



CHARITY BRIEF

Charlottetown Discussion Circle

ABOUT

On 19 September 2025, the LCC hosted a discussion circle at the [Charlottetown Library Learning Centre](#) in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (PEI), with representatives who work or have worked with the following charitable organizations in the region:

- [Canadian Mental Health Association, PEI Division](#)
- [PEI Humane Society](#)
- [PEI Association for Community Living](#)
- [Queen Elizabeth Hospital Foundation](#)
- [University of PEI Department of Development and Alumni Engagement](#)

LIVING CHARITY

What should the Canadian public understand about the nature and needs of charities and the charitable sector in general?

- Breadth and significance of charitable functions
 - Charitable organizations in PEI deliver a wide range of community services: housing advocacy, job placement and education, peer support, suicide prevention, social justice, animal welfare support, and inclusive employment and education.
 - Many aim to foster partnerships across sectors to increase their effectiveness (e.g., collaborations between hospitals, universities, and community organizations).
 - The charity sector is unique in that it represents 8% of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP), generates over a billion volunteer hours, and maintains strong community trust.
- Financial realities
 - Funding sources often include a mix of provincial, federal, and philanthropic support, which come with different vulnerabilities:
 - Overreliance on government funding makes an organization susceptible to budget cuts.
 - Donor-advised funding can sometimes impose constraining, short-term project restrictions or be withdrawn for ideological reasons.
 - Reporting and compliance requirements tied to government grants can be administratively burdensome and limit flexibility in how funds are used.





- Many essential programs and services depend on private donations, though public awareness of this remains low.
- Stable, long-term funding builds community trust toward charitable organizations and supports investment in research, infrastructure, and capital projects.
- Charities are exploring new ways to fundraise, such as crowdfunding and micro-donations, to strengthen financial sustainability.

PURSUING CHARITY

What challenges do charities face in their work that might act as a barrier to achieving their mission?

- Human resources
 - High staff turnover strains organizational capacity and limits the ability to expand programs or maintain consistent service delivery.
 - Small organizations must often rely on a few employees who “wear multiple hats” to operate across large geographic areas.
 - There is need for stronger staff support services, mental health resources, and stable funding to reduce turnover and ensure workforce stability.
- Demonstrating impact
 - Charitable organizations are placing greater emphasis on demonstrating measurable impact to funders, donors, and the public.
 - There is a move toward combining qualitative with quantitative data to better capture the breadth of charitable outcomes.
 - National data platforms such as CanadaHelps enable charities to better understand their position relative to peer organizations.
 - Identifying appropriate metrics can be difficult, especially for organizations that operate across multiple programs or services.

RENEWING HOPE

What are the possibilities for the future in the charity sector and how should its importance be conveyed from generation to generation of Canadians?

- Collaboration and partnership
 - Collaboration is increasingly recognized as essential to addressing complex social and community challenges, even though organizations often compete for the same limited funding.
 - Funders increasingly ask who charities are collaborating with, signaling a shift toward collective approaches and shared accountability.
 - New members on boards of directors are bringing valuable new skillsets with respect to data collection and measuring impact.
 - Charities continue to call for a “home in government” to strengthen coordination among organizations and improve transparency.

