

# Alberta model a good start for charity funding nationwide

A funding program for charities in Alberta should be copied across the country as a way to help non-profits weather the economic storm created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

That's the view of Cardus, a Christian think tank based in Ontario.

Cardus calling on the federal and Ontario governments to match donations made to charity organizations on a one-to-one basis, a move that Alberta has taken, capping the amount of money the province would match at \$2 million. Alberta announced its program April 15.

"Can Ontario and the federal government match Alberta's pace in helping charities through the COVID-19 crisis?" Cardus said in statement. "Alberta is first out of the gate to heed Cardus's call to action for a pandemic charity rescue plan by setting up its own 1:1 donation matching program. Ontario and the federal government have yet to respond."

Brian Dijkema, vice-president of external affairs at Cardus, said "it's time for Ontario and the federal government to step up."

On March 23, Cardus released a \$2.5-billion action plan for governments and Canadians to help support the charity and non-profit sectors. One aspect of that plan was a call for governments to match donations to charities since the closure of all but essential services.

History shows that during past difficult economic times, the charity sector has suffered extreme financial hardship.

"Canadian charities may see financial losses this year of between \$9.5 billion and \$15.7 billion, according to one estimate, and may have to lay off between 118,000 and 194,000 workers," according to the policy brief written by Dijkema and Sean Speer, assistant professor at the Munk School of Global Affairs, for the C.D. Howe Institute.

While all governments across Canada have announced various support programs for Canadian workers, direct help to charities by matching donations is needed.

"While federal wage subsidies are important and can help keep charity staff employed, they don't help with charities' operational funding needs," Cardus said in a statement.

"Cardus's call for a 1:1 donation matching program, shared among provincial and federal governments, is an accountable, equitable way to meet this need quickly and with the least administrative burden, while keeping charities' donor bases active until the pandemic is over."

Alberta's donation matching program is not a straight one-for one program Cardus is calling for.

"The Government of Alberta will match up to a maximum of \$2 million dollars for funds raised by the designated organizations. Matching amounts depend on the collective amount raised," a statement on the Alberta government's website said. "For example, if the funders collectively raise \$10 million dollars, each organization would receive 20 cents on the dollar based on the \$2 million government matching commitment."

A spokesperson for Ontario's Minister of Children, Community and Social Services outlined a series of support programs that the provincial government has enacted as of April 20 when contacted by the Canadian Catholic News, but did not directly address Cardus' call for a donation matching program for charities.

Palmer Lockridge said that among the support programs enacted in Ontario is "\$200 million in social services relief funding to help protect the health and safety of the province's most vulnerable people, \$148 million of which will support agencies and organizations."

"Emergency shelters, food banks, charities, non-profits and emergency services who require additional support will have access to funding, to help cope with growing demands and extraordinary circumstances. Municipal partners will determine allocations based on community need," Lockridge said.

Charities and non-profits can access up to a 75-per-cent wage subsidy. They are eligible for loan supports, and specific funding to help some services for seniors, women, the homeless and food banks announced by the federal government.

Ahmed Hussen, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, did not respond to questions on the specific issue of federal donation matching funds for charities by the deadline for Canadian Catholic News.