Members of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector
Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Honourable Senators:

As President of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA), I would like to congratulate you on your work to date as part of your study of charities and non-profit organizations.

The FCFA is the main voice of Canada’s francophone minority communities nationally and internationally. The FCFA consists of 18 members: 12 provincial and territorial associations representing francophone interests; and 6 national organizations representing different sectors of activity and client groups (culture, justice, seniors, youth, women, parents and early childcare services). It is also the lead organization in the consultation network serving francophone organizations and institutions. The FCFA coordinates the Leaders Forum, a group of 42 organizations committed to working together to support francophone and Acadian communities.

The FCFA is a key representative in dealings with the Government of Canada on all matters relating to the development and vitality of French and the Francophonie, respect for language rights and official languages policy in Canada. It also works closely with the Government of Quebec, particularly the Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes (SQRC), to strengthen ties between the francophone and Acadian communities and Quebec society.

The FCFA is a member of Imagine Canada and strongly supports the remarks and recommendations submitted in this organization’s brief to you and made during the appearance by Bill Schaper, Public Policy Director at Imagine Canada.

However, we would like to draw to your attention several issues that were not raised in the testimony you have heard during your study.

As Imagine Canada explained, it is extremely difficult to obtain accurate data on voluntary and community organizations in the social purpose sector, given that the last National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations was conducted in 2003 and the 2010 Satellite Account of Non-profit Institutions and Volunteering was based on data from 2008. Imagine Canada also emphasized the importance of this data in making informed decisions and developing evidence-based public policies.
However, we must stress that the surveys still have not developed a way of distinguishing between the circumstances facing organizations in official language minority communities and those of the majority, because the language questions needed to identify these groups were not asked or the subsequent analyses did not take them into account.

In our estimate, there are more than 1,000 charities and non-profit organizations operating throughout the social purpose sector in francophone and Acadian communities. These organizations function in a special set of circumstances that should be considered during public policy development. For example, given the small population in our communities, fundraising requires a very high degree of effort. It is often difficult if not impossible in some regions. In addition, a number of organizations in our communities do not have charitable status, which further complicates matters.

Although we have access to some information on people who speak the minority official language, and Canadian Heritage has data on the agencies that it funds, this information does not give us a complete, reliable and accurate picture of our communities.

For these reasons, we would like to add the following recommendations to those submitted by Imagine Canada.

Recommendation 1: That the Special Committee encourage the Government of Canada to include consideration of the official languages in all its surveys on the social purpose sector as well as those on giving and volunteering.

Recommendation 2: That the Special Committee ask the Government of Canada to include an official languages component in all its consultations and collaborative work with the social purpose sector, by ensuring that at least one representative of these communities is at the table.

[signed]

Jean Johnson, President
Recommendations submitted by Imagine Canada:

Recommendation 1: That the Special Committee encourage the federal government to provide Statistics Canada with a clear mandate and the financial resources (estimated at no more than $1 million per year) to collect, analyze, and disseminate data about the social purpose sector.

Recommendation 2: That the Special Committee encourage the federal government to work with the social purpose sector to identify and implement machinery of government changes so that the long-term health and vitality of the sector are an integral part of the federal policy- and decision-making process.

Recommendation 3: That the Special Committee encourage the government to revisit the recommendations of the Independent Blue Ribbon Panel on Grant and Contribution Programs, and ensure government-wide adoption of the Panel’s recommendations.

Recommendation 4: That the Special Committee encourage the federal government to reconsider its decision regarding capital gains taxation on donations of real estate and private company assets.

Recommendation 5: That the Special Committee encourage the federal government to launch, in partnership with the social purpose sector, a two-year long co-creation process aimed at modernizing the legal and regulatory regime under which charities and nonprofits operate.

Recommendation 6: That the Special Committee encourage the federal government to work with the sector to prioritize and implement recommendations made by the Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy Co-creation Steering Group.