



SNAP ELECTION SERIES

**Communicating the
value of nonprofits**

One of the ways nonprofits can meaningfully engage in snap elections is to share their impact in communities. While the public (voting or not) pays the most attention to public policy at this time, political parties and candidates will be eager to learn about great ideas, hear success stories from constituents, and build relationships.

Let's not be humble. We are facing complex challenges in our communities and the nonprofit sector is the launching pad for connecting, mobilizing, and creating positive changes. Talk about the issues your nonprofit, our sector, and communities care about in candidate meetings, on your social media, in your newsletters, and/or with the people you work with.

Weave into your messaging the nonprofit difference which emphasizes how the purpose, governance, and ownership structure of nonprofits makes the sector uniquely positioned to deliver quality and affordable programs and services, especially during times of crisis.

Key messages about the value of the sector

- Nonprofits create communities people want to live in and raise their families in.
- Think about all the places families interact with and rely on in their neighbourhoods; many of those programs or services are delivered by nonprofits.
- Nonprofits do not quit when the challenges are immense. From rising income inequality, unaffordable housing, and threats from climate change to demographic shifts, polarization fueled by distrust, weak social fabrics, and world conflicts, nonprofits are there for communities. When faced with challenging conditions nonprofits continue to put programs and services first.
- Nonprofits reinvest all surpluses into their missions and leverage government revenues through private grants and donations, the sale of goods and services, and volunteer efforts to create additional value for the communities they serve.
- The nonprofit sector is an economic driver and significant job producer that creates vibrant communities.
- Nonprofits are accountable to local communities, exhibit higher levels of transparency, and reinvest profits back into their missions, ensuring taxpayer money is used effectively.

- Nonprofits have the knowledge, trust, and relationships to engage those who are often hardest to reach.
- A better supported nonprofit sector means less pressure on tertiary systems, high-quality and accessible programs and services for all, better social cohesion, and ultimately better supported communities.
- When nonprofits close, or are at risk of closing, the health, social and economic wellness, and vitality of communities suffers.

Tell your story authentically

Nonprofits often struggle to articulate their value in ways that are compelling to decision-makers. The key is to tell your story authentically through testimonials and data about programs and services and their connection to people. How is your work making a difference? Why is the challenge you face urgent? Show it, don't just say it! Storytelling is a powerful tool nonprofits can leverage to showcase their impact:

- Relate to your audience. Tell stories about your impact in ways they understand and care about.
- Activate emotions. A good story reminds the audience of their values.
- Tell a compelling story. Tell a story that energizes the listener to take action.



Draw on relevant data about [Canada](#) and/or [Ontario's](#) nonprofit sector from Statistics Canada to demonstrate the economic value of your organization. Use data from ONN's [Ontario state of the sector](#) survey to highlight the issues and challenges your organization might be facing.

Additional resources

- [How the sector is using narrative change to advance social change](#) (The Philanthropist)
- [Ontarians deserve access to affordable and people-centred services. Nonprofits can make that a reality](#) (ONN)

About ONN

ONN is the independent nonprofit network for the 58,000 nonprofits in Ontario, focused on policy, advocacy, and services to strengthen the sector as a key pillar of our society and economy. We work to create a public policy environment that allows nonprofits to thrive. We engage our network of diverse nonprofit organizations across Ontario to work together on issues affecting the sector and channel the voices of our network to government, funders and other stakeholders.

For more information

Candice Zhang, Policy Advisor

Email: candice@theonncanada.ca

