



Growing Pains: How Canada's Population Boom Affects Nonprofits

SFX: Sound of typing and office ambiance

Mary Barroll: Welcome to CharityVillage Connects. I'm your host Mary Barroll.

SFX: Hummingbird flying and tone

That's the sound of a Hummingbird pollinating our world and making it a better place.

Music

The Hummingbird is CharityVillage's logo because we strive – like the industrious Hummingbird – to make connections across the nonprofit sector and help make positive change.

We'll offer insight that will help you make sense of your life as a nonprofit professional, make connections to help navigate challenges, and support your organization to deliver on its mission.

Mary Barroll: In this episode of CharityVillage Connects, what does the recent surge and unprecedented growth in population in Canada mean to charities and nonprofits? And how best to address the resulting exponentially increased demand on services?

SFX: Buzz

News clip

www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?&q=government+of+canada+accepts+new+immigrants+2023+1.3+million&&mid=CEDA345E198922B46CADCEDA345E198922B46CAD&&FORM=VRDGAR

“I'm pleased to share that Canada intends to maintain its target of welcoming 485,000 new permanent residents in 2024, and 500,000 in 2025.”

Buzz SFX

News clip

www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?&q=canada+immigration+increase+2023&&mid=85EE0C7C88C19D8CE8FF85EE0C7C88C19D8CE8FF&&FORM=VRDGAR

“With more people than ever before and millions on the way in the years ahead, Canada

is growing faster than comparable nations. The population now 40 million and counting.”

SFX: Buzz

News clip

www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=canada+hits+40+million&&mid=27626F30552B92631E0D27626F30552B92631E0D&FORM=VCGVRP

“Well, come Canada Day more Canadians than ever will be celebrating. That’s because this past Friday, our country hit a new milestone, officially passing 40 million in population.”

Music

Mary Barroll: Here’s a fascinating piece of demographics that makes many Canadians proud. What is the most diverse city on Earth?

SFX: Buzzer

No, it is not New York or London. It’s Toronto.

SFX: Crowd cheering

Nearly half of Toronto’s population was born outside of Canada and it is often called the most multicultural city in the world. The 2021 census finds over 55 percent of Toronto’s population is composed of visible minorities and Toronto has more foreign-born residents than both London and New York. And it’s not just Toronto where new immigrants settle.

Almost a quarter of our population, more than 8 million people, are either landed immigrants or new residents to Canada. We are truly a mosaic of nationalities and ethnicities. And less than two years ago, the federal government designed an ambitious plan to increase those numbers, to around half a million new immigrants a year, to solve a labour shortage, together with welcoming temporary foreign workers, international students and asylum claimants. This is Immigration Minister Marc Miller making the announcement in the fall of 2023.

News clip

www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?&q=tariffs+delayed&&mid=FCF65DD80C3D56C6A1C9FCF65DD80C3D56C6A1C9&&FORM=VRDGAR

“These immigration levels allow us to bring in the skills and talent we need to fill the labour gaps and ensure Canada’s economic prosperity, help families reunite and remain a leader in refugee resettlement. They’re keeping us, with our long term focus, growth, with roughly 60 percent of the permanent resident missions dedicated to the crucial

economic class.

Mary Barroll: What a difference a couple of years can make. That announcement was made, and the first phases of the new policy were initiated. In 2023, Canada's population surged by 1.3 million – the largest annual increase on record.

SFX: City sounds

Mary Barroll: Then the government realized it had failed to contemplate the impact of increased immigration on already strained infrastructure, such as housing, food security and healthcare -- in an economy that was just emerging from the damage wrought by the Covid-19 pandemic.

SFX: Buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu6FeU6bVuo>

“Asylum seekers have been regularly sleeping on the sidewalks outside an intake centre in the downtown of Toronto as they seek a space in the shelter system.”

SFX: Buzz

News clip

<https://toronto.citynews.ca/video/2023/10/05/concern-over-unhoused-refugees-as-winter-months-approach/>

“New concerns tonight about asylum seekers still sleeping on the streets of Toronto, months after pressure increased on all levels of government to address the issue. Dozens remain camped outside of the shelter intake office downtown and concern is growing over how the winter months could make an already dire problem much worse.”

Mary Barroll: Refugees were literally sleeping on the sidewalks outside of overcrowded shelters for the better part of the year in Toronto, including in the middle of winter, and foodbank usage skyrocketed. Many Canadians were furious and appalled.

SFX: Buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu6FeU6bVuo>

“I am disgusted and ashamed as a Canadian to be witnessing this.”

Mary Barroll: Canadians were already struggling with inflation, the high cost of living, affordable housing, and access to healthcare. Nonprofits who were already at the breaking point in terms of demands for service found themselves pushed even closer to

the brink. And so, finally facing the consequences of the new immigration policy, the government reversed itself, saying it hadn't got the balance quite right.

SFX: Buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Brdex1rvL7g>

“We will reduce the number of immigrants we bring in, over the next three years, which will result in a pause in the population growth, over the next two years. We didn't get the balance quite right. Not quite an admission of fault but the Prime Minister says Canada will be cutting the number of immigrants coming here on a permanent basis. It's a 22 and a half percent cut for the next two years with even lower targets set for 2027.”

SFX: Buzz

Mary Barroll: That is quite a shift in policy, from allowing a record number of new immigrants into the country, to then cutting off the flow dramatically. It's a lot to get your head around.

Music

And it has tremendous impact on nonprofits and charities, not only those who work in settlement services, but also those who provide social services and community support to all Canadians, including newcomers.

Many of those organizations also experienced proportional cuts in funding, related to the decreased immigration targets, and have a lot of unanswered questions about what comes next. At the same time, Canadian nonprofits employ new Canadians in high numbers, both as volunteers and paid staff, and are looking to further diversify both their labour force and their potential donors.

There are a lot of nuances at play here, and that's exactly what we're going to tackle in this CharityVillage Connects podcast as we attempt to answer this question: What is the impact of a significant population increase on the Canadian nonprofit and charitable sector?

Mary Barroll: Canada has been growing steadily over the last three decades, by slightly more than one percent a year. Our population is now just over 41 million people, and the majority of that growth came from immigration, people choosing Canada as their new home.

