



Safeguarding Equity: How Trump's DEI Rollbacks Are Impacting Canadian Nonprofits

Mary Barroll: Hi I'm Mary Barroll. In this episode of CharityVillage Connects we'll tackle the challenging story of how Canadian nonprofits are responding to the so-called anti-woke war that the Trump administration is waging against DEI in America. But first, here's a word from our sponsor.

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SFX: Sounds of typing and office ambiance

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

SFX: Hummingbird flying and tone

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

Music

Mary Barroll: 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, President Trump's DEI rollbacks and how they're impacting Canadian nonprofits.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdyVuJ5uNgA>

“My administration has taken action to abolish all discriminatory diversity, equity, and inclusion nonsense. And these are policies that were absolute nonsense. DEI at HUD is dead. It's gone. DEI is dead at the VA. DEI is dead at the EPA. We've killed DEI at the Department of Energy.”

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhYNzXg0BTo>

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion, or DEI programs are under attack by conservative lawmakers and activists. From college campuses to corporate America, the fear of legal liability and political backlash is leading some to backtrack or rebrand their diversity initiatives. And what's driving the backlash? Well, part of it is this woke/anti-woke culture war idea. The DEI piece, and that's really what's come under fire recently, especially since the Supreme Court rolled back affirmative action in 2023.”

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSQ2P8nObVs>

“President Trump signed multiple executive orders revoking several DEI mandates, policies, and programs within the federal government this week. And he also put federal DEI workers on leave. History wise, DEI has been around since the 1960s, linked very much to the civil rights movement. It was the 1964 Civil Rights Act that banned employment discrimination based on race, religion, sex. But it was in 2020 when in the wake of George Floyd's murder, you'll remember, we had these big protests on the streets. And that's when companies rushed in to get more diverse people into executive positions. And with this big push we saw a big backlash with political figures on the right, people like Elon Musk, really pushing back and saying DEI equated racism against white people and specifically white men.”

Mary Barroll: In this episode of Charityvillage Connects we dive into the conversation around DEI or diversity, equity and inclusion, as it becomes one of the most polarized, cultural flashpoints in North America. We gather insights from DEI professionals and advocates, non-profit governance experts and talent management professionals, to bring a Canadian lens to this issue and better understand how the American backlash is hitting the nonprofit and charitable sector here – north of the 49th Parallel.

Mark Blumberg: When you have a neighbor, not just a little neighbor, but a very big

neighbor, a neighbor who's 10 times the size of us, right next to us, who is dealing with these problems, it has a very negative effect on them, but it also has a potentially very negative effect on us as well.

Jade Pichette: We have seen some significant queer organizations actually close in the last year, being the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity and Trans Care Plus, as examples, and it's possible that we'll see other organizations who are in challenging positions, as they move forward. Certain organizations have been stepping up and trying to fill some of those gaps, but it's not enough — and it's not enough on a global scale either.

Mante Molepo: It's interesting. I see a variation. I see organizations, nonprofits, retreating from their DEI efforts. Others are also remaining steadfast and really doubling down on their commitments. But we're also seeing, and I see this a bit more, of rebranding their DEI efforts or developing what are like shadow DEI initiatives where they no longer refer to, quote unquote controversial language around DEI.

Wendy Cukier: What I would start with is by reinforcing that our institutions, our constitution, our charter of rights and freedoms, our various legislative frameworks, our jurisprudence, our provincial human rights legislation, our disability legislation at the federal and provincial level, all of those are solid and unchanged. Where we see, in my view, dangerous spillover is really in the media and the discourse.

Dean Delpeache: This is really the cry of the quote unquote civil rights movement. This is the cry. If you think about the civil rights movement, what was it really about? It was about ensuring that everyone can work within an organization and not feel segregated. That's really belonging at its core. You want everyone to come to work at a company and feel like they belong and not feel that they have to quiver because they're of a certain color or certain background, etc.

Music: The song “Hail to the Chief” plays and slowly distorts

Mary Barroll: The election of Donald Trump has provoked many dramatic changes for our neighbours south of the border: anti-immigrant policies leading to ICE raids and deportations, the DOGE cuts to USAID and other institutions, and of course, the openly hostile so called “anti-woke” war on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Some of the first indications that the Trump policies were seeping over the border, into Canada, were spikes in reports of violence and hate crimes against many of the same groups that were targeted by the U.S. Administration. To better understand how American politics are affecting the Canadian landscape, we spoke to Dr. Wendy Cukier, founder and academic director of the Diversity Institute at the Toronto Metropolitan University. An award-winning diversity leader, Wendy Cukier also leads the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub and is the academic research director for the Future Skills Centre.

Wendy Cukier: The backlash against immigrants and racialized people, I think, is

acute. And certainly, the backlash against the trans community is something we can't ignore. And the other thing of course is hate crimes and we've seen spikes in hate crimes against South Asian communities, spikes in hate crimes against the Jewish community and Muslim communities, and I would argue that violence against women is effectively a hate crime and that has increased as well as the attacks on trans people and so on. Physical violence is kind of the tip of the iceberg in some respects. And we've seen spikes in a lot of manifestations of violence against the populations we're talking about. The next layer is, of course, overt discrimination and then systemic discrimination and then microaggressions. So, when I see a big spike in hate crimes, I worry that other forms of discrimination are also increasing.

Mary Barroll: Wendy Cukier isn't alone in her observations. Here's Jade Pichette, an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility or IDEA professional, and the Director of Programs at Pride at Work Canada. Jade Pichette says hate crimes against the LGBTQI+ community have increased dramatically – and it's not just the tip of the iceberg, but a global phenomenon.

Jade Pichette: Within Canada, we've seen an increase of anti-2SLGBTQI+ hate. In fact, between 2016 and 2023, we actually saw a 388% increase in hate crimes against the community. And this is part of a broader effort to demonize the community. It's not like we haven't been demonized as a community before, so we're familiar with this, but it is at a level that we have not seen in a few years, that's for sure. And it has been getting worse, especially with some of the actions that are happening overseas in the U.S., in the UK, in parts of Africa, including Ghana, and some others. So, we are seeing a pushback against our community worldwide. So, it's not just in Canada.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdZvyIFVj0g>

“The DEI rollbacks continue with more companies doing away with diversity, equity, and inclusion requirements. Goldman Sachs, now no longer requiring companies they take public to have diverse board members. Disney also announcing changes this week to its DI approach, shifting the diversity and inclusion performance for employees to focus more on business outcomes. PBS, shutting down their DEI Office Monday to comply with the Trump executive order, ending DEI and federally supported organizations.”

