



# RESETTING NORMAL: FUNDING A THRIVING WOMEN'S SECTOR

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**Resetting Normal** is a series of reports on gender equality and the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. They explore risks to human rights exposed by the pandemic and propose new ways to build a gender-equal Canada in pandemic recovery efforts.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Women's Foundation is collaborating with Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN), Imagine Canada, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and Prof. Kathleen Lahey to present this analysis of the situation of women's sector groups going into the COVID-19 pandemic and the crisis precipitated by the lockdowns. This report lays out the existing erosion of women-serving agencies and gender-equity seeking groups that has created greater vulnerability for the sector, and thus for women and other vulnerable groups, in the current emergencies.

As women experience higher rates of gender-based violence and financial precarity, organizations that serve them are at the leading edge of proposing innovative and timely responses. Still, decades of defunding, project-based rather than core funding, and government austerity measures have robbed organizations of vital capacity building supports. In addition, governments have passed on responsibilities for providing front-line essential services, such as sexual assault supports, to this sector without adequate accompanying funding. The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to examine the current conditions and propose a new way to move ahead for all funders supporting the women's sector.

# ESSENTIAL SECTOR, ESSENTIAL SERVICES

The term women's sector is used to describe women's services and the women's movement. Women's services, in this definition, are focused on responding to women's specific needs, and delivering programs with a gendered analysis and equity lens, and would include shelters for women, sexual assault centres, and women's centres. Women's services also include organizations that are generally community-focused but include services that are designed for and delivered to women specifically.

Women's movements are made up of gender equity seeking groups carrying out policy and advocacy work on the local, regional, and national levels; playing an important role in promoting and advancing gender equal outcomes for women in all their diversity; and addressing the underlying inequalities that make women more vulnerable structurally.

The services provided by the women's sector are social service programs. They offer direct intervention as well as wraparound and ancillary services, including counselling and advice, education and skills development, public health prevention, and a support system that is a safety net for women and their families. This also includes after-hours outreach, childcare support, and access to legal and financial advice. Most, if not all, are nonprofits and charities. These are essential services that are part of a healthy welfare state system. Their work seeks to improve the social determinants of health for those in Canada who face intersecting oppressions that create structural barriers.

# ESSENTIAL SECTOR, ESSENTIAL SERVICES

The Canadian Women's Foundation is one of the largest women's foundations in the world, and among foundations in Canada, one of the very few that focuses wholly on women's issues, women's serving agencies, and gender equalities. For example, out of more than 200 foundations listed on Charity Village's website,<sup>1</sup> fewer than 10 mention women and girls in any context. Most remain committed to a "mainstream" approach that does not prioritize women's sector responses that can be characterized as feminist, intersectional, or grounded in recognition of structural and systemic barriers to equality for all.

The women's sector is part of the larger nonprofit and charitable sector; an historically and traditionally feminized sector where gender plays a significant role in shaping an inequitable and inadequate funding model. ONN's 2018 research on women's work experiences in Ontario's nonprofit sector found that feminization of the sector is a result of various factors.

These factors include: nonprofits and charities consist of 80% women workers (women-majority); much of their work is considered care work and thus women's work, particularly that of racialized, immigrant, and Indigenous women (gendered and racialized work); and women and children make up a large portion of the populations they serve.<sup>2</sup>

**80%**

*of non-profit and charity  
workers are women*

Consequently, the women's sector is perceived through the lens of negative gender stereotypes as dependent, emotional, inferior to masculinity (i.e. to other sectors), unintelligent and unskilled, and in need of constant guidance and monitoring.<sup>3</sup> Feminization has real consequences for nonprofits and charities, their labour force, and the communities they serve. For instance, patriarchal power dynamics emerge between organizations and donors/funders, or executive directors and boards of directors. The larger workforce is overworked, underpaid, and low valued, and community needs, as a consequence, are underfunded.