Yet, over the next two years with the government decision to reduce the number of permanent residents and a decrease of non-permanent residents, we'll see greatly reduced growth. Canada may even slide into slightly negative growth for the first time in

decades. So, we have two factors at play here.

Canada has been growing, with new immigrants leading the way and, as a nation, we will likely continue to grow, throughout this century. But we will not likely experience growth in 2025 and 2026, following the announcement of a pause in immigration. In fact, we may even shrink as a nation, over the next couple of years.

Toss into that conflicting formula the fact that we will elect a new Prime Minister this year who will, no doubt, have his own thoughts on immigration, and you have a real recipe for uncertainty.

So, let's discuss what all of this might mean for our sector. As always, we have a panel of nonprofit experts and professionals to help us understand what's happening on the front lines, and how we can navigate these seismic shifts in population.

We start with some initial thoughts from them.

Music

Steven Ayer: In the most recent estimates Stats Can put out, they said 92 % of growth was because of international immigration. And certainly, there is still some growth, that remaining growth from natural increases, births, that sort of natural population growth. But the vast majority of it is international immigration and some of that's temporary, with all the issues we might have seen around students or temporary foreign workers, and some of its permanent immigration. And some of it is refugees, but that is a much smaller share compared to some of the scale around temporary and permanent immigration.

Aleks Dughman-Manzur: We saw the announcement on the cuts in the immigration levels plan and that meant that many resettlement spots that we had in previous years are being cut. So, less people are going to be able to arrive through the resettlement program because there are cuts to the levels plan. But it also means that asylum seekers who have reached protection, here in Canada, will have longer wait times to be able to become permanent residents.

Andrew Chunilall: We're definitely seeing higher usage of food banks. I'm definitely seeing here in my home city of London, Ontario, and I think it's true for all parts of Canada. Students, newcomers have unique challenges with integrating into the Canadian economy. The Canadian economy is really in a space of uncertainty and is faced with a lot of threats. Inflation, obviously, is another factor. And so, yes, people are using those types of services more. I would say it's across the board. I wouldn't just target newcomers. I think it's really, really important that Canada needs to think about its immigration policy and how it can work with civil society to help integrate newcomers, to help integrate students better so they have a better chance at being successful in Canada.

Olga Stachova: As a country, we face a number of serious challenges. We have seen the cost of living go up. We have seen severe shortages of housing, particularly affordable housing, challenges accessing health care. And unfortunately, immigrants have been often painted, in the public discourse, as the source of these challenges, which is a sentiment that is very misplaced and honestly dangerous and harmful, as it goes hand in hand in the steep increase in incidents of racism and hate experienced by newcomers every day, and the significant change in public sentiment towards immigration that we've seen over the past year.

Carolyn Stewart: For us, what we've seen in terms of the shifting demographics is really how hard it's becoming for everyone. Because unfortunately, there's not one demographic that has necessarily escaped being food insecure and accessing a food bank's support. We know that people only access food banks after they've exhausted all other options. So, downsizing their home, selling a car, borrowing from friends, taking out loans, that sort of thing. And so, we're really a last resort. And so, now that we've seen the decrease in access to affordable and appropriate housing for people, on top of the rise in precarious work. So, the type of works and the type or supports that are coming, whether that be through wages and benefits, being something as simple as a paid sick day, are really impacting the demographics of who we're seeing and why we're seeing them.

Kishone Roy: Population growth, when it's portrayed as a negative. I understand it may come too fast, but it's a good thing. Population decline is the bad thing. You may not want the rate of people coming to your town that, you may not be able to build to keep up with it. Our immigration levels may have gotten a little too high, but at the end of the day, people are good and more people in your community is better, and people building your community up for the future, contributing to your food bank, building social housing, starting up a business, these are goods for your community.

SFX: Canadian anthem

News clip

www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?&q=canada+immigration+ceremoney&&mid=36BA755FD1C55350AFAD36BA755FD1C55350AFAD&&FORM=VRDGAR

"I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his majesty, King Charles the third. King of Canada ..."

Mary Barroll: That's the sound of this country's affirmation pledge, spoken by all new immigrants to this country, at the ceremony welcoming new Canadians.

"And now you are Canadians."

SFX: Applause

Mary Barroll: A truly moving experience, for newcomers and Canadians alike. With initial comments from our nonprofit experts setting the stage, let's dig into the population issue. We'll start in Toronto, where we began the podcast, because it's the biggest city in the country and is a pretty good reflection of trends that then ripple across Canada.

A recent Vital Signs report, published by the Toronto Foundation, found more than three quarters of Toronto nonprofits have an increased demand for services. Yet a small fraction of those nonprofits, only 15 percent, can meet that rising demand.

As a result, more than half have scaled back programs and over a quarter have longer waitlists. Population growth played a real role in that, as we'll hear from Steven Ayer. Steven Ayer is the CEO of Common Good Strategies, a social impact research firm based in Kitchener, Ontario. He's also a social strategist, data scientist, and public speaker who keeps a close eye on population trends.

Steven Ayer: When we talk through the issues in Toronto around population growth, it is reflective of a situation we do see across the entire country. In 2023, we saw the country grow by about 3%. It's more than a million people in a single year, many times faster than typical growth rates before the pandemic or even in decades past. And in 2024, the preliminary data again shows very similar, I mean, adding more than a million people in a single year. And Toronto is very rapidly growing, absolutely. And we highlight some of the specifics, in terms of Toronto growing by more than 125,000 people in a single year. Whereas, when we look at the previous decade, before the most recent growth, it typically would grow by about 25,000. We're growing about five times faster than had been historically the case.

But Toronto's not even the fastest growing area, even in Ontario. Toronto is in the top ten fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. But this is an issue that affects everyone from Calgary to Vancouver to Moncton. There's growth going on all across the country and there's going to be the same consequences that we see in Toronto, in terms of making sure that we have adequate social services, are certainly going to be felt wherever we look in the country.

Mary Barroll: I want to pick up on that last thought. Toronto is an indicator of things to expect across the country. And indeed, cities and some rural areas across Canada have already seen their populations expand. And it's because of past immigration policies.

Steven Ayer: Yeah, it is predominantly international immigration and the majority of that, I think, in the most recent estimates Stats Can put out, they said 92% of growth was because of international immigration.

