

## Social Enterprise Models in Canada—Ontario

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to examine social enterprises in Ontario, Canada, as part of the “Social Enterprises Models in Canada” research of the International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) Project. The report presents an analysis of the historical, contextual, and conceptual understanding of social enterprises in Ontario. Five cases studies illustrate social enterprise models, and the article then presents the main institutions in Ontario related to social enterprises, describing legal framework, public policies, university institutions, networks, spaces, and funding agencies and programs.

### RÉSUMÉ

Dans le cadre du projet Modèles d'entreprises sociales au Canada de l'International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM), l'objectif du présent article est d'examiner les entreprises sociales en Ontario, Canada. Le rapport présente une analyse historique, contextuelle et conceptuelle pour comprendre les entreprises sociales en Ontario. Cinq études de cas illustrent les modèles d'entreprises sociales. Les principales institutions liées aux entreprises sociales en Ontario, tel que le cadre législatif, les politiques publiques, les établissements universitaires, les réseaux, les espaces, les organismes de financement et les programmes, sont décrites.

**KEYWORDS / MOTS CLÉS** : Ontario; Social enterprises; Models / Ontario; Entreprises sociales; Modèles

## **INTRODUCTION**

Located in east-central Canada, Ontario is the most populous province in the country, with a population of more than 13.5 million, i.e., about 38 percent of Canadians. It is the second-largest province by area, covering more than one million square kilometres (Government of Ontario, 2015a, 2015c). The majority of the population resides in Southern Ontario. More than 85 percent of the population lives in urban areas, largely on the shores of the Great Lakes. Canada's most populous city, Toronto, and Ottawa, the nation's capital city, are located in Ontario. English is Ontario's official language and there are several French-speaking communities in the province. Aboriginal peoples make up about 2 percent of the province's population, and more than one-quarter of the province's population was born outside of Canada (Government of Ontario, 2015a, 2015c). Economically, Ontario includes Canada's largest manufacturing sector, Canada's centre of finance and banking (Toronto), and important natural resources, information technology, tourism, and agricultural sectors. Most of the province's exports (79%) and imports (57%) are with the United States, located on its southern borders (Government of Ontario, 2015c).

The objective of this article is to examine social enterprises in Ontario. The article was initially presented as a report for the International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) Project as part of its "Social Enterprises Models in Canada" research stream.<sup>1</sup> The methodologies used in this examination are primarily literature review and case studies. A literature review served to collect extant literature and documentation on social enterprises in Ontario and identified relevant laws and policy reports. Websites and research reports were also used to gather information on the various key social enterprise organizations and initiatives. For case studies, we used many internal and external sources to collect information on the organization's mission and activities, such as websites, interviews, documents (brochures, annual reports, financial statements, etc.), and articles. We also conducted some interviews with executive directors of the organizations.

In the remainder of the article, we first present an analysis of the historical, contextual, and conceptual understanding of social enterprises in Ontario. Second, we present five illustrative case studies of exemplar social enterprise models in the province. Third, we describe the institutions in Ontario that support social enterprises, including the province's legal framework, public policies, university institutions, networks, spaces, and funding agencies and programs.

## **UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT**

In Canada, social enterprise is, as it is around the world, a contested concept. Although theorists have attempted to create frameworks by which we can understand social enterprise in a broader context (i.e., the "third sector" or the "social economy"), these framing attempts have not yet been fully accepted or integrated (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001). Given this contestation, this article discusses the Ontario context of social enterprise within the broader Canadian context and via three guiding frameworks: historical, contextual, and conceptual.

### **Historical background**

In Canada, the province of Ontario has historically played the role of the political and economic "centre," with Toronto, the provincial capital, in turn serving that role in the province. This has meant that traditionally Ontario has taken a "market" approach to economic policy and a "welfare/charity" approach to social service delivery.

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Social enterprises in Ontario have a long history dating back to the nineteenth century, especially in agriculture, with a number of large and well-established producer or marketing co-operatives, but also housing, child care, financial, and consumer co-operatives. This sector has however largely been invisible historically in terms of policy and public awareness, despite its size and presence in the economic fabric of the province.

This context began to change in the 1980s when an environment of neoconservatism dominated the Ontario political landscape, first with the election of Premier Frank Miller and later in the 1990s with the Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government. In this new political context, the twin imperatives of cost-cutting and self-sufficiency in public service became the watchwords of policy. Influences from the international political economy, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) entering into force in 1994 and public finance policies adopted in the United States and the United Kingdom, have also contributed to the political context within Ontario.

As a result, the broader social economy sector began to look toward social enterprise as a means to respond to the contextual change. Innovation in this area began to take hold, especially in the nonprofit sector that became—often unwillingly—a partner to these policy changes. Thus, venerable nonprofits such as the United Way or the YM/YWCA became participants in various government program-downloading projects such as the infamous “workfare” program of the Harris government.

At the turn of the millennium, the focus on social enterprises increased, both by actors in the social economy and in government, and can be said to be an agreed-upon concept now even if the meaning of the concept remains opaque. Interestingly, there have been important policy changes to facilitate social enterprise in Ontario, perhaps most notably in energy, where the Green Energy Act has broken up the state monopoly on energy generation for both private and community power entities. More recently social enterprise has also made inroads into social service delivery across a broad spectrum of services from healthcare to elder care.

