
Sector News Digest - March 23, 2020

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This week: responses to anti-Asian hate crimes and the lack of giving to Black-led organizations, CanadaHelps hits a milestone, more drama from the WE saga, and the dearth of digital philanthropy.

Responding to anti-Asian racism and the Atlanta shootings

The Toronto chapter of the [Chinese Canadian National Council](#) and [Butterfly](#) (Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Network) have set up [a community statement](#) signed by multiple organizations and individuals expressing concern for the safety of Asian and migrant workers in massage businesses and sex work due to racism, misogyny, and white supremacy. Butterfly has seen an influx of donations since last week's shootings in Atlanta.

On March 22, the YMCA launched an initiative with the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF) called #BlockHate to draw awareness to online hate speech and harassment, particularly as [faced by women of colour](#). The initiative was planned around the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21), with the recent context of the more than 700% increase in violent attacks toward Asian-Canadians, especially in cities such as Vancouver.

"This campaign is an effort to ensure that the hateful fringe voices are never given the greatest platforms," said CRRF executive director Mohammed Hashim.

More support for the Foundation for Black Communities

The MLSE Foundation has joined the Laidlaw and Inspirit foundations in supporting the Foundation for Black Communities' \$300-million endowment goal. MLSE Foundation, part of

Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, announced last week that it is investing \$1 million.

Bridgette Estrela, MLSE Foundation's director of innovation and strategy, told [the Toronto Star](#) that the investment will help to "identify and support grassroots organizations that provide hyper-local sports programming to Black youth and will ultimately help ensure Ontario-based Black communities will have the investment and the resources they need to grow."

Who does the climate crisis hit the hardest?

Canada's members of Parliament [will vote this month](#) on Bill C-230, or the [National Strategy to Redress Environmental Racism Act](#). The private member's bill was inspired by the work of Dr. Ingrid Waldron, author of *There's Something in the Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous and Black Communities* and project director of the [ENRICH](#) (Environmental Noxiousness, Racial Inequities & Community Health) Project. If the legislation passes, the federal environment minister will need to come up with a strategy for redressing environmental racism – the understanding that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour) communities are more likely to experience adverse effects of pollution and the climate crisis.

Waldron and Naolo Charles, project director for the [Black Environmental Initiative](#), are hosting the National Anti-Environmental Racism Coalition, a group seeking to bring attention to the issue of environmental racism. [MakeWay](#) is hosting the event and [running a petition](#) to ask MPs to pass the bill.

WE Charity goes to committee hearing

Marc and Craig Kielburger, the founders of WE Charity, were summoned to testify before the House of Commons ethics committee last week to answer more questions about the \$912-million federal student grant program announced last spring and subsequently cancelled because of conflict-of-interest concerns regarding the Trudeau family and then-finance minister Bill Morneau.

At the March 15 hearing, the Kielburgers described how WE Charity helps children, with Marc noting that "this committee is trying WE Charity in the court of public opinion and forcing testimony." He alleged again that the charity was a casualty of political scandal. When NDP MP Charlie Angus asked why WE had not registered as a lobbyist, the Kielburgers described themselves as volunteers. [As CTV News reports](#), Parliament's Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying does not consider volunteers to be lobbyists – however, the brothers draw annual income from their for-profit arm, ME to WE.

The continuing fallout over WE prompted *Globe and Mail* columnist Doug Saunders last week to [call for changes](#) in donation rules that date back to the mid-1990s. The policies, he argues, favour wealthy individuals donating assets like land and stocks: "[W]e should consider funding charities from government directly, through a process that's public, transparent and arm's-length."

Recommendations from the Charitable Advisory's first report

The Advisory Committee on the Charitable Sector (ACCS) has released its [first report](#) to Minister of National Revenue Diane LeBouthillier and CRA commissioner Bob Hamilton. It

includes three main recommendations: amending the Income Tax Act to remove the “own activities” test, enabling partnerships and more accountability; an amendment to the act “[allowing] all appeals to go to the Tax Court of Canada”; and the creation of a “home in government” for the sector.

For more detailed coverage, read Tim Harper’s [story](#) from last week.

Weeding out systemic racism in the charitable sector?

Senator Ratna Omidvar has tabled [Bill S-222](#), the Effective and Accountable Charities Act, in the Senate. As the ACCS report recommended, the bill’s goal is to amend the Income Tax Act so that charities can partner with social enterprises or other non-profits that are not charities, provided they take reasonable steps to ensure that any donated resources are used exclusively for charitable purposes.

The requirements of the current policy can result in [a form of systemic racism](#), Omidvar argues, adding that Bill S-222 would empower BIPOC organizations. “I urge parliamentarians and Canadians to support this bill,” she said in a statement. “It will get rid of old laws that perpetuate systemic racism and will create more effective partnerships in the charitable sector by freeing up resources for important causes and equity seeking communities.”

A generation of CanadaHelps

To celebrate 20 years, CanadaHelps hosted [a virtual event](#) on March 11 with various guests, including keynote speaker Paul Taylor, the executive director of [FoodShare](#) Toronto. The organization also used the event to launch a [video docu-series](#) celebrating Canadian charities. As the largest online platform for charity donations and fundraisers in Canada, CanadaHelps has been at the forefront of digital innovation and transformation in the charitable sector.

The organization has seen huge traffic growth during the pandemic: there was a 95% increase from 2019 to 2020 in the number of Canadians donating through the online platform, with a total of 1.1 million people giving more than \$480 million. In comparison, during CanadaHelps’ first year in business – 2002 – the platform processed about \$150,000.

Canada is lagging in “digital philanthropy”

A study published in October by the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA), [Unconnected: Funding Shortfalls, Policy Imbalances and How They Are Contributing to Canada’s Digital Underdevelopment](#), found that the charitable sector is behind in prioritizing digital investment, such as ensuring stable internet access in rural areas and digital literacy. With the increased importance of digital access to services such as healthcare and education, the [sector is working to expand digital philanthropy](#). (This story is also available [in French](#).)

“In 2021, digital issues are still new for non-profits,” says Kathryn Ann Hill, executive director of [MediaSmarts](#), a digital and media literacy group. “We haven’t quite understood how they can contribute to social problems and social inequities both in terms of access and use of technology. It’s not as simple as giving everyone access to broadband. It’s about understanding how the internet is becoming foundational to how we live.” Read more about the state of digital philanthropy in Canada [here](#) and [here](#).

