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## Sector News Digest - November 3, 2020

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**This week:** Indigenous housing, the economic plight of single people in Canada, and mentorship for Black youth and young adults.

### Are singles Canada's forgotten poor?

Investments in progressive, universal income policies like the Canada Child Benefit and the GIS top-up for seniors have lifted thousands of Canadians above the poverty line.

But a new [Policy Options report and podcast](#) examines an often-overlooked demographic: working-age single people. The report – *Canada's Forgotten Poor?* – finds that among all household groups, single people without dependants are the demographic most likely to be living below the poverty line.

The study draws on data from 69,000 singles receiving social assistance in Toronto in 2016 and calls attention to the fact that income supports for single individuals living in poverty are considerably less generous than those for families. Working-age singles have little access to income supports other than social assistance, which keeps recipients below the poverty line instead of raising them above it. The report proposes changes to Employment Insurance and an expansion of the Canada Workers Benefit as two policy reforms that could address the issue.

### Indigenous housing needs

The [Canadian Housing and Renewal Association's](#) (CHRA) Indigenous Caucus has launched a new campaign called [For Indigenous, By Indigenous](#) to raise awareness of the need for appropriate and adequate housing for Indigenous people in urban, rural, and northern communities.

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According to the CHRA, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) estimated in 2016 that 18% of Indigenous households were in “core housing need,” compared to 11.3% of non-Indigenous households. Core housing need is an indicator – developed by the CMHC, with input from provincial and territorial governments – used to evaluate whether an individual needs housing assistance, based on the quality of existing and available housing and the individual’s income.

The Indigenous Caucus was created to be the common voice for Indigenous housing providers across Canada. The group’s [strategy calls for](#) funding in addition to the sums announced in the National Housing Strategy for the establishment of a For Indigenous, By Indigenous National Housing Centre and \$225 million for off-reserve housing.

### **Ontario’s Bill 218 protects non-profits – but not democracy**

The Ontario government’s [recently introduced Bill 218](#), which outlines protections for workers, businesses, and charities and non-profits against COVID-related lawsuits, has been met with mixed reactions in the sector.

Some non-profit advocates [applauded the move](#). Healthcare groups, meanwhile, say the bill will make it more difficult to hold long-term-care homes to account for negligent practices. And some Ontario municipalities and electoral reform organizations that advocate for ranked ballots have decried the legislation because it includes a clause that would remove the right of local councils to decide the type of voting system they use in elections.

The proposed law rolls back a change to the Municipal Act passed in 2016 that allowed cities to use voting systems other than the current first-past-the-post approach. Ranked-ballot advocates say this system, used widely in other countries but only in party leadership races in Canada, promotes greater diversity in representation and less divisive elections. A [recent article in Policy Options](#) argues that voting reform could also unlock meaningful action on climate change.

If the bill becomes law, it could leave some municipalities in the lurch: London was the first Ontario municipality to make the change to ranked ballots, in 2018 – a [recent report by Unlock Democracy Canada](#) explores how it made the switch. Cambridge and Kingston were preparing to hold council votes on the issue in 2022.

The bill will receive second reading at committee this week.

### **Addressing anti-Black racism against Black youth**

The [Black Business and Professional Association](#) (BBPA) has launched Say It Loud! MentorME, a six-month mentorship program for Black youth across Canada. The new program will build on the BBPA’s long-running mentorship strategy, which has provided tools, resources, and networks to Black students, entrepreneurs, and professionals for 38 years.

The MentorME program offers Black youth and young adults between the ages of 14 and 29 the opportunity to engage in mentoring conversations that will support their academic, career, and community development. The program will include training for mentors of all backgrounds on the cultural competencies and racial nuances that affect Black youth and young adults. The program is a collaboration between Starbucks, BBPA SAY IT LOUD! Canada, and MENTOR

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Canada.

