

Common Priorities Presented to the 20th Legislative Assembly by Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) Collective Voices

December 13, 2023

Dear Honourable Premier, Ministers, and Members of the Legislative Assembly,

NGOs play a fundamental role in addressing social and environmental challenges, improving the quality of life, fostering social justice, advocating for and with vulnerable populations and delivering the direct services and supports required to meet societies' needs.

The various NGOs in the NWT, some of which are included here today and others which were not included, came together to discuss significant common issues of concern which impact their ability to operate. Through a collective voice we stand together to amplify our individual voices.

This collective came together to emphasize the critical role NGOs play in our communities and the equally critical importance that the government has in supporting (NGOs) through four identified areas. Many of the points presented here are echoed through reports from the United Nations on the Importance of NGOs, Charities Aid Foundation, the World Bank on the Impact and Funding of NGOs and the National Council on Not for Profits.

I. Core Annual Funding:

NGOs provide critical services and supports. Core annual funding provides NGOs with stability, allowing them to plan and execute their programs effectively. It ensures they can focus on their mission without constant financial uncertainty. It provides stability which assists in many aspects of operation including human resources and continuity of service. As well, Core Annual Funding needs to be linked to the timely release of funding to organizations to prevent interruptions of service.

II. Operational Program Funding:

Appropriate operational program funding empowers NGOs to implement programs that have a tangible impact on the communities they serve. This funding enables them to develop innovative solutions and address pressing issues. Appropriate operational funding should reflect, through a clear understanding of programs being delivered, the actual costs of doing business including, but not limited to, human resources, inflation, infrastructure, population served and northern impacts.

III. Respectful, Equitable and Responsive Communication:

Open and respectful communication between governments and all NGOs is essential. This fosters trust, ensures that government policies align with societal needs, and allows for quick responses to emerging challenges. This means changing the current

patriarchal government relationship from government to NGOs. Government needs to change from the current its current overseer and gate-keeper role to a role of equal partnership with NGOs. Equitable access for all NGOs should be included in the process if full diversity and inclusion and representation is to be realized.

Respect should be given to the knowledge and expertise that exists within NGOs for the sector they represent. Understanding that the NGOs, which provide direct services, hold the knowledge and that NGOs and government should come together as equals. Equitable communication and consultation ensure that NGOs, from all backgrounds and areas of expertise, have a voice in shaping policies and programs and that the information, feedback, and consultation they provide is valued. Governments need to not only listen to NGO feedback but also act upon it. This commitment to action demonstrates a genuine commitment to cooperation and collaboration with NGOs.

IV. Fair Reporting:

Streamlining reporting requirements reduces the administrative burden on NGOs, enabling them to direct more resources towards their mission and served populations. This means consistent reporting requirements and less subjective or interpretive reporting based on government personnel changes. Ensuring that NGOs government partners are informed and understand the programs, and sectors, for which they are responsible.

The understanding that a program's importance, significance, and impact cannot be measured through a narrow lens of understanding based solely on the financial statement or personal opinions. Without the factoring of social impact, the cost of government bureaucracy, rather than direct positive impacts to these vulnerable populations, is the only measurable increase.

In conclusion, the support for NGOs through core annual funding, appropriate operational program funding, respectful communication, streamlined reporting, equitable consultation, and follow-through on feedback is not just a moral obligation but a strategic imperative for any government. NGOs play a pivotal role in shaping a more just and equitable society. By investing in them and engaging in collaborative efforts, governments can achieve their social and environmental goals more effectively.

Sincerely,

The following organizations have come together to present this letter,

Salvation Army NWT

YWCA NWT

Northern Mosaic Network

Yellowknife Women's Society

Home Base Yellowknife

NWT Seniors Society

Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories

and

NWT Disabilities Council