### Contextual aspects

The context of social enterprise in Ontario is deeply influenced from four, often contradictory, directions, and those influences are features in social enterprise discourse and practice in Ontario. First, there is the strong influence of the United States and its focus on entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency—especially in Ontario’s Anglophone communities. Thus the dominant formulation of social enterprise in Ontario, especially from the point of view of funding bodies, is one that focuses on individual entrepreneurs creating successful businesses that have, as an element, a broadly construed social purpose (e.g., employment or environmental need). Second, there is the influence of the social enterprise movement in the UK—which has a more socially focused and policy component. Thus the state can create policies (for example, the Green Energy Act) that encourage community control and opportunities for social entrepreneurs in the context of Ontario. There is increasing acceptance of these types of policies politically, although their implementation in policy is underdeveloped and measurement of the impacts of such policies on community well-being understudied. Third, and this is especially true of Francophone and immigrant communities, there is the influence of a more European understanding of social enterprise in line with the EMES definition (Defourny & Nyssens, 2012), and following the Québec example. And finally, Ontario social enterprises are distinguished by their diversity, shaped by the geographic, socio-economic, and demographic complexity of the province as well as the wide assortment of funding sources and a plurality of organizational forms (e.g., nonprofits parented by a charity, nonprofit co-operatives, for-profit co-operatives, etc.). One could see First Nations social enterprise activity as a fifth

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influence, but this is not specific to Ontario, affected, but not determined, by the policies and influences mentioned above, while encompassing the heterogeneous characteristic of social enterprise models taken up by Aboriginal communities across Canada (see Sengupta, Vieta, & McMurtry, 2015).

### Conceptual dimensions

A number of definitions regarding social enterprises are used in Ontario. Recent academic and consultant-based research has defined social enterprises in ways that identify their strong social mission, varying in emphasis related to their social innovation, main beneficiaries, or organizational structure.

For instance, social enterprises are recognized to be “innovative organizations established to address social needs and or problems; the social mission is central and explicit; and assets and wealth are used to create community benefit” (Madill, Brouard, & Hebb, 2010, p. 137). In a report for SiG@MaRS, Mulholland Consulting (2008, p. 5) defines social enterprise as “the establishment, financing and operation of sustainable businesses by non-profit, co-operative and for-profit organizations or corporations, for the purpose of selling goods and services, generating a profit, and generating measurable social benefits beyond those generally delivered by competitor businesses.” Flatt, Daly, Elson, Hall, Thompson, and Chamberlain (2013) define social enterprise as “a business venture owned or operated by a non-profit organization that sells goods or provides services in the market for the purpose of creating a blended return on investment, both financial and social/environmental/cultural” (p. 4).

The Province of Ontario has only recently entered the social enterprise sector with the opening of the Office of Social Enterprise in 2012, located within the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Focusing on the social impacts, business, and revenue generation dimensions of the organizational form, its report *Impact: A Social Enterprise Strategy for Ontario* defines social enterprise as “an organization that uses business strategies to maximize its social or environmental impact” and “a business with two goals: achieve social, or environmental outcomes, and maximize revenue” (Government of Ontario, 2013b, pp. 5, 7). It is still too early to tell how much influence and impact on shaping the direction of the social enterprise sector the province’s recent entry will have, given that the social enterprise concept and model have been a part of Ontario’s social economy for some years already.

The social economy sector in Ontario has also been influential and active in attempting to conceptualize social enterprise and social innovation. For instance, the Centre for Social Innovation defines social innovation as “New ideas that resolve existing social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges for the benefit of people and planet. A true social innovation is systems-changing—they permanently alter the perceptions, behaviours and structures that previously gave rise to these challenges” (Centre for Social Innovation, 2015, para. 1; see also Ontario Nonprofit Network, 2010, p. 2).

Finally, broader Canadian definitions have also been influential in the province. The Canadian Task Force on Social Finance (2010) suggests that “a social enterprise is generally understood to mean any organization or business that uses the market-oriented production and sale of goods and/or services to pursue a public benefit mission. This covers a broad spectrum of entities—from enterprising charities, non-profits, and co-operatives to social purpose businesses” (p. 32). The Canadian Task Force on Social Finance (2010) further defines social purpose businesses as “commercial for-profit entities created by entrepreneurs to address social issues, with

the core of their operations directed toward maintaining their social purpose, while operating in the market economy” (p. 32).

A few observations can be made from the above range of definitions. First, participatory governance has not centrally entered into the discussion of social enterprise in Ontario outside of the co-operative sector. Second, the dominant elements of social enterprise are seen to rotate around

1. economic operation in the market, and
2. provisioning a social good of some kind, namely environmental, community, social, or economic well-being.

Although these elements give some clarity to the social enterprise form in Ontario, it also creates significant latitude for for-profit market actors to claim identity in this sphere. Third, the definitions of social enterprise in Ontario are significantly being launched by already existing entities—nonprofits, co-operatives, and market agents—as a way to “rebrand” existing activities to an emerging policy and popular perception paradigm.

A final observation is that social enterprises are significantly emerging “from the ground up” in Ontario using existing legislation and organizational forms as tools to meet social, community, economic, and cultural challenges. It can be expected then, as these experiments take hold and demonstrate value to policy makers and the public at large, that the definitional environment will change accordingly. We are, in Ontario, in a period of significant transition, with social enterprise emergent but by no means stable.

