

## **ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SEEKS TO ENHANCE THE WORK OF CHARITIES AND NOT-FOR-PROFITS**

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*By Esther S.J. Oh\**

The charity and not-for-profit sector has witnessed many changes in the last few years. Both the federal and provincial governments have introduced sweeping legislation that will affect how the sector will be governed. As part of these changes, the Ontario government announced earlier this year, a new initiative that will enable the government to better support organizations that “help Ontarians maintain a high quality of life.” To that end, the Ontario government will be seeking input from the charitable and not-for-profit sector regarding how the government can be more responsive, supportive and accessible to the sector.

The initiative is being described as a “comprehensive and long term strategic action plan for its partnership with the not-for-profit sector” that is a “first-of-a-kind approach for Ontario.” In consultation with the Ontario Trillium Foundation and other sector stakeholders, the government will conduct a series of discussions with the not-for-profit, private and public sectors to determine how to make the government more responsive to the needs of not-for-profit and volunteer organizations across the province.

It was announced by the initiative’s co-chairs, Ontario Citizenship and Immigration Minister Dr. Eric Hoskins and Ontario Trillium Foundation Chair Helen Burstyn, that the discussions will specifically examine the structural and legislative framework of the sector in Ontario and review new methods on how to improve co-ordination between the government and the sector. Differing models of partnership between

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governments and not-for-profit sectors employed in other jurisdictions will also be analyzed in order to help strengthen the non-profit sector in Ontario under the province's five year, "Open Ontario Plan."

The Government announcement notes the following points of interest:

- The Not-For-Profit sector includes over 45,000 organizations and employs 1 million people in Ontario.
- The sector contributes about \$47 billion in combined revenue to the economy, representing over 7.1% of GDP – greater than the auto and construction industries combined.
- For every \$10 invested in not-for-profit organizations, an additional \$20 is generated in donations and volunteer resources.

To date, the "Partnership Project" has held roundtable discussions in Toronto (May 17, 2010), Thunder Bay (June 7, 2010), Grimsby (June 24, 2010), Toronto (July 27, 2010), Mississauga (August 4, 2010), Sault Ste. Marie (August 6, 2010).

Individuals and organizations are encouraged to get involved and make submissions on the "Partnership Project" website. Participation can be as simple as filling out a survey or as involved as participating in a round table discussion which will include the co-chairs of the initiative. It is expected that a report outlining the results and recommendations of the plan will be released before the end of the year.

The Partnership Project Website is found at: <http://partnershipproject.ca/Home/>

The Government announcement can be found at: <http://news.ontario.ca/mci/en/2010/04/building-a-strong-partnership-with-the-not-for-profit-sector.html>