

# Guide on key messages about Ontario's nonprofit sector

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## How to use this guide

Find some time and space in your advocacy efforts to share two to three key messages about Ontario's nonprofit sector. There are many framings shared below, pick the ones that best nest within and/or support key messages about your sector, organization, and community priorities.

### Examples of advocacy efforts to include key messages in:

- Pre-budget submissions
- Consultation submissions
- Meetings with elected officials
- Committee testimonies, remarks, and presentations
- Meetings with philanthropic funders and supports

### Examples of public education opportunities:

- Meetings with the general public and/or communities and clients
- Public events
- Media opportunities, including op-eds

## Data and information about the sector

- Ontario Nonprofit Network
  - [2025 State of the Sector policy report](#)
  - [Get to know Ontario's nonprofit sector](#)
  - [The nonprofit difference in publicly-funded services](#)
  - [The impact of economic uncertainty on nonprofits](#)
  - [The domino effect](#)
  - [Welcome to Bridge Hill: Public education tool](#)
- [Charity Insights Canada Project](#)
- Imagine Canada: [Diversity is our Strength: Improving Working Conditions in Canadian Nonprofits](#)
- Statistics Canada: [Canada Business Conditions Survey](#)

## Key messages

### Nonprofits are always here for us

- Think about all the places Ontarians interact with and rely on in their neighbourhoods; many of those are nonprofits. It could be the child care centre families drop their kids off to every day, the local coffee shop that workers pick up coffee from, the annual neighbourhood block party, the gym across the street, or perhaps, the PSW that helps a family's elders age at home is employed by a nonprofit.
- Nonprofits are a big part of why people will choose to be part of Ontario's communities, whether individuals, families, or businesses. We create the conditions for improved quality of life and growing local economies.
- Nonprofits are fundamental in helping Ontarians battle the affordability crisis. Our sector has never been more integral to Ontarians as more individuals, families, and communities turn to and rely on nonprofits, particularly during times of crises.
- Nonprofits are getting people back to work, serving on the frontlines, and providing critical care services for the old, young, sick, and frail. Youth employment training services, Meals on Wheels, child care, and gender-based violence services are all nonprofit driven. As demand rises, we are also filling gaps for affordable housing, mental health and addictions programs, and settlement services.

- Whether it's the trade war, an affordability crisis, or the next emergency, the nonprofit sector is the first to know and respond. We deliver essential programs efficiently and effectively that sustain the quality of life for millions of hardworking Ontarians and their families.
- Whether we are fostering a sense of belonging through arts and sports programs or ensuring families have access to affordable housing, we are there for Ontarians when they need us most.
- Our work today carries forward the long-standing tradition of people coming together at the local level to recognize community challenges and solve local problems.
- Nonprofits create spaces that facilitate community development, enhance social interaction and engagement, and generate economic revitalization. These can include: the sports league in your neighbourhood, the affordable child care operated out of your local church or community centre, the orchestra, or other nonprofits in your neighbourhood that provide essential social services and programs like mental health and addictions programs, child care, and shelters.

## Nonprofits are a ready ally to government on the ground, working alongside communities

- Ontario's nonprofit sector is a ready ally to the provincial government in navigating these uncertain times and supporting Ontarians. We bring together the expertise of millions of volunteers and employees, strong social capital, and financial leverage to develop and deliver innovative solutions for the public good, while contributing to the province's prosperity.
- Our province is facing big challenges. This is where nonprofits can step up. Our sector gets more done and faster, in ways that are cost-effective and ensure quality, with nimble flexibility and diverse options.
- Now is the time to better leverage nonprofits' expertise, local infrastructure, and community-centred missions to protect and build an Ontario that works for everyone. Nonprofits are accountable to local communities, have higher levels of transparency, and reinvest profits back into their missions, ensuring taxpayer money is used effectively.
- Nonprofits are trusted partners to government across the province. We share the goal of modernized public and nonprofit services that are integrated, accessible, and equitable - and that safeguard public investments in community services.
- Work with us to get things done.

- To meet the rising demand for infrastructure, Ontario needs all hands on deck, including nonprofits. Nonprofits build and operate community infrastructure such as child care facilities, affordable housing, multi-service community centres, youth recreational hubs, and much more.

