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## Six Months and Counting: COVID-19 Represents a Marathon With No End in Sight

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Over the past six months, as the charitable sector responded to the expanding repercussions of COVID-19, *The Philanthropist* provided up-to-date coverage of its impact on our sector alongside our usual reporting and commentary. Now, as winter approaches and governments roll out new restrictions, the evolving challenges of the pandemic find a way into most of our coverage.

With the first six months of the pandemic behind us, and what looks like many more months ahead, we are revisiting and re-sharing our series on COVID-19 and hoping readers may glean new lessons or knowledge with a second look during the pandemic's second wave.

**[Charities Unite to Request Support and Collaboration as COVID-19 Crisis Leads to Increased Need and New Operational Risks](#)**

March 24

Canada's charitable sector has always stepped up in times of crisis, but as we reported in March, the coronavirus pandemic threatened to make the sector a victim rather than a saviour. Organizations that instinctively run to the flames in case of fire had to deal with their own house burning. In the first article in our coverage of the sector's response to the COVID-19 crisis, Tim Harper spoke to leaders across the country to find out how they were responding.

**[Lire l'article en français](#)**

**[Atlantic Canadian Service Charities Face New Pressures in the Wake of COVID-19](#)**

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March 31

While the COVID-19 outbreak affected charitable organizations across the country, Atlantic Canada was particularly hard hit, Kim Hart Macneill reported in March. For years, the region has consistently seen lower amounts of charitable giving than the other provinces. A 2018 report found that the region saw the smallest increase in the number of donors, total donations, and the size of the average donation. Anecdotally, local charities said they had been seeing higher demand for support and services, even before the pandemic.

[\*\*\*Working Virtually in Response to COVID-19? Lessons From our Four-Year Journey to Build a Virtual Organization\*\*\*](#)

April 8

As Canadians pulled together to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, many organizations made the shift to having all their employees working online from home. While it was a daunting prospect to reorient to a “virtual office,” and perhaps not feasible for all types of organizations and roles, Julia Anderson and Charmaine Crockett wrote about the many benefits to a well-run virtual workplace, noting that many, in fact, may never want to go back.

[Lire l'article en français](#)

[\*\*\*Alberta Charities are Relying on Collaboration and Innovation to Meet the Challenges Presented by COVID-19\*\*\*](#)

April 13

It was an Alberta story that was playing out in similar ways for charitable organizations across the country thanks to the COVID-19 crisis: needs were on the rise while donations were way down. Indeed, the Open Door, a Camrose non-profit, faced a double whammy back in April, reported Sharon Riley, with both cash and in-kind food donations down as much as 75%. Yet Open Door was also bombarded with new requests for help over the same period. These organizations faced another worry that is unique to Alberta – they had to also pay attention to ongoing instability in the province’s oil sector.

[\*\*\*Unpacking the Sector’s Pandemic-Induced HR Crisis\*\*\*](#)

April 22

For charities and non-profits contending with the COVID-19 pandemic, the problem of layoffs was a bit like the old question about pulling off the Band-Aid quickly or slowly. Some organizations did the former, while others held on a bit longer. Overall, the country’s workforce shrank by one million jobs in March, reported Emily Mathieu. But beyond the numbers, the pandemic shone a spotlight on the lack of human resources and legal expertise within many organizations.

[\*\*\*Relaxed Funding Approaches Provide Crucial Lifeline to Charities Grappling with the COVID-19 Pandemic\*\*\*](#)

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April 27

From the depths of a crisis, a new way of providing grants may be emerging. Four of the country's largest umbrella groups of funders called for the easing of donor restrictions, an acknowledgement that in this time of acute need, frontline organizations know best how to quickly and more efficiently provide help to those suffering. Tim Harper looked into the shift and asked whether it will remain in place when the pandemic is finally in the rear-view mirror.

[\*\*\*“Flexibility, Collaboration & Engagement:” Six Charities Navigate the Perks and Pitfalls of Non-Profit Work in a Pandemic\*\*\*](#)

May 6

With COVID-19 prompting dramatic change across Canada's charitable sector, stories of layoffs, cancelled fundraisers, and virtual meetings become commonplace. Individual organizations handled the crisis differently and many found new ways to provide needed services. In May, Eva Salinas checked in on six organizations to see how they were coping with the crisis, including a non-profit serving vulnerable communities in Vancouver and a national group representing Indigenous physicians.

