

The Honourable Marci Ien, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Youth
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

By email: marci.ien@parl.gc.ca

Re: Letter of congratulations

November 12, 2021

Dear Minister Marci Ien,

On behalf of the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN), congratulations on your re-election as Member of Parliament for Toronto Centre and appointment as Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Youth. We look forward to working with you in your critical new role to support and strengthen communities across the country.

As your government puts forth an invigorated policy agenda for Canada's pandemic recovery, we urge you to consider the nonprofit sector as a natural ally. The sector and your mandate have a shared commitment to using our collective resources to support the needs and priorities of Canada's diverse communities, and more generally, the public good.

About ONN

ONN is the independent nonprofit 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 to work together on issues affecting the sector and channel the voices of our network to government, funders, and other stakeholders.

Nonprofits play an essential role in Canadian communities during crises and beyond

Across urban and rural Canada the nonprofit sector plays an essential role in job creation, volunteer engagement, and programs and services that support the well-being of Canadians. The sector generates more than 8.1 per cent of the country's GDP, employing 2.4 per cent of the workforce¹ -- of whom 80 per cent are women, making us a women-majority sector. That's approximately 1.6 million women workers across Canada and, although there is lack of data on

¹ Imagine Canada. "Everything you need to know about Canada's charities and nonprofits." August 20, 2021. <http://www.imaginecanada.ca/sectorstats>

the demographics of women workers in nonprofits, anecdotally we know many of them are racialized and immigrant women.

As a sector, nonprofits receive less than half of their revenues from governments and reinvest all surpluses in their missions. They leverage government revenues through private grants and donations, the sale of goods and services, and volunteer efforts to create additional value for the communities they serve. Through their job creation and local spending activities, nonprofits generate considerable economic impact above and beyond the extensive social, cultural, and ecological value they provide to Canadians.

Nonprofits are also at the forefront of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, leading vaccination efforts with hard to reach populations, and supporting communities into pandemic recovery. Many frontline workers in the sector are considered essential workers in essential services. Others in the sector are supporting communities with affordable housing, youth employment, and inclusive economic development. Arts and culture, sports and recreation, faith, and environmental organizations are ensuring community well-being is front and centre. All Canadians, especially those that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic - women, Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialized people, youth, seniors, and newcomers to Canada - rely on nonprofits.

The sector is a natural ally to government

As you know, Canada is headed into a decade of significant transformations and Canadians need an ambitious plan, based on principles of fairness, inclusivity, and sustainability, to match the scale of social, economic, environmental, and technological transformations heading our way.

“Forward. For Everyone” cannot be achieved without the partnership of the nonprofit sector. A true partnership can leverage nonprofits’ expertise, local infrastructure, and community-centered missions to build a social and economic system that works for everyone. Black-led, Indigenous-led, women and gender-diverse people-led nonprofits are essential partners in bringing people together and truly moving the needle on anti-Black racism, nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous Peoples, and gender equity. Our sector is accountable to local communities, has higher levels of transparency, and reinvests profits back into their missions, ensuring taxpayer money is used effectively rather than leaked to shareholders.

Working with the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)

Initially funded in 2017 for a project-based grant, ONN has been working with WAGE for almost five years to move the needle on women’s economic justice by building a decent work for women movement in Canada’s nonprofit sector.² This work began with hearing from 760 self-identifying women workers across Ontario that the barriers women face in the broader labour market also exist in the nonprofit sector; however, they manifest differently. Since then, we have mobilized our research to mitigate and reduce these barriers by building and coordinating efforts at the policy, sector-wide network, and organizational levels. When our sector’s women-majority and racialized workforce can access decent work it ensures that not only do the marginalized communities they serve get the best care, but historically discriminated against workers have economic security as

² Ontario Nonprofit Network. “Decent Work for Women.” <https://theonnc.ca/decentworkforwomen/>

well. We continue to work closely with WAGE to share information and seek opportunities to make change.

A key action that can enhance both the work of the sector and government priorities

Champion a gender-based intersectional (GBA+) lens on critical decisions at the cabinet table to advance gender equity. The new federal cabinet will be making critical decisions on how to recover from the pandemic and prepare Canadians for significant social, economic, environmental, and technological transformations heading our way. We urge you to champion the needs of diverse women and 2SILGBTQ people to ensure that public policy and investments are in their best interests as well. This includes advocating for investments in the care economy to stimulate economic recovery as that will benefit women more.

Next Steps

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your team at your earliest convenience to discuss how ONN and our network can act as a partner to the government in taking action on a refreshed mandate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Taylor', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cathy Taylor
Executive Director, Ontario Nonprofit Network