# UNDERLYING INEQUALITIES: THE SECTOR AND THE TAX SYSTEM

This context is further compounded for women's sector organizations. ONN's research highlighted that women's organizations found it more difficult to be taken seriously by funders, and workers had lower wages in comparison to the broader sector. Within the nonprofit sector women still experience a glass ceiling for positions outside of women's organizations. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternative's Kate McInturff and Brittany Lambert also noted that women employed in gender equity-seeking organizations are the lowest paid amongst the nonprofit sector.<sup>4</sup>

Underlying inequalities are also at play in the patterns of giving and the tax structure that support the women's sector. In terms of overall giving, Canadian data reveal clearly how the charitable funding structures used in Canada reinforce and magnify existing structural gender inequalities. In 2010, the federal government 'gave back' \$2.8 billion in tax credits and refunds to individuals and corporations that had made a total of \$12.9 billion in charitable contributions. Those tax credits returned 22% of total charitable contributions to taxpayers who were able to claim tax benefits for making such donations.

This mechanism lets taxpayers redirect what would otherwise have been government revenues to activities preferred by donors. In that year, women donors received only 29% of those tax dollar benefits, even though more women than men made contributions.

In contrast, men donors received 71% of the \$2.4 billion credit that arose from personal charitable contributions, and 70% of the \$0.4 billion credit from corporate charitable contributions. These gender shares reflect women's persistently lower incomes, and a resulting lower capacity to donate. They also mean that because women's lower incomes are taxed at lower personal income tax rates, dollar for dollar, women will on average receive smaller tax benefits from their donations than men. Thus, women as a group cannot direct as much funding to their preferred charitable organizations as men can, even with fewer men making donations. In addition, men's preferences in charitable giving are quite different from women's, with women supporting charitable activities that help meet core economic needs like adequate housing, care and health resources, and education, while men prioritize sport and recreation.<sup>5</sup>

# ERODED FUNDING, STRETCHED SERVICES, DEEPENING INEQUALITY

The women's sector has experienced several decades of erosion in funding in addition to, and perhaps because of this system that replicates underlying inequalities. In the period from 2005 to 2015, there was considerable loss of federal government funding as the Status of Women budget was cut by 37% and more than 30 women's groups lost 100% of their funding.<sup>6</sup> The mandate of Status of Women Canada was also narrowed so that organizations could not advocate for equality. In addition, organizations focusing on immigrant communities and refugees saw their funding reduced at the same time. The United Nations Gender Inequality Index noted that "starting in 2005 Canada lost significant ground in key areas of gender equality, dropping the country's overall global ranking by 13 places in 2008."<sup>7</sup>

This decade included the 2008 financial crisis and ensuing austerity measures brought into place by various provincial and territorial governments, which chose to reduce spending. This resulted in the closure of many women's services so that additional responsibilities were piled onto other organizations, sometimes with increased funding, but mostly with no extra resources being provided. This has been noted in British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia in particular.

In addition, service industries, largely made up of women, were almost completely left out of injection of stimulus payments. Massive infrastructure funding went to male-dominated sectors such as the construction industry, and because of the gender-based predominance of men in those industries, women did not benefit.

The women's sector provides protections that are essential to the health and safety of people in Canada. Yet they are funded partially and irregularly, through an unpredictable combination of individual donations, corporate gifts, and grants. This model is not only very time-consuming, requiring constant renewal and contact, but also inefficient as agreements only last for twelve months to perhaps three years. As a result, groups are constantly searching for, applying for, requesting, and renewing funding, most of which is project-based and temporary. This model is extremely fragile.

Reports from the nonprofit and charitable – and specifically the women's sector – reveal that they are facing an impending funding crisis. Canada Helps' 2018 Giving Report revealed that the charitable sector is experiencing a long-term decline in private donations and shift in government funding in favour of large organizations with more than 200 employees.

