

Philanthropy in Canada

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Charities and nonprofits change lives

Creating a secretariat would enable the sector to be stronger and more effective

An Ipsos poll conducted for CanadaHelps last fall showed that nearly a quarter of Canadians – 9.6 million people – expected to call on charities to support their basic needs within the following six months, but even that high number may have under-estimated the actual demand on the charitable sector.

The *National Insights into Non-profit Organizations, Canadian Survey on Business Conditions, 2023* poll by Statistics Canada, showed that nearly half – 46.1 per cent – of nonprofits reported an increase in demand in 2023.

The increase was hardly surprising considering the many complex challenges Canadian charities and nonprofits are trying to address in some of the country's most vulnerable communities – poverty, hunger, shelter, health care, climate change, inequalities.

It's a long list, and there's no doubt that charities change lives through the extraordinary work they do whether in remote communities helping individuals in need or at big city hospitals raising funds for groundbreaking research or life-saving equipment.

It's a tough ask for Canada's charities according to the Association of Fundraising Professionals Canada

“The charitable sector plays a critical role in the lives of millions of Canadians every day. When you think about that, there's a lot more the government could be doing to support the success of the sector.”

Aaron Sanderson

Board Member and Chair, AFP's Government Relations Committee; SVP of Advancement and Chief Development Officer, Kids Help Phone



(AFP), and it's only through the generosity of donors that charities are able to provide their services to Canadians in need and to fund crucial research.

But the task is getting harder. In a written pre-budget submission earlier this year, AFP noted that, according to CanadaHelps' *The Giving Report 2024*, over 57 per cent of charities were reporting that they cannot meet the current level of demand and warned that proposed changes to how donations are treated under the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) would result in less funding for charities, which would force them to reduce or eliminate programs that support those they serve. The changes were confirmed in the 2024 federal budget in April.

Despite slight concessions made to one of the revisions to the AMT in response to advocacy, the fact that changes that make it less attractive to donate to charities were made is yet another example of why the sector has been engaging in a years-long campaign for the establishment of a secretariat within government to serve the interests of the nonprofit and charitable sector.

AFP contends that the sector is significant enough to justify better government representation. Canada's

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF FUNDRAISING PROFESSIONALS



Association of Fundraising Professionals

The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) represents more than 26,000 fundraisers around the globe, partnering with donors and volunteers to change the world through ethical and effective fundraising. AFP helps its members raise more than \$100-billion annually for a wide variety of causes through advocacy, research, education, mentoring and the most rigorous code of ethics in the profession.

The 3,000 AFP members in Canada are leaders in the charitable sector – a sector that contributes over 8 per cent to Canada's GDP annually. They raise funds for organizations large and small. They support arts, culture, shelters, emergency services, health care, education and social justice. Their fundraising efforts help fight poverty, hunger, climate change and inequalities in Canada and around the world.

170,000 charities and nonprofits contribute approximately \$216-billion – eight per cent – of Canada's GDP and employ over two million people who provide services that often complement and bolster government programs that might otherwise be inadequate to meet people's needs.

AFP points out that sectors like oil and gas, construction and

finance, that are of similar size and importance to Canada's economy, have direct input into government decision-making through secretariats or ministries, but charities and nonprofits are left out.

It says a secretariat within government would provide the opportunity for the sector's interests to be **See DEMAND on page AFP2**

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BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN DONORS AND PEOPLE WHO NEED SUPPORT

Legacy benefits Montreal men facing housing insecurity

Life has changed and the future looks brighter for the 54 men who recently moved into Pavillon Robert-Lemaire. This new bachelor apartment building in Montreal for men who face housing insecurity or homelessness shows the profound impact that an individual can have on the lives of those in need, says Lizette Flores, executive director, Maison du Père Foundation.

Robert Lemaire, a Montreal businessman, made the Maison du Père Foundation – whose mission is to initiate outreach to donors and ensure Maison du Père's (MDP) sustainability – his universal legatee.

“We see [the bequest] as a reflection of the deep connection he had to our mission and the desire to make a lasting difference in the lives of others,” says Ms. Flores, noting MDP has been active in Montreal for 55 years, welcoming people in precarious or homeless situations and offering them support adapted to their needs.

“A few years before his death [in 2019], my friend Robert Lemaire



Robert Lemaire wanted to make a difference in the lives of MDP's clients – Nicolas Rivard-Lamy is one of the men who has moved into the Pavillon Robert-Lemaire. SUPPLIED

told me about his visit to Maison du Père. At the time, he told me how impressed he had been with all the help and services offered by the Maison team, and how everything seemed perfectly organized and

directed,” says Line Guevremont, who was asked by Mr. Lemaire to ensure his bequest would be used to improve the living conditions of MDP's clients.

“I quickly realized that I was work-

ing with a formidable team in every respect. They understood Robert's wishes very well, and our collaboration was always marked by mutual respect, openness and honesty,” she says.

“Throughout the thorough process, I have been able to see the exceptional achievements made possible by Robert's money, and I am very happy to say that his wishes have been fully respected and his legacy has been used to provide maximum benefit to those he wanted to help,” says Ms. Guevremont.

Ms. Flores says the foundation is proud of Ms. Guevremont's experience.

“Her testimonial speaks about the dedication and integrity of the organization and our team – and our commitment to transparency, respect and accountability when we receive generous donations from people like Mr. Lemaire. This transparency, respect and accountability are the pillars of our commitment to donors,” she says.

MDP relies on the generosity of

donors like Mr. Lemaire for 65 per cent of its operating costs, which were over \$10-million in 2023.

“At MDP Foundation, we see ourselves as building bridges between donors and people who need support. We are building futures, restoring dignity and fostering hope, not only for those who need it the most but also for the entire community,” says Ms. Flores.

“In addition to addressing homelessness, we also see our work as building a community founded on empathy, compassion and solidarity. With the continued support of donors like Mr. Lemaire, we can make strides towards a brighter and more inclusive future for all,” she says.

