

THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR & HEALTH



From affordable housing investment to job creation strategies, the provincial government makes decisions that have serious implications for the health and well-being of Ontarians. Before you vote on October 6th, choose a candidate that will make the health and well-being of you, your family, and your community a priority. The Wellesley Institute wants to help you better understand some of the top issues in this election. Ask local candidates where they stand on policy issues that affect your health and well-being.

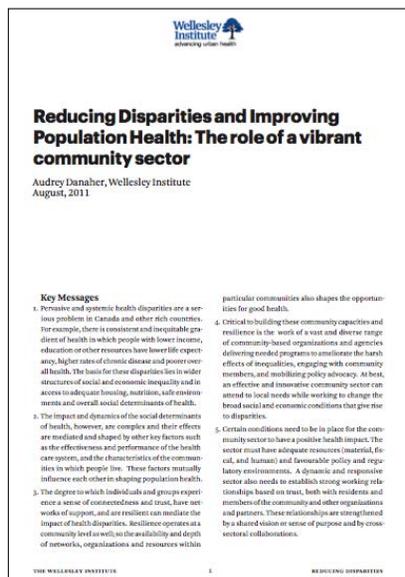
Non-profits Are Good For Our Health

New research from the Wellesley Institute shows that, in addition to having social and economic benefits, a strong and vibrant non-profit sector is critical to individual and population health.

People with lower incomes, education or other resources have lower life expectancies, higher rates of chronic disease and poorer overall health.

Ontario's 46,000+ non-profit organizations are active in every part of the province and in all aspects of community life, from health and social services to housing and recreation, arts and culture to sports and education.

An effective, innovative and resilient non-profit sector plays an important role in improving population health by helping individuals and groups experience a stronger sense of connectedness and trust, access networks of support, receive practical and necessary services and supports, and, in other ways, ameliorate the harsh effects of inequalities.



Recession brings new challenges for non-profits

In recent years, non-profits have faced growing uncertainties as governments have cut funding, forcing the sector to rely more heavily on donations and earned income. Meanwhile, the administrative burden is growing, as are demands for innovation and collaboration – complex processes that require both time and financial resources (two commodities that are increasingly scarce in the ‘do more for less’ ethos being pressed on the sector).

In 2008, the Ontario government promised a \$20 million social innovation fund to help non-profits thrive and be innovative. But the onset of the recession led to a withdrawal of that promise, even as the United States and Britain have moved forward with social innovation initiatives. The 2008 recession added to the challenges facing the sector – most non-profits have reported an increase in demand for services (especially in the health, housing and social sectors) while also experiencing a cut in revenues. In 2009, the Ontario government recognized the importance of the non-profit sector when it released its Poverty Reduction Strategy, even amending the enabling legislation (on the recommendation of the Wellesley Institute) to specifically acknowledge the central role of the community sector.

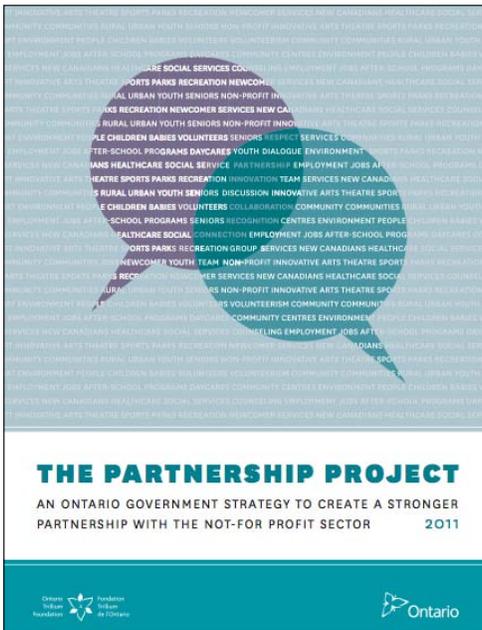
Non-profits are a vital third pillar to Ontario's economy, employing more than one million people (15% of total workforce), and contributing \$50 billion to the province's GDP – more than the auto and construction sectors combined.

Following Through With Ontario's Partnership Project Promises

In 2011, following a year-long, province-wide consultation, the provincial government released the findings of its Ontario Partnership Project. It pledged to take action in six key areas, including promoting respect and recognition for non-profits; fostering co-ordination and collaboration; building the sector's capacity; supporting volunteerism; modernizing and streamlining administrative issues facing non-profits; and, investing in social innovation. The recommendations were welcomed by non-profit leaders as a solid blueprint—but much action is required to implement the promises.

In communities across Ontario, vibrant non-profits are making a positive difference. Innovation hubs are helping to seed and share promising practices. Universities, including business schools, are placing a new emphasis on social innovation and enterprise. Comprehensive community initiatives—community-wide collaborations that are formed to address complex social issues—are demonstrating great potential.

When it comes to practical support and proper funding for the non-profit sector, Ontario is falling behind other Canadian jurisdictions, including Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and British Columbia, along with many countries and regions overseas.



WHEN PROVINCIAL ELECTION CANDIDATES ASK FOR YOUR VOTE, ASK THEM:

- **What specific plans — funding, legislation, programs and services — will you introduce to strengthen Ontario's vital non-profit sector?**
- **How do you plan to implement the six key recommendations from the Ontario Partnership Project?**
- **What are your plans — timelines, funding — for an Ontario Social Innovation Fund that would support innovative, enterprising and effective non-profits?**

To read Reducing Disparities and Improving Population Health please visit:

<http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/publication-papers/reducing-disparities-and-improving-population-health-the-role-of-a-vibrant-community-sector/>

For more information on the Ontario Partnership Project:

<http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/pp/>

For More information contact:

Michael Shapcott
 Director, Innovation
michael@wellesleyinstitute.com
 416.972.1010 ex. 231

Jo Snyder
 Communications Specialist
jo@wellesleyinstitute.com
 416.972.1010 ex. 230