## **FIVE ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDIES OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN ONTARIO**

Social enterprises in Ontario are distinguished by their organizational diversity. This diversity is due to both the plurality of socio-economic needs they attempt to address and the lack of unified provincial legislation and policies for social enterprises. Social enterprises in Ontario are further shaped by the geographic, economic, and demographic complexity of the province. As such, our case studies attempt to illustrate the differences among Ontario social enterprises, namely their variety of organizational and governance forms; the stakeholders they involve; the multiplicity of socio-economic, environmental, and cultural needs that drive them; and the regional characteristics that differentiate them.

For structuring the case studies, we have taken into consideration the key objectives of the broader ICSEM project, with further guidance from research frameworks and findings provided by recent Canadian and Ontario studies of social enterprise models (i.e., Elson & Hall, 2013; Flatt et al., 2013; Quarter, Mook, & Armstrong, 2009). Our case studies thus endeavour to take into account the historical, organizational, and contextual dimensions of what we have identified as exemplar Ontario social enterprises. Our case studies include an overview of each enterprise’s main social purpose and activities, governance structure, institutional trajectory and enabling environments, and finances and financial model (see Table 1 for a summary of our illustrative case studies).

**Table 1: Summary of case studies in Ontario**

Name of the organization	Region / City	Legal structure	Ownership	Purpose	Activities
Groupe Convex Prescott- Russell	Eastern Ontario / Rockland	Nonprofit corporation	Community	Multipurpose enterprise	Francophone work integration / reinsertion
Haween Enterprises	Southern Ontario / Toronto	Parented nonprofit corporation	Private by statute (foundation)	Capacity-focused enterprise	Work integration and training for immigrant women
The Renewable Energy Co-operative	Southern Ontario / Toronto	Nonprofit co-operative	Members (consumers of the power produced)	Community power producer and facilitator	Sustainable energy provider
Sumac Worker Co-operative	Southwestern Ontario / Guelph	For-profit co-operative	Individuals (workers)	Multipurpose enterprise	Fair employment and fair trade / organics
Good Foot Delivery Service	Southern Ontario / Toronto	Nonprofit corporation parented by a registered charity	Stakeholders in trust (trustees) — nonprofit foundation	Capacity-focused enterprise	Permanent employment and training for people with cognitive challenges

### **Groupe Convex Prescott-Russell**

Rockland, Eastern Ontario  
www.groupeconvexpr.ca

#### **Overview**

Groupe Convex Prescott-Russell, Inc. / Prescott-Russell Convex Group, Inc. (hereafter Groupe Convex) is a federally incorporated nonprofit organization located in Prescott-Russell in eastern Ontario, close to Ottawa. Established in 2004, the corporation incubates and manages social enterprises, namely businesses that have a social mission.

Groupe Convex’s mission is “to generate quality jobs through business projects for people of Prescott-Russell, who face challenges in terms of employability” and the enterprise “also serves as a catalyst in socio-economic change for the region” (Groupe Convex, 2014, n.p.). Convex may, jointly with its partners, guide entrepreneurship forces to solve social problems. The underlying philosophy is that “employment is one of the most gratifying experiences in North American society” (Arcand, 2010, p. 2).

Groupe Convex is an umbrella organization and operates nine social enterprises and has closed or sold three other social enterprises (see Table 2). Groupe Convex’s social enterprises employ more than 180 employees, of whom around three out of four workers face serious barriers regarding their employability (for example, related to intellectual disability).

**Table 2: Groupe Convex social enterprises**

Name	City	Year	Products / Services
Groupe Convex (3 employees)	Rockland	2004	Head office www.groupeconvexpr.ca
<b>Social enterprises</b>			
Express Net (24 employees)	Hawkesbury	2002*	Interior cleaning and housekeeping; Exterior cleaning and groundskeeping; Interior and exterior painting; Moving services
Menuiserie / Woodshop Casselman (20 employees)	Casselman	2002*	Manufacturing of wooden garden furniture; Transformation of ornamental wooden products; Design and manufacturing of various wooden products; Custom development; Inventory management
Antiques Hawkesbury (20 employees)	Hawkesbury	2004	Restoration and repair of antique furniture and wooden furniture; Finishing of cabinets, stairs, and hardwood floors; Sale of restoration and finishing products for furniture and antiques; Pickup and delivery
Emballages Prescott-Russell Packaging (32 employees)	Rockland	2004	Packing and bagging; Inserting and assembling documents; Labelling; Handling and finishing of packaging
Les Glaneurs / The Harvesters (22 employees)	Eastern Ontario and western Québec	2005	Labour co-operative: Sowing and planting; Weeding, hoeing, and pruning; Picking and harvest; Vegetable production; Animal care and milking; Wood cutting
Café Le Plateau (8 employees)	Hawkesbury	2007	Specialty coffees and drinks; Breakfast; Fresh sandwiches and salads; Catering (Monday to Friday)
Recycle-Action (50 employees)	Hawkesbury	2008	Recycling of blue box content; Recycling of white expanded polystyrene; Collection and recycling of cardboard; Electronic waste recovery; Destruction and shredding of confidential documents; Special collections; Rental of containers
Café Bistro (1 employee)	Rockland	2012	Specialty coffees and drinks; Breakfast; Fresh sandwiches and salads; Catering (Monday to Friday)
Café entre 2 barreaux (3 employees)	L'Original	2012	Specialty coffees and drinks; Breakfast; Fresh sandwiches and salads; Catering (Monday to Friday)
<b>Total (183 employees)</b>			
Librairie du Coin (5 employees)	Casselman	2005; closed in 2009	Library
Gold and Spices (6 employees)	Hawkesbury Plantagenet	2005; closed in 2011	Selling coffee and spices; gift baskets
Imprimerie Charles Printing (6 employees)	Hawkesbury	2005; sold in 2012	Print shop

