

# MAJORITY OF GROUPS REPORTING REVENUE LOSS

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munity Development Halton (CDH) paints a worrying picture of the state of non-profits in Halton Hills and across the region.

Closures, revenue declines and a loss of volunteers are just some of the issues plaguing the non-profit sector.

CDH's report sourced its data from the Ontario Nonprofit Network's (ONN) "COVID-19: The State of the Ontario Non-profit Sector One Year Later."

Roughly 3,000 organizations responded to the survey, and eight per cent of them were from Halton.

Especially troubling is the fact that many of these organizations service the most vulnerable members of their community.

"We did have an office in Burlington. We got rid of that space to save on the rent, because we had to work at home anyways," said Maggie Edwards, chair of the Halton Down Syndrome Association (HDSA), which provides a wide range of services to area families who have members with Down syndrome.

The HDSA also had to cancel a major fundraiser due to COVID-19 — a golf tournament — and pivoted online for its Walk for Down syndrome event, as well as some of its services.



Theresa Brereton photo

Kate Holmes is executive director of the Women's Centre of Halton, one of many non-profit groups struggling these days due to COVID-19.

Admitted Edwards, "Sometimes, the virtual platform doesn't work for people."

Socialization is a huge part of Down syndrome therapy. Edwards said many patients, including

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- ONN spokesperson Sarah Matsushita

her own son Oliver, have lost out on that component.

"When they went to a virtual platform at school and he had to stay home, he actually completely regressed, and he stopped talking completely," she said.

The Women's Centre of Halton (WCH) has also suffered from the new normal created by the pandemic.

"We were very grateful to have some COVID relief funding," said executive director Kate Holmes. "But certainly, our fundraising (from private donors and events) was down."

Sixty per cent of Halton's non-profits reported revenue losses, and one in three reported a decline of greater than 50 per cent, according to the CDH's report.

This happened in an environment where half of all Halton non-profits reported an increase in demand during the pandemic.

The same report states that "only a minority of non-profits were support-

ed by government emergency relief measures."

Only 35 per cent of Halton non-profit took advantage of the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy, and 15 per cent asked for cash from the Canada Emergency Business Account.

Around 75 per cent of those organizations did not receive provincial support, which the report describes as 'astounding'.

"The non-profits sector is facing a financial crunch like never before," ONN spokesperson Sarah Matsushita said. "And if this gap (solvency versus demand) can't be made up by donors, fundraising, going to private foundations and other non-government funders, how will the sector continue to survive?"

Despite recent struggles, there's optimism for the future — with plans underway for less restrictive times.

Zhu hopes to rekindle the HHCC's relationships with backers and private donors.

Holmes said the WCH

will introduce fall programming such as "having a mechanic talk about how to put windshield washer fluid in their car. What an oil change may cost." Programs like these and many others, according to Holmes, are important because it lets women who come from a controlling environment know "they can make decisions and do things on their own."

Said Edwards, "We've been able to run some successful programming virtually that we might not go back to in person with. Like cooking shows and those kinds of things."

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: Non-profit organizations have been hit especially hard by the pandemic. We spoke with representatives from a number of local groups to see how they've been affected.*



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