# ERODED FUNDING, STRETCHED SERVICES, DEEPENING INEQUALITY

By applying a simple gender-lens to these data, it is clear that only a handful of women's sector organizations in Canada have 200 employees or more, leaving them out of this shift in funding to large organizations. Most women's sector organizations have under 10 employees, and according to the Giving Report, they are in the group that is fundraising and self-financing for almost 75% of their revenue, compared to around 50% for larger organizations with staff of 10 to 200 employees.<sup>8</sup>

Among individual donations, there have been decreases too, with average annual donations in almost all age groups declining. This trend continued in the 2020 Giving Report.<sup>9</sup> We can expect that the decline in contributions will be exacerbated during the pandemic. Yet to understand the exact interplay between structural gender gaps and funding, it is crucial to have access to comprehensive, timely, and up-to-date data on all aspects of fundraising.

The effects of funding the women's sector largely through private means such as corporations, foundations, or individuals has the potential to create a loss of autonomy in decision-making for many organizations. They are no longer able to fund and support specific community needs according to their mission, but must respond to a project model directed by funder priorities.

This often means that existing programs that are successful and have been ongoing for a number of years must be scrapped, redesigned, reimagined, or overhauled so that they fit the project model required by funders, in line with criteria sometimes established without consultation or research into promising practices.

Sometimes this funding has been designed to offer capacity so that organizations can engage in innovation, developing new tools, and methodologies. Other private funders focus on "only direct program costs," limiting organizational potential to take part in advocacy, and engage in community building and sector collaboration. Additionally, the burden to prove efficacy and efficiency in program delivery falls to the organization, not to the funder, adding more work.

In recent years, the Canadian Women's Foundation has been funding essential social services that should be covered by the government. Grants have supported the establishment of Sexual Assault Response Teams in rural and northern communities; they have been allocated to provide funding for rape kits for women in Alberta who did not want to immediately press charges; they support the salaries of childcare workers in shelters; and they provide food and transportation for program participants.



# ERODED FUNDING, STRETCHED SERVICES, DEEPENING INEQUALITY

Because the Foundation focuses on those who are facing the greatest barriers, we fund organizations that are often the least resourced. The Canadian Women's Foundation is only able to fund approximately 15% of the requests received, so each granting cycle leaves many valuable proposals unfunded.

Some services, in particular women's shelters, currently benefit from provincial funding that is largely secure and recurring. But being a government-funded service has its drawbacks when it comes to carrying out advocacy to change or criticize government policy.<sup>10</sup> Women's sector organizations have stated that they have lost autonomy and capacity to influence policy or counter government decisions because of their dependence on government funding. This is a concern inherent in being more securely tied to any regular funding and can be addressed through challenging underlying power dynamics in the fundee/funder relationship.

Thanks to changes made by the current government to increase the budget and scope of the Women and Gender Equality Department, there have been improvements in funding for the women's sector since 2015. Yet there are still many areas where a gender-based analysis needs to be consistently applied by the governments.

Many national women's organizations have started to rebuild capacity, as have regional ones. However, this has in no way completely replaced the previous level of capacity, which was already insufficient for the needs of women in Canada. This is why there has been widespread support for the National Action Plan on Gender Equality and the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls. Such measures would go a long way to guaranteeing strong coordination, and similar levels of service and support in all parts of the country.

The proportion of funding going to the women's sector is lower, and women are doubly disadvantaged by the tax system. What has been considered normal for the women's sector is a mix of extreme inequalities that have left the sector in a crisis even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The women's sector is facing the emergency brought on by COVID-19 that affects all society but has, in addition, specific negative gendered effects on women. Organizations are being asked to step up and step into the crisis with a greater level of service and many of them are doing so.

# ENTERING THE PANDEMIC WITHOUT A SAFETY NET

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, because of an existing lack of gender analysis and quantitative data that can easily delineate the scope of the impact on the women's sector specifically, the Canadian Women's Foundation, ONN, Imagine Canada, and others have turned to online surveys, consultation, and convening to assess the effects of the pandemic on the women's sector. That is why the Canadian Women's Foundation launched an online survey on March 23 to gather organizations' reactions on the initial impacts, and why the Foundation consulted with and continues to work with partners to track and record their concerns and needs moving forward.