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O16CdUWH3Q0>

“More than 50 universities are being investigated for alleged racial discrimination as part of President Donald Trump's campaign to end diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, his officials say exclude white and Asian American students. The U.S. Department of Education announced the new investigation just one month after issuing a memo

warning schools and colleges, they could lose federal money over "race-based preferences" in missions, scholarships, or any aspect of student life."

News clip

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DGofPNTpCbS/?hl=en>

"Nearly 350 private and community foundations face potential federal investigations under President Trump's order to scrutinize DEI programs. These foundations which distribute 55% of all grant dollars include major names like Ford, Rockefeller, and Bloomberg Philanthropies, while some, like the MacArthur and Freedom Together Foundations, are increasing their giving, the Chan Zuckerberg initiative has withdrawn from DEI funding. A federal court has put part of Trump's order on hold, but the investigation provision remains, leaving these grant makers under intense scrutiny."

Mary Barroll: There's no doubt that the U.S. President's so-called anti-woke policies against DEI, Trans and LGBTQI+ rights have caused many major corporations, educational and philanthropic institutions in the United States to roll back their policies and programs on diversity, equity and inclusion, for fear of federal funding cuts and retribution from the Trump administration. Some of the first clues, that the Trump policies within America are having a measurable impact on the nonprofit sector in Canada, are the extraordinary steps American NGO's, nonprofits and charities are taking to protect their mission work and their assets, by sheltering them in Canada. Mark Bloomberg is a partner at the law firm Bloomberg's Professional Corporation in Toronto and works almost exclusively advising nonprofits and registered charities, on their work, in Canada and abroad. Lately he's been approached to advise and act for many organizations from south of the border, with very specific concerns for which they need solutions -- many of them are active in DEI, LGBTQI+ rights, immigrant and refugee supports and other areas whose missions are under threat and even outright attack from the new policies of the U.S. federal government.

Mark Blumberg: Typically, in the old days, someone might say an American charity, we want to fund raise in Canada. They'd set up a registered charity in Canada. What we're seeing is something very different and it isn't necessarily setting up a headquarters yet. It's a more preliminary step, which is setting up an affiliate in Canada. And what we've seen over the last few months is a very large number of American organizations that are interested in this, and a large number are actually going through with it. So, what they're setting up is a nonprofit here in Canada, that's not a registered charity. Their focus is not on fundraising from Canada. Their focus is on many other things, including the safety of their reserves, the ability to conduct international activities, things of that sort.

Now, there's a lot of nonprofits in America, and I can tell you, many are not thinking about this, partly because they're very comfortable with the situation in the U.S. right now. Some evangelical churches are very comfortable with what's going on or certain, right-wing think tanks and things. We're talking about tens of thousands of nonprofits in the U.S. that are working in areas like immigration, human rights, including LGBTQ and

trans rights, dealing with Middle East or certain other issues, the environment, etc. And they're worried that they're going to get shut down or undermined.

Harvard, one of the wealthiest and most prestigious U.S. universities, is under attack. And if they can be under attack, then presumably anyone can be under attack. They've been threatened with loss of tax-exempt status and taxes and other things. So, it's hard to say what exactly will happen. It's very fluid. The danger for an American charity is that the government can come after them. But there's another danger, which is that the banks who are trying to curry favour, perhaps with the government, could, for example, freeze their accounts. And at that point, they have no access to money. Basically, their whole operations are going to shut down. And even if, in three or five years from now, those assets are no longer shut down, the organization is destroyed by that.

So, groups are looking at what can they do if you have \$100 million in the U.S. right now? Should you move maybe 50 million to grantees that you would give the money to and maybe some of it to a Canadian affiliate, a separate entity that doesn't have funds in the States. It basically just operates in Canada and outside of Canada, but not in the U.S. They're looking at whether they can move some of the reserves. There's been talk forward and backwards, in terms of whether certain types of international activities might be banned from the U.S. For some groups, international is just a small part of what they do, but for some groups, it's the main thing that they're doing. And that could be very problematic. Whereas if they had a Canadian affiliate and it was resourced, that Canadian affiliate may be able to do certain activities. There are also foreign funders, some groups receive money from groups outside the U.S., and those groups may not be comfortable sending things to the U.S. in the future, worried that there will be a shutdown. So, having an entity outside of the U.S., like in Canada, could be helpful there. Some of these U.S. groups have employees around the world. Will they be able to deal with payroll and other things like that? So, basically, the idea is to potentially have an affiliate in Canada, an entity that can take in some funds, do certain activities that may be either impossible or difficult to do, depending on where the situation goes in the U.S.

Mary Barroll: While some American nonprofits and charities have sought out Canada as something of a safe haven from which to operate, others are trying to shelter their funds from being frozen or seized by the U.S. government, by opening Canadian bank accounts. We wondered if the repercussions of the Trump so called "anti-woke" policies were actually beginning to influence Canadian companies, institutions and nonprofits' own DEI policies and practices. Are we seeing a rollback or cuts in funding for DEI initiatives and programs within Canadian organizations? Earlier this year it seemed that some of that backlash had already seeped over the border into Canada, with top sponsors of the nonprofit Pride Toronto, well-known brands like Google, Home Depot, Nissan, and Clorox, pulling out of their sponsorships in 2025.

News clip

<https://globalnews.ca/video/11053128/pride-toronto-loses-some-key-corporate-sponsors>

“North America's largest pride parade brings over 3 million people into the city of Toronto, but this year, it will look a lot different, after losing \$300,000 in funding. We've had sponsors for different reasons, some because they have shifted their priorities, some of financial constraint. However, Modes is connecting the loss of support to cuts in DEI programming, south of the border. But I'll be very honest. I strongly believe that some of the organizations that are pulling back the funding is as a direct result of what we see happening in the U.S.”

Mary Barroll: We asked Jade Pichette about the corporate sponsorship cancellations for Pride Toronto that made the headlines in Canada.

