



March 26, 2020

VIA EMAIL

TO: Minister Ahmed Hussen, Minister for Families, Children and Social Development

Dear Minister Hussen:

It is no exaggeration to say that the COVID-19 pandemic is a devastating catastrophe. It has placed demands on our charitable sector like never before. Charities across Canada have stepped up to take care of some of the most vulnerable communities in our country by providing an array of supports in response to the pandemic.

As an advocacy organization serving Canadian Muslim communities, we at the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), have seen firsthand how Canadian Muslim charities have risen to the challenge of providing support services to the elderly, the impoverished, the unwell, and to those seeking shelter.

NCCM is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit organization that protects Canadian human rights and civil liberties, challenges discrimination and Islamophobia, builds mutual understanding, and advocates for the public concerns of Canadian Muslims.

NCCM therefore has a unique perspective on witnessing how this pandemic has brought out the best in our charitable sector, but we have also seen the devastating effects of the pandemic on Canadian charities that provide the front-line services and aid that are critical to combat the sociological effects that this pandemic has already had and will continue to have.

Let us be clear: charities are critical in Canada.

The charitable and nonprofit sector contributes an average of 8.1% of total Canadian GDP, more than the retail trade industry and close to the value of the mining, oil and gas extraction industry. Two million Canadians are employed in the charitable and nonprofit sector. These figures exclude the total value of volunteer time to assisting those most in need.

Organizations that have signed on here, including Islamic Relief Canada, the International Development and Relief Foundation, Penny Appeal Canada, ISSA, the National Zakat Foundation, the Muslim Association of Canada (MAC), and so many other signatories, provide critical services, as well as other basic needs, to Canadians every day.



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COVID-19 has put strain on the charitable sector in two ways.

Firstly, charities are no longer able to effectively fundraise in the absence of being able to host physical fundraisers due to the need for social distancing. Many of these charities provide critical infrastructure to those with disabilities in a given community, for instance, but lack the infrastructure to completely transition their fundraising to the digital space.

Institutions like MAC, the Islamic Society of Markham, ISNA Canada, the Al Rashid Mosque and others run schools, organize charitable giving for local causes, collectively employ thousands of people, and provide counselling, as well as many other services, for thousands of Canadians. Institutions like these, as well as many of the other signatories on this list, are deeply impacted by no longer being able to locally fundraise in the same way.

Secondly, at the same time when charities are being cut off from being able to effectively fundraise, many have faced increased demands on the front-line services being provided. Nisa Homes, for instance, is one of the signatories to this letter. Nisa Homes provides a safe haven for women experiencing domestic violence, poverty, homelessness or seeking asylum. In the last week, they have seen an increase of 400 calls from women seeking their assistance.

Earlier, the Government of Canada announced a stimulus/aid package of over 82 billion CAD amounting to 3% of Canada's GDP for businesses, self-employed Canadians, and families through Employment Insurance supports, GST supports, Child Tax Benefits, and a suite of delayed tax and loan payments.

The government has also committed to subsidize wages for companies and non-profits facing layoffs. The government will support employers to cover up to \$1375 per employee and \$25000 per employer in wages.

While these supports offer a great deal of support for everyday Canadians and struggling businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a significant challenge to most non-profits/charities in Canada. To date there have been no commitments to specifically support the charitable sector serving vulnerable communities.

We make four urgent recommendations to the Government at this time:

- We ask that the Government of Canada match donations raised by charitable organizations for the next three months.
- Secondly, we ask that the Government of Canada improve the charitable donation tax credit to encourage donors to continue to support charitable institutions.



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- Thirdly, we ask that the government extend a 0% interest credit line for charitable organizations (capped at a \$1 million loan) to help cover operational costs to be paid back over a three-year period.
- Fourthly, we ask that the government set out a specific wage subsidy plan for charities. We ask that the government subsidize salaries for charities up to the maximum EI benefits as has been done in the United Kingdom. This will allow charitable organizations to ensure that the front-line staff most critical to delivering services to Canadians can continue to deliver those services, rather than be forced to lay them off.

Thank you for continuing to engage with us in productive conversation. NCCM will continue to work with the Government at this critical time and provide our perspective as we work with the hundreds of Canadian Muslim charities that enhance the lives of all Canadians.

Regards,

Mustafa Farooq

CEO, NCCM

Cc: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

The Honourable Jagmeet Singh

Signatories:

1. Academie An-Noor
2. [Deen Support Services](#)
3. [ICNA Relief Canada](#)
4. [ISNA Canada](#)
5. [Mosquée Madani](#)
6. [Nisa Homes](#)
7. [TARIC Islamic Centre](#)
8. [The Canadian Council of Muslim Women](#)
9. The [Islamic Society of Markham](#) (ISM)
10. The [Manitoba Islamic Association](#)
11. The [Muslim Association of Canada](#) (MAC)



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12. The [National Zakat Foundation](#)
13. [Think For Actions](#)
14. Feras Marish, VP of the [Dar Foundation](#)
15. Imam Ibrahim Hindy, [Dar Al-Tawheed Islamic Centre](#)
16. Imam Refaat Mohammed, President of the [Canadian Council of Imams](#) (CCI)
17. Khalid Tarrabain, President of the [Al Rashid Mosque](#)
18. Mahmood Qasim, CEO of the [International Development and Relief Foundation](#) (IDRF)
19. Masood Peracha, President of the [Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities](#) (ECMC)
20. Momin Saeed, Executive Director of the [Alberta Muslim Public Affairs Council](#) (AMPAC)
21. Omar Yaqub, Executive Director of the [Islamic Family & Social Services Association](#) (IFFSA)
22. Rabia Khedr, Executive Director of the [Muslim Council of Peel](#) (MCP)
23. Shahina Siddiqui, Executive Director of the [Islamic Social Services Association](#) (ISSA)
24. Talha Ahmed, CEO of [Penny Appeal Canada](#)
25. Zaid Al Rawni, CEO, [Islamic Relief Canada](#) (IRC)