And certainly, there is still some growth, that remaining growth, from natural increases, births, and that sort of natural population growth. But the vast majority of it is

international immigration and some of that's temporary, with all the issues we might have seen around students or temporary foreign workers, and some of its permanent immigration. And some of it is refugees, but that is a much smaller share compared to some of the scale around temporary and permanent immigration.

Mary Barroll: The scale of that growth, coupled with rampant inflation, has had tremendous impact on the nonprofit sector, creating a growing vulnerability and increased need for services.

Music

Steven Ayer: One of the things that makes the challenge so great is the overall growth and vulnerability we've seen in the last few years. Inflation surged several years into the pandemic, and we see food prices going up 25%. We see average rents going up similar margins. And even though inflation has come back down to lower levels, the baseline of how much everything costs has gone up and has not gone back down. That really affected a huge number of folks and increased a lot of vulnerability across the entire population. And at the same time, when you're looking at the population growth, there's an additional set of folks who are coming to the country and need a lot of supports, being able to settle here and effectively raise families, figure out how to connect into their communities. So, there's a really big demand on services there. And there's an even bigger increase in demand for services, as we've seen the effects of inflation and how many of the most vulnerable folks in our communities are struggling at an incredible margin. And both these things are happening at the same time. So, I think this is really where nonprofits are so stretched, is they're facing both these consequences of a lot of the folks settling with the country. And the sheer number compared to what we said previously, like these increases are staggering. I mean, when you, again, look at Toronto, a five-time increase. There are so many great nonprofits on the front lines of providing those services, but it's incredibly hard to deal with a five times increase in population growth, let alone that they're also seeing this even larger increase in vulnerability across the entire population because of increases in food prices, rent, and so many other things that have gotten more expensive, over the course of the pandemic.

Mary Barroll: Rising inflation across the country, resulted in increased demand on nonprofits, creating spiraling effects that caused the charitable sector to struggle to keep up with more demand, while facing the same inflationary pressures as other Canadians. We see this playing out in two major issues facing the country: food insecurity and lack of housing.

SFX: Buzz

News clip

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/audio/9.6585166>

“There’s no question is getting harder to put healthy food on the table. According to a report released this week from Feed Ontario, food bank usage has increased for the 8th year in a row and 40% of food banks are having to reduce the amount of food they provide. People are making tough choices when it comes to limited budgets, and it sometimes means going hungry.”

Music

Mary Barroll: Sadly, where we see an increase in both a vulnerable population and inflation play out is on the front lines of the charitable sector. Food bank usage is unfortunately one of the best indicators of the consequences of this dire combination of a rising vulnerable population and inflation.

SFX: Buzz

News clip

<https://youtu.be/HO7NwoL4hT0?si=AeqD-UyouEFEISKz>

“It’s almost scary just trying to keep up with it. You have to worry about a society where we have that many people in that kind of trouble.”

Mary Barroll: Hunger Count is a nationwide survey that provides data on food bank use in Canada as well as insights into what is happening on the front lines and connections to larger trends of food insecurity in the country. According to Hunger Count, a year ago, there were over 2 million visits to food banks in Canada — the highest number in history.

Visits in March 2024 surged to an unprecedented level. This record usage is consistent with record high rates of food insecurity, and it reflects findings from other studies showing growing numbers of people experiencing economic hardship, right across the country.

Carolyn Stewart has seen it firsthand. She is the Executive Director of Feed Ontario, the province's largest collective of hunger-relief organizations.

Carolyn Stewart: To give you a picture of what it’s looking like, in short, it’s not good. It is getting exponentially worse every single year. We have seen eight consecutive years of growth and demand at food banks, with need now surpassing 1 million people accessing our services over 7.6 million times in the last year. This is the highest number on record that we’ve ever been recording data, which we’ve been doing for quite some time.

Mary Barroll: Nonprofits on the front lines are increasingly being relied on to provide community needs but they’re tapped out - demand rises but the support from government does not. In fact, food banks do not receive government funding, except in

discrete situations as part an emergency response. Carolyn Stewart explains.

Carolyn Stewart: It's a common misconception about food banks. We receive no government funding, unless it's specifically program related. So, we work in partnership with the government on emergency response. So, when we provide specific supports, but otherwise we don't. So that's the case for most food banks, some receive a small amount of municipal funding, but that would be the exception. But mostly they're exclusively funded by either corporate funders and partners or private individual donors. But overall, even without being government funded, we are still seeing a significant decline in funding and support. And that's just because people are having a harder time getting by every single day. So, we're needing more to run our operations because we're seeing such increased demand. And then on the other side of that, we're seeing fewer donations come in the door. So, we're seeing a decline in monthly donors, people having to cancel their donations because they just can't make those ends meet, every single month. We're seeing fewer amounts of food donations at food banks as well.

And we're even hearing stories of people who were once donors to the food bank now visiting the food bank for support.

SFX: Buzz

News clip

<https://youtu.be/WuJs22fRIQk?si=co3LlsTSQs-u3kaJ>

“There are people who are...fully employed and having to access the food bank.”

Mary Barroll: And the situation is dire with food bank visits surging across the nation. With no signs of letting up, Carolyn Stewart says exponential demand is forcing food banks to cut back on both food and services.

Carolyn Stewart: What we're seeing is the response to this growing demand, exponential demand, really weighing on the food bank network with 40 % of our network reporting they've had to either reduce the amount of food that they're providing just to make sure that they're able to meet demand but also potentially even change types of services or reduce wraparound supports because they provide additional services beyond emergency food support. So, unfortunately, things are not good and the amount of change and upheaval that's happening in the country does not give us hope that things are going to get better anytime soon.

Mary Barroll: And it's not just food insecurity that's on the rise. We go to Toronto again, where the recent Vital Signs report indicates trends that are taking place across Canada. The housing crisis is increasingly grim. More Torontonians are unhoused and taking shelter in encampments than ever before. For those who have shelter, rents have almost doubled, while new housing builds have not kept pace with the booming population. Carolyn Stewart explains how a lack of affordable housing has contributed

to the issue.