The Canadian Women's Foundation's survey reached approximately 500 organizations, and gathered 120 responses, from all provinces and territories. Just over half the respondents shared that they were in a precarious position financially for a myriad of reasons. Some have closed their social enterprise, some have cancelled fundraising events and will not benefit from third-party fundraising, and others are concerned that individual donors will turn their attention and donations to services that seem to be offering an emergency COVID-19 response. Eighty-two percent (82%) of organizations fear they will have to close their doors.<sup>11</sup>

Any downturn in revenues affects any charity, but the women's sector is behind the line compared with the rest of the sector, because of underlying inequalities.

Nonprofits and charities in general rarely have more than three months operating funds in reserve, a standard used in the sector to control their income and separate them from for-profit entities. Large surpluses occasionally built up by organizations often deter funders from supporting them. A few of the organizations who responded to the Canadian Women's Foundation survey mentioned that they were a few weeks away from having to close their doors.

Based on ONN's COVID-19 flash survey<sup>12</sup> on the pandemic's impact on Ontario's nonprofit and charitable sector, 78% of organizations primarily serving women and girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ communities reported that they were experiencing or anticipating reduced revenue from fundraising (e.g. cancelled events and donations). This was higher than what the rest of the sector reported (74%). Only half (52%) of those that had temporarily closed would be able to sustain themselves for up to six months.

# ENTERING THE PANDEMIC WITHOUT A SAFETY NET

Roughly one-third (36%) of respondents reported that the total financial impact of the pandemic will be less than \$100,000 while 23% reported impact between 100,00 to \$249,000.

At the time of publication, 60% of job losses in Canada due to COVID-19 have been experienced by women.<sup>13</sup> According to Imagine Canada's survey, a third of charities have already laid off staff because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with more planning to do so. Typically, the staff in these organizations are women, and so the precariousness of the organization has an effect on the capacity of women to access permanent decent work and thus increase economic security for themselves, their families, and their community.

Cash flow issues have had a serious effect on the women's sector and many organizations have applied for emergency funding from their local community foundation, United Way, or other local funders. ONN's flash survey found that 40% of organizations primarily serving women and girls and the 2SLGBTQI+ communities reported needing less than \$100,000 in emergency funding to maintain operations and meet increased demand.

Organizations shared they primarily needed help with rent/mortgage, supports to retain staff, and technology to respond to the pandemic, alongside a stabilization fund from government.<sup>14</sup>

According to the World Health Organization, gender-based violence increases in every kind of emergency. Emergencies such as the forest fires in Alberta, or the floods in Quebec, created multiple shocks for families and for communities, due to loss of property, displacement, loss of income, and change in basic community structures that may be temporary or long-term. All emergencies have gendered impacts, and the women's sector must be ready to continue to deal with the ongoing and upcoming threats to stability in Canada. In the current model, they continue to work and offer their expertise in the context of an eroded and precarious funding base. This cannot continue.

In the COVID-19 crisis, women's sector services and workers are essential: they have responded to increases in gender-based violence (GBV); they are supporting women and children in precarious housing and with the least access to food security; they are providing emergency childcare; and they are maintaining a robust and flexible community service response that can pivot in the most trying circumstances.

# ENTERING THE PANDEMIC WITHOUT A SAFETY NET

In the Canadian Women's Foundation survey, 67% of the respondents said they had launched new programs or services in response to the pandemic; just over half had seen an increase of up to 30% in demand for their services that they were prepared to answer. Many have lost volunteers, not only because of the lockdowns, but also because their volunteer base is made up of people who are retired or disabled, and in both cases, these groups are more vulnerable if exposed to COVID-19.

Isolation measures have exacerbated domestic violence and sexual violence, and children and young people are witnessing and experiencing more family violence, neglect, and child abuse. Yet many service users are completely unable to access the organizations that support them because of shuttering.

Even with some provinces taking steps to lift restrictions so that sectors like retail, manufacturing, and construction can return to operating, without a reliable vaccine, social isolation and other measures are likely to be put into place from time to time.