Pavillon Robert-Lemaire is a collaboration between the Government of Canada, the Government of Quebec, the City of Montreal, the Société d'habitation et de développement de Montréal (SHDM) and MDP. The building is owned by SHDM and operated by MDP.

Learn more: maisondupere.org

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Association of Fundraising Professionals
Association des professionnels en philanthropie

The intersection of philanthropy and investment

Flow-through shares fund charities and mineral exploration

Mineral exploration plays a crucial role in the economy of Northern and rural Canada, providing jobs and investment that help remote communities cope in an economic environment that offers little else of the same financial calibre.

But the sector also provides a spinoff benefit that few Canadians know about. Mineral exploration and development play a significant role in providing much-needed funds to charities and nonprofits across the country through a financing structure called flow-through shares endorsed by the federal government specifically to encourage investment in exploration companies.

Toronto-based PearTree Canada created the flow-through share donation platform to enable donors to access the tax benefits that accrue from subscribing to and then donating flow-through shares, thus providing two socially

“The conversation is always how much more can I give away and how much more can I give away in a tax effective way? We are an enabler for generous people who want to give away their money.”

Ron Bernbaum
Founder and CEO, PearTree
Canada



responsible and tax revenue neutral activities: Northern, rural jobs and the delivery of social benefits by charities.

Here's how it works: PearTree identifies an exploration company wanting to raise money and matches it with clients who want to donate to charity. The clients buy shares at a set price providing the exploration company with funds to continue its operations, by spending millions of dollars in the Northern and remote economy, including the creation of jobs.

The clients then donate the shares to a charity of their choice. The charity immediately sells them to an investor identified by the exploration company – usually an institution – at a discount to both the price paid by the PearTree clients and to the current stock market price. The charity receives cash for the shares, and the clients receive tax benefits for the donation.

Ron Bernbaum, PearTree's founder and CEO, says Canada is fortunate to have high-net-worth individuals and families who care enough to donate significant sums to charity. When those donations can be increased by accessing tax benefits, then charities will benefit as well.

“For many wealthy people, it's not a matter of giving away money, it's how much more money can they give away,” he says. “So, what we see in our business is a willingness to give away even more because the cost of giving is lowered by tax benefits. The conversation is always how much more can I give away and how much more can I give away in a tax effective way? We are an enabler for generous people who want to give away their money.”

Mr. Bernbaum says the flow-through shares donation platform can have a significant impact on charities. He points out, for example, that soon after PearTree began operations over 15 years ago, it was approached by one of the McGill hospitals in Montreal to help with fundraising for two new mammography machines. The campaign was expected to take up to three months. With PearTree's help, the funds were raised in three weeks.

Similarly, he says PearTree helped a Christian school in British Columbia raise all the funds it needed to build a new campus after it hit a fundraising wall at \$12-million.

“Our model was a great enabler within that small community, and it makes me feel good to know we were able to help,” says Mr. Bernbaum.

He says while PearTree's flow-through shares donation platform is just one of the tools available for tax and estate planning and its impact on the charitable sector as a whole is relatively modest when measured against the \$4-billion contributed annually by the high-net-worth community, it plays an important role for smaller charities.

“We are particularly helpful to grassroots organizations whose budgets are small and money is very dear,” says Mr. Bernbaum. “They may have two or three

supporters for a million and a half dollars helping out a specific cause that is not high on the radar of causes, but yet it's as worthwhile as any other. And somebody who otherwise would've given \$100,000 is suddenly giving \$300,000. It has a material impact on the charity's budgets and their ability to provide their services.”

He says the company's success since it was founded in 2007 is a vindication of its belief that flow-through shares could benefit both the resource and charitable sectors.

“At the beginning, nobody thought the structure had legs or that government would be supportive. But they have been remarkably supportive because there's no real tax leakage buying flow-through shares which, in effect, fund somebody else's payroll,” says Mr. Bernbaum. “Our clients access the same exploration deductions and credits otherwise available under the flow-through tax regime and are paying the capital gain on the donation of the shares, there's no double dipping, and getting a donation receipt for the cash the charity receives, so there's no valuation gain.”

But, while charities benefit from PearTree's model, the greater impact is on Canada's resource sector, he adds.

“Probably 90 per cent of all exploration is financed using flow-through shares. That's about \$1-billion a year of which we do \$500-million, so we are more important to the resource sector than we are to the charity sector. By separating the flow-through tax incentives available to the donor as the first subscriber from the resource issuer treasury from the underlying equity which is then sold at a discount, the structure enables global investors to buy into early-stage exploration in Canada. In fact, over 85 per cent of all the investors providing charity liquidity are outside of Canada. However, if you look at the construct as a whole, our model reduces the cost of giving for donors on the one hand and expands the universe of investors in exploration companies on the other,” says Mr. Bernbaum.

Learn more: peartreecanada.com



Flow-through shares help support mineral exploration in Northern and remote areas of Canada. JAMES GABBERT VIA GETTY IMAGES

FROM PAGE 1

DEMAND: NO CLEAR PATH TO ADVOCATE ON POLICY, LEGISLATION

considered during policy discussions and before legislation and regulations are decided on.

Cindy Ball, a member of AFP's government relations committee and director of philanthropy at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care, says the sector currently has no clear path to advocate for itself on policy and legislation.

“Not having this clear path should matter to Canadians because it results in less funding for services for our sector. The AMT example illustrates this clearly,” she says. “It's not just about AFP, it's about Canadians who rely on our sector.”

Nevertheless, Ms. Ball believes government is receptive to the idea.

“There have been some great conversations that have happened, and there are leaders within government who are listening,” she says. “We just need to keep the messaging clear and emphasize the positive impact this will have on the people we support.”

Aaron Sanderson, board member and chair of AFP's government relations committee, and SVP of advancement and chief development officer at Kids Help Phone, agrees.

“The charitable sector plays a critical role in the lives of millions of Canadians every day. When you think about that, there's a lot more the government could be doing to support the success of the sector,” he says. “Having a secretariat is one of the ways we can continue to build the sector, maximize the partnership with government and tackle some of the biggest issues of our time.”