[\*\*\*COVID-19's Disproportionate Impact on Women Raises Tough Questions for a Philanthropic Community Wary of Applying a Gender Lens to its Investments\*\*\*](#)

May 12

Gender-lens investing is one of the newest (and lesser-known) ways to advance social equity goals. It covers mutual funds, exchange-traded funds, and other financial vehicles that screen companies based on how they treat and promote women. As of 2018, gender-focused financial products held US\$2.4 billion in assets globally. Yet few Canadian foundations have embraced such vehicles. That may be about to change, noted Joanna Pachner in May, thanks to COVID-19.

[\*\*\*Fundraising During COVID-19: How Charities are Fighting to Move the Needle and Make a Difference\*\*\*](#)

May 20

The fundraising story during the COVID-19 pandemic was something of a tale of two sectors, noted Catherine Phillips back in May. For organizations that depend heavily on events, the enforced social distancing created a disaster. For example, the Canadian Cancer Society projected a \$20 million loss in April. It expected tens of millions more in losses in the months to come. However, the picture looked markedly different for other organizations.

[\*\*\*When the Investments Drop: Foundations and Portfolio Managers Navigate a New Type of Market Crisis\*\*\*](#)

May 25

In late May, Joanna Pachner reported that the sector was reeling from the pandemic: not only

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had endowment values plummeted but fundraising activities and volunteer operations were severely restricted. Market meltdowns are never alike, but this one felt unique, she noted in this piece, which looked at how foundations and seasoned portfolio managers are navigating the crisis.

[Lire l'article en français](#)

**[Virus That “Knows No Borders” Sees Canadian Aid Groups Responding Both Locally and Globally as Financial and Humanitarian Pressures Mount](#)**

June 3

Canadian non-profit staff who work with vulnerable communities around the world were urging the federal government to maintain aid flows and establish a stabilization fund to help them remain afloat during the crisis, reported Kareem Shaheen in June. Like their domestic counterparts, non-profits operating abroad have been hit hard by the pandemic. It forced some to suspend critical aid delivery and lay-off staff amid a slump in donations.

[Lire l'article en français](#)

**[The COVID-19 Crisis Presents an Opportunity for Canada’s Charitable Sector to Disrupt the Status Quo: Sector Leaders](#)**

June 17

Like other businesses, charities are finding new ways to deliver their services, with more than half reporting they have moved programs online or expanded existing virtual programming. Sector leaders, as well as those delivering front line services, told Tim Harper they see a need for bigger changes ahead, especially in the context of a country that was tentatively making its way toward some semblance of normalcy.

[Lire l'article en français](#)

**[Granting During the Pandemic: Foundations Face Increasing Calls to Increase Their Expenditures to Assist Struggling Charities](#)**

July 2

While the charitable sector has welcomed additional funds flowing from foundations over the past months, the financial crisis triggered by the pandemic has surfaced an old question about the structure of philanthropy in Canada: are tax-exempt foundations distributing enough of their earnings to charities? Christina Palassio looked into this question in early July.

**[Art, After Virus: Seven Questions for a Sector on the Edge](#)**

July 20

In 2019, the Metcalf Foundation collaborated with *The Philanthropist* to curate a series on the public value of arts and culture in Canada. Now, in the midst of the pandemic, there is a new

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urgency to the challenges facing the arts. In the face of COVID-19, David Maggs challenged us to see opportunity within the damage and find new ways to connect artistic contributions to some of our transformed world's most pressing needs.

[Lire l'article en français](#)

**[Nowhere to Go: Advocates Hope COVID-19 Will Force Governments to Finally Address Canada's Affordable Housing Crisis](#)**

August 3

When COVID-19 forced country-wide shutdowns in mid-March and then took hold in homeless shelters, it underscored one of the core tenets in the charitable and non-profit sectors, that four solid walls and a roof are essential to human dignity. What has become increasingly certain, reported Emily Mathieu, for the third of the country that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation estimates are renters, is that there's almost nowhere to go.

**[Is Social Innovation a Useful Tool in a Crisis? Lessons From COVID-19](#)**

August 31

In reflecting on a series of discussions with United Way-Centraide staff before and during the pandemic, an important question surfaced for Paul McArthur and Laurence Miall: can we really innovate during a crisis, or are we simply adapting and drawing on the innovation, talent, culture, and systems that were already built before? Their preliminary research suggested that we can accelerate social innovation tools developed in "normal" times in times of crisis.

[Lire l'article en français](#)