Carolyn Stewart: A consistent concern over the last few years has been the affordability and availability of housing. We're seeing rising homelessness in communities across the country. What we've seen and why we've become more entrenched in the social safety net is because we've become progressively relied upon during economic downturns or to fill the holes left by bad public policies. It's not surprising that our growth in need mirrors the lack of affordable housing being built in the last 40 years, the disinvestments that we've seen in our social support programs over the last several decades. All these things are coming to a head at once, right? So, when you don't take care of something, it starts to fall apart. And so, what we're seeing is the result of decades of under investment in social programs. And so, they're increasingly relying upon nonprofits or charity organizations to fill those holes.

Music

Mary Barroll: Inadequate affordable housing is only one piece of the puzzle. Steven Ayer points out that insufficient mental health support adds to this growing crisis.

Steven Ayer: This country has started to realize some of the unique challenges of housing. Certain communities have done better jobs of solving it than others. But I do think there's at least a realization of some of the challenges we need to ensure there's adequate housing now. The immigration plays a key part, but I do think that that overall rise in vulnerability is an even larger one, combined with the funding challenges. You know, when we see the mental health consequences of pandemic with a lot of sources suggesting like mental health challenges have essentially doubled over the last five or six years. Over the course of the pandemic, nothing was open. So, a lot of people, were not involved with activities. And once you do that for a couple of years, it can be really hard to get out and do things again, even, you know, things that you used to love and things that you used to enjoy. And so it's really, like, how do we provide both services for those who are all struggling over the course of the pandemic, make sure that we're providing support for people who are moving into a community. Because if people are not getting adequate support in the first couple of years, it's going to affect their entire time here in Canada.

SFX: Buzz

News clip

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.6544999>

“Today we’re announcing that we will reduce the number of immigrants we bring in, over the next three years, which will result in a pause in the population growth, over the next two years. This builds on our previously announced measures to cap international student permits and reform the temporary foreign worker program. All of which we are implementing with a single aim: stabilize our population growth to give all levels of

government time to catch up. Time to make the necessary investments in health care, in housing, in social services, to accommodate more people in the future.”

News clip

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.6565514>

“Well, the cost of living has skyrocketed, housing has become scarce and expensive and health care access is still a problem for many Nova Scotians. All of this as we grapple with record-breaking population growth. In less than ten years we’ve added more than 135 000 people to the province.

News clip

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.6565385>

“In recent years, Winnipeg has experienced fairly rapid population growth. The city grew by 7% over the past two years alone.”

Mary Barroll: We’ve talked a lot about immigration and population growth in urban centres, but it’s an issue in smaller centres as well. Andrew Chunilall serves as Chief Executive Officer at Community Foundations of Canada. He helps the philanthropic sector transform, innovate, and meet the new challenges and opportunities, such as immigrant migration to Canada.

Andrew Chunilall: When people do come to Canada, they are, initially choosing to be in larger urban centers, in part because that’s where the services are, that’s where the jobs are. And that’s where the infrastructure has been built to help them succeed. However, the housing and shelter costs, transportation costs, in those communities, are making it almost impossible for them to stay there. And so, they are moving to lower cost areas. However, when you go to a lower cost area, they may not have the same level of opportunity in terms of jobs and wages, support systems and that much needed infrastructure. So, what’s happening is those communities are struggling, building that infrastructure and support system out. And so, it is a bit of a catch-22. But again, affordability and inflation is at the heart of the issue, especially in our largest urban cities.

Mary Barroll: Steven Ayer agrees. He notes that the high cost of living and housing in large cities are forcing a lot of immigrants to smaller centers where there are fewer supports for newcomers.

SFX: City traffic sounds

Steven Ayer: A lot of people continue to leave Toronto. It’s an extremely expensive place and I think that the rent and particularly the folks with family have been particularly likely to leave the city. I think that really means that a lot of the outlying areas, whether it’s Kitchener or Cambridge, Waterloo, one of the fastest growing areas in almost every

single year over the last seven or eight years, or even Moncton, where a huge number of people from all around the country are moving out that way, or Calgary where a lot of people from across the country are moving there because of lower home prices. So, I mean, a lot of these places are facing exact same issues around international immigration. A lot of people want to move to these places because they are great places to live and particularly for many people like they feel as great places to raise a family.

A lot of these other places that normally haven't grown very much are experiencing really unprecedented growth rates because of many people are no longer able to afford going to Toronto.

So, all the forecasts in places like Waterloo region or Durham region, they were not expecting the sheer number of folks with children moving in. So, all of the sorts of services around there are inadequate. so, and pretty much every community around the country did not, if you look at their growth plans, did not realize they're going to have this gigantic inflow of 25- to 40-year-olds.

So, think this is also another area that a lot of, pretty much every region in the country has to deal with is, the trends we've seen over the last decade mean that a lot of our planning forecasts and assumptions were not correct. And so, we might have been investing in programs and services that don't fully match the needs of the population that we ended up with.

Mary Barroll: In addition to inflation and increased housing costs, funding cuts to the settlement sector has meant more of a strain on the system and fewer resources to address the needs of newcomers, who are often particularly vulnerable when they first arrive in the country, and who need access to settlement supports to build a thriving life here.

As we mentioned earlier, this isn't an issue limited to Toronto or even Ontario.

Olga Stachova is the CEO of MOSAIC: a charity serving immigrant, refugee, migrant and mainstream communities in Metro Vancouver and the Fraser Valley, as well as throughout the province of BC. She explains what organizations are dealing with, out West.

Olga Stachova: We see our shelters already full. We are in very close contact with shelters across Metro Vancouver, and they constantly report that more than half of the clients using shelters are refugee claimants, are people who are coming to this country to seek asylum and escape persecution. And so, we lack the capacity for the initial emergency housing upon arrival. And this will become especially problematic when we start seeing families arrive. Because if individuals arrive, they could go to shelters for men or women. When you see families arriving, they will need to be separated to be able to even use shelters. So, there's a lot of additional trauma and

harm that can happen.

We also see an incredible increase in interest in services. And many of our programs have long waiting lists. In particular, the federally funded language training programs. As you can imagine, when you are new to the country, your first priority is to find a job and achieve economic stability. And strong language skills are so essential for newcomers' ability to find jobs, participate in training programs and function in this new society.

Mary Barroll: Aleks Dughman is seeing the same trends. Aleks is the Co-Executive Director of Rainbow Refugee, a Vancouver-based organization that helps people fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or HIV status. Like Olga Stachova, they are seeing a constant and unrelenting demand for services.