A secretariat would result in a better, more coherent and more cohesive relationship with government and provide the opportunity for the sector to be more effective in communicating changes that might be needed to the way charities operate in Canada and having input on legislation before it is rolled out, adds Mr. Sanderson.

“There are several examples over the last three years alone where we have had to ask government to revise new policies and regulations, which could have been avoided had we been in the initial discussions. So I think there's a good opportunity for us to have a more fruitful relationship and help government make better informed decisions,” he says.

A permanent home in government could also enhance the sector's standing within the broader Canadian

“People deeply appreciate the charities they're engaged with, and there's a keen awareness of the difference that they make. But overall, the sector may not be that well understood by the average Canadian, and that's where a home in government might help reinforce the importance of the sector.”

Cindy Ball

Member, AFP's Government Relations Committee; Director of Philanthropy, Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care



community, says Ms. Ball.

“People deeply appreciate the charities they're engaged with, and there's a keen awareness of the difference that they make. But overall, the sector may not be that well understood by the average Canadian, and that's where a home in government might help reinforce the importance of the sector,” she says.

Mr. Sanderson agrees that, on an individual level, Canadians probably have a good understanding of how their communities or their lives might be impacted by some of the charities that may be local to them. However, he doubts that many are aware of just how much impact the sector has on the lives of so many people and the contribution it makes to the national economy.

“We tend to talk about charities and nonprofits in very specific sectors or sub-sectors like health and education. But when we look at it more broadly, I think it would be really quite impressive for Canadians to recognize the total support that our sector provides,” he says.



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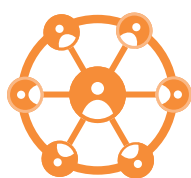
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How we do it

1

Make information freely available by creating high quality learning resources in multiple languages, accessible through our online water, sanitation and hygiene library - the largest in the world.

2

Deliver training workshops and consultation to people who are starting, strengthening or scaling up projects in their communities.

3

Partner with organizations globally who can extend and localize CAWST's training and consultation model, enabling us to reach more people who need help.



CAWST is addressing one of humanity's most challenging issues. I had the privilege of seeing the enormous leverage of this small, but mighty charity when I visited East Africa with them in 2017. I witnessed how effective and scalable CAWST's model is. CAWST is on a trajectory to make an even greater contribution and what it needs now is fellow philanthropists to come together and support its goal of helping 100 million people by 2030.

David P. O'Brien, O.C.
Board Chairman and Major Donor

To learn more about CAWST's work in-action, please read about Anil's story here:



Tackling the global water crisis

Helping communities solve water, sanitation and hygiene challenges

The Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST) has an ambitious goal – to reach 100 million people by 2030 with better water, sanitation and hygiene.

Marcos Lopez, a successful tech entrepreneur who joined the CAWST board in 2022, says he is still grappling with the gravity of the world's water crisis. According to UNICEF, 2.2 billion people live without safely managed drinking water, sanitation and hygiene – known as WASH – and as a result, waterborne illnesses claim the lives of 1,000 children under the age of five every day.

Like CAWST, Mr. Lopez knows that humanity will be stronger when people have the opportunity to succeed because their basic water and sanitation needs have been met.

"In the last 12 months, I became aware that more people have access to a cell phone than a toilet. That's so incongruent from the world that we see every day," he says. "It also means all those people with cell phones can be reached digitally, and that enables you to distribute knowledge very effectively. Now we can take the advancement of telecommunication and cellular networks into areas where people might have reasonable cell connection but not clean water and use this technology to help them solve the problem," he says.

With its sights set on reaching 100 million people by 2030 through partnerships, training and leveraging digital platforms, Mr. Lopez says CAWST favours the adage: teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

To achieve this ambitious goal, the Calgary-based organization needs the support of Canadian philanthropists to catalyze action



Manjali Hasda drinks clean water from the biosand water filter at her home in Sharanamati Village, Nepal. GAVIN GOUGH/CAWST

“When a person has safe water, their world changes. It's essential for a child to grow up, be healthy and go to school; and for parents to earn a living and be contributing members of their society. Water has the power to change everything.”

Shauna Curry
CEO, Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology



around the world in support of people like India's Anil Sharma.

Mr. Sharma's son was hospitalized with a waterborne illness in 2007, from drinking contaminated water in his school, an unfortunate reality for many kids around the world. From Mr. Sharma's home in a hard-to-reach village in the Himalayas, he searched for a solution to help his family and others. He learned about the biosand filter, a technology invented in Canada, and travelled across India to apprentice with an organization that had been trained by CAWST.

Fast-forward 18 years later, Mr. Sharma and his team have built 5,000 filters, reaching 30,000 people with safe drinking water. And his son is a 24-year-old taking his PhD in atomic physics at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Poland. Safe water completely changed the trajectory of his life.

"What's amazing is that this was possible because CAWST trained a local partner who went on to train

Anil. As a result, Anil has improved the lives of tens of thousands with sustainable solutions. That's the power of our model ... of teaching people to take action for themselves and their communities. It's one story and there are countless more," says CAWST CEO Shauna Curry, adding that CAWST estimates that the impact from their training programs have helped more than 12 million people, just like Mr. Sharma, in 2023 alone.

What makes CAWST's model unique is the leverage from training local organizations around the world, training them to train and making innovative use of digital technology. "CAWST hosts the world's largest free and open access online database of water, sanitation and hygiene resources and training materials, but also provides consulting and in-person support," she adds.

"We don't have projects in communities; the communities have their own projects. People who are motivated to take action to

solve their own water, sanitation and hygiene challenges, but might just need a bit of help, come to us," says Ms. Curry. "We train and share expertise when invited – and the invitations keep coming. The demand and need for our services have never been greater."

Founded in 2001, CAWST is a charity and nonprofit engineering firm tackling the global water crisis by making water knowledge common knowledge. CAWST trains and supports local people on simple, affordable technologies that they can implement themselves.