### **Governance**

A volunteer board of directors consisting of eight persons oversees the activities of Groupe Convex. Board members are chosen from the community in the region. Groupe Convex's financial results are reported in two financial statements (year-end March 31), one for Recycle-Action and one for Groupe Convex (consolidating all social enterprises, except Recycle-Action). The separate structure for Recycle-Action was created due to higher risks from an insurance point of view.

### **Institutional trajectory / Enabling environments**

Groupe Convex is the result of an initiative made by Valoris for Children and Adults of Prescott-Russell (hereafter Valoris), formerly Prescott-Russell Services to Children and Adults (PRSCA) (Arcand, 2010). Valoris is a multi-service social service agency for children, teenagers, adults, and their families living in the United Counties of Prescott-Russell in eastern Ontario (Valoris, 2014).

In reaction to serious and chronic unemployment among the intellectually disabled citizens of the area, a group of community leaders decided that there was need for community-based solutions. After studying nonprofit organizations in Canada, France, Switzerland, and the United States, and looking at transforming traditional sheltered workshops into real businesses, these leaders created a separate organization. "Though initially formed under Valoris, within two years the decision was made for Groupe Convex to dissociate from the agency, with agreements formed between the two entities" (Neutel, 2013b, p. 1). The decision was based on the different approaches of social services and social enterprises, and because Groupe Convex would be an employer (Arcand, 2010; Neutel, 2013a). The first executive director, Caroline Arcand, was the PRSCA's project leader, and she remains the executive director of Groupe Convex.

### **Finances and financial model**

As of March 31, 2014, Groupe Convex had total revenues of more than \$3.5 million, including about \$1.7 million from selling products or services, representing around 50 percent of the total operating budget. Grants, the other 50 percent of the operating budget, come mainly from the Valoris social services agency, various government agencies, and foundations, such as the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Yves Landry Foundation, and Co-operators Foundation.

Grants and revenues coming from Valoris and their related organization, such as the Valoris Foundation and the Valor Institute, are subject to continuous negotiations with Valoris to cover social costs to compensate for lack of productivity or errors and to ensure appropriate supervision of the workers. The Prescott-Russell Community Development Corporation has provided venture capital to finance the purchase of equipment.

### **Haween Enterprises**

Toronto, Southern Ontario

[www.haweenenterprises.com](http://www.haweenenterprises.com)

### **Overview**

Integrating new immigrants into the workforce is a major social and economic challenge in Toronto, Canada's major destination for newcomers, where over half of the population consists of people born elsewhere. In recent decades, as a response to this surge in immigrant populations across Ontario's major urban centre as well as

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the reduction of government-sponsored work integration and settlement programs, transition-to-employment social purpose businesses such as Haween Enterprises have emerged.

Haween Enterprises (hereafter Haween) began operations in 1992 shortly after the founding of its parent organization, the Somali Women and Children's Support Network (SWCSN), as a response to the employment needs of refugee women arriving mostly from Somalia. Haween (the Somali word for women) employs women who have participated in training with its parent organization, the SWCSN, and other similar immigrant settlement organizations found throughout urban Ontario and Canada. Via Haween, the SWCSN strives to improve the long-term employment opportunities of its women participants by funnelling its social objectives through the market activities of Haween's "contract manufacturing" of clothing and other products. At the same time, and via the close work with SWCSN's other programs, Haween's workers are also provided with job training, ESL (English as a Second Language) educational services, and the development of business skills such as marketing, invoicing, and general business administration.

Haween is a "transitional employment" social enterprise, providing "training and transitional employment" (Quarter et al., 2009, pp. 110–113) for immigrant and low-income women in Toronto's inner-city suburb of Rexdale (Haween Enterprises, 2014). Haween Enterprises is a good example of a training-based and settlement-focused work integration social enterprise that addresses the skills upgrading and work experience required by a vulnerable subset of Toronto's new immigrants: women from wartorn areas of the world. Economically, SWCSN, via Haween Enterprises, supports part of its cost recovery via Haween's textile and sewing business, which makes garments, vacuum cleaner bags, corporate apparel, and conference materials for private- and public-sector interests.

Haween's workforce is involved in product development, cutting, design, and sewing. It outsources the skills and capabilities of these women to other nonprofit and for-profit businesses while empowering its workers to acquire the confidence and capacities needed to navigate the Ontario job market. In line with its social objective, Haween does not mass-produce its products, purchases production inputs from the fair trade movement, and is compliant with the "Made in Canada" label. Its mission statement, encapsulating the gist of its social purpose, is as follows:

To increase employment opportunities and work experience for both Somali and other immigrant women, providing services to the textile industry, manufacturers, and private companies. Involvement in Haween Enterprises will increase these women's self-sufficiency and improve the quality of their lives. The social support component of Haween includes increasing life skills, leadership skills, social networks, and the capacity to integrate into Canadian Society. (Haween Enterprises, 2014, n.p.)

