardish Chagger and Carla Qualtrough and Ian Shugart, clerk of the Privy Council [testified](#) before the ethics committee.

In the meantime, the [Ontario government has announced](#) it won't renew funding for WE Schools programming. It joins the Royal Bank of Canada, Loblaw Companies Ltd., GoodLife Fitness, and KPMG Canada in severing ties with the organization.

### **One third of Canada's faith buildings threatened by closure**

A new report predicts a dire future for Canada's faith buildings and the organizations and communities that rely on them. The [No Space for Community report](#) says that 9,000 of the country's 27,000 faith buildings could close within the next 10 years. The data comes from a two-year study of 948 respondents led by Faith and the Common Good, in partnership with the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Nonprofit Network, the City of Toronto, Cardus, and the National Trust for Canada.

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The findings are significant because of the number of nonprofit organizations and individuals that depend on these buildings for free or inexpensive gathering and programming space. Half of the respondents report that they have no other tenancy options if the faith building in which they rent or use space were to close.

### **Canadian Black Policy Network launches**

The founders of the biannual Toronto Black Policy Conference announced on Emancipation Day (August 1, commemorating the official end of enslavement throughout the British Empire in 1834) the launch of the [Canadian Black Policy Network](#). The initiative aims to create a space for Black Torontonians to discuss issues that affect their communities and to support the Black community to engage in and contribute to shaping policy processes in Canada. For more, follow the network on Twitter at [@bpncan](#).

### **The social fallout of COVID-19 comes into clearer focus**

The [Toronto Star reports](#) on new data released by Toronto Public Health that shows how and where COVID-19 spread through the city starting in January. The data highlights the disproportionate effects on low-income and racialized communities. It also shows that Black people made up the largest percentage of total cases in Toronto – 21% – while Latin Americans had the highest infection rates, at 481 cases per 100,000 people.

### **Priorities from the Advisory Committee on the Charitable Sector**

At its June meeting, the [Advisory Committee on the Charitable Sector](#), a group set up to advise the federal government, identified five key areas of focus for its work in the coming months:

- modernizing the regulatory framework governing the charitable sector;
- supporting the work of charities serving vulnerable populations;
- exploring charity-related regulatory and legislative issues faced by Indigenous Peoples and organizations;
- examining the regulatory approach to charitable purposes and activities, including the impact on charities working with non-qualified donees as well as charities engaging in revenue-generating activities; and
- improving data collection and analysis related to the charitable sector.

The committee also expressed support for the sector's efforts to meet emergency and infrastructure needs related to the pandemic, and discussed ways it might support those needs.

### **Federal budget 2021**

What support will the next federal budget bring for charities and nonprofits? [Imagine Canada's pre-budget submission](#) calls on the government to make several key investments, in addition to the [Sector Resilience Grant Program](#) for which it continues to advocate. The requests include:

- a home in government for the sector;
- reforms in the administration of federal grant and contribution programs, including a request that government cover full administrative costs associated with funded programs

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- and that it ensure that agreements span a minimum of two years;
  - investments in collecting sector data; and
  - reforms to qualified donee restrictions.

[Read the full submission here.](#)

In other budget news, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released its [alternative federal budget recovery plan](#), which details what it would take to spur a just recovery in Canada, including a focus on affordable housing, childcare, and food security.

### **Food insecurity and COVID-19**

The Daily Bread Food Bank has released a report on [food insecurity and the challenges faced by food bank clients](#) during COVID-19. The report collects responses from 220 people who accessed the food bank programs. It finds that there has been a 200% increase in new clients accessing food banks in Toronto since February. The number of respondents who are moderately or severely stressed about having enough food to feed their households has tripled during COVID-19. And a third of food bank clients report being worried they'll be unable to continue to pay rent four to six months from now.

### **Combating anti-Semitism in Canada**

The *Globe and Mail* reports that Fighting Antisemitism Together (FAST), an organization founded in 2004 by former BMO executive Tony Comper and his late wife, Elizabeth, to deliver education programs for middle and high school students, [has named a new chair and president](#). Catherine Chatterley, founding director of the Canadian Institute for the Study of Antisemitism – a scholarly organization that publishes the academic journal *Antisemitism Studies* – and an instructor at the University of Manitoba, will continue the organization's efforts to combat rising anti-Semitism.

The work is urgent. In 2004, B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights recorded 857 incidents of harassment, violence, and vandalism targeting Jewish people across the country – the largest number in more than 50 years. By 2019, however, the number of reported incidents had risen to 2,207.

### **Upcoming events:**

- August 13: The Economist Group's World Ocean Initiative hosts a webinar entitled "Meet the Ocean Changemakers," featuring leading female ocean experts from around the world. [More info here.](#)
- November 10 and 11: The Ontario Nonprofit Network will host its annual Driven conference virtually. The keynote speaker will be Nonprofit AF's Vu Le. [More info here.](#)