



Pre-Budget Consultation in Advance of Budget 2025

A Joint Written Submission from the Coalition of National Service Federations

Coalition members

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada

BGC Canada

Canadian Mental Health Association

National Association of Friendship Centres

United Way Centraide Canada

YMCA Canada

YWCA Canada



Recommendation

Co-develop a Community Services Sector Labour Force Strategy

Join leading nonprofit and charitable sector organizations and private foundations to co-develop an all hands on deck community services sector labour force strategy to future proof care and support a strong economy. The strategy should address recruiting and retaining talent and evaluating progress against data on service demand and workforce capacity to serve community members today and into the future.



About the Coalition of National Service Federations

Together, we represent communities in all provinces and territories providing and supporting front-line services through 315 member organizations that serve 10 million people annually or 1 in 4 people in Canada. We support diverse individuals at different stages of life in the areas of child care, mental health and substance use, family violence, housing, homelessness, settlement, youth programming, and skills training, among other services.

At the onset of the pandemic, we mobilized to meet urgent community needs. In 2020, we began collaborating with the community sector and government partners to advance solutions to support individuals and build stronger, more equitable communities. We continue to advocate for a robust, responsive community services sector and systemic policy change through collaboration with the federal government.

Support the development of a labour force strategy for the community services sector

The charitable and nonprofit sector in Canada is an under-recognized economic engine. Annually, the sector contributes 8.3% - or \$211– to Canada's Gross Domestic Product. It is also a significant employer, providing 2.4 M people with meaningful and important jobs in rural, remote, urban and suburban communities.

The community services subsector of the charitable and nonprofit sector employs approximately 600,000 people, 77% of whom are women. These hard-working individuals are an essential part of Canada's care economy - caring for the young, elderly, sick and frail. They deliver employment and skills development programs, keep seniors in their homes and communities, deliver high quality, critical mental health support and keep people housed, and supported so they can reach their full potential. The community services sector puts people first and makes communities in every corner of the country more welcoming, inclusive, safe and prosperous for everyone.

The care economy is essential to supporting the overall Canadian economy and to supporting people in vulnerable circumstances. Demand for services across the sector continues to surpass pre-pandemic levels, with individuals facing a greater complexity of needs in the face of a range of economic and societal challenges. This includes the rising cost of living, a housing crisis, and emergencies such as wild fires affecting all parts of the country in unprecedented ways.



As Canada's population both grows and ages, and life becomes increasingly unaffordable, the demand for locally-provided, high-quality care in communities is outpacing supply and only projected to grow for the foreseeable future. While the community services sector is eager and best-positioned to meet the growing demand, it is facing recruitment and retention challenges. Workers are leaving community agencies for more stable, less stressful jobs in other sectors with better compensation and benefits. Many workers are facing burn out linked to extraordinary demand during the pandemic and working to meet complex challenges in understaffed environments. The services these workers provide are a critical bridge to opportunity and equality, enabling people to access training and join or return to the workforce.

Recommendation

Given the community services sector's economic and social contributions, it's time to future proof this sector so it can be there for the communities that rely on it. To do this, the Coalition of National Service Federations recommends Budget 2025 invest in:

1. Developing a Community Services Sector Labour Force Strategy
 - a) Join leading nonprofit and charitable sector organizations and private foundations to co-develop an all hands on deck strategy to recruit and retain workers to future proof care and support a strong economy.
2. Recruiting Talent for the Community Service Sector
 - a) By creating and promoting job opportunities in the sector. There are opportunities to support these efforts through investments and scaling of existing programs such as Canada Summer Jobs.
 - b) By Supporting skills training and workforce development. This includes investing in skills training and workforce development in the sector, particularly for youth and newcomers, to better equip staff to meet future care needs in Canada. There are opportunities to support this effort through investments and scaling of existing programs such as the Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program which could provide micro-credentialing and training opportunities.



3. Enabling Retention of Talent

- a) By exploring the implementation of a tax credit for workers in the care economy, inclusive of workers in the community services sector
- b) By reducing the precarity of employment in the sector through stable, longer term funding agreements, without delays between agreements.

4. Evaluating Progress

- a) This should include collecting and analyzing data about demographic shifts, service demand and the sector's workforce capacity to enable adaptive service planning to support communities today and into the future.

Conclusion

We thank the Standing Committee on Finance for the opportunity to provide recommendations for Budget 2025. We would be pleased to present our recommendations to the Standing Committee on Finance and are happy to provide additional information.

Contact Information

Anita Khanna
National Director, Public Policy and Government Relations
United Way Centraide Canada
E: akhanna@unitedway.ca