Jade Pichette: In terms of the support for our organizations, I think there is a lot of context that the broader media doesn't necessarily get. So, in terms of organizations taking away sponsorship, in some cases, that sponsorship money has actually just been reallocated to other queer organizations that aren't Pride festivals. And that doesn't get news coverage. And so that, some of that is actually still happening through corporate foundations and other spaces where they're looking at more programmatic abilities to fund instead of just Pride. Another challenge with that piece is that Pride festivals are political, right? And the community has certainly addressed some serious challenges that are happening globally, and have spoken to some of those challenges, and protests have actually happened at Pride festivals in multiple parts of the country, especially around the absolute humanitarian crisis going on in Gaza. And a lot of companies have been the target of some of these protest activities, as a result of their investments overseas. As a result of that, none of the banks this year marched in Toronto Pride, and it was more around being concerned that they were opening up their staff to protest, and less about the actual support for the organization or the like. That being said, there have been some international companies, especially that are headquartered in the U.S., who have just been moving away from the community as a whole, and that is still a trend that is happening, as well. But in terms of Canadian companies, we aren't seeing necessarily that full trend. We're seeing more that there's been a reallocation of some of those budgets to other places, including other queer organizations. We are also in a place where we are concerned that a lot of organizations will lose their funding through multiple means — through government cuts, through corporate downsizing, especially in response to the trade war that has been going on. So, there are multiple factors that are impacting this, and communities coming together, we will continue, as we always do, but we have seen some significant queer organizations actually close in the last year, being the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity and Trans Care Plus, as examples, and it's possible that we'll see other organizations facing challenges, as they move forward. Certain organizations have been stepping up and trying to fill some of those gaps, but it's not enough.

SFX: News buzz

News clip

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdyVuJ5uNgA>

“For months, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives have been under fire in the United States. Corporations like Walmart, McDonald's, and Amazon have all scaled back various DEI initiatives, moves that have been celebrated by the Trump administration. Here in Canada, there are growing concerns that similar rollbacks are on the horizon or already happening. Shopify got rid of its DEI initiatives. The University of Alberta changed its DEI policy to access, community, and belonging.”

News clip

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0wVuB_UL6U

“The University of Alberta starting the year off by announcing the university is moving away from equity, diversity and inclusion policies saying the terminology has become polarizing. This is a debate that's going on not only at the University but more broadly in society in Canada, the United States and elsewhere. There are some people who have come to see language around EDI as polarizing and divisive.”

Mary Barroll: Wendy Cukier says signs of the American war against DEI influencing Canadian companies and institutions are undeniable, including prestigious national law firms and universities. But she says the Canadian public is signaling it's not prepared to go along with Trump-style “anti-woke” policies. Here's Wendy Cukier to explain.

Wendy Cukier: We've certainly seen retreats. One of the most notable ones, in my view, was McCarthy-Tetro that canceled its program for Black and Indigenous lawyers, because for sure we have more than enough Black and Indigenous lawyers. Look at the numbers. We don't.

And as a result, the chief inclusion officer left the firm. University of Alberta is one of the organizations that rebranded its diversity, equity and inclusion policies. If I were in Alberta, maybe I'd be ducking for cover as well. I'm not sure.

We also see that, you know, large and important companies, Shopify, for instance, joined with the tech bros in the United States, saying it was retreating from equity, diversity and inclusion. But what was interesting about that was the counter backlash, where a huge number, nearly 400 tech entrepreneurs and executives signed an open letter criticizing the equity, diversity and inclusion retreat. So often these individual examples get a lot of attention. But as I said, you know, the majority of Canadians are not with that program. The majority of Canadians, 54% think that focusing on increasing DEI work is a good thing. 27% are neutral and only 16% say it's a bad thing. That's a massive majority of Canadians who are committed to equity, diversity and inclusion.

Mary Barroll: At CharityVillage Connects, we wondered if there were other impacts on Canada's nonprofit sector that we should be keeping a close eye on. How exactly is the American pushback on DEI hitting Canadian organizations, specifically in the nonprofit

and charitable sector? Is Canada insulated from this anti-DEI wave or are our economic and cultural ties with the U.S. too deep for it not to impact us? Are we more vulnerable than we might think? Wendy Cukier acknowledges that the U.S. rollbacks against DEI are creating significant ripple effects, here in Canada. But she suggests that both good business sense and strong legal institutions, are stalwart defenses against these tremors of change.

Wendy Cukier: Where we're dealing with multinationals that are operating in Canada and the U.S., they're having to navigate the complexity of doing business there and doing business here. So, there's no question that some of those that are rolling back policies in the U.S., are at least muting their commitments in Canada.

But remember, despite the executive orders and despite the high-profile attacks on women, you know, the revival of masculine energy, the attacks on immigrants, on trans people, on pretty well all of the equity deserving groups that we have focused on, for recent years. Despite those attacks in the U.S., we're seeing corporations stand up to the President, arguing that this has nothing to do with wokeness. It has to do with good business, because as markets change, so do your policies. As the labour supply changes, so do your recruitment and retention strategies and so on. So, we have to make sure that we don't let the loudest voices mislead us into what's really going on. And the other thing that is critically important is, of course the courts, are still not all aligned in terms of what Donald Trump is trying to do.

I think where the courts have created problems is specifically around affirmative action and those are programs which are targeting equity-deserving groups and for example saying a portion of funding, a portion of positions will be reserved for certain populations. But that's a relatively small percentage of what we consider to be effective equity, diversity and inclusion policies, and so it is important to keep an eye on the spillover effects from the U.S., but also to recognize our institutions are solid and organizations that ignore their obligations, under law, are setting themselves up for huge risks.

Mary Barroll: Wendy Cukier is not alone in seeing ripple effects of Trump's war on DEI flowing into Canada, but with important nuances that are distinctly Canadian. Mante Malepo is the founder and CEO of Mante Malepo Consulting, where she advises nonprofits on board governance and organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mante Molepo sees a range of reactions in Canada to the DEI rollbacks in the United States that range from fully embracing Trump's policies to efforts to rebrand their DEI initiatives and walk a tightrope of supporting the principles of DEI while trying to avoid the controversy surrounding it.

Mante Molepo: I see a variation. I see organizations, nonprofits, retreating from their DEI efforts and they're using the executive orders as an excuse to bend into their DEI commitments. Others are also remaining steadfast and really doubling down on their commitments. But we're also seeing, and I see this a bit more, of rebranding their DEI

efforts or developing what are like shadow DEI initiatives where they no longer refer to, quote unquote, controversial language around DEI. And so, they're patching it up as accessibility or belonging or human capital. And I can understand why this is happening, but I think it leads to a lack of transparency, which can be problematic because it does undermine accountability.

Mante Molepo: What I think is really important, for us in Canada, to remember is that many American organizations must comply with these executive orders. So, they're really, in a way, required to rebrand their initiatives accordingly. Maybe they believe in the value of DEI, but because of these orders, they have to rebrand. These shifts are understandable in the context of the United States, but here in Canada, DEI is not illegal. We don't have legislation restricting it. And so, we really need to think about DEI in the context of Canada. What concerns me is that we are seeing some trends here in Canada kind of following what's happening in the U.S.