Aleks Dughman-Manzur: We have mental health concerns. So, a lot of people, of course, come with trauma. They're fleeing persecution. They flee in terrible conditions in their home country. So, they have had to travel to different countries on their way to Canada. You know, there's no real free access to mental health supports right now. Healthcare access, a lot of refugees are dependent on a federal program called IFHP. And many of the service providers here in Canada do not register with IFHP. So, there's less service providers available to address their healthcare needs. Legal Aid, who also has a shortage in their funding, are now turning away a lot of our clients and not giving them free legal representation. And then there's the funding cuts to the settlement sector, which means there's much more strain on the system and less people and resources, human resources and financial resources, to be able to address the needs and meet the needs of LGBTQI newcomers, in general. So, I would say those are, in a summary, all the challenges that we're seeing right now.

Mary Barroll: In addition to the increased population impacting demand for services, Aleks Dughman says global anti-LGBTQI sentiments, and the policies of Donald Trump, have increased immigration levels to Canada.

Aleks Dughman-Manzur: Not only last year, but in the past few years, we have experienced a progressive rise in service demand. This increase is driven by the global surge of anti-LGBTQI sentiments, shifting immigration policies, and the growing number of LGBTQI asylum seekers arriving here in Canada. So, as a volunteer-based organization in the past, we used to support around 90 people per year, that were asylum seekers and did around 25 to 30 private sponsorships of refugees, and now we're supporting over 700 or 800 asylum seekers per year. So, you see that the numbers have gone up exponentially and we're sponsoring around 60 to 70 people per year, through the private sponsorship program. So, definitely we've seen a rise, for many reasons, that we can experience here. And now, of course, with the new Trump's administration, we're also seeing a rise of people reaching out from the U.S.

Music

SFX: Construction sounds

Mary Barroll: Cities are growing and developing but their infrastructures and services are not keeping up with the needs of their population. Though new housing is being built, the adjacent community services needed to help their new tenants to thrive are not being provided. Steven Ayer weighs in.

Steven Ayer: Population growth in any region is incredibly concentrated. There are certain areas that are being developed, and these are the places where housing is being built, and sometimes new infrastructure is being put in place at the same time, but really, it's incredibly concentrated. If you look at Toronto, it has more than 140 different neighbourhoods. But half of them, between 2016 and 2021, had declining populations. So, despite the population of the city really surging, when we look at the most recent census data, we have, the vast majority of the city is actually not growing. It's about 10 neighbourhoods are growing, far, far, far faster than the rest of the city. And when you think about, like, what the needs are for organizations, like from the population growth perspective, it's certain organizations that are in these high growth areas that are really particularly strained, there's not going to be a corner of any major city where the nonprofits are not suffering from this mismatch between growing demand for services and the lack of increase in funding. But particularly when I think about the need for supports, I mean, it is the fastest growing areas. And so, in Toronto, it's like downtown Toronto itself, a few other clusters where you go around and almost every time you see them, there's another 60-story tower going up. But you don't see, at the same time, another nonprofit being fully funded to be able to provide supports and services, ranging from the sorts of things that you might want for a sense of belonging, for community services, for recreational activities. So, you see these giant towers going up, one after another, but we don't see that corresponding funding to nonprofits that would be really needed to make sure that everyone's thriving.

Mary Barroll: Additionally, as Carolyn Stewart explains, the services that are available are not always aligned with the needs of the populations they are meant to serve.

Carolyn Stewart: So when we're seeing population growth, it hasn't been coupled with the growth in purpose-built housing or the right types of jobs. For people, we're seeing shifts in the sector. We're seeing different skill sets and different needs for jobs. And so those two things aren't matching up, as well. And then on top of that, even better support, scaled accordingly, as people navigate challenges. So, even something as simple as services are now offered online or you have to navigate it online. But 30% of food bank clients don't have access to the internet. And so, there's almost these complex challenges that aren't fitting together or dovetailing the way they're supposed to. And so, when those things don't grow alongside the population growth, so the supports and the needs of the communities, whether it's population growth or any other factor, it becomes increasingly difficult for families and people of the community to

navigate how to get there and get the supports they need or alternately even find solutions so that they're not falling into poverty.

Mary Barroll: Olga Stachova explains how despite the fact that the government has reversed its immigration policy and reduced immigration, the corresponding cuts to funding for immigration services make it difficult to serve the needs of newcomers who are already in our country. The funding cuts are also contributing to increased poverty levels and unemployment.

Olga Stachova: The Immigration Targets directly inform the budgets available for immigrant services, which led to very drastic funding cuts that we've recently seen. And the sector is understandably bracing itself for new cuts amid political changes and fiscal realities across the country. So, the impact really on our clients and organizations is twofold. On one hand, there is cuts to funding that will reduce services available. And again, on the topic of language, of that, a very prominent changes is access to higher level language classes that equip newcomers with professional language competencies required for jobs and further skills training.

Mary Barroll: Aleks Dughman shares what effects these funding cuts will have on asylum seekers.

Aleks Dughman-Manzur: We saw the announcement on the cuts in the immigration levels plan and that meant that many resettlement spots that we had in previous years are being cut. So, less people are going to be able to arrive through the resettlement program because there are cuts to the levels plan. But it also means that asylum seekers who have reached protection, here in Canada, will have longer wait times to be able to become permanent residents.

Mary Barroll: And it's not just settlement services that have seen funding cuts. Several of our guests identify a concerning and chronic underfunding of social services and are calling on governments to prioritize action on poverty by investing in people and communities.

Kishone Roy, a Canadian author and Executive Director of The Federation of Community Social Services of British Columbia, says social services and housing supports have failed to keep pace with the needs of community, for decades.

Kishone Roy: There hasn't been good times for community-based social services over the past three decades, in Canada. An important piece of research nationally by an organization called GetWell Canada looked the historic spending of governments, regardless of political stripe, over the past few decades. And you can see it in the state of affairs of social housing, for example, which for many decades, we built a normal amount of social housing in every community. I was raised in it, in Hamilton. And then, around 1990, we stopped. And for about three decades, we didn't build any housing that was really linked to the incomes of local residents. And so now you have a deficit. We

have that similar deficit when it comes to community-based social services and the things that prevent these rising health care and policing costs. So, we haven't been spending on it.