## Nonprofits are essential to economic policy

- Nonprofits weave together a safety net that all Ontarians rely on and are vital to unlocking the full potential of the province's economy.
- We are a powerful economic driver. Nonprofits create jobs, activate volunteerism, and deliver essential programs and services that support the well-being of all Ontarians, including the most vulnerable in our communities.
- The [sector contributes](#) \$65 billion to our province's GDP, employing 844,000 people. With \$1.00 of investment, nonprofits generate up to \$2.18 in GDP impact. This magnitude is equivalent to many other industries in Ontario, such as manufacturing and automotive.<sup>1</sup>
- Our [workforce reflects Ontario's population](#) in its diversity. Two-thirds of the workforce consists of women, almost half are immigrants, and nearly a third are racialized.
- From Thunder Bay to Barrie, Windsor to London, and across the GTA to Ottawa, the nonprofit sector is an economic amplifier. As a sector, nonprofits receive less than half of their revenues from governments and reinvest all surpluses back into their missions. They leverage government revenues through private grants and donations, sale of goods and services, and volunteer efforts to create additional value for the communities they serve.
- Where Statistics Canada data can be segmented by industries that consist of both for-profits and nonprofits, the data indicates that investment in a nonprofit yields greater benefits to communities than a for-profit entity.<sup>2</sup>
- Through their job creation and local spending activities, nonprofits generate considerable economic impact above and beyond the extensive value of the social, cultural, and environmental programs and services they provide to Ontarians.
- 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 Ontarians.
- We all understand that vibrant, healthy, supported communities make good

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Dhuey. "The Economics of the Nonprofit Sector in Ontario." 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Dhuey. "The Economics of the Nonprofit Sector in Ontario." 2022.

economic sense. But vibrant, healthy, supported communities are not possible without a strong and sustainable nonprofit sector.

- Ontario's economic well-being and societal shifts are inextricably tied to the work of nonprofits.
- Nonprofit social enterprises, co-operatives, and social purpose organizations are local, small, and medium sized businesses. They provide goods and services, but with [additional public benefits](#). They are well positioned to help the provincial government deliver greater value for taxpayers money. As a vital part of Ontario's supply chain, both as purchasers and suppliers of goods and services, nonprofit social enterprises and co-operatives create jobs and stimulate economic growth, while advancing economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- Ontario is faced with many challenges today, from the housing crisis, labour shortage, to poverty and climate change. Nonprofit social enterprises and co-operatives offer solutions to these complex issues while also generating economic impact.

## The domino effect of undersourcing one part of the sector

- As we look at our neighbourhoods, we can see how major changes taking place around the world are being felt here at home in Ontario. Ontarians are worried and struggling to meet their basic needs.
- The widening gap between [income supports and cost of living](#) is resulting in a domino effect of untenable demand for nonprofit programs and services, and Ontario's tertiary systems.
- When our social safety net fails more Ontarians fall through the cracks, creating untenable pressure on nonprofits. Poverty begins to show up in our tertiary systems such as schools, hospitals, and justice systems, and in unlikely places such as libraries and small businesses.
- When one area of the sector is underfunded, organizations shoulder what they can and pass on those clients that fall through the cracks to the next logical provider. And when none of Ontario's services can suffice, we see clients turning to encampments, sleeping in buses, and living in ravines.
- If Ontario's social safety net, as the first line of defense, fails to catch individuals and families falling into poverty, it sets off a domino effect of losses (lost housing, employment, and food). It also sets off increases in health concerns, gender-based violence incidents, and addictions. This ends up costing Ontario more in the long-run.

- If we do not course correct, our communities will continue to fracture and the third or fourth line of defence like nonprofits and tertiary systems will not be able to put them back together.

## Nonprofits are protecting Ontario

- Team Ontario includes over 58,000 nonprofits and charities that operate for the public benefit in all corners of our province. Nonprofits are the first line of protection for communities, especially in times of emergencies when fast and effective mobilization is needed. Remember, we did it in 2020 and we are ready to partner with government again.

## Messages for the general public

- Take some time to learn more about how nonprofits are caring for your community and creating wellness and connection - local theatres, art galleries, museums, and sports leagues, service clubs and faith groups, child care and elder care centres, nonprofit housing cooperatives and shelters, food banks, and gender-based violence support groups, and community health centres and summer camps - there are so many types of nonprofits to get involved with!
- Community nonprofits are locally run and supported. They have local volunteers and board members. Many are entirely volunteer operated. They need communities to support them and advocate for sustainable funding so they can continue their work. The best way to know how to support your local organizations is by asking!
- Knowing about your local neighbourhood association, participating in community consultations, and having a relationship with your local elected officials are also ways to participate in your communities!
- Connect with local nonprofits to learn about what is important for them, in the run up to an election, and consider these needs as part of your process of deciding who to vote for.