I've spoken with many leaders in both the corporate and nonprofit sectors to tell me the same thing. They see the imperative for DEI and will continue to pursue it. They may not be doing it under the specifically referencing DEI, but they remain committed to it. Again, I think it's really important to assess those risks of what happens if we don't act accordingly, we retreat from our DEI commitments, if organizations, for instance, stop addressing discrimination and harassment, they expose themselves to human rights claims or other really public incidents that can really ruin an organization's reputation. I think many organizations are unclear about what they want to do because they've never really clarified why DEI is important. They latched onto it five years ago. They adopted DEI language. It can be performative, but they didn't integrate DEI into their strategy and across their organizations. So, I think that courageous leadership will require us to be transparent with our commitments, even when language is, quote unquote, shifting or there's this backlash.

Mary Barroll: Dean Delpeache has been focused on talent management and creating frameworks of equity for organizations for the past decade. Through his consultancy, Strasity, he helps organizations design strategic frameworks, focused on diversity, inclusion, belonging, and equity. He is also a professor and program lead of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace program, at George Brown College. He shares what kinds of concerns he's witnessed organizations having.

Dean Delpeache: Particularly with the non-profit profits that we work with, we're noticing that people are asking, number one, for advice. How are we actually to deal with what is going on? Should we be concerned if corporate funders start to pull back money based on this? And what we're noticing is that companies want to start, potentially, an evolution of the wording and terminology around these terms of diversity, equity, inclusion, and looking for a way to align with what's happening in the U.S. but still be intentional about what's going on, saying, listen, we want to keep the same principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racism, anti-oppression, but why don't we frame it as more of a culture of inclusion?

Mary Barroll: Similar to Mante Molepo's observations, Dean Delpeache says many Canadian nonprofits are choosing to make semantic, rather than substantive, changes to their DEI practices.

Dean Delpeache: For the not-for-profit sector, in particular, what we're hearing is, we want to focus on the mission. In a lot of those missions, we have equity-seeking groups. So, they want to make sure that they're still focused on the mission and being intentional about the mission and that the organization continues to reflect those who they are serving. With that said, they're being cautious with regards to stopping, halting, changing direction, if I can use that terminology, in terms of the work, but they're also considering should we pivot and align with regards to the wording. And so, it's really just looking at the terminology, but not stopping the work.

If you have, for example, a not-for-profit where, let's say, their corporate funding is typically coming from head offices based in the U.S., and those organizations may be federal contractors and receive money from the federal government. Well, yes, you may be seeing a softening, trickle down, based on the fact that we still want to continue to keep this corporate funding. And I think the real highlight word as of late is that word inclusion. You might be seeing, for example, the softening on the terminology of the word equity, because what's happening is there's a push in the U.S. to say that we don't want to create equity-based outcomes. But we still want to create access, which is really the use of the word equity. We still want to continue to proceed with programs that help support it. We're just not going to shout it on the mountaintops like we used to. So, I think, depending on where they're getting their funding and their sponsorship support, they may consider the softening.

Mary Barroll: Mark Blumberg has also seen a shift in the terminology related to DEI among the organizations he works with.

Mark Blumberg: I'm just looking at law firms, some of them have basically unwound their DEI. Others have not. But if you're working with U.S. entities, whether they be for profits or funders, whether they be charities, etc., you really have to carefully consider how what you say and what you do with them could impact them, as well as yourself. So, I have seen groups that are more careful in their discussions around DEI. Some are avoiding the term DEI, but they're doing similar types of things that they would have done that they would have called DEI. Some it's more of a terminological type of thing. But for others, and especially if your funder is a U.S. entity, you're going to have to be much more mindful of these sorts of things. Even if one doesn't use the term DEI, you can still do a lot of good in terms of dealing with historical inequities there, but it's going to make groups have to rethink how they're talking about it, how they're doing it. I have seen that groups are starting to think about these issues. It's pretty inevitable, especially if you've got close relationships with American groups or you're funded by American organizations.

Mary Barroll: Jade Pichette has seen the same trends in the organizations and partners Pride at Work supports. The demand for advice was so high that Pride at Work published an “Emergency Messaging Guide”.

Jade Pichette: So, we're certainly having to see how we can talk about diversity, equity, inclusion without talking about diversity, equity, and inclusion, quite often lately. And we have been doing that. We actually put out an emergency messaging guide for our partners, because many of the people that we work with are DEI professionals, HR professionals who do DEI, and then employee resource group leaders, in addition to our community partner network that we also work with. And we've found that a lot of these professionals are looking at how can we talk about these issues, how can we continue to move the needle, using different language? And so that has definitely been something that we've seen. I've seen some organizations change their terminology to access, community, and belonging. I've seen some who have focused on human rights in the workplace. And all of these solutions, per se, are not necessarily changing entirely what we're doing, but there has been definitely some organizations that have been, not as forthcoming and as forward-thinking, in terms of these issues,

SFX: News buzz

News clip

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

“Tonight, cries Cries of Black Lives Matter, and Hands up, don't shoot. [crowd chanting] Hands up, Don't shoot! Echoing from coast to coast, the largest day of demonstrations for George Floyd yet.”

Jade Pichette: I think a lot of that has come as a result of almost a boom mentality of DEI back in 2020, especially after the terrible, tragedy that was the death of George Floyd, as well as the global pandemic. And so, those led to a bit of a boom in the DEI sector, and we saw a lot of organizations joining DEI, because they thought it was the right thing to do, or they thought they would be seen as doing the right thing. And I think what we're now seeing is that organizations are either trying to pivot in how they talk about these issues, or we also are seeing organizations who were never really committed, in practice, now moving away from their efforts. And it's not that there's a huge wave of organizations leaving this work, it's that the organizations that were never truly committed to this work are now showing the fact that their budgets have been cut and are moving in a different direction. So, I put it with a bit of nuance in that I also see a lot of organizations still continuing their commitment to DEI, and then I see many others who are trying to just reframe the work that they're doing using different language, because DEI has become -- I don't like saying that it's a tainted acronym, but it's becoming tainted by a certain administration. Not that I think that that is the right thing about DEI.

Mary Barroll: Although all of our experts have witnessed many Canadian companies

and nonprofits searching for new terminology to avoid the controversy evoked by Trump's Anti-Woke policies, they say the abandonment of DEI is mainly semantic -- not substantive. Indeed, they say many Canadian organizations are still committed to the principles of DEI. Wendy Cukier also believes that Canadian societal attitudes are quite distinct from those held by many Americans, especially in their attitudes towards DEI. She points out some key legal and constitutional differences between Canada and the United States that help to insulate Canadian organizations from being influenced by the Trump policies.