Some sources remind us that this could continue for another 12 to 24 months, and this is set against other potential crises, such as the flooding in Fort McMurray and weather events related to climate change.

Many organizations have taken steps to change their models of delivery in order to maintain services; moving to providing online or telephone service. ONN's flash survey found that 83% of respondents are experiencing or anticipate a disruption of services to clients and communities. Six out of ten (59%) of organizations reported they were open and operating but had modified their regular operations while 19% – almost one in five – have closed.<sup>15</sup> This is adding stress to front-line workers who are reimagining their program methods, learning new technologies, and addressing questions of confidentiality and record keeping while adapting to working from home. Many staff members are doing this with no extra supports. Very few already have a home office set up, but they have shifted gears quickly and are managing to work from home in spaces that are in no way designed for that purpose. They are upgrading their home Wi-Fi provision, commandeering family space, and sharing laptops, computers and phones, often without any extra compensation from their employers.



# ENTERING THE PANDEMIC WITHOUT A SAFETY NET

This is one aspect of the cost of the pandemic that has not been estimated yet and may never be reimbursed. This is set against the structural inequalities that characterize this sector. Not only do women work in organizations that exist within a precarious funding model, as employees they experience a significant gender pay gap. On average, comparing full-time work, women make about 75 cents to the dollar compared to men in Canada. But intersecting oppressions increase the wage gap: Indigenous women make 65 cents, racialized women 67, and women with disabilities 54 cents.<sup>16</sup> Both the sector and women employed in it are vulnerable to the ongoing effects of the pandemic, because of existing financial inequalities.

The shift to working from home, as well as maintaining some schoolwork from home, has placed additional pressure that is felt largely by women in the workforce. The load for childcare typically falls to women, and in the current crisis, they are more isolated than ever: usually, grandparents, other family members, babysitters, and others may offer additional support. The pandemic is stretching the women's sector even further than the pre-pandemic status quo had ever done.

Now that responses to the pandemic necessarily involve large numbers of workers having to work from home remotely, or working in front-line risk conditions such as hospitals, workplaces in which social distancing/isolation are not possible, or long-term care homes, it is clear that women's longstanding double burden of unpaid care work, plus paid work, in the absence of universal child care facilities is becoming a triple unpaid care burden. Nurses and health support workers, who continue to be predominantly women, now routinely face working 12-hour-or-longer shifts and then come home to child or other care needs that only they can fill. Workplaces that crowd workers into work spaces, transportation, and living spaces place them at extremely high risk of infection and either force all parents – often predominantly women in food processing plants – into either parting from their children to protect them, or living with them and risking spreading the virus to them should they have inadequate protections at work. Long-term care workers are expected to replace family members who cannot visit their loved ones in public and private care residences, and work at shockingly low wages while also being required to give more care to their charges than to their own children or family members. We need to recognize this additional labour being carried out by workers during the pandemic, and that this burden typically falls to women.

# IN THE IMMEDIATE: CRISIS MODE

Governments have not ignored the needs of the women's sector in the COVID-19 crisis. Federal funding of \$50M was made immediately available through Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) to shelters and sexual assault centres to deal with the increase in gender-based violence. Crisis lines have been reporting a 300% increase in calls. Police have reported being called more often to deal with domestic violence, and shelters mention that previous and current residents are more on edge, need more support, and are experiencing a greater variety of issues. For these reasons, it is essential to have ongoing funds available to deal with increasing needs. In our estimation, so far, \$30M of the WAGE funds have reached almost all the shelters and sexual assault centres throughout Canada; about 600 in total.

In addition, the federal government announced the Emergency Community Support Fund of \$350M through Economic and Social Development Canada to support community-based organizations. These funds need to be distributed with a strong gender analysis. Many organizations offer front-line social service support to women and girls, outside of the shelters and sexual assault centres.

These organizations intervene in and prevent gender-based violence. As discussed, they provide essential supports that are not found elsewhere. They provide our missing social safety net.

