

The Honourable Ratna Omidvar  
Senator – Ontario



L'honorable Ratna Omidvar  
Sénatrice – Ontario

SENATE | SÉNAT  
CANADA

April 16, 2020

The Honourable Bill Morneau, P.C., M.P.  
Confederation Building, Room: 325,  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Morneau,

I want to thank you and the rest of the government for working with remarkable speed sending out financial support to Canadians. It's incredible when Canadians pull together in a time of crisis. We work with each other, all rowing in the same direction, to keep Canadians safe and healthy. We will conquer this by sticking together. By staying home. And by the fortitude that has defined this nation since its beginning.

On the front lines of this fight are Charities. Many Canadians are reaching out more and more to local and national charities as their lifeline to services, support, counselling and much more. Jobless Canadians are straining food banks during a time when donations and volunteers are drying up. The Kids Help line has seen increased calls from children coping with the mental health impacts of isolation. Women who are at higher risk of abuse because of social isolation are needing to access shelters and the shelters are adjusting to meet these challenges.

Due to this crisis, Imagine Canada has estimated that charities will see \$9.5 billion to \$15.7 billion in financial losses this year and layoffs of 118,000 to 194,000 people. Charities are already laying off staff and as the demand grows every day, it is essential that charities have the right policy tools to support their much-needed work during this crisis.

The government's new 75 per cent wage subsidy policy will help. I have heard from Charities and they are satisfied that the government listened to their concerns. They can live with the parameters that are laid out.

There is an additional measure the government should pursue to support the sector. The government should implement a temporary moratorium on the restrictions that limit charities and foundations to only provide funds to qualified donees. By temporarily lifting this restriction, it would allow charities and foundations to form business relationships with social enterprises, community groups, nonprofits, and private sector businesses to ensure that important services are effectively delivered during this extraordinary crisis. The current requirements prevent charities from working with partners that are indispensable in reaching vulnerable populations. This is particularly relevant for indigenous populations.

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This action is desperately needed and would further support the sector to provide the services and supports Canadians need now more than ever. We need to make these adjustments and speed is of the essence.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ratna Omidvar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Honourable Ratna Omidvar, C.M., O.Ont.

