



ONTARIO SOCIAL ECONOMY ROUNDTABLE (OSER)

CHARTER

Context

The necessity to create a social economy network mobilizing all actors involved in the sector has been confirmed since 2010, when the Ontario Social Economy Roundtable (OSER) was established. Throughout the years, many stakeholders have invested time and resources to organize awareness activities, to advocate, and to promote the social economy in Ontario. Many advancements have taken place in this province since this networking began and the need to create a charter was eventually affirmed by the members. It was an opportunity to confirm a common vision, a mission, the values of OSER and at the same time to recognize the value, the contributions, the organizations and the actors of social economy in Ontario. It is the product of collaboration between numerous members of OSER. These members proposed this Charter which states the principles of membership, the objectives, the values and the impacts that OSER wishes to accomplish within the province. This charter is open to any individual, organization, constellation, network or social enterprise which shares those values, goals and principles. This philosophy is promoted by OSER and reflected upon a greater economic and social movement, transcending the local, regional, provincial, national and international realities. This document, we hope, will promote social economy, will ensure its development in the coming years and will engage all parties to develop innovative tools that will benefit the entire community.

Introduction

Considering that for the last three centuries, social enterprises, either in the form of associations, corporations, foundations, cooperatives, mutuals, caisses populaires and credit unions, have contributed to the development and the quality of life of Ontarian communities;

Considering that all parties of the social economy have benefited the economic, environmental, cultural and social capacities of individuals from one generation to the next, while opening an alternative to the prevailing economic model, which better takes into account the most pressing human needs and the health and sustainability of communities in our modern world;

And considering that social economy is the result of many leaders, members and entrepreneurs, who build from the ground up dynamic, prosperous and effective enterprises, benefiting the commons, all while understanding the core values and principles which strengthen our capacities;

Signatories of the present charter support the following articles.

1. Definitions

1.1. Social Economy

Social economy is a third sector among economies between the private (corporate) and public sectors (government). It includes organizations and models such as cooperatives, nonprofits (including registered charities), social enterprises and community ventures. The social economy theories and practices attempt to situate these organizations into a broader political socioeconomic context. In particular, they investigate and demonstrate the economic viability of cooperatives and the value of non-profit organizations (including charities) in the prevailing economic model. Social economy flourishes because of a need for new solutions to solve specific issues and to satisfy pressing human needs, which have been ignored or inadequately fulfilled by the private, public or nonprofit sectors.

1.2. Social Impact

Social impact, for any organization within the social economy, is the major goal. It can be measured in terms of community impacts, environmental impacts or cultural impacts.

1.3. Sustainability

One of the essential principles of social economy, sustainability can be understood as the capacity of businesses to generate long-term social impact, all while giving future generations the same opportunities to achieve the mission of the organization.

1.4. Social Economy Actors

The actors of social economy gather all members of society who contribute directly or indirectly within organizations to the social economy via either their work, through volunteering, by administering or by financing and supporting. Actors of social economy play a crucial role regarding the promotion and development of social economy.

2. The Development of Ontario through Social Economy

Historically speaking, social economy has been linked, as an economic activity, to the development of nonprofit organizations and coops. The value system of the associative movement, as formed through the ages by the coop movement, has articulated the modern conception of social economy, structured around three great socio-economical entities: the cooperatives, the mutuals and caisses populaires / credit unions, as well as the foundations. Those movements expressed a social phenomenon where the most vulnerable groups in society organized through cooperation to foster new life conditions. This phenomenon was a product of modern industrial societies during late 18th and early 19th centuries. The cooperatives, the non-profits, the caisses populaires and credit unions, the mutual funds, the foundations and trade unions represent various forms of this general movement.

In Ontario, the development of the social economy fits within this historical tangent, all while evolving to the present situation giving new forms of businesses and activities. Through the advances in technologies and the interconnections of the 21st century, new forms of collaborations are emerging, transforming our daily lives. Social economy has played a crucial role in the consolidation and the construction of modern day Ontario. Taking into consideration the emerging new realities (climate change, widening income disparities, democratic deficit, globalization, etc.) and envisioning new concepts reflecting the profound transformation of our society, the social economy is able to challenge the prevailing economic model by providing an alternative way to live together and to develop the commons.

3. The Ontario Social Economy Roundtable (OSER)

OSER aims to be a focal point for social economy stakeholders, who intend to put resources together in order to improve the general quality of life and the well-being of our society as a whole. Based upon the principles of democratic governance, equity, equality, solidarity, inclusion, sustainability and cross-collaboration, OSER is a space for dialogue, exchanges and collaboration to promote the growth of social economy.

4. Values, goals and strategies of OSER

4.1. Values

Members of OSER embed the following values within their respective fields, and actively promote those values:

- Democratic governance of the economy.
- Sustainability, environmental responsibility and innovation.
- Equality and inclusivity.
- Collaboration across generations, regions and cultures.
- Engagement and active participation of citizens within community projects.

4.2. Goals

OSER, through its actions, aims at achieving the following goals:

Be a unified voice for the social economy sector within the Province of Ontario.
Facilitate connections among organizations working in the social economy sector.
Share common resources to actively heighten the social well-being of communities.
Improve understanding of the social economy sector, its needs and its opportunities among Ontarians and among decision makers.
Promote the utilization of alternative solutions.
Increase financial and other resources available to the social economy sector.
Encourage an enabling regulatory environment to facilitate the work of the social economy sector.

4.3. Strategies

Efforts are focused on three core areas, called strategies, to strengthen social economy in Ontario:

Members are working to build a movement by sharing information and increasing the engagement of communities in Ontario around social economy. This foundational work is informing the subsequent policy work collectively undertaken by OSER members and is focused strongly on inclusively capturing the voices of the community.

OSER serves as a vehicle for interested parties to provide a strong, unified set of voices for the sector to coordinate and drive forward policies that meet the ongoing challenge of creating an enabling environment for social economy work in Ontario..

Through their individual work or in collaboration, OSER members also facilitate direct capacity building to strengthen the work of the sector as a whole.

Signatories

The following are engaged, within the terms of this charter, to work within the definitions, values,

goals and strategies proposed in this document.

Canadian Centre for Community Renewal / Centre canadien pour le renouveau communautaire
Canadian Community Economic Development Network
Cathy Lang Consulting
Centre for Learning, Social Economy & Work (CLSEW), University of Toronto
Centre for Social Innovation
Community Forward Fund
Community Innovation
Community Opportunity & Innovation Network
Conseil de la coopération de l'Ontario
EkoNomos
Georgian College, Centre for Social Entrepreneurship
Huron Business Development Centre
Impact Counsel Professional Corporation
Learning Enrichment Foundation
MaRS Centre for Impact Investing
MécènESS
Niagara Peninsula Homes
Ontario Co-operative Association
Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
Ontario Network of Skills Training and Employment Programs
Ontario Nonprofit Network
Ottawa Community Loan Fund
PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise
Pathway to Potential
Perth Community Futures Development Corporation
Pillar Nonprofit Network / VERGE Capital
Purpose Capital
Ryerson University
School for Social Entrepreneurs Ontario
Social Delta
Social Enterprise Rural Alliance - Community Ventures
Social Enterprise Toronto
SoJo
Toronto Enterprise Fund
United Way Chatham Kent
WeTech Alliance
Working for Change
Youth Employment Services, Thunder Bay