The federal government has also offered a wage subsidy that charities can access, although it is unclear at this time how many have been able to benefit from this given current eligibility criteria. There have been top ups for essential workers, and additional measures to help small and medium businesses that could be of benefit to the women's sector too, but these have barely covered the needs, and given the seriousness of gaps even before the pandemic, this is a concern.

Many foundations have also launched emergency funds, and many have raised millions of dollars, but only occasionally do these amounts reach the women's sector, because of a lack of gender-based analysis in how they are allocated. In addition to federal government funding, some provinces have offered to increase funding to certain parts of the sector in recognition of the increased stress. Notably, Quebec pledged \$2.5M to help intervene in gender-based violence.

# IN THE IMMEDIATE: CRISIS MODE

In contrast, some provinces are moving ahead with austerity measures that put women and families at considerable risk, such as the Alberta government laying off teachers, and Manitoba withdrawing funding from youth and women's services and taking an austerity approach to re-opening.

These decisions will have serious repercussions in the sector by downloading additional needs onto the organizations that continue to function, thereby increasing demand for services, and the burden to replace lost government support with fundraised dollars. This will create an uneven patchwork and continue to push funding for social services into the already inadequate funding model, where they will become even more precarious and underfunded.

Gender-based analysis is often implemented by governments after advocacy groups pressure decision makers and policy makers to include it, and although it has become part of regular decision-making for the federal cabinet, this is not the case throughout all levels of the federal government or through all levels of government provincially and territorially.

Since it is essentially a voluntary consideration, and has been largely treated as "nice to have," there is already evidence that it has been shunted aside in this crisis and as a result, many of the policy measures have avoided taking gender-based analysis concerns into account.

As noted, before the pandemic hit, women had been facing considerable barriers to reaching levels of safety, income and job security, housing, and childcare services they need. The need to remove barriers to equality for all women has long been the work of the women's sector, before and up to the federal government's enthusiastic adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in the 1990s. While some equality measures put in place have started to make a difference, these differences are small. Thus, women in Canada are still far from reaching substantive equality, and considerations of how to reach equality must be part of how funding for the women's sector is reimagined going forward, and exiting out of the pandemic crisis. There can be no return to the previous way of "doing business" in this sector.

# REASSESSING NORMAL: LIMITS OF THE FUNDING MODEL

The pandemic and lockdown have exposed many existing flaws and widened them. The women's sector will continue to address existing inequalities in a context whereby private funding by corporations, foundations, and individuals will likely face much higher demand. At the same time, falling government revenues and tighter fiscal expenditure restrictions will put more organizations and more people at risk. The women's sector will be acting within an environment of social or economic shocks, not only because of the impact of this crisis, but also because of upcoming climate change difficulties.

Reaching gender-equal outcomes requires a consistent robust response; connecting services, funding, policy making, analysis, and monitoring to track progress. Women's equality will not be reached in Canada without the work of the women's sector addressing the root causes of inequality like violence and economic barriers. There also needs to be a strong women's movement of equity-seeking groups advocating for change and providing expertise on gender-based analysis from a position of autonomy. Canada cannot do without the services they provide.

This sector is too important for Canada to be allowed to continue to function in a model that builds in precarity and has the potential to leave those most vulnerable with fewer and fewer supports.

Foundations and corporations can step in to support these organizations. But they more commonly offer tailored support for projects and pilots, and shy away from funding core operations. As core funding for ongoing services from federal, provincial, and territorial governments dries up, organizations see their missions drifting as they can struggle to support themselves through a patchwork of project grants that are temporary, and often cannot be renewed.

The current funding model has built in a level of impoverishment and fragility that has translated into a deficit model, whereby organizations must show desperate needs and lack of funding in order to be considered worthy of support. In addition, they are not able to put aside funds to shore them up against the kind of risk that this pandemic brings.