10 years ago, there was no national housing strategy. Stephen Harper was still Prime Minister and in many communities across the whole country, particularly indigenous communities, but whole cities in some cases, large cities, they hadn't built any affordable housing in decades. And if you can think of an apartment, it takes about a decade to go from planning, financing, zoning, construction, to actually build it. So, even though we have our first national housing strategy, and we have our first real provincial housing strategy, on the ground, the support that's really needed in community hasn't come yet. It hasn't been built yet. And these organizations who are doing their first buildings are now gearing up to do their second and third because they know that those will be filled right away. So, these social causes, I think, will dominate the needs of citizens in the decade ahead.

Mary Barroll: Carolyn Stewart and Feed Ontario are issuing their own call to action, asking government to take action to relieve poverty and food insecurity.

Carolyn Stewart: Our network is calling on all parties to really prioritize people and take bold action on poverty by investing in people and communities, because that's what we need to see. Whether it be affordable housing and tenant protections, quality employment and worker protections, and even really reinvesting in those social support programs that we've seen disinvestments in over the last two decades.

SFX: Buzz

News clip

www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?&q=donald+trump+lgbtq&&mid=59EA201F00154FB603AF59EA201F00154FB603AF&&FORM=VRDGAR

“It will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there will only be two genders. Male and Female.”

Mary Barroll: Of course, we can't talk about changes in population without bringing up what's going in the United States. The actions and policies of the Trump administration will, in part, shape migration to Canada, both from the U.S. and abroad. Aleks Dughman has already alluded to that.

Changes to American policy come almost daily, adding further pressures on nonprofits who are forced to respond.

Aleks Dugham Manzur: When you're not a permanent resident, you have to continuously be applying for a work permit, for a study permit. It's really an unstable situation, with regards to that. We are also fearful that there's going to be more

restrictions on the Inland Asylum claims. So, as it is expanded that a cut off on temporary resident permits, it means that less people will be able to arrive to Canada to be able to then claim asylum. And effectively, with the expansion of the Safe Third Agreement with the U.S. and closing the border completely between the U.S. and Canada, that means that there's less pathways for people to arrive to actually seek protection. And then the backlogs and delays in refugee processing, as well. So, we are very much aware of what could happen

We saw in BC how the ongoing challenges of affordable housing shortages, limited healthcare access and gaps in legal aid disproportionately impact LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers have not been able to get those services. And then across provinces, we have also seen troubling trends of policies that roll back protections for trans and non-binary people. And this shift in policies contribute to an increasing hostile environment that can make settlement even more difficult for trans and non-binary people and queer people in general. So, at the same time that we see in Canada shifting their narrative and the rhetoric around newcomers and shifting their protections and rhetoric and narratives around trans people, it becomes an intersectional risk to LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers, for sure.

Mary Barroll: Olga Stachova echoes the sentiment that the shifting narratives around newcomers is very concerning for a country that has long held a reputation for being welcoming to immigrants.

Olga Stachova: So, there is the reduction of services, on one side. And it's all compounded by the negative rhetoric and the scapegoating of newcomers that causes real harm and fear in the newcomer communities. You know, we are repeatedly hearing from our clients that they are not feeling safe in Canada anymore. And this unease extends to our staff, and not only staff at MOSAIC and immigrant serving sector, the staff and not-for-profit sector who are often immigrants themselves. And their well-being and their safety is also impacted by this rhetoric.

Mary Barroll: Olga Stachova spells out the significance of this shift in Canadian public sentiment and rhetoric and its impact on our country as a whole.

Olga Stachova: Our clients have most certainly been impacted and so have organizations like MOSAIC by the changing political landscape and the narrative they're displaying out on the national political stage.

We know that as a country we face a number of serious challenges. We have seen the cost of living go up. We have seen severe shortages of housing, particularly affordable housing, challenges accessing health care. And unfortunately, immigrants have been often painted in the public discourse as the source of these challenges, which is a sentiment that is very misplaced and honestly dangerous and harmful, as it goes hand in hand in the steep increase in incidents of racism and hate experienced by newcomers, every day, and the significant change in public sentiment towards

immigration that we've seen over the past year. And then of course, we've seen the federal government respond to these sentiments and dramatically reduce immigration levels applying for the next three years. And while some adjustments to our immigration policies and targets were needed and expected, I think everyone was surprised with just how large these reductions were and that the number of policies introduced to deter people from coming to Canada. So, we would change from a country who was proud to broadcast to the world how welcoming we are of immigrants and how appreciated and essential they are, to a country that is actively trying to discourage people from coming here, putting more and more obstacles in the way.

Mary Barroll: Although we've seen public rhetoric and sentiment around immigration becoming increasingly negative, Kishone Roy reminds us that it's the failure to properly manage population growth that is the problem, not the growth itself.

Kishone Roy: Population growth, when it's portrayed as a negative. I understand it may come too fast, but it's too much of a good thing. It is a good thing. Population decline is the bad thing. You may not want the rate of people coming to your town that, you may not be able to build to keep up with it. Our immigration levels may have gotten a little too high, but at the end of the day, people are good and more people in your community is better and people building your community up for the future, contributing to your food bank building social housing starting up a business, these are goods for your community.

Music

Mary Barroll: With the changes to immigration policy in this country and tectonic shifts south of the border, can we find opportunities? Or reason for optimism? Yes. I think we can. According to a recent study by Imagine Canada, two thirds of Canadians still view charities and nonprofits favourably and immigrants, particularly new immigrants, show higher levels of charitable engagement compared to Canadian-born residents. And almost 80 percent of multicultural Canadians reported donating in the past year. And these new Canadians volunteer as well. Steven Ayer comments on this phenomenon.

Steven Ayer: We called our 2023 report from Toronto Foundation, The Power of Us. And it really was emphasizing the role that, whether it's even just, you know, reaching out to your neighbour and seeing how they're doing, inviting people out that you might've lost touch with over the pandemic, reconnecting with folks, like all these are absolutely vital. And, people might be struggling, you might be able to volunteer together.

