



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"Beyond Decent Work": Addressing Labour Issues and Pay Inequity in the Nonprofit Sector will help all Nova Scotians

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Kjipuktuk (Halifax, NS): Nova Scotia has one of the highest unemployment rates and one of the highest poverty rates in the Country. In March 2023, there were over 1.9 million visits to food banks in Canada, representing a 32% increase from the last year. With cost of living growing quickly comparable to Ontario and British Colombia, some Nova Scotians are spending over 100% of their income on necessities and housing costs.

Nova Scotians report feeling more hopeless than they were last year, and demand for community services are greater than ever (Food Banks Canada, 2023a).

Nonprofits continually rise to the challenge, often relied upon by government and communities to distribute materials, resources, and critical services. But Nova Scotia's labour policies and current funding structures aren't doing enough to ensure that nonprofit staff themselves have adequate supports.

"Over 1,500 organizations in our province support basic needs and deliver supports around housing, food security, poverty reduction, navigating health and legal systems, accessibility and advocacy programs, among others" says Janet Barlow, IONS Board Chair and Executive Director of Hike Nova Scotia. "The effects of workforce challenges in the sector is felt by everyday people when essential community services the sector provides become strained."

The Nonprofit sector is in a crisis of attracting and retaining staff in part due to lower salaries, challenging workplace conditions and burnout, which is compounded by the increasing living costs in an already underpaid workforce. Recent reports have highlighted the need for intervention. Did you know?

- According to Statistics Canada, the average annual salary for nonprofit employees is \$38,716, compared to \$57,137 in the economy overall.
- Hourly wages in the Nonprofit Sector in Nova Scotia are about 20% lower than in other provinces (IONS, 2022).
- Women represent 72% of the sector but on average are making 13% less than men employed in the sector.
- Wage equity gaps continue in the sector for racialized employees, who earn 10% less than their white colleagues (Imagine Canada, 2022).

In Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia's (IONS) most recent survey about labour market trends, we learned that over 40% of Nova Scotia's nonprofit organizations find it difficult to meet wage and benefits expectations in their recruitment efforts, and the challenge becomes even greater when trying to retain staff (reported by 68%).

Following the launch of IONS new campaign, “*Beyond Decent Work,*” earlier this month – IONS is calling on impact organizations (nonprofits) to respond to sector labour issues of overwork, pay inequity, and burnout to improve the quality of life for sector staff.

In a newly released report on “Improving total compensation in the Community Impact (Nonprofit) Sector”, IONS seeks to help address recruitment and retention challenges in the sector and provide equitable solutions to strengthen and diversify the workforce.

“We know that offering competitive salaries is a systemic issue, and that financial compensation is just one piece. More and more people are making employment decisions driven by personal values and a desire for work-life balance” says Annika Voltan, IONS Executive Director. “Our sector can often be more creative with the additional perks we can offer like flexibility, a four-day work week, paid time off, and focusing on organizational cultures that are welcoming and inclusive.”

The relevance of this brief is apparent in current events as nonprofits and charities provide critical services and community leadership. If sector staff aren’t adequately compensated and supported, we risk losing our ability to support all Nova Scotians during these times of crises and emerging challenges.

Read IONS October 2023 “**Possibility Brief: Improving Total Compensation in the Community Impact Sector**” and the five calls to action [linked here](#).

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About Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia

Founded in 2012, Impact Organizations of Nova Scotia (IONS) helps build a better world by recognizing the importance of a more just, equitable, and community-driven approach to re-envisioning our society. As a Community Impact Sector advocate and a voice for the sector provincially, IONS both serves and represents organizations driving positive impact at the community level. IONS provides capacity-building opportunities, helps facilitate community networks, shares knowledge across diverse groups, and enables greater collaboration across community impact organizations in Nova Scotia.

Visit ions.ca to learn more.

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