

# Alberta Pre-Budget Submission 2020



Budget consultations are important opportunities for nonprofit organizations to bring issues and priorities to light. As a member-based organization that promotes and strengthens the nonprofit sector, CCVO is providing input for consideration on behalf of the broader nonprofit sector for Budget 2020, which is set to be tabled in Spring 2020. We note that Budget 2019 has been difficult for many, including the nonprofit and charitable sector, which saw funding cuts and restructuring of funding streams. However, there is no better time for nonprofits and charities to influence policymakers by highlighting their priorities.

The Government of Alberta has asked Albertans to partake in an online consultation in preparation for Budget 2020. CCVO's priorities align with the government's priorities where Albertans can earn a living and make their life better, and where individuals can access high quality programs and the services they need. These priorities require a healthy and prosperous economy that allow both for-profit and nonprofit sectors to fulfill their missions. The nonprofit and charitable sector builds healthy communities, provides critical services that contribute to economic stability, and is a bridge between the public and government. It is also crucial to recognize that both nonprofits and businesses create financial and social value.

We urge the Government of Alberta to have meaningful engagement and consultation with nonprofits before making major changes to investment streams that impact the communities they serve. The nonprofit sector can provide input from Albertans who are affected firsthand by major changes and cuts in funding, and therefore can help shape policy and budget decisions.

CCVO's summary of recommendations were formed as a response to the three-question survey provided by the Government: what spending priorities do you think government should focus on; where do you think government could find savings; and how should government support job creation and economic growth?

#### Summary of Recommendations:

1. Commit to adequate, long-term, sustainable funding for the nonprofit and charitable sector.
2. Enhance nonprofit sector information and engage in meaningful consultation with nonprofits and charities.
3. Invest in nonprofit infrastructure.



## RECOMMENDATION 1

### **Commit to adequate, long-term, sustainable funding for the nonprofit and charitable sector.**

As the Government of Alberta develops Budget 2020, CCVO would like to see the nonprofit sector receive funding for the quality programs and services that all Albertans benefit from. Budgets are about choices and the government has made an explicit goal of eliminating the deficit by 2022-23. The government's priorities are focused on reducing taxes on businesses to stimulate investment in the short term and job growth in the long term. Achieving the goal of eliminating the deficit over the next few years by reducing spending, with little priority on increasing revenues or economic diversification, will impact the lives of many Albertans. This will have consequences for the nonprofit sector, the individuals it serves, the communities it works in, and the issues it seeks to address.

As an organization that serves the broad nonprofit sector, we believe that right now is a crucial time for the government to understand and consider the impact of Alberta Budget 2019. This includes the dissolution of the Alberta Lottery Fund (ALF), and significant cuts that the ALF was intended to support including the Community Facility Enhancement Program, the Community Initiatives Program, the Other Initiatives Program, and the elimination of the Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP). All are important sources of support for the nonprofit sector. The ripple effect of these cuts is multifold. Many Albertans are now at risk of being turned away for services and programs and are at a greater risk of unemployment. The government spending cuts not only reduce funding for nonprofits, they also create unmet community needs for service providers.

There are now fewer resources available for the arts and culture, disability supports, sport and recreation programs, poverty reduction, children and youth, social services, development and housing, environment, and education and research. This reduction of funding for nonprofits results in the sector attempting to fill the gaps on its own. It is often suggested that during times of government spending restraint, nonprofits should diversify their funding. However, research indicates that this does not always prove to be feasible for the financial health of the sector.

We encourage the Government to reconsider the means of directly funding nonprofits and STEP programs, and increase funding to levels that match the high rate of population growth, cost of living, inflation, and an increasingly growing demand for programs and services.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### **Enhance nonprofit sector information and engage in meaningful consultation with nonprofits and charities.**

The nonprofit sector is a vital partner in building a strong province through delivering services and creating healthy and vibrant communities. Despite this critical role, we have an inadequate understanding of labour market challenges facing the sector, and little information about the current or future capacity or composition of Alberta's nonprofit sector. The limited amount of information available to the nonprofit sector, especially in comparison to other sectors and industries, means it is difficult to make informed decisions around capacity, productivity, or sustainability of the sector. Ultimately, the absence of data also means that government, funders, and nonprofits lack reliable information upon which to base decisions affecting the future of the sector and can result in misinformation.



Given the close connection nonprofits have with the communities they serve, they are uniquely positioned to provide input on policy development. For example, the dissolution of the ALF and cancellation of STEP have been introduced without consultation among those closest to the issues. There are many individuals and organizations within the nonprofit sector dedicated to shared goals around systemic change. They serve as a wealth of knowledge and are eager to collaborate with the province to realise the goals articulated in the government's policy framework. For these reasons, it is important that the province engage in meaningful consultation with the sector to ensure adequate input and representation on the challenges, opportunities, and limitations of proposed policy shifts before they are enacted through budgetary decisions.

Therefore, we encourage the utilisation of the Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative (ANVSI) or moving forward with the proposed Premier's advisory council as a direct line of communication to the Premier and Cabinet on issues impacting the nonprofit sector, and to enhance nonprofit sector information through data collection. Meaningful engagement and collection of sector information will ensure savings as it will assist the government and the sector to make optimal use of their resources and streamline funds.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

#### **Invest in nonprofit infrastructure.**

Alberta's nonprofits and charities play a vital role in our communities, delivering essential social and health services, providing opportunities to participate in sport, the arts and cultural initiatives, and stewarding our natural environment. They are a pillar of Alberta's economy, contributing \$9.6 billion in revenues to our province, and support a strong and thriving economy by providing education and workforce training, supporting families, and by employing more than 400,000 Albertans, both full-time and part-time.

We suggest that the Government should invest in infrastructure spending for community organizations to better enable them to carry out their work. Investments, such as community and social services, environment, arts and culture, housing, sports and recreation, among others – can help provide important community infrastructure for families, youth, and seniors most affected. Government's long-term commitment is required to sustain investment and ensure that community organizations, knowledgeable staff and volunteers, operating funds and other resources are in place. This will ensure that programs and activities required for infrastructure will be used effectively and add optimal value to the community.