I do think when we look at a lot of the folks moving into the country, I mean, we do see this incredible spirit of volunteerism and a lot of them do, like if you ask them all sorts of questions about their civic engagement. They have extremely high civic engagement. A lot of people certainly are struggling incredibly, yes, there's a lot of things about Canada that they are very enthusiastic about, like certainly the cost of living is dramatically, you

know, traumatic consequences, but a lot of people, they see a lot of really strong things with Canada and like they're very enthusiastic about many of the principles that the country's founded on. And like there's a lot of possibility and opportunity for civic engagement.

Mary Barroll: Andrew Chunilall reminds us of all the reasons Canada needs immigrants.

Andrew Chunilall: There's a reason why we have such a robust immigration policy and why we bring so many people to Canada. We need the people. We need a strong labour force. We need volunteers. We need taxpayers. We need people to help build this country and innovate, create new businesses, be entrepreneurs. We need all of those things. So, immigration is critically important for that to happen. You know our birth rate is 1.2. You need a birth rate of, I think, 2.1 to just even replace yourself, let alone have any level of growth in the economy. All of our demographic growth comes from immigration. And those families tend to have larger families and more children than Canadian families. And so, I think what we have to do is accept the fact that we do need immigration. We do need to bring the very best people we can to this country, but we also need to support them and their success as well, and that will have payoffs down the road. All the success that has brought us here as a country has in some shape or form been because of immigration and the people that come to this country and succeeding generations. And so, we know it's a proven formula. We know it can work. We just need to do it better.

SFX: Crowd cheering

Mary Barroll: Aleks Dughman adds that engagement of newcomers in all organizations is essential both for Canadian nonprofits and the communities they serve. That far from being a burden on social services, newcomers can be an essential part of building capacity, supporting community and contributing to society and Canada's social safety net, if the sector embraces the possibilities newcomers offer.

Aleks Dughman-Manzur: I think engaging with newcomer communities, it's essential and it has been essential to our organization. Like I would say 90% of our staff team and many of our volunteers are newcomers to Canada. They have come through Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership. They are LGBTQI refugees, so they have an immense wealth of knowledge in understanding the challenges and also in providing the supports. So, I would say engaging with newcomer communities is essential. I think already settlement organizations do that, but it would be good to expand on that. But it requires trust, cultural competency and inclusivity, meaning, you have to engage and at the same time you have to provide a safe space for people to be able to engage and be part of your communities, be part of your organization. So, investing in training and capacity building for your staff and your volunteers, that is one thing that can happen. Creating leadership pathways. So, hiring refugees and newcomers and particularly hiring LGBTQI refugees in your organizations will transform the way your organizations

provide those services. Develop employment opportunities. This is very important for settlement supports that people have access to employment. Engage volunteers from newcomer communities and also many of them are very successful once they have settled in Canada want to give back so there may be sources of funding from newcomer communities as well, offering mentorship and professional development, those are all things. But the main thing I want to emphasize is creating communities of belonging. We don't want to other the newcomer or the LGBTQI newcomer. We want the LGBTQI newcomer to feel that they are part of the system and the society that they are helping create and co-create, that they're part of the organizations that are providing support. So, hiring practices around that and also engaging the communities I think is very important.

Mary Barroll: Kishone Roy agrees that it's crucial to engage and make connections with newcomer communities – and to refocus how we in the sector perceive newcomers -- as not just people in need of services, but also as providers and contributors to community.

SFX: Sounds of many people circulating

Kishone Roy: The biggest challenge is community connection. When a whole bunch of people move into a new community, it doesn't matter if you've been running the food bank for 30 or 40 years or you've been delivering child development services or early year services for 60 or 70 years. If nobody knows your name and brand in the way that 20, 30 years ago was common parlance for who does this locally. So, a lot of real connection with first time people in a community is hard to do for nonprofits because they're generally looking at those demographics as people who need service and support and so they wait for people in need, but not as people who are coming in as students and doctors and nurses and people who need to know about your organization locally because they might want to donate, they might want to volunteer.

Music

People need to be able to, as humans, they need to be able to do good in their community, to live happy and healthy lives. If they don't know how to do that locally, they might get tied into a bunch of online federal schemes and hopes and dreams. Instead of understanding that locally there are organizations that can work with, that can improve the grounds and neighborhoods they see for the rest of their lives. So that is a real challenge.

I've been surprised how many times it's been somebody from an exurb or a small town who's been able to tell a whole room full of people, in a larger urban center, how to do their job, how to find expertise. I actually think, we may have something to learn from these organizations because they step up with responsibility in a greater way. They're largely multi-service organizations already, they don't have to diversify their revenue streams because they haven't been so, so focused. And they value local community

connection, in a different way as well. Everybody values it highly, but they value it as part of every interaction with every person is somebody who's part of this community and might be for their whole lives and we should get to know them, versus what services do you need by what time on what day at how much and are we paying for it or you as the government, which is a bit more of what happens in the urban centers. So, I think we have a lot to learn from these rural areas and smaller communities. And I think, too, they, they will need some support and respect and appreciation for what they're doing to be able to juggle the growth.

Mary Barroll: Olga Stachova agrees that the nonprofit sector has to readjust its perspective and recognize the potential that newcomers offer to organizations and Canadian society as a whole.

Olga Stachova: Newcomers represent such a wealth of experience and talent, which is largely untapped and underutilized. So, there's a lot that we, as organizations, can definitely do to support. I could mention some calls to action to all of us. I would ask our sector and all industry sectors to review our hiring practices, to really look at the potential barriers and consider whether our shortlist of candidates, as we're hiring, represent truly the demographic of the regions we serve. When you look at Metro Vancouver, 50 % of candidates are newcomers. So, your shortlist and your workforce should reflect this. We should all examine our practices for promotions. Are newcomers being considered for promotions as frequently as Canadian-born employees? Are newcomers represented in your management teams and your leadership? I think if we can do that, if we can all get together behind allowing that and bridging the key barriers, one of them lack Canadian work experience, and being those employers who provide that for newcomers. And lots of not-profits do. A lot of newcomers start jobs in the not-for-profit sector, and not-for-profit sector employees, when you look at the statistics, are predominantly newcomers. So how do we provide the first Canadian job experience to help them grow their careers beyond that? I think, again, we can look at government, we can look at funding, but the main role is the role we have as employers.