### **Governance**

Haween Enterprises is owned and operated by the parent charity organization, Somali Women and Children's Support Network (SWCSN). This is a typical model for social enterprises for marginalized communities in Ontario. In practice, Haween is a subsidiary of the SWCSN, enabling the charity to receive both "an income stream from the market" (Quarter et al., 2009, p. 107) and, importantly, to meet its social objectives most directly by providing a space where its program recipients can receive real-world experience and training in a market setting.

***Institutional trajectory / Enabling environments***

Haween Enterprises is tied closely to Somali community organizations and the state through its immigrant services as well as to the City of Toronto.

***Finances and financial model***

Haween is also funded and supported by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and by the United Way Toronto. The City of Toronto is also closely involved in job integration social enterprises such as Haween via its Employment and Social Services program (City of Toronto, 2014), which helps new immigrants find jobs and other financial supports that have, in recent decades, been downloaded increasingly to Canada's municipalities.

**The Renewable Energy Co-operative**

Toronto, Southern Ontario

[www.trec.on.ca](http://www.trec.on.ca)

***Overview***

The Renewable Energy Co-operative (hereafter TREC) was founded in 1998 (originally as the Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative) as a nonprofit co-operative focused on community power production (The Renewable Energy Co-operative, 2014). The original membership of the co-operative comprised environmentally concerned professionals from universities and the private sector. TREC is unique as a social enterprise as it has been at the forefront of incubating emerging social enterprises in community power but has also been at the forefront of developing policy at the provincial level in both social enterprise finance and renewable energy.

Since 1998, TREC has continually diversified and expanded its enterprise activity. As mentioned, it has incubated a number of social enterprises in alternative energy—WindShare, LakeWind, SolarShare—as well as a nonprofit educational organization, TREC Education, and a business incubation and professional services business, TREC Services.

The main social purpose of TREC is to provide energy alternatives owned and operated by communities as well as to educate the general public on the environmental issues raised by climate change as well as innovative solutions to them. By serving as an incubator of renewable energy social enterprises, TREC performs an important role in the social enterprise ecosystem in Ontario.

TREC and its board have also been instrumental in creating a positive policy environment for social enterprises in Ontario. The co-operative played a central role in changing the Ontario Co-operative Act to allow for a unique understanding of membership in energy co-operatives, as all energy produced has to be sold to the provincial hydro grid before it can be distributed. It has also played an important role in raising the profile of community bonds as a means of financing social enterprises, utilizing the Ontario Co-operative Act to innovate small-scale community investment in energy projects.

### **Governance**

TREC is governed by community members, many of whom were instrumental in its founding. It relies heavily on its 11 paid staff, including its executive director Judith Lipp, to function day to day. Its community membership is composed largely of small-scale investors and, indirectly (see above), of the power related organizations.

### **Institutional trajectory / Enabling environments**

TREC was initially funded by community member investments in WindShare as a traditional consumer co-operative as well as a number of grants and subsidies from the provincial government. In 2010, TREC decided to separate the funding from government, creating TREC Education as an environmental education nonprofit. TREC now focuses on income generation through its energy production activities and increasingly on TREC Services, which helps incubate other community power organizations. Finally, TREC has used existing policy frameworks, namely the Ontario Co-operative Act, to innovate in finance, developing community bonds. TREC is significantly involved in, and influenced by, a number of key policies in Ontario. These are the Ontario Co-operative Act, the Green Energy Act, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, and the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act.

### **Finances and financial model**

Financial statements are available to the board, investors, and members as is required by law. As TREC is increasingly reliant on income generation through enterprise, its finances are not easily accessible.

### **Sumac Worker Co-operative**

Guelph, southwestern Ontario  
sumac.coop

### **Overview**

Sumac Worker Co-operative (hereafter Sumac) emerged out of a failed co-operative restaurant—Tributaries—that had a coffee roasting business (Sumac Worker Co-op, 2014). Saving the roaster from the creditors, in 1997 Planet Bean Worker Co-operative was founded, and began to produce fair trade organic coffee for the specialty coffee market—both retail and wholesale. As the enterprise grew and stabilized, the worker-owners of Planet Bean began to think about the further financing, entrepreneurial, and co-operative opportunities that might emerge under different organizational structures.

In 2005, the Sumac was born and Planet Bean became a wholly owned for-profit business subsidiary of the new co-operative. The idea of the worker-members of Sumac was, following the Mondragon example, that an apex worker co-operative that owns for-profit businesses could better provide the social goals of employment to its member/owners and promotion of fair trade products and principles through a diversity of enterprises. To date, Sumac has incorporated one other business, WearFair, a fair trade and organic clothing supplier.

Currently, Sumac has nine worker-members and provides “meaningful work” to more than 20 people in the Southern Ontario region. Sumac has annual sales of just over a million dollars, and Planet Bean has three retail outlets and a vibrant wholesale business distributing coffee throughout the region.

