

September 18, 2007

The Honourable Lyle Oberg
Minister of Finance
#408 Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

RE: Provincial Budget

Dear Minister Oberg,

The Government of Alberta's online information reminds Albertans that provincial budgets are about quality of life, sustainability and careful choices. With this in mind, we submit our suggestions for high-impact ways to make quality of life a priority in Budget 2008.

The Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO) is a registered charity working to strengthen the nonprofit/voluntary sector and provide leadership on policy issues. We support and work with Alberta's nonprofit sector, including our 340 member organizations in areas such as arts and culture, sports and recreation, environment, and human services for seniors, children, immigrants and others.

The Alberta government has a multi-faceted relationship with the nonprofit/voluntary sector as a collaborative partner, funder, beneficiary and contractor of essential services. CCVO requests that the next provincial budget support the nonprofit sector – and Albertans – through:

- **Increased financial investment in programs and services necessary for Alberta's economic success and quality of life**

We are pleased that recent government Labour Market Strategies for the energy, retail and manufacturing sub-sectors recognize the need for quality nonprofit services. We also know that organizations providing these services (including skill development, affordable housing and immigrant supports) are struggling. Economic stability and quality of life are struggling alongside them.

- **The commitment to adequately fund programs and services that the government contracts nonprofit organizations to provide**

The government has committed to provide certain necessary services (including programs for people with a disability, children living in poverty, and people escaping domestic violence) through contracted nonprofits. Despite this commitment, the government rarely funds the full program costs. Program employees are chronically underpaid, organizations are chronically under-staffed and clients are chronically under-served. Investments that simply keep pace with inflation and population growth – or much less – fail to recognize that organizations are falling far behind in their ability to meet important needs. This is not sustainable. It is also not a sound financial strategy, when we consider the future costs of social issues not dealt with today.

- **The recognition that there is a human resources crisis in the nonprofit sector**

Profound and well-documented human resource challenges exist across all areas of the nonprofit/voluntary sector, resulting in massive inefficiencies and turned-away clients. The recent Labour Market Strategy for the nonprofit sub-sector is a good step that requires continued support. It's a great example of collaborative work between government and nonprofits, including CCVO. Further investments in human resources for the sector, however, remain desperately needed.

- **Continued support of the Alberta Voluntary/Nonprofit Sector Initiative (ANVSI)**

ANVSI is another example of important collaborative work that we urge the government to continue supporting. By involving nonprofits and representatives from key government departments, ANVSI is able to address priority issues that often cut across government departments and nonprofit sub-sectors. The group is also a perfect sounding board to develop and advance ideas and to foresee potential ripple effects.

It is often assumed the community-based organizations that fulfill essential roles will always be there to support individuals and economic activity. Unfortunately, many organizations are struggling, particularly with the pressures of Alberta's growing population. Overall, the cumulative impact of Alberta's 19,000 nonprofits and charities in building and maintaining sustainable communities is generally underestimated and undervalued.

The consequences of this are felt by the individuals, families and communities that organizations serve. Program clients working to improve their lives are supported by a revolving door of new employees, as organizations are unable to pay reasonable wages to retain staff. Services are reduced and people are turned away. Cultural and recreational experiences decline. Alberta's individuals, communities and economy are unable to reach their potential.

Budget 2007 introduced the Community Spirit Fund and tax incentives to help organizations attract increased donations and matching funds. These measures could help further the missions of some organizations, particularly large institutions such as universities and hospitals. For many other organizations, however, individual donations are not a major source of income and the impact of these measures will be negligible.

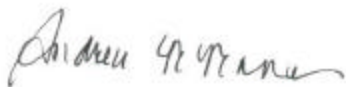
While the Fund and tax incentives provide supplemental support to the sector, they are not an alternative to reasonable levels of government funding for nonprofit services and programs. These initiatives do not ensure resources are directed towards the greatest need, the greatest impact, or the gaps in services to communities.

They also do not provide the stable funding organizations require to plan for the future or to address disabling human resources challenges. They do not promote sustainability.

It is time that Alberta chooses to recognize and support the nonprofit sector's essential social and economic role, for the benefit of all Albertans.

We would be pleased to discuss ways of enabling nonprofits and charities to support healthy and sustainable communities. Katherine van Kooy, CCVO's President and CEO, can be reached at (403) 261-6655 or kvk@calgarycvo.org.

Sincerely,



Andrea McManus
Board Chair

cc: Hon. Lloyd Snelgrove, MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster
Mr. Dave Rodney, MLA for Calgary-Lougheed