

- For Immediate Release -

Over 500 Nonprofit Leaders Call for Action – Is Anyone listening?

Toronto, Ontario - Over 500 nonprofit leaders, from more than 300 nonprofit organizations across the GTA came together over five sessions, spoke with experts, deliberated over details, and developed a clear message to the province – action is needed, it’s needed now, and the consequences are significant. Their message on housing, income supports, community services and equity, point to big gaps, threadbare systems and missed opportunities. It is an urgent call to leaders of all parties – the system is in crisis, and we must work together now to make the changes needed. There is no time to lose.

“These are front line agencies, dealing with the consequences of poverty and inequity every day,” said Sean Meagher, the coordinator of Ontario for All, which organized the meetings, together with United Way Greater Toronto, Peel Poverty Reduction Committee, Social Planning Toronto, and the Social Planning Council York Region. “If they are this worried, we should all be.”

The meetings were organized to discuss key issues affecting communities across the GTA and the province, but the flood of concern was unexpected. “We anticipated 40 or 50 leaders to come and tell us how they felt about existing policy approaches,” Mr. Meagher said. “Instead, we had over 500 participants, from agencies serving tens of thousands of residents, across the province, saying we needed to go far beyond the policy proposals on the table.”

The result, ‘An Agenda for Change’ sets a clear and achievable path. “People are hungry for real solutions,” noted Daniele Zanotti, President and CEO of United Way Greater Toronto. “And solutions are available – evidence-based policies that will build our economy, meet urgent needs in our communities, and create lasting system level change – but this means committing to the hard work of implementing them, as well as investing in a strong community services sector.”

Housing was prominent issue in the discussions. “We need real direct investment in affordable housing, we need to protect the affordable housing stock we do have, and we need an end to the giant holes in rent control,” said Alyssa Brierley, the Executive Director of the Center for Equality Rights in Accommodation, noting that under the current rent control rules landlords can raise rents to any level, as long as they can get the current tenant to leave, and that provincial investment in affordable housing lags hundreds of millions behind other levels of government.

Income supports were a deep concern. “With social assistance rates 40%-60% BELOW the poverty line, it’s hard to imagine anyone making ends meet. Who can rent a home with the \$390 a month housing allowance the current rules provide?” said Devorah Kobluk, Senior Policy Analyst at the Income Security Advocacy Centre.

Nonprofit leaders offered clear, achievable guidance on addressing inequity, decent work and relationships with the nonprofit sector as well. Read the report at <https://ontarioforall.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/An-Agenda-for-Change.pdf>

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Ontario for All is a nonpartisan organization supporting nonprofit leaders in playing active roles shaping evidence-based public policy.