

ONN POLICY PRIORITIES 2022-2023

Our policy buckets

ONN works within four broad public policy areas:

- our **people**,
- our **finances**,
- our **regulatory frameworks**,
- and our **data**.

Our goal is to create a more enabling public policy environment for a strong and resilient sector so that nonprofits can focus on supporting Ontario's vibrant communities.

The issues that ONN primarily focuses on are a combination of:

- Sector-wide (affecting more than one subsector, such as social services, arts, faith groups, and environmental organizations);
- Ontario-wide;
- Impacting organizations of all sizes;
- Aiming to advance settler-Indigenous reconciliation, anti-racism, and gender equity.

ONN advances its policy work using a network model. We hold ourselves accountable for upholding [our values](#) in all that we do.

We apply various equity lenses in our public policy and advocacy work in an effort to highlight the differential impacts of our policy environment on communities that are often overlooked and underrepresented in policymaking. We particularly aim to centre and amplify the experiences of organizations and groups serving Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, women and people who identify as 2SLGBTQI+, people with disabilities, newcomers, and low-income individuals and families.

Applying an equity lens to our work also means paying attention to power imbalances that exist across the sector, such as between rural and urban areas, established organizations and grassroots groups, and settler organizations and B3, I4¹, and/or ethno-specific organizations.

¹ Source: [CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals](#) and [The Circle on Philanthropy and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada \(2022\)](#)

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1. OUR PEOPLE

Our goal is a strong nonprofit workforce and a sector that models decent work employment practices. Through advocacy, workforce planning, and sector-wide collaboration, our paid workforce and volunteers will be well equipped for the future of work and reflective of the communities we serve, from front-line staff to senior management and boards of directors.

1.1. DECENT WORK

Championing policy that bolsters decent work to better serve communities

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for workforce-wide employment standards, labour legislation, and other key measures that underpin decent work for all, address the increasing precarity of work, and create the conditions to enter/re-enter the labour market. We advocate for mechanisms that particularly address the needs of workers at the margins of the sector's labour force. In the context of a relentless nonprofit HR crisis, we advocate for investment in nonprofit jobs -- decent work jobs -- as a critical component of a low-carbon, well-being-oriented economy, rather than a GDP-oriented economy.

PRIORITIES

Advocate to Ontario government for:

- Employment standards that create the conditions for decent work for all, including permanent paid sick days, minimum wage that reflects a livable wage, equal pay for equal work across employment statuses, and regulation of gig and platform work, with a particular focus on ending misclassification of workers and volunteers.
- Wage restraint measures, such as Bill 124, to be repealed.
- Funding to support nonprofits' compliance with the Pay Equity Act.
- Proclamation of the Pay Transparency Act (2018).
- Affordable, high quality, and accessible public and nonprofit driven, licensed childcare for all working parents -- including the women-majority nonprofit workforce.

1.2. VOLUNTEERISM

Reigniting volunteerism for sector sustainability and community vibrancy

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for a policy environment that enables as well as promotes volunteerism, while closing the door on exploitation of unpaid labour. We advocate for a provincial volunteer recovery strategy that brings together stakeholders across sectors to address the negative impacts of the pandemic and loss of volunteer infrastructure. In addition, we advocate to remove costs and lengthy processing timelines associated with police record checks that are part of volunteer screening.

PRIORITIES

Advocate to Ontario government for:

- Provincial volunteer recovery strategy that addresses the negative impacts of the pandemic on volunteerism and the loss of infrastructure that supports volunteers.
- Elimination of fees for level three (vulnerable sector) checks for volunteers and lengthy processing timelines for police record checks in regulations under the Police Record Checks Reform Act.

