

----For Immediate Release----

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Alberta Government ends 45-year commitment to Alberta charities

EDMONTON, AB - Albertan charities working to end extreme poverty and reduce inequality in the world's most vulnerable regions got a shock on Friday after receiving letters from Alberta Culture, Multiculturalism and the Status of Women stating that the government has cut all funding to their projects.

"The Government of Alberta has been providing financial assistance to developing countries through the International Development program since 1974," reads the letter sent out by department staff late Friday evening. Yet, to realize their commitment to Albertan citizens and to balance the budget, "the International Development grant stream has been discontinued effective immediately."

While the grant stream was small, at only \$1.5 million dollars in the 2018-9 budget, it was a vital source of dollar-to-dollar matching funds that Alberta organizations could access to carry out their activities. Over the past year alone, 69 projects were funded, including a project to supply technical training to improve access to clean water Malawi, a program to bring affordable energy to remote communities in Peru, and even a project supporting the operations of a low-risk midwifery-led birthing centre in Tanzania. While projects were implemented outside of Alberta, they leveraged the skills, expertise, technologies, passions, and private donations of Albertans to achieve their results. At a cost of only 34 cents per Albertan a year, the fund helped ensure a healthy and active charitable sector in our province as well as a diverse and vibrant economy.

"ACGC is deeply disappointed that the Government of Alberta has decided to eliminate the International Development grant stream, which for 45 years supported Alberta charities and service clubs who work with partners around the globe building strong, resilient communities," stated Leah Ettarh, Executive Director of the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation.

In the Alberta Budget 2019 released Thursday, the Community Initiatives Program, which hosted the international development fund stream, was reduced from \$28 million to \$23.5 million. Rather than making cuts across all grant streams proportionately, the government reduced the budget in most streams while completely eliminating the long-standing international stream, a move which Ettarh says sends a pointed message.

"Eliminating the International Development grant stream sends a powerful signal that the current government is not concerned with achieving global sustainable development," states Ettarh. "Furthermore, it sends the wrong message—one that Albertans do not care about those outside of our borders, and do not care about the world's poor—a message which will not be lost on other Canadians, nor on our partners across the globe."

“It’s an extremely simplistic view to state that we have to choose between reducing poverty in Alberta, or reducing poverty abroad,” states Ettarh. “While we must work to ensure all Albertans are living lives full of dignity and free of poverty, we must in tandem realize our global responsibility to provide support to the world’s most vulnerable communities. This small but important funding has been the commitment of the Province of Alberta for 45 years, and I believe many Albertans will be disappointed to hear this commitment has effectively ended.”

This recent decision by the Alberta government follows a similar one made in Saskatchewan in 2016 when the government of Brad Wall ended its 45-year commitment to funding international development. After the Thursday cut, only the provinces of Manitoba and Quebec remain providing grants to charities working to tackle poverty and extreme inequality abroad.

The Alberta Council for Global Cooperation will be working with the affected charities to understand the impact this cut will have on their ability to continue operating and assist them in mobilizing Albertans to support their essential work.

About the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation

The Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC) is a network of organizations and individuals, located in Alberta, working locally and globally to advance sustainable development and global citizenship. The mission of ACGC is to mobilize Albertans to become global citizens engaged in sustainable international development. We do this by building the capacity of network organizations, representing members’ interests with government and others, and increasing the awareness, knowledge, and connections of Albertans in global issues and sustainable development.

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