

November 1, 2020.

Dear Standing Committee on Justice Policy regarding Bill 218,

Re: Bill 218, Supporting Ontario's Recovery and Municipal Elections Act, 2020

I am writing to you on behalf of Family Service Perth-Huron to request your commitment to ensure the Ontario Government immediately passes an emergency order providing “Good Samaritan” COVID-related liability protection to non-profits if they have followed all public health guidelines. The risk that is posed if there were lawsuits due to infections resulting from the current pandemic could mean catastrophic loss/damage to our organization.

There is precedent for taking these reasonable and responsible measures during this time: The Ontario government has provided “Good Samaritan” relief to non-profits operating in good faith before. For example, the [Donation of Food Act](#) ensured that those who donate food to food banks and other non-profits were not held liable for damages related to the consumption of that food, and [changes to the Health Protection and Promotion Act](#) after SARS offered “Good Samaritan” protection to health professionals.

To be clear, we are not looking for protection from litigation for non-profits that have been negligent and not followed public health guidelines. We are looking to the Ontario government to protect non-profits that have acted in good faith as they re-open and follow public health guidelines.

Many non-profits have barely survived the first phase of the pandemic only to find themselves struggling to operate or re-open because of skyrocketing insurance costs, COVID-related exclusions, and an excessive burden of liability falling on volunteer boards of directors.

Non-profit organizations supports Ontario’s economic recovery in our local communities by supporting those most vulnerable, whether by providing mental health counselling for small business owners, essential service workers, persons who have lost employment, and /or offering Caregiver supports. We also work to assist people when they

are struggling to most meet their basic needs. We are asking the Ontario government's support of Bill 218 in order for us to continue to be a strong partner in Ontario's economic recovery.

Ontario's 58,000 non-profits contribute \$50 billion to the province's GDP to the economy and they employ one million workers and connect five million Ontarians to meaningful work as volunteers.

We know that your government cares about our work supporting over 2000 individuals and families in Huron-Perth each year. We are calling on your support to ensure our non-profit and all others can continue to serve our communities during the pandemic, and beyond.

Respectfully Submitted,
Susan Melkert,
Executive Director
Family Services Perth-Huron