"When a person has safe water, their world changes," says Ms. Curry. "It's essential for a child to grow up, be healthy and go to school; and for parents to earn a living and be contributing members of their society. Water has the power to change everything. It is a fundamental human right and essential for our very existence," she says.

Today, CAWST is poised to scale up even further. With a 60-person professional team behind her and partners across the globe discovering their capacity for making changes in their communities, Ms. Curry and CAWST are well positioned to hit their goal of reaching 100 million people by 2030.

"What we most need right now is to grow our revenue. CAWST has been extremely successful in attracting notable philanthropists like David O'Brien O.C., Marcos Lopez and many others who not only provide funding that makes CAWST possible but also provide critical guidance to the organization," says Ms. Curry. "Because we are a relatively small charity, each of our committed philanthropists can see the tangible impact they make and how it is critical to our mission of making water knowledge common knowledge."

[Learn more: cawst.org](https://www.cawst.org)

LAND DONATION PROTECTS CRITICAL HABITAT FOR WATERFOWL

The acquisition of a 297-acre property on the Beaver River in Ontario's Lake Simcoe Watershed will provide a contiguous corridor of wetland habitats for migratory waterfowl and rare and endangered bird species.

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) acquired the property from several individuals who donated the shares of the land to the charity.

Finalized in early March this year, the donation allows protection of

the wetland in perpetuity and extends the conservation of vital wildlife habitats in the region, including the adjacent land with public-use trails owned by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority.

The lands have a high proportion of both temporary and semi-permanent shallow marshes, deep marshes and bodies of open water. The lands support some of the highest waterfowl pair densities in the province and provide quality

habitats for breeding, moulting and staging dabbling ducks.

The property is a Class 1 Provincially Significant Wetland within the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence biome and is situated within DUC's Priority Habitat for breeding waterfowl.

The donation was initiated by a group of people in 2021, says Alex Hand, conservation program specialist, Land Securement, DUC.

"To protect the property from development pressures, they knew

DUC was a good fit. We are grateful for their thoughtful gift of conservation and for their determination to protect critical habitats for waterfowl and other wildlife long into the future."

To date, DUC has successfully

conserved more than one million acres of wetlands and adjacent habitat such as grassland, forest or other upland habitats, across Ontario.

[Learn more: ducks.ca](https://www.ducks.ca)



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Canada has 461,240 Veterans

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Collaboration is key for the new Peel Memorial

Improving health care access equity and building hospital capacity in Brampton, Ontario

In 1925, community members and volunteers raised funds to build the original Peel Memorial Hospital. Fast-forward nearly 100 years and collaboration is at the forefront again as plans move ahead to transform the current Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness (Peel Memorial) into Brampton's second hospital.

The new Peel Memorial will be a game changer for the diverse and fast-growing community, says Ken Mayhew, president and CEO, William Osler Health System Foundation (Osler Foundation).

Hospitals across Ontario have been facing enormous capacity challenges, and the new Peel Memorial will bring more inpatient

beds and a second emergency department to the city. It will build upon the outpatient clinics, diagnostic imaging, surgery and other life-changing health services already operating on the current site.

"The community understands the urgent need to improve health care access equity and build hospital capacity in Brampton. We have been

meeting with friends and supporters – both those new to our cause and some who have been with us for generations – and we are seeing a lot of pride and excitement for the plans for the next phase of Peel Memorial and for William Osler Health System," says Mr. Mayhew.

While the community is motivated to build a brighter future for health care, more than 80 per cent of people don't realize that communities fund 100 per cent of necessary equipment and 10 per cent of construction costs for hospitals in Ontario, he says, adding that this is known as "local share."

"We want people to know that their contribution – regardless of the amount – will make a meaningful difference," he says, noting that even small donors show those who can give larger or transformational amounts that there is a tradition of support and belief in the project.

"Every gift matters, and modest donations often provide the proof of concept that inspires others to give," says Mr. Mayhew, adding that partnerships between nonprofits, businesses and government entities foster collective impact.

Brampton City Council has committed \$125-million towards the required local share for Peel Memorial, while Mayor Patrick Brown's homegrown sell-out fundraiser, Hockey Night in Brampton, raised more than \$1-million for the new hospital last year.

Support from service clubs – the Brampton-Bramalea Lions Club recently gifted \$2-million for Peel Memorial – and businesses of all sizes also highlight the significance of collaboration.

"Efforts by businesses to raise awareness among their staff, col-

“
We have been meeting with friends and supporters – both those new to our cause and some who have been with us for generations – and we are seeing a lot of pride and excitement for the plans for the next phase of Peel Memorial and for William Osler Health System.

Ken Mayhew

President and CEO, William Osler Health System Foundation



leagues and customers are also crucially important. Through their channels and networks, Osler Foundation is able to extend the reach of our message exponentially, which has opened many doors for us and allows us to engage new supporters," he says.

Osler Foundation raises funds for Brampton Civic Hospital, Etobicoke General Hospital and Peel Memorial Centre for Integrated Health and Wellness. Learn more: oslerfoundation.org



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Initial draft architectural drawings and renderings of the new Peel Memorial Hospital provided by HOK Architects Corporation. Drawings and renderings are subject to change as design and planning progress. SUPPLIED

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"I am very pleased to say that the will of my friend, Robert, has been fully respected, and that his legacy has been used to provide the maximum well-being to those he wanted to help."



Line Guevremont, friend in charge of Robert Lemaire estate.

Maison du Père Fondation is privileged to have the support of thousands of loyal donors who take to heart the dignity of those who find themselves in situations of homelessness or great precariousness.

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VETERANS NEED YEAR-ROUND SUPPORT

Veterans are most often top of mind on Remembrance Day in November when Canadians honour those who have served – and currently serve – in the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP. But veterans need support 24/7 every day of the year, says Samantha Laprade, director, Development, Legion National Foundation (LNF).

Ms. Laprade says veterans face many challenges including homelessness, mental health and wellness, financial struggles and transitioning from life in the military to civilian life.