Wendy Cukier: Our institutions, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, our various legislative frameworks, our jurisprudence, our provincial human rights legislation, our disability legislation, at the federal and provincial level. All of those are solid and unchanged. And I think that there's certainly challenges for organizations that operate cross-border because they're trying to figure out how to navigate the realities in Canada and the United States. But where we see, in my view, dangerous spillover is really in the media and the discourse.

What's interesting though is when you survey Canadians, and we just did a survey of more than 5,000 Canadian workers, most of them think that the level of commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is appropriate or we need more of it, a relatively small percentage, about 15, think that there's too much focus on EDIs. So, we see a situation where the discourse, in my view, reflects very much what we see in the United States. But the reality in Canada is very different, and we need to double down and make sure that people understand that.

Mary Barroll: Mante Malepo also emphasizes that our distinctly Canadian laws and principles are a strong defense against the attacks on DEI happening south of the border.

Mante Molepo: Substantive equality which is a constitutional principle here in Canada under the Constitution, it is really critical, and it enables governments to take action to combat discrimination proactively, through affirmative action programs. And the Charter specifically refers to affirmative action programs. We also have human rights legislation such as Ontario's Human Rights Code, as well as pay equity laws and employment equity legislation that explicitly support the creation of ameliorative programs that are aimed at addressing the disadvantages that people face, as a result of their gender, their race, their disability, sexual orientation and other protected grounds. So, it's important to keep that in mind here in Canada. Things are different.

Music: Canadian anthem

Mary Barroll: Things in Canada are different. Our laws, our constitution, our human rights legislation, our political system, not to mention our attitudes, values and culture are distinctly our own. President Trump's repeated threats of annexing Canada as the 51st state has only accentuated those defining attributes that make us Canadian. But

are Canadian organizations at risk of importing American cultural and political conflicts around DEI? We wanted to hear our experts' advice and strategies for helping Canadian nonprofit leaders to remain committed to DEI in the face of such political and economic pressure from south of the border. Here's Mante Molepo's advice.

Mante Molepo: I think that leadership should stay grounded in Canada's legal and cultural context, reinforced by our charter, our employment equity laws, and especially for federally regulated institutions, human rights codes. Canada's a different climate. If I could be very frank, it's those organizations that have never been truly committed to DEI that are using what's happening, south of the border, to kind of escape their commitments or to weaken or water down their commitments around DEI. I think it's really important that we remember who we are as a country. We recently had a federal election where we voted in a government that is committed to recognizing difference across our society and that believes in equality. And I think that's really critical. These are the values that we hold as a society. Much of the discourse on what is happening in the US, again, focuses on these executive orders and the backlash to DEI. However, we look at these executive orders and these measures that are coming into place, but we don't really push the analysis a bit further to really understand what are the ramifications of these executive orders. We've seen how qualified officials are being replaced with unqualified individuals. It's so inconsistent with what diversity, equity, and inclusion represent. And we're not asking what is the impact of that. And I think we need to really turn the conversation to that impact. We see public institutions banning DEI-related literature and curriculum in universities and schools. What is the impact of that? How are we going to cultivate critical thinking, awareness about difference in our society? How are we going to be innovative? How are we going to learn to live together if we are shaming a child's book because it's DEI related? I think these are the conversations that we should really be focusing on.

Mary Barroll: Jade Pichette believes that a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture in any organization depends on the level of support coming from the top – along with a healthy measure of openness, curiosity and humility.

Jade Pichette: I would say start with commitment, and commitment from leadership. If leadership is not involved in these efforts, if they are not committed to these efforts, they don't go very far without that leadership support. And that's to say, you know, I've seen very concerted efforts towards building more inclusive workplaces by many, many, many people, but then they have their leadership not following through on those commitments, which erodes trust for the entire organization. And so, in this time of polarization, I think workplaces are one of the places that we have the opportunity to connect with more people that are different from us. And that's one of the reasons why I personally do this type of work, still to this day, is because of the fact that I'm able to reach people, connect with people in workplaces that not everybody does. And so, for the nonprofit sector, we're often tasked with so many things, in a way that larger organizations sometimes have more budgets, more abilities, more of these pieces. So, for the nonprofit space, you're still a workplace, you're still a place where people are

interacting, and that has to come first, before anything else. And so, we really need to have that leadership approaching with curiosity, openness, and with humility and vulnerability, to really see that change. And sometimes that humility is admitting, 'I don't know what the right thing to do is, in this situation.' As somebody who is a white settler, I'm going to make mistakes in leadership around race, and I have to be very open and very interested and curious and humble when working on issues of racism and anti-Indigeneity. And I think that that is the case with any leader. There are going to be places where you are not going to share the identity of everybody within your organization, and it is up to you to lead with that curiosity, vulnerability, and humility.

Mary Barroll: Dean Delpeache says nonprofit leaders have to start with a good hard look at their missions to understand that for most nonprofits, DEI is critical to their success in fulfilling their missions, by reflecting those communities that they serve.

Dean Delpeache: Focusing on what's our mission. Who is the communities that we serve? And within that, the majority of not-for-profits are going to find that the communities they serve have within them communities of equity-seeking groups. That's number one. Is our organization reflective of the people that we are serving? Do we have people within our organization, in place, that can serve those communities because they actually understand their experiences, they understand the environments that they're in to appropriately serve, and I think once we can do that, then we can align our programs internally within the organization to truly reflect that. And keep the staple of what you're doing focused on the word inclusion. Because what we really want to see is individuals from all walks of life and background, whether coming to our workplace, feel included where they can do their best work in an environment where everyone can feel like they belong. When they can do that and do their best work, then they're going to serve those equity-serving, deserving groups in stronger, more passionate ways and really, really reach out to the mission.

Mary Barroll: Wendy Cukier also reminds us that under Canadian law, equity remains a requirement. Though some organizations may be considering changing their rhetoric, the reality is that Canadian society is diverse and most citizens here support DEI.

Wendy Cukier: It is important to recognize that equity is a requirement under Canadian law. Diversity is a reality that we see in the changing demographics of Canada. And inclusion is how you get the best out of the people who work for you. So, there isn't anything, in my view, that justifies, quote, rebranding in order to avoid backlash. The majority of Canadians, 54% think that focusing on increasing DEI work is a good thing. 27% are neutral and only 16% say it's a bad thing. That's a massive majority of Canadians who are committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. Often the outliers are the ones that make the news, and we need to focus more attention on those who are staying the course.