## **Governance**

Sumac is a worker co-operative that is owned and operated by its workers. Workers are the sole members of the organization, and currently all of the worker-members sit on its board of directors. Worker-members, from the CEO through every other management position, staff the management team of the organization. The president of Sumac sits on the board of both the for-profit companies (Planet Bean and WearFair). The boards of these organizations may also have community non-members of the co-op on their board.

## **Institutional trajectory / Enabling environments**

Sumac is a self-managed and self-financed social enterprise, which self-consciously chose to incorporate as a worker co-operative utilizing the Ontario Co-operative Act. It is financed through a combination of member loans through “sweat equity” (where a portion of the members’ wages are held back by the co-operative to purchase shares in the co-operative); loans from financial institutions; and grants and investments from “social investors” such as the Canadian Alternative Investment Co-operative (CAIC) and individual community members. Sumac has created a positive investment environment for individual community members by utilizing the federal government policy of Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSPs) and Tax-Free Savings Accounts (TFSAs) that provides various tax breaks to investors on top of the favourable rates of interest attached to these investments.

## **Finances and financial model**

As outlined above, Sumac is self-financed through business activity, grants, investments, and member loans.

## **Good Foot Delivery Service**

Toronto, Southern Ontario  
www.goodfootdelivery.com

## **Overview**

Good Foot Delivery Service (hereafter Good Foot) is an example of a social enterprise that creates a place for “permanent employment” for communities that find it difficult to enter the job market. Good Foot employs people with developmental disabilities and offers a personalized point-to-point delivery service on foot or via public transit for more than 200 corporate and individual clients throughout metropolitan Toronto. A nonprofit work integration social enterprise parented by a charity organization, Good Foot was founded in 2010 by advertising executive Kirsten Gauthier and her brother Jon Gauthier. From an initial vision to create a meaningful and stable job for Jon, the business has gone on to employ more than 20 people with cognitive challenges and other developmental disabilities in a courier service that uses Toronto’s public transit system for deliveries. As of early 2014, Good Foot was providing jobs for 13 part-time couriers and seven volunteer-based workers, who will eventually transition into work as part-time employees.

Good Foot’s mission is to be a “courier service providing dependable point-to-point delivery within the Greater Toronto Area ... in a timely fashion with an attention to detail and quality.” For Good Foot, it is their social aim that sets them apart: “We believe social responsibility to be a corporate duty and we are proud to give companies in our community the option to invoke that duty in a way that serves their image, utility and bottom line” (Good Foot Delivery, 2014, n.p.). Indeed, Good Foot enjoys exceptional support from its corporate clients,

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who appreciate helping provide employment to some of the city's disadvantaged residents while receiving dependable and quick delivery services (Schatz, Vieta, & Kasparian, in press).

While Good Foot is a social enterprise that is in the courier business, it is primarily tasked with helping provide financial independence, self-direction, and responsibility to its workers, assisting in improving their mental and physical well-being and in helping them become "integral contributors" to the community. All of Good Foot's workers are also on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) assistance. Potential employees start out on a two-month probationary test period as volunteers, shadowing more seasoned delivery workers. After the probationary period, volunteer workers eventually becoming paid part-time employees if they wish. Good Foot also has an open-door policy, accepting most people with developmental disabilities who are willing and able to begin the mentorship phase of the program.

A recent study of Good Foot for its social return on investment report found many intrinsic benefits to working at Good Foot, including better physical health, a sense of purpose, the development of extended social relationships, and other benefits for workers and their families (Schatz et al., in press). Moreover, Good Foot has partnered with local restaurants and businesses to provide its workers with free and healthy lunches, free cellphones, participation in a yoga program, and free tickets to local sporting and cultural events.

### ***Governance***

Good Foot Delivery Service is a nonprofit social enterprise parented by a charity organization, Good Foot Support Services. Good Foot's charity parent organization was set up to solely serve Good Foot Delivery, receiving donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and overseeing the long-term strategy of the courier business. The connection between Good Foot's courier business and its charity is its volunteer-based board of directors, made up of president Kirsten Gauthier and members from the local business community and the families of the workers. The daily management of the business and funding applications are the responsibility of managing director, Greg Kasparian, and the office manager, Jon Gauthier, Good Foot's two full-time paid staff.

### ***Institutional trajectory / Enabling environments***

From the perspective of its social mission, Good Foot provides its employees with decent and steady jobs. These jobs assist Good Foot's workers in becoming less dependent on government assistance, which primarily consists of ODSP contributions. One challenge has been that as ODSP recipients receive employment income, their ODSP supplement is reduced. Moreover, other benefits are affected, such as subsidized public transit passes and some Ontario Health contributions. In light of this, and as a testament to the benefits in personal confidence these workers receive, Good Foot and some of its workers have become advocates for the reform of the provincial ODSP program in recent years, with some success as the province has taken an interest in Good Foot as a model social enterprise for people with mental disabilities.

### ***Finances and financial model***

As with many work integration social enterprises in Canada with strong social objectives (Quarter et al., 2009), Good Foot requires substantial funding from government grants, foundations, and other donors. Sixty-three percent of its annual revenue stream, for instance, comes from individual and foundation-based donations, 20 percent from sponsorships and grants, and 14 percent from delivery sales (Schatz et al., in press). The Ontario Trillium Foundation provided initial startup money, and the University of Toronto's Social Economy Centre

supported Good Foot through its recent SROI (Social Return on Investment) research project, which was initiated to try to measure Good Foot's greater social returns, such as employees' intrinsic benefits from working there. Good Foot Delivery also enjoys a reduced monthly rental for its office space and access to many of the city's social enterprises (and thus clients) from its location at Toronto's Centre for Social Innovation.