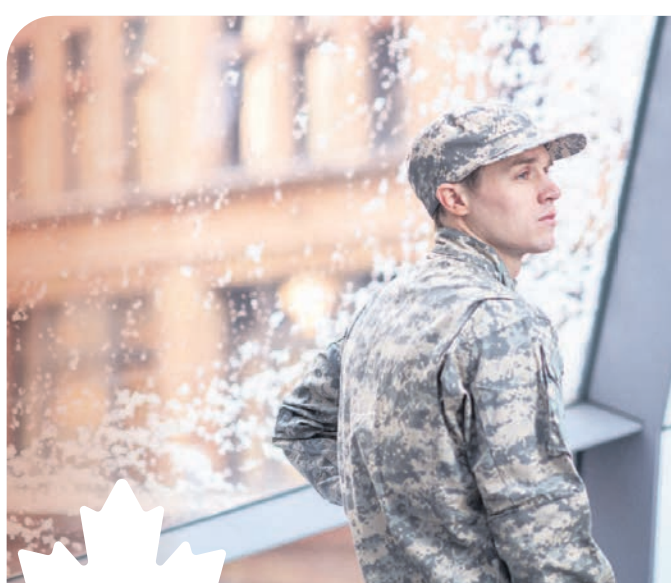
Founded in 2017 as a charitable organization operating at arm's length from the Royal Canadian Legion, the LNF funds programs and activities that support veterans and assists donors through its ability to issue tax receipts.

Those initiatives rely on income from LNF's digital poppy campaign, monthly giving and legacies from estates.

"We receive a lot of support through monthly giving, and that consistent income enables us to plan ahead and identify programs that will help our veterans," she says.

"We're encouraging people to think about legacy giving too as a way to support our four pillars: Veteran's Health and Wellness; Scholarships and Bursaries; Pilgrimages of Remembrance; and Remembrance Contests for Children to encourage the tradition of remembrance through visual art, writing and video.

Learn more: lnfcanada.ca



Veterans face many challenges when they transition from the military to civilian life. FATCAMERA VIA GETTY IMAGES

New hope for pancreatic cancer treatments

Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network supports clinical trial to increase personalized treatment based on an individual's cancer genetics



The Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network (MOHCCN) was inspired by Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope. MOHCCN unites cancer researchers as they pursue precision medicine in the fight against cancer. ED LINKEWICH

In 2023, approximately 7,200 Canadians were diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. For many, the future is bleak: with a five-year survival rate of just 10 per cent, pancreatic cancer is one of the deadliest cancers.

The Terry Fox Research Institute (TFRI), through its Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network (MOHCCN), is aiming to change those statistics by funding a new clinical trial that uses genomic sequencing to help match pancreatic cancer patients to more precise, individualized therapies.

Dr. Erica Tsang, a medical oncologist at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and assistant professor at the University of Toronto, is one of three clinician-scientists co-leading the "Marathon of Hope Genome Sequencing to Inform Novel Treatments Portfolio (MAESTRO)" trial, along with Drs. Daniel Renouf (BC Cancer) and George Zogopoulos (Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre).

She says that advancing personalized therapies for pancreatic cancer is needed if we want to improve outcomes for patients diagnosed

with these deadly cancers.

"We have some targeted therapies for pancreatic cancer, but these options are not available for the majority of our patients," she says. "The MOHCCN had the vision to create a national network where Canadian patients have access to state-of-the-art genome sequencing. The MAESTRO trial takes the sequencing information to the next step – offering patients new and targeted treatment options with the hope of improving survival and quality of life. MAESTRO represents the next generation of clinical trials where we can personalize treatment based on an individual's cancer genetics, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach."

Dr. Tsang anticipates the trial, which will take place in at least three centres across the country but hopes to expand beyond that, could start within the next year.

These kinds of collaborations are a key aspect of the MOHCCN, which unites 35 of the country's top cancer hospitals, research universities and health authorities to accelerate precision oncology. The MAESTRO trial is partially funded through the

network's Pan-Canadian Projects Program and is an evolution of a TFRI research project, showing the importance of long-term funding to find more effective cancer treatments.

Dr. André Veillette, the MOHCCN's executive director and director of the Molecular Oncology Research Unit at the Montreal Clinical Research Institute and a professor of medicine at the University of Montreal, says that by supporting projects like MAESTRO, the network is playing a pivotal role in fast tracking the fight against cancer.

Funded by the Government of Canada with \$150-million over six years, to be matched by Network partners, MOHCCN aims to create Canada's largest cancer case resource – the Gold Cohort – containing 15,000 cancer genomes with related clinical data. This data is key to accelerating precision cancer medicine that targets the unique genetic and biological characteristics of each patient's cancer.

Dr. Veillette says the drive to create the Gold Cohort is forging ahead with 5,000 cases recorded.

"It's a project everyone believes in," he says. "As a result, the rapidity with which we're accruing the cases is exponential. We went from 1,000 about a year ago to 5,000 now. We should be able to reach 15,000 within the next couple of years."

He ascribes the success of MOHCCN to several factors.

"First, it's affiliated with the name of Terry Fox, which I think inspires a lot of Canadians. Second, it's supported by the federal government and the private sector, and involves leading experts in clinical care and patients across Canada. We have a fantastic chance to be able to have a huge impact," he says.

Dan Murphy recognizes the impact of genetic sequencing in his own treatment. Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last year, Mr. Murphy says genetic sequencing showed he had a BRCA mutation.

"Through precision cancer medicine, they can target the mutation rather than having a blanket approach," he says.

"With these treatments, there's

hope. Hope is relative; in my case, it is hope that I get some good quality of life. For others, it means there's hope for the next generation of people five years or 10 years from now. And then just the hope that maybe we're onto something here, and hope makes you feel good too," he says.

"It would be an understatement to say that we're grateful for bodies like the Terry Fox Foundation that

support research. It is changing my life in a significant way, and I just can't thank people that have the wherewithal to do it enough, especially with pancreatic cancers. To have that kind of support behind the research really does make a difference," he says.

