

# LET'S INFLUENCE PUBLIC POLICY THROUGH ADVOCACY

Nonprofits can, and should, advocate for improvements to public policy



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## Public policy impacts you.

How your nonprofit goes about its work – what you can do, how you do it and why your work is needed. Whether you are a small nonprofit in Moosonee or large one a few blocks away from Queen's Park, an organization working on many broad issues or one focused on one specific local concern, public policy affects your work.



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## Advocacy is required to change public policy.

Nonprofits serve the public good, from delivering services, to responding to needs, to creating new opportunities that help individuals and communities to thrive. But while we are focused on our missions, our work can be hindered by bad public policy, or enhanced by better policy. So nonprofits must also advocate. Advocating for good public policy is a way to tackle larger systemic forces.



## FOUR REASONS NONPROFITS SHOULD ADVOCATE

**Advocate:** To publicly take a position on an issue and work to get others to agree with your position.  
**Public Policy:** Government regulations, legislation, policies, and programs. Public policy impacts people's lives, and many stakeholders work to influence it, including businesses, nonprofits, community groups, individuals, and other levels of government.



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## Advocacy empowers communities.

Nonprofits are an important bridge, connecting governments to the people affected by government policy. Your nonprofit's work to meet your mission gives you community knowledge, community connections and subject expertise. You can convene and channel community concerns, lived experiences and grounded ideas to the government. The act of advocacy itself creates connections, and increases engagement skills and opportunities among community-builders and strengthens the nonprofit sector.

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## Advocating helps you meet your mission.

Public policy can create barriers to getting your work done, like making it difficult to secure resources and space for programming, connect community members to opportunities, or protect their health and well-being. Advocacy is a way to present sustainable solutions, express concerns, influence decisions, create access, defend, promote and make change so your nonprofit can get work done, and serve your community.



# DON'T WAIT TO ADVOCATE. IT'S EASY TO GET STARTED.

## Government of Ontario SEVEN TIPS FOR ADVOCACY



**1 Do your research.** Find out which levels of government are responsible for the issues that impact your organization. Research the relevant departments, ministries or agencies at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels of government - looking at budgets, as well as responsibilities.

**2 Get ready.** Find out who represents your organization's constituency in the provincial parliament (MPP). ONN helps you advocate provincially. Connect to your local or national partners for advice on municipal or federal advocacy. Understand how legislation is introduced and how bills are passed. Attend a question period. Respond to budget consultations. **Learn more:** [Ontario Legislative Assembly ola.org](http://Ontario Legislative Assembly ola.org)

**3 Offer solutions.** Share community solutions with your local MPPs, government officials, staffers

and public servants. Be clear and concise. Don't be reactive or negative. Your proposal should solve your communities' needs, as well as a problem the government wants to solve.

**4 Get to know them.** Your MPPs have interests too! Find out what interests them. They may introduce a bill, or be on a standing or special purpose legislative committee. Monitor these committees, bills and notices for issues that impact your nonprofit. Look up your local MPP's or cabinet minister's voting record, interests and responsibilities.

**Learn more: Bills:** [ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/current](http://ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/current), **Legislative committees:** [ola.org/en/legislative-business/committees](http://ola.org/en/legislative-business/committees)

**5 Meet with them.** Connect to MPPs when they are in their constituency, or local office, as opposed to Queen's Park. Constituency days are Fridays, while

there are constituency weeks when the legislature does not meet. **Learn more:** Parliamentary Calendar [ola.org/en/legislative-business/parliamentary-calendars](http://ola.org/en/legislative-business/parliamentary-calendars)

**6 Help them get to know you.** Become a trusted community resource to your local MPP and their staff. Start by sharing publications, newsletters, and press releases. Invite them to events you host — and follow up after. Share information about your organization, its role in the constituency, and how you can be an ally.

**7 Tap into your networks, expand your networks.** Work collectively to prepare joint letters, reports, and consultations. Build your networks by attending town hall meetings and reaching out to community groups, schools, and local businesses in your community. Connect to ONN: [theonn.ca](http://theonn.ca)