## **INSTITUTIONS SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN ONTARIO**

The main institutions in Ontario supporting social enterprise include various legal frameworks, public policies, university institutions, networks, spaces, and funding agencies and programs, all of which are discussed in this section.

### **Legal frameworks**

Different pieces of legislation interact in Ontario. We distinguish between the main and secondary laws of the Government of Ontario at the provincial level and those at the federal level, by the Government of Canada. These pieces of legislation include laws concerning legal structure (corporation and co-operative), charities, taxation treatment, how specific transactions can be carried out, and various other laws. There is no specific social enterprise law in Ontario. Modernizing the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA) is one of the most recent changes (still pending) affecting nonprofit organizations in the province, including social enterprises. The Ontario Law Reform Commission's report of 1996 also examined and influenced the province's current legislation on charities.

### **Public policies**

Public policies focusing on social enterprises in Ontario are developing, but are relatively recent. Some strategies and funds are currently in place to explore different possibilities and directions for social enterprise public policy (Flatt et al., 2013; Government of Ontario, 2013b).

In 2008, the Government of Ontario published two policy reports. The Ontario Innovation Agenda proposed "to develop a Social Venture Capital Fund and a Social Innovation Generation Program to encourage the growth of social enterprise" (Government of Ontario, 2008a, p. 27). Regarding social innovation, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy proposed to develop and implement a Sustainable Procurement Strategy, which "will include social procurement factors, including social enterprises" (Government of Ontario, 2008b, p. 32). Moreover, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration of the Government of Ontario and the Ontario Trillium Foundation (2011) engaged in The Partnership Project, "an initiative to build a stronger partnership with the not-for-profit sector" (p. 35). Started after the May 2011 Social Innovation Summit, a wiki process was experimented with for policy development. The result was the publication of *Ontario's Social Innovation Policy Paper* (Government of Ontario, 2012).

In 2012, an Office for Social Enterprises was created as part of the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. The objective of the Office for Social Enterprises is to promote the province's programs and services for social enterprises and to raise the profile of social entrepreneurship in Ontario and around the world. In 2013, the Government of Ontario released a report on the "State of the Sector" with a "Profile of Ontario Not-for-Profit and Charitable Organizations" (Government of Ontario, 2013a). This report was followed by *Impact: A Social Enterprise Strategy for Ontario* (Government of Ontario, 2013b). The

## **Brouard, McMurtry, & Vieta (2015)**

Ontario social enterprise strategy plans “to foster an innovative, coordinated and collaborative social enterprise sector, positioning Ontario as a global leader in social enterprise” (p. 1).

### **University institutions**

Many Ontario universities have research centres and programs oriented toward social enterprises. They are presented here from eastern Ontario to western Ontario.

The Sprott Centre for Social Enterprises / Centre Sprott pour les entreprises sociales (SCSE/CSES) is a research centre located in the Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, in Ottawa. The SCSE/CSES was established in 2008. The Sprott School of Business also offers an International Development Management concentration as part of the Sprott MBA. Established in 1997, the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation (3ci) is a research centre also located at Carleton University. In August 2013, Carleton University’s School of Public Policy and Administration also began to offer the Master / Diploma in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership (MPNL).

The Centre for Responsible Leadership (CRL), established in 2004, is a research centre located in Queen’s School of Business at Queen’s University in Kingston, which also hosts the Public Policy and Third Sector Program Initiative (TSP), a research and teaching initiative within the School of Public Studies, established in 1999.

The University of Toronto, in Toronto, had until late 2014 the Social Economy Centre (SEC) It also hosts the Social Enterprise Initiative @ Rotman in the Rotman School of Management and the Mowat Centre. The SEC was established in 2005 and recently merged with another research centre to become the Centre for Learning, Social Economy and Work (CLSEW), founded in November 2014. The Mowat Centre is a research centre and public policy think tank located in the School of Public Policy and Governance. The Mowat Centre was established in 2009 and MowatNFP, a research program, was established in 2012.

The Schulich School of Business and the Department of Social Science’s Business & Society program at York University in Toronto offer different programs, such as the Social Sector Management Program, the MBA in Social Sector Management, the Graduate Diploma in Nonprofit Management & Leadership, and the Co-operative Management Certificate Program.

The Centre for Voluntary Sector Studies (CVSS) is a research centre located in the Ted Rogers School of Management at Ryerson University in Toronto. The CVSS was established in 1995. Under the auspices of CVSS, Ryerson University offers a Certificate Program in Interdisciplinary Studies in Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Management.

The Social Innovation Generation (SiG@Waterloo), established in 2008, is a research centre located in the School of Environment, Enterprise and Development (SEED) at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo. The related Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience (WISIR) is also located at SEED at the University of Waterloo and offers a Graduate Diploma in Social Innovation.