And so, in my mind, despite all of the talk about immigration levels and the backlash that's focusing on immigrants, many of them racialized, immigrants are our competitive

advantage, globally, when it comes to expanding brand Canada and entering new markets. We're really doubling down on what is often referred to as the business case, because that has not changed. The rhetoric may have changed, but the reality is Canada is diverse. Organizations serving Canadians have to understand how to serve Indigenous peoples, racialized peoples, persons with disabilities, women and so on. And organizations that want to recruit the best and the brightest need to be able to attract people from those communities and retain them. That hasn't changed. The fact that diverse populations are associated with increased innovation and entrepreneurship, that hasn't changed. They see things, often in different ways, because of their different lived experience. And if that's not enough for you, the risks of retreating are quite considerable because from what we've seen, the courts are still very solidly behind our commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion from a human rights perspective, but also from a safe workplace perspective.

Mary Barroll: Even if many Canadian nonprofits remain deeply committed to DEI, the potential threats to funding – whether from US based funders and corporations or the strength of the backlash in society impacting the attitudes of donors – can make a public embrace of DEI seem like a daunting and risky venture. But Mante Molepo says there's more than one way to look at risk.

Mante Molepo: I do see there's some pressure. Some organizations worry that visible DEI efforts or initiatives will alienate donors or community members, especially in our increasingly polarized society. And the advice I often give to my clients is, what have you done to assess the risk of not pursuing these measures? People trust that when they work for an organization that is committed to DEI, it's going to follow through on its commitments. And then pulling back can really alienate not just employees, but board members and other stakeholders, whether they're volunteers or donors.

So, I really think that it's important for organizations to really do a risk assessment and also manage that risk effectively. We're not navigating in a world that is equitable and inclusive. We know that, including within the nonprofit sector, that there's a lot of inequality and whether it's within the leaders that run our organizations or the people that volunteer for us or even the communities that we're serving. So, I think it's really important organizations think critically about how they want to steward this work and what are the risks that are going to be involved from pulling back.

Mary Barroll: For nonprofits worried about alienating donors, Dean Delpeache has this advice.

Dean Delpeache: I think the first thing, you need to have a conversation with your donors and really understand where they align on this topic. And just have a conversation to understand, are you feeling pressure? You're finding pressure within your organization to make changes? How are you adapting? Is your organization requiring the companies that you're funding to adapt in a different way? I think it starts with that conversation with your donors. But then parallel to that conversation, there's a

leadership discussion that needs to happen. Where do we fall and where do we stand when it comes to our mission, what we're trying to provide to equity seeking groups, and how we want our employees to experience our culture and the values? And I think once we can align on those two things, then that will tell us where we need to move our strategy and the frameworks that we're working with, regarding these principles of diversity, inclusion, belonging, and equity.

Mary Barroll: Wendy Cukier suggests reframing how we look at what DEI is – and what it isn't – and communicating that in most cases pursuing the principles of DEI is not just a performative box checking exercise but part of rational business-focused decision-making.

Wendy Cukier: What's an example of an EDI program that someone might consider? I was on the chair of the board of Women's College Hospital and there was a big focus on Indigenous women's health. Someone might look at that and say, oh, that's EDI. What I would say, that's about health equity. That's about ensuring that Indigenous women have access to healthcare. To me, there's nothing politically correct about that. It's about fulfilling women's college hospitals' mandate, which is to serve women. I'll stick with healthcare just because I've been thinking a lot about it lately. Kwame McKenzie, at the Wellesley Institute, shows concretely that the focus on the Black community during the pandemic and having specific, targeted outreach to the Black community during the pandemic decreased the infection rates in the Black community from nine times the rest of the population to about parity. Think about that. Focusing on the Black community, in rolling out vaccinations, was all about achieving the mandate of reducing COVID infections and death. It wasn't about checking a box. Say you're the Professional Engineers of Ontario, which is a non-profit, but it's a professional organization. A very high percentage of engineers in Canada are racialized. Increasing proportions of engineers are women, and they have different needs, different experiences. And if the Professional Engineers of Ontario doesn't address those needs, they are not serving their mandate. We could go through example by example by example of organizations, in the nonprofit sector. And I'd be hard pressed to think of any, where equity, diversity and inclusion wasn't a rational business decision, given their mandate and the population that they serve.

News clip

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

“This woke movement is so anti American, denial of due process, it's so pernicious to this country. And it's used as a cudgel to power. So, if they don't like you, they being whether it radical left, mostly, they're gonna come and punish you, and you get punished by accusation.”

News clip

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2101bAHz_g8

“We've ended the tyranny of so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion policies all across the entire federal government and indeed the private sector and our military. And our country will be woke no longer.”

Mary Barroll: In the midst of distortion and polarization in public discourse, Mante Molepo says it's important for nonprofit leaders to remember the reasons why organizations embraced DEI practices, in the first place.

Mante Molepo:

What is it that you want to achieve? If it's that things around psychological safety, creating an organization that's representative of the communities you serve, increasing revenue, if all of those things are important to you, then you need to remain committed to DEI. Here in Canada, we do have our own legal, cultural, and policy frameworks, our charter that protects the center of equality, nonprofits operating within these human rights contexts, our commitments to truth and reconciliation, anti-racism and accessibility. These are not just moral imperatives, they're legal obligations, in many cases, but they're also just the right thing to do.

People have trusted you to lead this work. And then, something we don't often talk about, but not confusing discomfort with risk. Not all discomfort is going to be some kind of liability. Sometimes it's just a sign that your organization is confronting something that is difficult, hard truths. So be able to create the capacity to manage this discomfort, navigate it collectively.

When we listen to our people and we're guided by their insights, then I think we can build more resilient and stronger organizations. And then I would say lastly, lead and not follow. This backlash, you're right, it is very real, but so is the progress. We have to celebrate how far we've come, even over the past five years. And the most resilient organizations are the ones that are continuing to do this work even in the face of this, they're being innovative, if they get resistance from donors, they are finding other funding sources. They're not doing this work quietly. They're being vocal and they are calling it out and they're engaging their communities and they're listening to their communities and they're trying their best to navigate the polarization.

Mary Barroll: As our experts have reminded us, many organizations started making DEI commitments, in the wake of the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. Dean Delpeache says some nonprofits may need help in developing a sustainable strategy to keep them.