1.3. THE CARE ECONOMY

Ensuring community accountability, quality care, and decent work for care workers through public investment in nonprofit business models in care sectors

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for enhanced public investment, nonprofit delivery, and decent work funding practices in the care economy, including elder care, child care, services for people with disabilities, and community services in general, as a key strategy for an inclusive and low-carbon economy. We recommend the adoption of policies that support Ontario's care workforce, which is women-majority and racialized. We support a coordinated approach for nonprofit employers to negotiate transfer payment agreements (TPAs) that contain key decent work measures, such as annual inflationary increases, more flexible budgets, professional development and pension plan coverage, and a commitment to nonprofit service delivery among service system managers, who themselves must be public or nonprofit.

PRIORITIES

Advocate to Ontario government for:

- Investment in the nonprofit care economy (e.g. nonprofit delivery of government programs) to grow the number and quality of care jobs to create [low-carbon employment](#) across the province and meet increasing demand for care.
- Incorporate decent work principles in nonprofit delivery of government programs to ensure care work with decent compensation and parity with other sectors, more full-time work, more schedule flexibility, and less job precarity.
- Prioritize nonprofit community-based care as the priority for care service expansion.
- Incorporate innovative ownership models in care work, such as community care cooperatives that give staff representatives and care recipients meaningful roles in their governance and operation.

Advocate to Government of Canada to:

- Prioritize nonprofit community-based care in federal-provincial/territorial transfers for care services.
- Work with the Ontario government to implement innovative nonprofit and cooperative ownership models in care work.

1.4. THE FUTURE OF WORK IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

Strengthening Ontario's nonprofit sector and its workforce to shape and adapt to the rapidly changing world of work

POLICY STATEMENT

In the midst of generational changes to the world of work, ONN advocates for a sector-wide labour force

strategy and workforce development plan to support a growing, diverse, resilient, inclusive, and well-supported workforce equipped for the future of work. New initiatives like a technology grant stream and targeted skills development programs can help the sector better adapt to technological change. ONN encourages the governments of Ontario and Canada to recognize the importance of the nonprofit sector to local economies by supporting our sector's integrated workforce planning through labour market studies.

PRIORITIES

Advocate to Ontario government for:

- A sector-wide labour force strategy and workforce development plan co-created with the sector.
- Targeted training and skills development initiatives for nonprofit workers to attain in-demand skills.
- Technology grant stream to assist nonprofits in adapting to technological change.
- Flexibility in provincial transfer payment agreements to support innovation.
- Nonprofit input in developing and governing technology that augments the work of the sector.
- Continue rapid rollout of broadband across Ontario to facilitate Indigenous and rural communities' access to technology.

Advocate to Government of Canada for:

- Collection and sharing of anonymized, disaggregated labour market information, via large-scale surveys or administrative data sharing. This includes data on the nonprofit workforce and the workforce at large, disaggregated by race, gender, and disability.
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2. OUR FINANCING

Our goal is to catalyze improvements in the Ontario nonprofit sector's funding environment by advocating for the reform of the sector's investment relationship with the government. The sector will play a critical role in local inclusive economic development, while diversifying its revenue sources with an enabling policy environment for community wealth building activities and one that allows nonprofits to seize expansion opportunities.

2.1. COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING FOR A BETTER ECONOMY

Growing inclusive local economies to address social and environmental challenges

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for an enabling public policy environment for nonprofit [social enterprises](#) and other community-owned structures as they work to create jobs, innovate, scale up, deliver essential community

services, and create community wealth and well-being through local, low-carbon economic activity. ONN advocates for support of nonprofit and cooperative enterprise and asset ownership as a way to facilitate local job creation in urban, rural, and Northern Ontario, particularly for Black and racialized communities, First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, and those facing barriers to employment. We call for social finance funds, and any private funds invested through “impact investing,” to flow through community-driven structures (using community-driven outcomes contracts, for example, instead of social impact bonds) and to prioritize First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Black, and racialized communities. Social finance should be channeled via community-governed nonprofit financial intermediaries, such as community foundations, credit unions, and community investment organizations. These are important intermediaries in delivering place-based economic development strategies. Investment in Indigenous communities must respect Treaties with Indigenous communities and uphold the principle of Indigenous development in Indigenous hands, as per Article 23 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

PRIORITIES

Advocate to Ontario government for:

- A comprehensive social enterprise strategy to help nonprofit social enterprises and co-operatives contribute to an inclusive and sustainable economy in all parts of Ontario.
- Government and broader public sector anchor institutions to engage in social value procurement (redirecting existing spending to purchase goods and services from B3, I4, and social enterprises) to channel existing spending into creating positive social and environmental outcomes for Ontario's urban, rural, and Northern communities.
- Public policies that promote or require community benefit agreements as part of infrastructure development, channeling the purchasing power of governments and their contractors to support [place-based strategies](#) and provide community benefits.