# REASSESSING NORMAL: LIMITS OF THE FUNDING MODEL

The Canadian Women's Foundation, the Equality Fund, and Community Foundations of Canada have developed 'Principles for Feminist Philanthropy', an evergreen document that strives to express how to consider feminist approaches in action through funding relationships. This includes providing "lasting, sustainable funds that cover administrative/core costs, are flexible and predictable, and last for multiple years." Now, more than ever, the sector needs flexibility and security in funding options, not project-based responses. It needs core funding.

Governments need to provide secure funding to a wider range of organizations. Currently, shelters are the services that typically receive the most significant, most secure government funding, as they are supported through all levels of government in such a way that most of their costs are covered. Yet they still have considerable waiting lists, they still struggle with rundown buildings that need upgrades and renovations, and they have not been able to address universal design principles to attain full accessibility for disabled women.

Even with these shortcomings, the model that maintains some financial security for the shelters is an important one and must be extended to include more parts of the women's sector.

Government funding can offer greater stability for the organization and its workers. For shelters, it means that they can serve as mainstays in their communities and offer many more services than emergency beds for women and families experiencing gender-based violence. Rebuilding the social infrastructure is something governments should take on to ensure the provision of essential services. They must ensure that there is capacity to maintain a minimum level of services available in all parts of Canada, and that these services can be maintained in all situations. During the COVID-19 crisis governments have acknowledged that women's sector organizations are essential to Canada's well being, and this has to be recognized going forward.

# RESETTING NORMAL: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A THRIVING WOMEN'S SECTOR

It is time to change what has been business as usual for funding the women's sector. The pandemic offers an opportunity to rethink and redesign the role of government and funding models. This is an opportunity to reset. Without this, governments' fiscal structures may now actually be endangering the sustainability of functioning human economies. The implications of this longer-term impact remain to be quantified, but sustainability of the biosphere that supports human life and wellbeing is thus also at risk. It is time for the federal government to shift its fiscal and budgetary policies from promoting the wellbeing of the corporate and financial sectors to prioritizing human health, security, and sustain/abilities.

- Provide core funding to women-serving agencies and equity-seeking organizations to support continued advances in gender equity in Canada.
- Consider the gains that have been made in policy to advance gender equity as of now and recognize that the role of government is to maintain and enhance progress made for women, by guaranteeing gender-based analysis plus in policy at all times.
- Involve women's sector in decision making, by always including women-serving agencies and especially equity-seeking groups in decision making at government levels. This should include advisory group roles, and compensation for organizations that recognize the expertise of the sector, especially in the post-COVID-19 rebuilding process.
- Ensure gender-based analysis plus within data collection on the nonprofit and charitable sector that helps quantify the structural gaps in funding and support for women's sector organizations.
- Embed gender-based analysis plus as a requirement in transfer payments from the federal government to provinces and territories, and agreements with nonprofits and charities, including sector stabilization funds.

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### **Canadian Women's Foundation**

Launched in 1991 to address a critical need for philanthropy focused on women, the Canadian Women's Foundation is one of the largest women's foundations in the world. With the support of donors, the Foundation has raised more than \$100 million and funded over 2,000 programs throughout the country. These programs focus on addressing the root causes of the most critical issues and helping women and girls who face the greatest barriers.

### **Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN)**

ONN is the independent network for the 58,000 nonprofits and charities in Ontario, focused on policy, advocacy and services to strengthen the sector as a key pillar of our society and economy. We work to create a public policy environment that allows nonprofits to thrive. We engage our network of diverse nonprofit organizations across Ontario to work together on issues affecting the sector and channel the voices of our network to government, funders, and other stakeholders.

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### **Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is an independent, non-partisan research institute concerned with issues of social, economic and environmental justice. Founded in 1980, the CCPA is one of Canada's leading progressive voices in public policy debates. Its Making Women Count program studies gender disparities and the solutions needed to advance a more gender equal and just society.

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#### **Imagine Canada**

Imagine Canada's mission is to strengthen Canadian charities and nonprofits so they can better serve individuals and communities both here and around the world. Its vision is of a stronger Canada where charities work together alongside business and government to build vibrant and prosperous communities.