Learn more: marathonofhopecancercentres.ca; terryfox.org; tfri.ca

INVESTING IN BASIC BRAIN RESEARCH

Brain Canada, Krembil Foundation and Women's Brain Health Initiative, with the support of The Erika Legacy Foundation and Power Corporation of Canada, will see \$3.3-million invested in addressing sex and gender gaps in Canadian brain health research.

Each researcher will receive \$1.1-million from Brain Canada's Basics of Better Mental Health Program. Their research will focus on investigating mental health conditions including depression, anxiety and postpartum depression, with a significant emphasis on sex-specific factors or differences.

The three Canadian researchers

and their teams are: Dr. Liisa Galea at Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Dr. Susan George at University of Toronto, and Dr. Stephanie Borgland at University of Calgary.

The Basics of Better Mental Health Program funds basic research that will provide insight into the causes and onset of mental health conditions, explore the neuropathological changes and information-processing deficits that may eventually lead to new directions for treatments and interventions, and explore the role of sex and gender in mental health.

Learn more: braincanada.ca



"The inclusion of sex-specific biological considerations is instrumental in understanding the biological roots of mental health conditions," says Dr. Viviane Poupon, president and CEO of Brain Canada. VM VIA GETTY IMAGES



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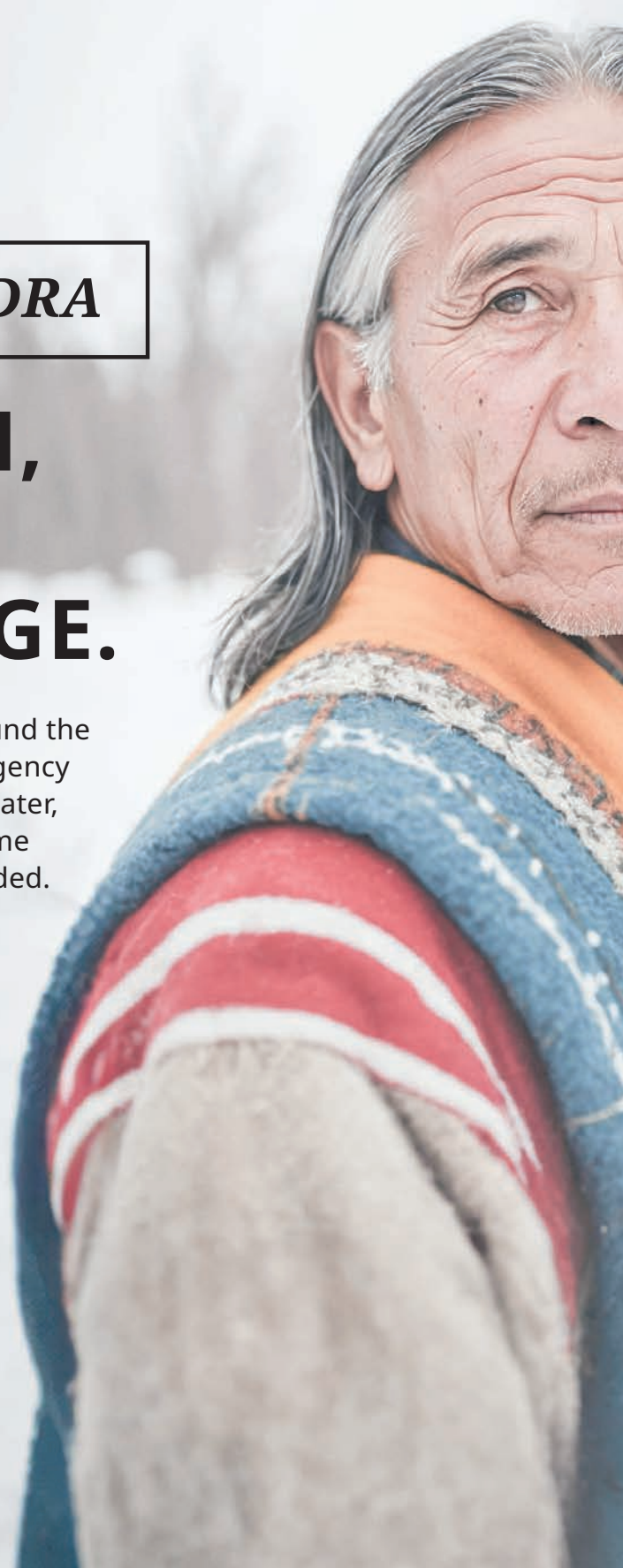
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Sharing knowledge for the benefit of seriously ill children everywhere

Canuck Place expands program to improve pediatric clinicians' communication skills

Parents of children with life-threatening illnesses in Canada require clinicians who are equipped with skills to lead them through unimaginable uncertainty.

Canuck Place Children's Hospice, a provincial program in British Columbia, is expanding a training program across Canada and globally with tools to teach pediatric clinicians how to communicate effectively and compassionately with the families of seriously ill children.

The Serious Illness Conversation Guide – Pediatrics® (SICG-Peds®) was adapted by Canuck Place staff in 2018 from an adult tool developed by Ariadne Labs at Harvard University to guide clinicians in how to communicate with patients and families facing serious illness by asking questions and listening.

The success of the Canuck Place program has attracted attention from physicians and hospitals across Canada and in Southeast Asia, says Camara van Breemen, a nurse practitioner and enhanced community care lead at the hospice.

"Serious illness conversations between clinicians and patients and families is already an international movement," says Ms. van Breemen. "We took the Ariadne Labs program and adapted it for pediatric and neonatal situations in line with evidence-based practice that integrating values into advanced care planning is essential, particularly for parents who have seriously ill children."

Pediatric clinicians will often inform families about their child's condition and illness and what the care plan will be without providing an opportunity for open, two-way communication for families to share their hopes, worries and values; that's where Canuck Place's SICG-Peds® comes in.

"Complex communication is a skill and a competency that takes time, energy and investment by the clinician to master. We need to know how to communicate support and help parents and children make decisions about what is good care and what isn't good care," emphasizes Ms. van Breemen.