Advocate to Government of Canada:

- Through the [People-Centred Economy Group](#), advocate to promote local and social procurement, enable employee and community-based ownership succession and buyouts, and implement all twelve recommendations of the Social Innovation/Social Finance Strategy.

2.2. NONPROFIT REAL ESTATE

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

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for surplus public lands and buildings with community value to be transferred to community hands for community use. Community access to civic spaces should be supported by strong government policy at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Governments and nonprofits should explore the community land trust model to provide permanently affordable housing, including supportive 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 long-term care homes, hospitals, and disability services) should be protected from being sold and resold

on the private market, and supported to reduce carbon emissions (e.g., through energy retrofits). Care homes should be gradually transitioned to nonprofit and/or municipal ownership.

NEXT STEPS

Advocate to Ontario government for:

- Expanded and expedited nonprofit access to the Infrastructure Ontario loans program, other rotating loan funds, and/or below market-financing especially to acquire/preserve/repurpose [faith buildings](#), long-term care homes, childcare, and multi-unit residential buildings that are needed to provide essential community services.
- Consideration of available tools, in partnership with municipalities, to support nonprofits to acquire and maintain real estate that provides community housing, programs, services, and amenities on a nonprofit basis. This includes surplus public lands, zoning, property tax, low-interest loans, pooled funds to backstop loan guarantees, and 99-year leases. This is especially crucial for Indigenous-led and Black-led organizations.
- Reinstate nonprofit sector access to surplus public lands, including broader public sector lands, to mitigate the loss of affordable housing and other spaces to the speculative market.
- A nation-to-nation approach to resolving Indigenous land claims and upholding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, supporting First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups in this advocacy.

Advocate to Government of Canada for:

- Access to Community Futures Development Corporation loan programs that could support both maintenance and growth of needed physical spaces by extending those approaches to faith buildings and other nonprofits.

2.3. FUNDING REFORM

Reducing red tape in transfer payment agreements to build a new funding relationship so nonprofits can focus on outcomes

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for a modernized funding relationship with the provincial government. Modernizing this relationship would replace antiquated funding models made up of uncertainty, short-term program-specific funding, and high administrative burdens with flexibility, appropriate risk management that reflects the true cost of delivering high quality programs and services. A refreshed relationship is crucial to nonprofits' ability to respond quickly to a changing environment and deploy resources accordingly.

NEXT STEP

Advocate to Ontario government for:

- Stable, long-term, and flexible operational funding that reflects the true cost of delivering services and programs, keeps pace with inflation, and responds to emerging needs.
- Reduction of administrative burdens associated with transfer payment agreements (TPAs), by streamlining budget lines, eliminating first-quarter reports, pre-approving transferring amounts between budget lines and from one year to the next, and developing umbrella agreements.
- A joint government-nonprofit table on Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) Consolidation and Red

Tape Reduction with the Treasury Board Secretariat and Office of Red Tape Reduction.

- Coordinated approach for nonprofit employers to negotiate transfer payment agreements that contain key decent work measures, such as annual inflationary increases, more flexible budgets, professional development and pension plan coverage, and a commitment to nonprofit service delivery among service system managers, who themselves must be public or nonprofit.
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3. OUR REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

Our goal is to ensure that the Ontario nonprofit sector's regulatory frameworks support and empower the sector's work. ONN monitors government initiatives and undertakes responsive policy advocacy when legislative and policy changes are proposed that affect the nonprofit sector, especially on issues related to our governing frameworks (like corporate legislation) and nonprofits' advocacy.