Dean Delpeache: Let's go back to the untimely death and unfortunate death of George Floyd. There becomes this rise of social justice. People start to say, we've got to do something. And the first thing most companies did was either put out statements, maybe made donations, but they formed diversity inclusion committees. And when they formed these committees, they formed them with good intentions. But a lot of people in

these committees are just people that are really just passionate about the work, don't necessarily know how to create a long-term sustainable program.

What I would do if I was an organizational leader is say, have we created a framework? Have we created a strategy that really can be sustainable? If we have not, what do we need to do to get there? Do we have to do have the resources internally to work on that? Do we need to get someone externally to help support, create the strategy? And once that strategy is created, then you want to really move to change management phase, which is about communicating the strategy, implementing the actions, measuring what you've implemented and reporting on what is measured. Because a lot of people will say, yeah, they talked a big talk, but then after, I saw no change. If you can get to a point where you're reporting on what has occurred and people can actually see change and evolution, then you will have a sustainable program.

To be quite honest, we've been trying to do this work forever. I think this is really the cry of the quote unquote civil rights movement. This is the cry. If you think about the civil rights movement, what was it really about? It was about ensuring that everyone can work within an organization and not feel segregated. That's really belonging at its core. You want everyone to come to work at a company and feel like they belong and not feel that they have to quiver because they're of a certain color or certain background, etc. And so really, all we're doing is throughout time, maybe changing the language, the principle is still the same. We want everyone to feel included so they can do their best work.

Mary Barroll: Jade Pichette says a big part of making sure people feel included at work -- is actually ensuring they feel safe. Here's Jade Pichette to explain how to protect employees from online hate.

Jade Pichette: There is a great organization known as the Open Digital Literacy Access Network, who has actually done some research on this issue, and does training, specifically, on how to make a safe place for your employees, especially around the rise of transphobic hate and homophobic and biphobic hate online, but especially transphobic hate. And this really means that we need to take very important safety planning into account, and I think most organizations who make significant social change need to be doing this — providing cybersecurity for their staff, making sure that there are consistent practices of updating passwords every three months, making sure that we have safety systems in place, in case somebody becomes the target of a hate campaign. And these campaigns can be very harmful. I know this firsthand as somebody who has been doxed and was the target of a hate campaign, back in 2012. And I've seen it impact people more recently, especially some younger activists and advocates who work mostly in the nonprofit space. And so, it's really about making sure that we have that cybersecurity in place, that we have the employee assistance plans ready for if people need prompt therapy or things of that nature, and really making sure that there's wraparound supports. And I think, even just board directors have a commitment to the safety of their staff, at nonprofits. So, any board directors that are

around listening to this, I highly encourage you to think about the cybersecurity of your staff, and to think about these risks, very openly, and to also touch base with your staff about what risks they're actually facing, because I think sometimes when we're in board roles, we don't have the full picture of what people are going through, on the ground, in our organizations. So, touch base with your staff, make sure you have a cybersecurity plan, make sure people are adhering to that plan, and become a bit more aware of the challenges.

Mary Barroll: Wendy Cukier also reminds us that nonprofit leaders must seize the moment and act courageously to foster it within their own organizations and advance DEI in the sector at large.

Wendy Cukier: I think there are two strategies. One is making sure that you as a leader are articulating clearly and concisely why this is an organizational priority. Why this is a commitment that stems from the organization's mission and mandate. As a leader, you set the tone, and you can't say that often enough to make sure that every single person in your organization really understands what they're doing and why they're doing it. So, that's one piece.

The second thing, then, is the outward focus and making sure that everybody you're interacting with, whether it's government, whether it's donors, whether it's partners, whether it's the sector at large, also understands why you're doing what you're doing. And looking for allies, many of you have boards of directors, with the captains of industry, and making sure that they become ambassadors for your organization, but also for the commitments around equity, diversity, and inclusion. Super important. And I think making sure that you're talking their language, that you're communicating to them in ways that they will be able to internalize it and share it is really important because most nonprofit leaders have lots of touch points where they can be exerting their influence. And I think the absolute worst thing that could happen is if a leader gets some pushback from their board or from some of their staff and then capitulates. Now is a time for courage, not for cowardice. And we have to really stick our courage in the sticking place and stand up for not just what we believe in, but what is necessary, what is absolutely necessary to fulfill the mission and mandate of the nonprofit sector.

News clip

<https://www.nbcnews.com/video/millions-pour-into-streets-across-the-country-for-no-kings-protests-241642565751>

“From Los Angeles to Atlanta. Donald Trump has got to go! To Chicago and in the nation's capital, organizers say more than 5 million Americans poured into the streets under the banner of “No Kings”, with the goal of sending President Donald Trump a message about the direction of his administration. I didn't expect to be fighting fascism in my 50s.”

News clip

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/toronto/video/2025/06/14/its-unfair-whats-happening-over-1000-anti-trump-protestors-march-downtown/>

“Demonstrators stream through the streets of downtown Toronto, from the U.S. Consulate to the Ontario Legislature. We won! We won!! There are reasons for raising their voices to protest the President of the United States and his administration are vast. I'm against Donald Trump and a lot of his policies because a lot of his policies are really hurting Canada. I think it's unfair what's happening in the U.S. In this crowd, there's fear about what demonstrators see as tyranny, dictatorship, authoritarian rule. It's big sweeps, just like it was before Nazism in Germany.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn3ZPv2koeI>

“Six people have been arrested after two protest groups squared off near Christy Pitts Park this afternoon, one side gathered to express their opposition to immigration in Canada, when they were met with counter demonstrators. Toronto Police formed a barrier between the two groups. Police closed off Bloor Street for a period of time, tactical officers with riot weapons moved in.”

Mary Barroll: In these times of increased polarization, political conflict and public protest, Mante Molepo advises nonprofit leaders committed to fostering an equitable and inclusive working environment to work hard to hold space for hard conversations.

Mante Molepo: It's not easy. I think conversations around identity are increasingly polarizing. Five years ago, with the murder of George Floyd, many Black people in communities finally felt seen, that they can engage in these conversations. And we saw similar movements of visibility with the rise in anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, and during Canada's ongoing reconciliation with reckoning with truth and reconciliation with the unmarked graves at former residential schools. We all know that these moments opened space for conversation, but they also triggered fear and defensiveness and backlash. And ultimately, I think people are just afraid to speak. They're afraid to say the wrong thing, being misunderstood, being publicly shamed. And we live in an era of social media where one mistake can destroy us.

