Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to express our deep and growing concern that the federal government has yet to propose policies or assistance aimed at helping charities and nonprofits face COVID-19. This ongoing gap jeopardizes the services and support communities need as Canada seeks to recover from this crisis.

Imagine Canada’s recent survey demonstrates the devastating impacts of the crisis already felt by the charitable sector. In April, we found that 80% of charities were operating with decreased capacity and nearly one in five organizations had suspended or ceased their operations. We estimate the projected financial losses for registered charities alone to be between $9.5 billion and $15.7 billion. These statistics directly translate to diminished access for vital services that communities rely on to thrive. Mr. Prime Minister, the situation needs your immediate attention.

Among the services that are in jeopardy if the government pursues its current approach:

- **Child care services, after school programs, and day camps.** These are vital to ensure parents are able to return to work. Charities and nonprofits need to be in a position to offer these services, the absence of which will disproportionately affect women and single-parent families.

- **Services to racialized populations and social justice support.** Urban indigenous, black, and immigrant communities have been particularly affected by the pandemic. Our sector is the primary provider of skills, language and literacy training, justice and social equity support, anti-racism resources and programs as well as advocacy for these communities.

- **Mental health services.** Whether by directly providing mental health services, or providing Canadians with a semblance of normalcy (e.g., through amateur sports or arts), our sector will be at the forefront of helping Canadians cope with the experience we have all shared.

- **Services to people with disabilities.** Charities and nonprofits ensure people with disabilities have a voice through advocacy efforts and a valuable place within society through career support, social activities, training, accessibility workshops and more.

- **Environmental sustainability.** These organizations are crucial for creating the kind of recovery Canadians want. From the preservation of ecosystems, to the protection of threatened species, and the development of sustainable solutions for communities, their work needs to continue.

- **Services to seniors.** Services provided by these organizations help seniors deal with isolation imposed by the pandemic and the resultant deleterious mental and physical health consequences.

- **Health services and support.** These organizations play an important role in preventative care, matching individuals to the right services, and providing support that enables individuals experiencing health problems to enjoy a higher quality of life.

- **Support for women.** Charities report that domestic violence is intensifying under lockdown, with additional support needed to engage children who are experiencing violence at home. Women and their families will need additional support to find safety and support.
Charitable and nonprofit organizations work together in a complex, interdependent system to fill critical gaps. Many of these services rely on longstanding relationships in communities, built on years of trust and experience, and work in concert with other nonprofit services. **Once services collapse, it is not simply a matter of reopening doors and getting back to business.** Where organizations do survive, many programs will need to fundamentally shift or scale to make up for other programs that are no longer available, many will need to retool to adjust to new needs and serve more people, and the vast majority will be doing this with much less funding.

**How much do we, as a country, want to invest in ensuring that people come out of this in the best shape they can?** Adults and children experiencing poverty or food insecurity, veterans, vulnerable or marginalized youth, seniors, the unemployed and unskilled, women facing domestic violence, people with disabilities, individuals with mental health challenges - entire populations will suffer from decreased sector capacity. Support for community gardens, parks and conservation, sports and recreation, performance art, festivals, educational programs, community museums, and art galleries are investments in much needed community and individual rehabilitation and reconnection. When programs expire, individuals become vulnerable, and communities are weakened.

At the outset of the pandemic, our sector identified the need for a grant program to ensure that organizations are able to survive, adapt to changed circumstances, and position themselves to actively contribute to the recovery. The financial measures announced so far have met a portion of what is required for those who are eligible, but much remains to be done. **We urge you to work with your colleagues – primarily the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development – to finalize and implement a grant program that recognizes the unique situation facing charities and nonprofits,** the efforts they have continued to make to serve their communities in unprecedented circumstances, and the role that they can and must play in Canada’s recovery from COVID-19.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Bruce MacDonald  
President & CEO

cc: Hon. Bill Morneau, PC, MP  
Minister of Finance

Hon. Ahmed Hussen, PC, MP  
Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development