3.1. HOME IN GOVERNMENT

Establishing a home in government for nonprofits to streamline and strengthen the government-sector relationship

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for a clear political structure and associated office within government to streamline supports, legislation, policy, and regulations that affect the sector and address emergent issues such as the labour force crisis and regulatory burdens. Coordinating and communicating with over 16+ ministries at a time through policy, programs, regulatory issues, and transfer payment agreements takes away from government resources and the sector's potential to more effectively serve communities.

NEXT STEPS

Advocate to Ontario government for:

- An Associate Minister-level appointment within the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, supported by a Deputy or Assistant Deputy Minister, in an Office representing nonprofits, charities and social innovation.

3.2. EMERGENCY PREPARATION, RESPONSE, AND REBUILDING

Leveraging nonprofits' infrastructure and role in communities for better emergency preparation, response, and rebuilding

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for the nonprofit sector to be an essential partner in planning for, responding to, and recovering from large-scale crises in Ontario. Lessons from the pandemic (as well as from floods, fires, and other disasters) about meeting basic needs, protecting people from harm, distributing information, supplies, vaccines, and medicines, supporting mental health, implementing place-based strategies, and other community-based work must be documented and used for the next crisis. Rather than taking for granted the resilience and responsiveness of nonprofits, governments must treat them as the essential partner they are in delivering place-based strategies for recovery and rebuilding. On the heels of a pandemic, climate-related emergencies are also likely to affect the nonprofit sector's capacity to take on the work required to achieve systemic change and impacts must be mitigated.

NEXT STEPS

Advocate for Ontario government to:

- Involve community-based nonprofits early on in emergency preparedness and response strategizing, decision-making and communication strategies, and other mass initiatives related to disasters and crises.
- Work with municipalities to ensure planning processes take better account of the need for community space in development, as well as spaces to meet urgent needs during a state of emergency (e.g., food and shelter).

3.3. ONTARIO NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT

Supporting the sector to transition to the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA)

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for an enabling corporate legal framework that is designed to meet the needs of the nonprofit sector and is regularly updated to meet changes in technology and practice.

NEXT STEPS

Advocate for Ontario government to:

- Provide adequate transitional support for the nonprofit sector through an educational and support program that addresses the diverse needs of nonprofits, including small, rural, and Special Act nonprofits.
- Improve the Ontario Business Registry to ensure it is user-friendly and enables the public use of sector data.
- Amend ONCA to create a meaningful distinction in law between nonprofits that have a public benefit mission and whose primary mission is to serve their members.

3.4. SHARED PLATFORMS

Promoting the use of shared governance structures in the sector so that emerging grassroots initiatives do not have to incorporate and manage a separate organization

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for established nonprofits and charities to be able to support emerging grassroots projects through shared platforms that leverage existing administrative capacity and governance to

support new and emerging initiatives. This will allow for innovation and emergence of new ideas and practices in communities. It will also help to maximize community efforts and donor impact, lower the risk for funders, leverage existing sector expertise and resources, support innovation for public benefit, and increase opportunities for equity and inclusion.

NEXT STEPS

Advocate to Government of Canada to:

- Modernize the legislative framework governing the charitable sector; create a Guidance document for charities on demonstrating direction and control that supports shared platforms; and provide formal recognition of shared platforms.
 - Ensure qualifying disbursement regulations support shared platforms and benefit from the new qualifying framework.
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4. OUR DATA

Our goal is to ensure that the Ontario nonprofit sector's data is ethically used and appropriately leveraged to support learning and data-driven decision-making. We advocate for nonprofits to be engaged in the development of new legislation and policies affecting data and privacy.

4.1. PRIVACY LEGISLATION

Ensuring nonprofits are reflected in the development of privacy legislation and frameworks for the ethical use of client, community, employee, and donor personal data

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN supports, in principle, privacy legislation that would ensure an ethical approach to the treatment of personal information in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The nonprofit sector must be part of shaping new privacy legislation. Legislation should ensure meaningful knowledge and consent mechanisms for the use of personal data by all sectors - public, private, and nonprofit. Legislation should ensure that technologies do not contribute to inequality.

