



Karen Cumberland

CCSA - Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, <https://www.ccsa.ca/en>

Supported by:
Proyecto Hombre

Candidate for:
Secretary

Introduction:

With over 20 years of in civil society and inside government I bring expertise in policy, partner engagement and an ability to leverage machinery and resources to develop collective approaches and sustainable impact. When I first worked for CCSA, supporting VNGOC's Beyond 2008, the power of civil society to diversify perspectives, increase pragmatic collaboration and hold accountability became clear. In 2026, at a time of political and ideological divide, I believe myself and CCSA are well positioned to build collaboration, inclusion and transparency. Our organization prides itself on working across continuums of care, across health and public safety, and on the principle that a diversity of voices makes us stronger. My professional desire to improve care, health and safety are supported by my experiences growing up in a small town that could not help my brother and father as they struggled with substance use. Being secretary would allow me to help build trust in and grow VNGOC.

What makes you a strong candidate for this position?

My work at CCSA has focused on bringing together different sectors and different perspectives into common action. From building partnerships with the EUDA, to elevating the voices of civic leaders in small Canadian towns I deeply value the power of collaboration. My previous work as a liaison for the Government of Canada to several international bodies as well as my work leading a community NGO in Canada have prepared me to support the full mandate of VNGOC. With a special interest in public policy and governance I can bring meaningful leadership and thoughtful advice to support this committee.

Why do you want to join the VNGOC Board, and how do you envision fulfilling this role?

The secretary has an important responsibility for supporting the board's function but also help ensure greater clarity, transparency and accountability. The Three goals I would have would be to support the board in: 1. Further building trust that VNGOC is the right vehicle for civil society to express its perspectives and proposed solutions. 2. Growing membership, especially from low- and middle-income countries 3. Navigating decreased global financing

by helping to find efficient ways to ensure that the voices of civil society are not cast aside. And, as much as possible to promote connection and build collaboration across VNGOC partners.

How do you plan to represent the diverse voices, regions, and stakeholders of the VNGOC community?

Few things are more critical to a board of directors than an ability to absorb and amplify diverse perspectives. However, it is an active and iterative process. The extensive experience I would bring of working with a diversity of partners includes work with international policymakers, communities, rural NGOs and indigenous groups brings with it the humility to understand that the best ideas are often from the partners hardest to reach. One of my proudest achievements at CCSA this year has been to create an ongoing neutral policy dialog among small town mayors and civic leaders from across Canada. For VNGOC Engaging with many of the member organizations throughout the year in small groups will be critical to success and understanding.

Main areas of work:

Treatment; Prevention; Harm Reduction; Policy Reform; Recovery & Social re-integration; data and monitoring;