With fewer than 12 pediatric palliative care teams across Canada, the challenge is to expand the number of trainers who can deliver the program to clinicians. Most recently, a Canuck Place team held training sessions for clinicians and trainers at McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton and supported one of the hospital's pediatric palliative care



Canuck Place nurse practitioner Camara van Breemen with clinicians in India, providing hands-on mentorship and training on comfort care and having difficult conversations with children and families using the Canuck Place Serious Illness Conversation Guide – Pediatrics®. SUPPLIED

“Complex communication is a skill and a competency that takes time, energy and investment by the clinician to master. We need to know how to communicate support and help parents and children make decisions about what is good care and what isn't good care.”

Camara van Breemen
Nurse practitioner and Enhanced Community Care Lead, Canuck Place Children's Hospice

doctors to become a master trainer.

Since mid-2018, over 900 clinicians in Canada have been through the training Canuck Place provides, and more than 150 clinicians have been trained in Southeast Asia including parts of India where the program has been translated into a local dialect, says Ms. van Breemen.

The end goal of the training is to encourage clinicians to recognize parents of seriously ill children as partners and decision-makers – rather than mere bystanders – in the care of their child. The key is listening, providing anticipatory guidance and asking questions to better understand what the parents want for their child based on their family values, she adds.

Two years ago, Canuck Place added four Canuck Place parents to the SICG-Peds® training team.

Lee Renaud is one of the four Canuck Place parents. In January 2015, her five-month-old daughter, Vivienne, was diagnosed with an

inoperable cancerous brain tumour, and doctors at BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver said she probably had only days or weeks to live.

"It was very life altering in that moment in time," says Ms. Renaud. "We were told there was very little they could do and that we should just take Vivi home and they would connect us to Neuro-Oncology at Children's Hospital for ongoing outpatient support."

It soon became clear that the hospital's program would not work for Vivienne and that palliative care was their only option. They were introduced to Canuck Place and received the support they needed to care for Vivienne at home. She died 10 months later.

Ms. Renaud joined the parent faculty as a volunteer to share the experience she gained in working with the Canuck Place clinical team while Vivienne was in palliative care.

Looking back on her own family's experience, Ms. Renaud says communication is critical in helping families cope.

"It's the key to how a family navigates the very traumatic experience

of a seriously ill child. It can either enhance the trauma or manage the experience of it," she adds.

"The SICG-Peds® training reduces harm; the harm that can be caused unintentionally by medical professionals when they are so focused on prognosis and treatment. Sometimes, they lose sight of the humanity. Input from moms like me adds the perspective of lived experience and adds the humanity back into caring for seriously ill children so the family's voice is not lost, which can easily happen; it's very easy to feel like you don't have a voice at the table," says Ms. Renaud.

The guide shifts the perception that clinicians hold all the power in the relationship.

The SICG-Peds® training offered by Canuck Place aims to revolutionize the way clinicians care for families navigating the uncertainty of their child's diagnosis. "Our job is to provide guidance, and get to know and understand the family, so their child can receive the best possible care," says Ms. van Breemen.

Learn more: canuckplace.org

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Vanessa was born without the lower part of her left arm. As a member of The War Amps Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program, she receives financial assistance for artificial limbs and devices, peer support from other amputees "just like me," and the opportunity to attend regional seminars where Champs and their parents learn about amputation and access valuable resources.

"I attended my first CHAMP Seminar with Vanessa when she was six months old," said her mother, Tori. "I learned a lot about artificial limbs and how they can help in so many ways. The War Amps has funded Vanessa's bike arm, which grips

the handlebar and ensures she can sit up straight and ride safely. She also has a myoelectric arm that has a hand that opens and closes, which helps her to do activities like puzzles and colouring."

The association encourages Champs to develop a positive attitude towards their amputation and try any activity they set their minds to. "Vanessa's determination and zest for life is an inspiration to all around her," said Danita Chisholm, executive director of the CHAMP Program. "Thanks to the public's support of The War Amps Key Tag Service, we are able to help young amputees reach their goals."

The War Amps does not receive government grants. Its programs are made possible through the public's support of the Key Tag Service.

Learn more: waramps.ca or call toll-free 1 800 250-3030



Vanessa Parsons is benefiting from The War Amps Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program. SUPPLIED

Working toward a world without kidney disease

The Kidney Foundation celebrates its 60th anniversary

As it celebrates its 60th anniversary, The Kidney Foundation of Canada is reflecting on the tremendous advances in kidney care it has been involved with over the decades, and is looking forward to enabling more research breakthroughs, outreach programs and advocacy efforts to make treatments more accessible for people affected by kidney disease.

When The Kidney Foundation was founded in 1964, people living with kidney disease had few treatment options, let alone opportunities for financial and emotional support, says National Executive Director Elizabeth Myles.

Today, beyond advocacy and research, The Kidney Foundation also offers education and support with the dual goal of improving the lives of people with kidney disease and helping prevent the disease.

As the leading charity committed to eliminating the burden of kidney disease, the organization has funded groundbreaking research that has helped improve treatments and raise awareness about kidney disease, organ donation and transplants, says Ms. Myles.

As an internationally recognized leader in transplantation and chair of The Kidney Foundation's Research Council, Dr. Peter Nickerson supports the organization by guiding investments into innovative research aimed at finding new solutions and helping patients experiencing kidney disease have better outcomes.

"It's a role I take seriously, not least of all because I know just how transformative funding from The Kidney Foundation and its donors can be," he says.

Dr. Nickerson was part of a team researching transplant rejection that brought a more sensitive cross-match into its research program called flow cross-matching. This became the national and ultimately



Finding a cure for kidney disease is a driving force with our work, and Canadians' generosity powers the research that can one day create a world without kidney disease.

Elizabeth Myles

National Executive Director, The Kidney Foundation of Canada



global standard of care, he says, noting the influential research was funded by The Kidney Foundation at the beginning.

But chronic kidney disease has been under-resourced compared to other major diseases, and The Kidney Foundation is one organization that is trying to counteract that and push positive change forward, says Dr. Nickerson.