NEXT STEPS

Advocate to Ontario government to:

- Engage nonprofits in developing legislation as stewards of personal data (employees, clients, donors, and volunteers) and as advocates for the rights and data ownership of First Nations, Inuit

and Métis Peoples, Black and racialized communities, and other groups affected by systemic oppression. Take into account their concerns about how data is currently used across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

- Harmonize legislation with existing frameworks to which many nonprofits (particularly those that operate across Canada and/or in the healthcare field) are already subject.
- Consider distinct regulations for [public benefit](#) nonprofits.
- Incorporate equity principles in government automated decision-making systems (e.g. AI).
- Support nonprofit sector education and specific, plain-language guidance for nonprofits, similar to that provided by the BC Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

4.2. OPEN DATA AND ADMINISTRATIVE DATA-LINKING FOR EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS AND POLICY

Leveraging the value in existing data sets for more effective programs and policies

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for governmental and non-governmental funders to support open data where appropriate and engage in administrative data-sharing arrangements that provide valuable information on programs and services, while respecting privacy. Ontario nonprofits and governments should work together to build on good practices in other jurisdictions that create confidential, ethical, standardized ways to share that data. Disaggregated data (by gender, race, and disability, for example) must be prioritized to support better programming and outcomes for racialized communities, First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, rural areas, and other equity-deserving groups. Sharing administrative data will create new opportunities for measuring program outcomes, providing more collaborative care, and supporting evidence-based policy.

NEXT STEPS

Advocate to Ontario government to:

- Work with the nonprofit sector to create a broad strategy to advance the possibilities of ethical administrative data sharing across provincially-funded programs and ministries, leveraging the information gathered by nonprofits and meeting the need for disaggregated data (by race, gender, disability, and urban/rural, for example).
- Accelerate the publishing of open data on the [Open Data Portal](#) and develop a mechanism for nonprofits and the communities they serve to prioritize data sets for release.

4.3. MACRO-LEVEL DATA ABOUT THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

Measuring the size, diversity, and impact of the nonprofit sector to better communicate its role in the economy and society

POLICY STATEMENT

ONN advocates for federal and provincial governments to engage the nonprofit sector directly on the development of open-access administrative data on the nonprofit sector and its contributions to the economy and society. Governments should find more comprehensive ways of measuring the nonprofit sector's contributions - and positive ripple effects - than basic revenue measures.

NEXT STEPS

Advocate to federal and Ontario governments to:

- Collect and publish up-to-date and comprehensive data and research on the nonprofit sector, in Ontario and Canada-wide, via:
 - Dedicated Statistics Canada studies of the nonprofit sector.
 - Canada Revenue Agency administrative data, notably form T3010 for charities and [T2/T1044](#) for nonprofits (open data).
 - Provincial and federal grants/transfer payment agreement data (open data).
 - Federal/provincial enterprise (business) registries (open data).

APPENDIX 1: Policy work awaiting a “policy window”

ONN has taken policy positions on many issues that still await the right “policy window” to be enacted. While we are not actively working on the following, we engage in knowledge mobilization activities, encouraging our network to continue pushing on these issues if they resonate and there are opportunities.

[REGULATING NONPROFITS’ ADVOCACY](#)

Advocating for an enabling regulatory environment for public benefit nonprofits to engage in nonpartisan, issue-based advertising.

[PUBLIC BENEFIT NONPROFITS](#)

Advocating for a distinction in law between nonprofits that have a public benefit mission and those that serve their members.

A WEB PORTAL FOR NONPROFIT LEGISLATION

Advocating for a one-stop shop where nonprofits can access and learn about all the legislation that governs their activities.

UNCLAIMED ASSETS

Advocating for the wealth in unclaimed bank accounts, whose owners cannot be found, to be reinvested in communities.