Music

Mary Barroll: We've learned a lot in this Charity Village Connects podcast. We know we'll go through a tremendous shift in demographics over the next couple of years. The Canadian government has curtailed immigration and that will have impact. In the U.S. President Donald Trump seems intent on cutting off immigration completely and using immigration as a scapegoat for some of the problems facing his country. With all this going on, it's easy to get discouraged. Our guests have final thoughts on coping with immigration policies that seem to change on a dime and the shifting demographics, shifts in public discourse, increased cost of living, demands on nonprofits, and challenges to Canadian society that result.

Olga Stachova: So, there is a lot of changes to temporary residence. You might have seen that Canada is trying to decrease the overall number of temporary residents to 5%

of the population. And that is done by decreasing number. We've heard a lot about international students. But there's a lot of policies that come around restricting eligibility to apply for work visas, for work with us, for spouses. So, if you come as an international student or you come as a temporary worker, your spouse will be limited whether or not they can work. And just imagine the cost of living in our country. If you come here and only one individual is able to work, you can't survive. So, policies like this will make Canada a country that is no longer attractive. And I think, for a long time, we in Canada thought that everyone wants to come here, and we'll just, and we can choose who should come. And we've been able to do that, but we should not take it for granted. People can see if, and we already see people either leaving because they can't survive due to the cost of living or people changing plans, not coming to Canada, not actually choosing Canada as their destination. So, we should be also careful about reputation.

Carolyn Stewart: The challenge we face as a province are complex and sometimes governments don't really have a clear line of sight on how different policies or interventions are actually affecting the individual and people. So, you are there as a voice of the people and as a voice from the community or group that may not otherwise have a voice. And so, you need to speak clearly and honestly about the realities that people are facing, and families are facing and how the government policies or practices are impacting their lives, whether that be good or bad. So, change you may have seen by a great policy implementation or alternately, one that's creating barriers and challenges for many families within your community. So, for us, we always say, we think there's always opportunity and we're never gonna be able to move forward as communities unless we have informed dialogue and we're willing to collect.

Andrew Chunilall: I think it's really, really important that Canada needs to think about its immigration policy and how it can work with civil society to help integrate newcomers, to help integrate students better so they have a better chance at being successful in Canada. And we have a lot of that know-how. We've worked with refugee communities for a long, time, especially helping to bring in Syrian refugees and Ukrainian, we know how to do this work really, really well. I also think it's important for us to understand that we're Canadians and we're generous people and we're a unified country and all sectors, government, corporate, nonprofit sector, these are moments when we really have to work together. And in order to do that, we have to have that abundant mindset. Although things appear to be coming scarce because the economy could contract quite a bit, we could go into a recession, there is still a lot of resources out there. There are still a lot of people that care and are willing to do more now because communities need them more. And it's one really good thing that community foundations do. We know where the pockets of resources are. We know who to talk to. We know when we pick up the phone who we need to call to help mobilize community. Community is the backbone. There's a lot there.

Kishone Roy: Demographics are just one of many changes. Demographic change isn't something that Pacific Canadians have pushed against too much, historically. In fact, I

remember some really tough economic times, particularly in the north and in the west side of the island here, where it was \$20,000 to buy a house because nobody was moving to these communities, and major industries had shut down. And we want growth of our demographics and change in our demographics. In particular, we want young people to be able to stay in the neighborhoods and the communities they were raised in. And traditionally, we've kind of encouraged them to go off in other directions. So, some stability through things like food banks, social service agencies, may be a good response to the uncertainty of the times ahead.

Aleks Dughman-Manzur: One of the things that we have learned at Rainbow Refugee and that I have learned in my own personal journey has been how to do this work from a solidarity perspective more than a charity perspective. And this is a shift in paradigm around NGOs because when you do it from a solidarity perspective, you are not only thinking that the need is on the other side, you're also not othering the person who's needing the support. You're not thinking that you have all the answers and then the other person is in need and you're here to provide them with the answers, but you are co-creating those answers. People have so much to teach us about their cultures, about their practices, about how we can support each other in community. So many cultures have so many rich practices around community building. So, I think it's important that we also place ourselves in empowering the newcomer and refugee, in providing the tools so they can continue their life plans that was interrupted by fleeing persecution and that they're able to contribute in the best ways that they can to their own development and the development of our society. So, I would say if we can maybe research and inquire, what are the differences between coming from a solidarity perspective and a charity perspective and shift that paradigm, I think it will make for stronger communities and for communities of belonging to also be able to shift the paradigm and contribute to our societies in better ways.

CharityVillage Connects theme music

Mary Barroll: That is our podcast on understanding the impacts – and the opportunities -- of population growth, changing demographics and increasing demands on nonprofits. There's lots to think about. We are in a time of great societal change, economic difficulties and shifting demographics. As our guests have reminded us, to navigate the challenges, we need to shift our paradigms, respond with an abundant mindset and embrace the promise that newcomers offer to our country – not just respond to the issues arising from immigration. Engagement and connection with newcomers are essential to tackling the problems all Canadians face with high cost of living and housing shortages, to build resilience in communities across the country. With the threats coming from south of our border, it's a time when all Canadians must reflect on the kind of country we want to be. How we respond to newcomers, address poverty, food scarcity and provide social services for those in need, while facing economic challenges brought about by U.S. tariffs and fighting for our values as a sovereign nation, will define us as a people, both to ourselves and to the world.

Be sure to visit our website and our show notes for more information on the resources, reports and programs mentioned in this episode. If you'd like to hear more of what our guests have to say, check out our full video interviews on our website. CharityVillage is proud to be the Canadian source for nonprofit news, employment services, crowdfunding, e-learning, HR resources and tools, and so much more. Please take a moment to check out our website at charityvillage.com.

Up next on CharityVillage Connects...For many thought leaders in the nonprofit sector, the minority rather than the majority of nonprofits have had the lion's share of influence on shaping policies that impact charities and nonprofits, for far too long. A relatively small number of large well-funded charities have dominated the public discourse and public policy governing our sector, drowning out the voices of the vast majority of small charities and nonprofits across the country. We'll take a closer look at the have and have-nots in the nonprofit sector, what the impacts have been historically, and what we can do to make access to influence more fair and equitable, and more reflective of the sector. Giving Voice to the Voiceless; Balancing and Sharing Influence in the Nonprofit Sector. That's next time on CharityVillage Connects. I'm Mary Barroll. Thanks for listening.