So, this cancel culture in which we exist, is to our detriment. It doesn't allow us to engage in meaningful, authentic dialogue. And I think the first thing that nonprofits can do is to really focus on how can we cultivate the conditions for change through conversation. One way we can do that is by cultivating psychological safety. This is the belief that within a group, I feel that I can engage in interpersonal risk taking. I can speak up. I can share ideas. I can admit that I've made a mistake or a fail, without that fear of being punished or rejected or embarrassed or canceled.

So, if we can hold space for people to share their concerns around DEI, to express their experience with being misgendered, to talk about the invisibility of having a disability and all of the ways in which we navigate the world, if we can create that space for

people to share, without that fear of being punished, I think we can really open up dialogue. But that doesn't mean we don't hold people accountable. And I think that we feel that if we create psychological safety, then we've opened up the space for people to say whatever they want, when they want. And that's not how it can be done. Keeping that in mind, I think is critical. And there are many ways leaders can reflect and model this behavior.

Mary Barroll: Dean Delpeache agrees and offers this advice on how leaders can facilitate what he calls these courageous conversations.

Dean Delpeache: One of the strongest things I've seen in an organization is something that we call courageous conversations. It's when leaders can bring the staff together and say we want to improve the experience and the wellbeing of employees. And today we're going to talk about a really important topic, which is belonging. We want to ensure every employee feels a sense of belonging and would love to know what are your thoughts? How do you think we can get there? What changes should we make? Are there examples of things that you're seeing are working? Are there things that you're seeing that are not working? Just questions. It'll give your employees the chance to speak. When you do that, you're going to create a list of ideas, believe it or not, a list of ideas that people are going to bring to the table that you can go back and say, which ones should we prioritize short term, medium term, long term. Start working on those ideas and then start to measure and again, report back to the employees. You gave us these ideas. This is what we are seeing done. That is a fantastic way just to have the conversation, in a way that's not polarizing. You're not calling out anybody, but you're giving people the opportunity. Have these quarterly. And as you go down the road, start to allow the words maybe to even get more specific because people are starting to build trust and get comfortable to the point where it might be about, what do you think about racism in the workplace? You might get to that point. It's not day one, but it might be day 365. But employees haven't been prepped already to have these conversations.

And I've seen this done with organizations that I've helped to support, where they'll call me in to have and facilitate these conversations and moderate. And they've gotten to places where employees are now saying, can we go deeper? And that's what you want. Build that trust over time.

Mary Barroll: Wendy Cukier believes it's critical that the nonprofit sector, as a whole, takes a leadership position in advocating for diversity, equity and inclusion in Canadian society – to take the message of the values that DEI brings to Canada to the halls of power among political and corporate leaders, as well as to the Canadian public itself.

Wendy Cukier: I think there is a need to encourage more conversations across the sector. And we need to get people together to reinforce the key messages, the evidence and share best practices, because at the end of the day, the challenge in doing this work is not so much preaching to the converted as making sure that people who may not have equity, diversity and inclusion front and center of their work every day, figuring

out how to ensure that they understand that this is critically important. We have lots of examples of how different, large nonprofits, but also smaller nonprofits that are considered quote mainstream have embedded equity, diversity and inclusion into their operations because it ensures that they serve Canadians. And that's critically important because it ensures that they are able to attract and retain the best and the brightest.

And we really have to call on our political leaders, our corporate leaders, and our leaders of big nonprofits to clearly articulate why this is so important and to share the data and the evidence. One of the problems, frankly, with the media is they like controversy. So, they will often say, so-and-so says this. And so-and-so says that. Now, so-and-so saying this may represent 1% of the nonprofits that are rolling back their commitments to EDI. And so-and-so who said that may represent the other 92% who have EDI programs. But they're often presented as equally valid and representative. And that can create real distortions in people's understanding of where Canadians are, where leaders are, and where the money is, frankly. And I think we have to work harder to just reinforce the arguments and remind people why we are doing this.

Mary Barroll: The drastic policy changes occurring south of our border have certainly impacted Canadians and Canadian organizations, both corporate and nonprofit. But as our experts have reminded us, Canadian law, our human rights legislation, our political system is different and unique, as is our culture, values and world view. All of which buttress our social norms and the values we hold dear and help to insulate us from embracing division and hate. For nonprofit leaders who are feeling the pressure of these volatile times, we asked our guests to give us some final words of advice.

Wendy Cukier: I would say a lot of folks who work on equity, diversity and inclusion are feeling under siege right now. And we really have to find ways to regroup and support. And again, focus on the business case, focus on why this is critical for the organization to fulfill its mandate. Because for me, that's the winning argument.

Dean Delpiche: I think that it is a refocus on the mission. Why do we exist? Who are we serving? Does our organization reflect who we're serving? And what are we doing internally to make sure that our employees feel like they can serve that organization? And I think that it is in these times like now. It's just continually, in those times when you see a downturn, revisiting why we are doing this, what our values are, why it's important, and keep moving forward.

Jade Pichette: Having something to be accountable to is helpful. Whether that is an equity plan that explicitly shows what actions you're going to take, that accountability is the power that I would move forward. When we're accountable is that we listen, we're curious, and we take action when we make mistakes, and we don't center ourselves in that process. That is something that we need to be cautious of when we're taking accountability for things — that we are still centering those who have been harmed instead of ourselves in that process.

Mark Blumberg: I guess if there's a silver lining, and it's really basic, some people will appreciate Canada more and some of the things that we have in Canada. Not because we're great, but just because we're not the U.S. But I think there's also a wake-up call for some of the funders in Canada who haven't been funding much, sitting on a lot of reserves and things, not spending money on making society better.

Mante Molepo: This backlash, it is very real, but so is the progress. We have to celebrate how far we've come. And I think the most important thing that leaders are doing that I see is, you know, we don't have all the answers. We are going to make mistakes, but we're willing to learn and be humble and curious in the process and hold ourselves accountable, as we continue to do this work.

Mary Barroll: Thank you to all our guests for their keen insight and wise advice. 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.

Music

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. We love to receive your feedback about our podcast and your ideas for stories you'd like to hear about, so please follow us, like and comment wherever you get your podcasts.

In the next episode of CharityVillage Connects, the Trump Administration's sudden elimination of USAID funding has created a global aid crisis and a massive funding void, estimated at over \$63 billion dollars, which threatens essential programs in health, education, food security, and disaster relief worldwide. Canadian organizations are facing increased demand to fill the gap, exacerbated by the loss of funding for joint programs, they're trouble shooting ways to continue their support and urging the Canadian government to increase its foreign aid contributions to meet urgent global needs and maintain Canada's international standing. That's in our next episode of CharityVillage Connects. I'm Mary Barroll. Thanks for listening.

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