## A feminist reading of the US election

Millions of women, in the US and Canada, were appalled when Donald J. Trump, a self-professed advocate of sexual assault, was elected president in 2016. Indeed, thousands of Canadian women joined the chorus of opposition that sprung up almost immediately after his win and led to the historic Women's March on Washington on January 21, 2017.

If Joe Biden wins the bitterly contested 2020 race, writes former Canadian parliamentarian Peggy Nash, a senior advisor to the dean of Ryerson University's Faculty of Arts and Labour Management Relations, "he needs to show women that he understands the value of their votes by making his [campaign promises for women](#) a reality. A Biden win signals to women that all their organizing, fuelled by anger and opposition to the Trump presidency, has paid off."

Writing in [The Conversation Canada](#), Nash, a one-time NDP MP for Parkdale–High Park, points out that the outcome of the race, which features a virtually unprecedented gender divide, holds huge consequences for women. But, she adds, a Biden victory would attest to the critical importance of women's votes. "I teach a course that encourages young women to get involved in politics. A Trump loss signals to them that women's votes really do matter."

## Getting to change

The discussion of what "building back better" looks like in the non-profit sector often includes conversations about increasing the sector's capacity to conduct effective advocacy. To that end, the Ontario Nonprofit Network has just released a new [advocacy spectrum](#) schematic that depicts the path of action organizations and individuals can follow to push for policy change.

"The spectrum could also be used to map out where other organizations are advocating on the same issue," says Sarah Matsushita, ONN's director of communications and engagement. "Where are the overlaps and where are the gaps in influencing decision-makers? The key is to find your place and work with others at different parts of the spectrum to build the change for healthy and inclusive communities."

## From around the sector

- **Record giving:** Canada Helps [announced a new milestone](#) last week: \$1.5 billion in donations have been made to Canadian charities through its platform by 26 million donors.
- **Academic clearing house:** Carleton's Master of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership (MPNL) program has launched [PANL Perspectives](#), a new platform that will share insights and analysis of philanthropy and fundraising, social justice and change, leadership and governance, and other sector-related topics. One of its first themes was how funders can shift the power dynamic between donor and donee.
- **Philanthropy podcast:** Senator Ratna Omidvar has launched a new podcast called [Moving the Needle](#) that explores socioeconomic questions facing Canada and the world. The first five episodes feature human trafficking expert Matt Friedman on fighting modern slavery, diversity and inclusion experts Hamlin Grange and Diya Khanna on anti-racism, former Philanthropic Foundations Canada head Hilary Pearson on strengthening

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the charitable sector, and former prime minister Joe Clark on promoting the power of pluralism.

- **Pandemic and international aid:** A new [survey](#) by Markham-based Children Believe on Canadians' attitudes toward supporting international causes during the pandemic reveals that 88% of respondents recognize the increased threat that COVID-19 poses to vulnerable communities, and 74% feel they have a duty to support those less fortunate, both in Canada and abroad.
- **Policy School:** Beginning in January, 2021, Maytree will select 20 to 25 individuals for a six-month online program in which they have the opportunity to enhance their organization's advocacy efforts by connecting with policy leaders and learning how to access new tools and resources. Applications are available [here](#), and the deadline is November 19.

### Upcoming webinars and events

- [Corporate Social Responsibility: Growing Social Good in Canada](#), offered by Blackbaud Canada, featuring speakers from Deloitte, Imagine Canada, and Finastra. November 17.
- [Top 10 compliance issues for charities](#), offered by Canadian Charity Law. November 19.
- [The State of the Sector: A Look Ahead to 2021](#). Imagine Canada's president & CEO, Bruce MacDonald, will touch on some of the key implications from 2020 and look ahead to provide sector leaders with insights that they can use when making plans for the coming year. December 3.
- [Nonprofit Driven](#), the Ontario Nonprofit Network's annual conference, returns in a virtual format on November 10 and 11.
- [Philanthropic Foundations Canada's conference](#) takes place November 17 to 19. PFC is also [offering a slate of upcoming webinars](#) that will explore the experiences of equity-focused grantees, the evolution of family philanthropy, and more.