

Alzheimer Society Echoes Calls for Supports for Canada's Charities

May 25, 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge for Canada's employers, including charities—which collectively employ over two million Canadians. Existing federal supports, such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Temporary Wage Subsidy for Employers, have filled some of the gap left by declining donations—however, many small- and medium-sized charities continue to struggle.

Charities are having to do more with less. The charitable sector relies on fourteen million volunteers, many of whom are now staying home. The Alzheimer Society specifically has moved most programs online, protecting our clients while also maximising the reach of staff. Despite falling revenues and a dwindling number of volunteers, charities are rising to the challenge with innovative solutions—but we need your help.

On May 7, 2020, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario endorsed a letter to provincial officials in Ontario, a copy of which is attached. This letter contained a number of suggestions for how governments at either the provincial or federal level can further assist charities, including:

- A stabilisation fund to meet the immediate, non-deferrable expenses of charities. Imagine Canada has calculated the need for emergency stabilisation funding for the charitable sector at \$8 billion nationwide. This figure is supported by the Health Charities Coalition of Canada, of which the Alzheimer Society of Canada is a member.
- A donation matching program to double the impact of individuals donating to a charity of their choice; such a program has been successfully launched in Alberta.
- Modify existing charitable donation tax credits, so that donations to charities carry the same tax benefits as those made to political parties (including being refundable).

The 29 Alzheimer Societies across Ontario have also encountered a number of barriers to fully accessing the suite of supports available to them. With minor modifications, both the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) program and the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) could be a lifeline to charities not currently able to draw upon these initiatives.

While only recently launched, the CECRA has already been dismissed by many landlords, who are also struggling to meet their financial commitments. As the program stands today, it is unlikely to help any Alzheimer Society in Ontario. We urge the federal government to consider measures available directly to commercial tenants, in addition to or in lieu of those requiring opt-in from property owners.

The CEBA is nominally available to charities, however the requirement that recipient charities generate a portion of their revenue from the sale of goods and services on which they charge federal sales tax excludes most health charities, including Alzheimer Societies. Removing this requirement, or creating a separate Canada Emergency Charity Account, would be of immense benefit to smaller charities for whom a \$40,000 interest-free loan would guarantee continued operations for months to come.

Shuttered charities cannot become part of the 'new normal'. Existing federal supports have been a good start, and the collaborative approach taken by governments at all levels has been appreciated. We ask that this approach continue, and that our feedback be considered as support programs are unveiled and modified in the weeks and months to come.