

# ONN POLICY PRIORITIES 2019-2020

## PUBLIC LANDS AND CIVIC SPACES

**Expanding nonprofit access to surplus public lands and ensuring critical social infrastructure is operated on a nonprofit basis**

### THE ISSUE

**Public assets built with public dollars are being sold for short-term gain, without consideration for their community value. Public lands should remain in community hands.**

Public lands (land and buildings owned by the government and broader public sector, including surplus school lands) are often sold to the highest bidder without consideration for their local community value. Once property is sold to the private market, its market value often becomes out of reach for nonprofits that provide affordable housing and community amenities. At the same time, privately owned assets that rely heavily on public operating dollars (such as nursing homes and child care centres) can be sold for private gain, leaving the public without necessary community infrastructure.

### POLICY STATEMENT

**ONN advocates for surplus public lands and buildings with community value to be transferred to nonprofit hands for community use** (by gift, purchase, long-term lease, or other arrangement). Community access to civic spaces should be supported by strong government policy at the provincial and municipal levels. Governments and nonprofits should explore the [community land trust](#) model to provide permanently affordable housing, as well as community amenities like child care centres and social enterprises that are protected from real estate spikes. Infrastructure that is needed for services and housing for vulnerable people (like nursing homes, hospitals, and disability services) should be protected from being sold and re-sold on the private market.

### NEXT STEPS

**Advocate for the Ontario Government to:**

- Mandate the inclusion of all broader public sector lands (including school properties) in the existing [Nonprofit Lands Registry](#) so that qualified nonprofits may have the opportunity to purchase these lands in advance of their availability on the open market.



- Ensure the process of accessing the Nonprofit Lands Registry and purchasing land provides reasonable timeframes.

**Work with the Ontario nonprofit sector to:**

- Explore the role and value of mechanisms such as [Community Land Trusts](#) in providing permanently affordable land for critical services such as nonprofit housing, child care, recreation facilities, and community food/urban gardening initiatives.