"There are so many unanswered questions and too many people suffering from kidney disease," he says, while inviting contributions from fellow Canadians to help the organization work toward a cure and a better quality of life for patients now and in the future.

"Finding a cure for kidney disease is a driving force with our work, and Canadians' generosity powers the research that can one day create a world without kidney disease," says Ms. Myles.

Learn more: kidney.ca



An Operation Eyesight Universal community health care worker teaches eye health in a village in West Bengal, India. Community health education is one way Operation Eyesight works to eliminate avoidable vision loss. SUPPLIED

Operation Eyesight's 'secret sauce'

Long-term donors crucial to charity's global eye health mission

By 2028, Operation Eyesight Universal, founded in Calgary, Alta., over 60 years ago, is aiming to declare 2,900 villages in South Asia and Africa avoidable blindness-free. But reaching that goal will require support from generous donors, says Myrna Linder, the international development organization's director, Fund Development.

Ms. Linder says long-term donors who have supported Operation Eyesight for decades are the 'secret sauce' that enables the charity to continue its global eye health mission to prevent blindness and restore sight. The need is great as 1.1 billion people live with vision loss, and 90 per cent is preventable or treatable.

"Long-term donors support us by giving on a monthly or an annual basis. When they think about how they want their assets to be handled when they're no longer with us, they often

leave a legacy gift to support an organization that has been important to them," says Ms. Linder.

Making a will and deciding how one's assets will be distributed is an important task, says Ms. Linder.

"Everyone should make a will – it ensures you determine what happens with your assets, and this is not just for wealthy people. You can leave \$100 or \$1-million, and that's your decision. A will puts you in the driver's seat and enables you to maximize your capacity for giving, ensuring the government does not control your assets," she says.

While most donors leave an unrestricted gift that supports the greatest needs of Operation Eyesight, some have specific areas they want to fund.

"Charities in Canada are fortunate that we live in a philanthropic society and people are generous. Our job is to share

the myriad options," she says, adding all bequests to Operation Eyesight help to transform lives through the gift of sight. "Donors can leave a gift in a will, or share stocks and annuities during their lifetime. Even leaving a small amount makes a difference – a cataract surgery in South Asia and Africa costs about \$75, so every dollar counts."

Operation Eyesight was founded by Calgary businessman Art Jenkyns, who was inspired by Dr. Ben Gullison, a physician who worked at a mission hospital in India. The charity partners with local health providers, hospitals and NGOs in South Asia and Africa to provide equal treatment to those with avoidable vision loss irrespective of their ability to pay, and to invest in capacity-building among local health staff.

Learn more: operationeyesight.com/legacy

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ADRA Canada sows Seeds of Change

Yellowknife projects part of increased focus on local programming



Left, Volunteers measuring out plant food at a distribution table. Right, Ray Fankhauser with some of the gardening equipment. TRISTHA JACKSON

In the aftermath of Yellowknife's evacuation last summer due to the threat of wildfires, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA Canada) supported the returning community. This process provided the agency with insights into the challenges faced by the population, leading to a new initiative to build resilience and address food security in the Northwest Territories capital.

ADRA is the global humanitarian organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It delivers relief and development assistance to people in over 100 countries – regardless of ethnicity, political affiliation or religious association.

ADRA Canada was working on designing a wildfire response plan as part of its emergency preparedness strategy, says Ray Fankhauser, the NGO's senior national program manager. However, given the speed of the evacuation and how widely the population dispersed, ADRA turned its focus to assisting evacuees on their return, using funding secured from the US Agency for International Development.

The agency reached people who

“On the strength of this great volunteer and community response, ADRA is now organizing emergency preparedness groups which will also regularly engage in environmental cleanup activities.”

Ray Fankhauser
Senior National Program
Manager, Adventist Development
and Relief Agency

required assistance through local radio, print media and social media, says Mr. Fankhauser.

“We created an electronic process whereby people could submit requests for assistance. Once their identity and residency were validated, we provided direct electronic transfers of funds,” he says, adding several hundred families were assisted through that process.

Building on the goodwill engendered from its financial assistance program for returning evacuees and new knowledge about local challenges and demographics, ADRA engaged its international arm to conduct a needs assessment and to design a project focused on resiliency, specifically addressing the limited accessibility of healthy food due to soil contamination from mining and the costs associated with transporting fresh produce to the area.

The result is the Seeds of Change project, which provides planter boxes, soil and seeds to Yellowknife residents.

Mr. Fankhauser notes the project also had to address the psychological impact of the

contaminated soil.

“Even if you clean up the soil, people will not accept that it is safe,” he says, “so, we designed a project where we would bring in topsoil from Quebec.” He further explains that some people will place the planter boxes on large balconies, while others might use them in their backyards in a way similar to raised-bed gardening.

The community identified priority vegetables – carrots, lettuce, tomatoes and cucumbers – for which ADRA is providing seeds. The aim is to eventually establish a greenhouse to function as a community garden, enabling people without access to private property the opportunity to grow food.

“We're also providing smaller pots for children. They can decorate them and have a sense of ownership, and by participating they will also be empowered to grow food,” says Mr. Fankhauser.

During the second weekend in May, with the help of over 20 volunteers, ADRA distributed 150 large cedar planter boxes with seeds, fertilizer, tools and approximately 20 tons of top-

quality soil, to enthusiastic community members. The children eagerly snapped up 70 pots with tomato seeds and accessories, which they proudly customized before taking them home.

“On the strength of this great volunteer and community response, ADRA is now organizing emergency preparedness groups that will also regularly engage in environmental cleanup activities,” says Mr. Fankhauser.

The Yellowknife project is part of a move by ADRA Canada to increase its local programming with a focus on domestic outreach.

“We've made significant efforts and investments to do that,” says Mr. Fankhauser.

The Seeds of Change initiative supports several of ADRA's strategic focus areas including partnership with Indigenous communities, emergency preparedness capacity, food security and psychosocial support. Migration (a life cycle approach, assisting on the full journey from arrival to integration and self-sufficiency) is the fifth focus area.

Learn more: adra.ca

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