### **Networks**

The Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN) is a nonpartisan convener for sector voice and a coordinator for nonprofits in Ontario. The ONN was established in 2007 in response to concerns about proposed changes to

## **Brouard, McMurtry, & Vieta (2015)**

the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (Bill 65). The Rural Social Enterprise Constellation (RSEC) is a working group of ONN.

The Canadian Community Economic Development Network / Réseau canadien de développement économique communautaire (CCEDNet-RCDEC) is a member-led national association of several hundred organizations and individuals in every province and territory. The CCEDNet-RCDEC was established in 1999 and the national office is based in Ottawa, with its Ontario regional office located at the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto.

The Canadian Council on Social Development / Conseil canadien de développement social (CCSD) is a registered charity and was established in 1920. The Ontario Co-operative Association (On Co-op) is a resource organization established in 1989 to serve Ontario's co-operatives in the areas of co-operative development, government relations, membership and communications, and lifelong co-operative learning. The Conseil de la Co-opération de l'Ontario (CCO) is an association supporting the social economy and co-operation for Francophone Ontario. The CCO was established in 1964 and also works closely with On Co-op.

The Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité (RDÉE Canada) is a national organization working for the economic development of the Francophone and Acadian communities of Canada. The RDÉE Ontario (2014) promotes economic development and employability in order to ensure the vitality and sustainability of all Francophone communities in Ontario.

Enterprising Nonprofits (enp) Canada is a national collaborative program that promotes and supports social enterprise development and growth as a means to build strong nonprofit organizations and healthier communities. enp Toronto (enp-to) is a program managed by the Toronto Enterprise Fund. enp Ottawa is managed by the Centre for Innovation and Social Enterprise Development (CISED). The Social Enterprise Council of Canada / Conseil des entreprises sociales du Canada (SECC/CESC) is an alliance of social enterprise leaders, affiliated with enp Canada.

Established in 2013, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Co-op Network is a network based around co-operatives in Toronto. Social Enterprise Toronto (SET), formerly known as Social Purpose Enterprise Network of Toronto (SPEN), is a network of nonprofit social purpose enterprises and practitioners founded in 2006. LIAISON (Linking Infrastructure and Investment for Ontario) was created in 2012 and is a three-year collaborative project to enhance the availability and consolidation of resources that support growth of the social enterprise sector in Ontario.

### **Spaces**

MaRS Discovery District is a registered charity located in Toronto, established in 2000. MaRS' main aim is to provide resources and private-public partnerships for socially focused initiatives and social innovation—people, programs, physical facilities, funding, and networks. The MaRS Centre for Impact Investing located in Toronto is a social finance hub and project incubator. Strategic initiatives of the centre include a Certified B Corporation (B Corp) hub, the Canadian Task Force on Social Finance; the outcomes finance incubator, Impact8; community finance solutions, socialfinance.ca; a social finance forum; and the Social Venture Exchange (SVX). Supported by SiG National, Social Innovation Generation (SiG) is a partnership of the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation (SiG@ McConnell), the MaRS Discovery District (SiG@MaRS), and the University of Waterloo (SiG@Waterloo). Established in 2003, the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) offers space in Toronto for social

## **Brouard, McMurtry, & Vieta (2015)**

enterprises. Similarly, HUB Ottawa, established in 2012, is a co-working community for social entrepreneurship located in Ottawa.

Based on the UK's School for Social Entrepreneurs founded in 1997, the School for Social Entrepreneurs—Ontario (SSE-O) offers training in Toronto for social entrepreneurs. The SSE-O is located at CSI Regent Park and was established in 2012. Finally, a number of local social enterprise-focused organizations are active throughout Ontario, such as the Centre for Innovative Social Enterprise Development (CISED) in Ottawa, Pillar Nonprofit Network in London, Community Opportunity and Innovation Network (COIN) in Peterborough, and PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise in northwestern Ontario.

### **Funding agencies and programs**

The Government of Ontario and a small number of foundations are active in funding social enterprises in Ontario. The Ontario Trillium Foundation / Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario. The OTF is now mandated to allocate over \$150 million annually to community organizations and initiatives, nonprofits, and social enterprise initiatives. In 2012, OTF launched the Future Fund, a program to build capacity in the social enterprise space, focusing on youth entrepreneurs (Government of Ontario, 2013b).

In February 2015, the Government of Ontario announced an investment of \$4 million, providing funding to 11 organizations that support early-stage social enterprises (Government of Ontario, 2015b). The Social Enterprise Demonstration Fund is another key commitment of the Social Enterprise Strategy for Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2013b). And since 2007, \$6 million was invested in the SIG@MARS program by the Government of Ontario (2008b).

In addition to public funders, some private foundations help social enterprises. The J.W. McConnell Family Foundation is a private family foundation. Among its programs relevant for social enterprises are indigenous-focused philanthropy, the Innoweave model, social finance, social innovation fund, and social innovation generation. Other foundations active in funding initiatives related to social enterprises in Ontario include the Laidlaw Foundation, the Metcalf Foundation, the Toronto Foundation, TIDES, and the Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

Toronto Enterprise Fund (TEF) is a funding partnership of United Way Toronto, the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the Government of Canada, supporting the implementation of social enterprises.

The Community Futures Program is a Government of Canada initiative that supports 61 Community Futures Development Corporations / Sociétés d'aide au développement des collectivités en Ontario (CFDCs/SADCs) in Ontario. FedDev Ontario works with the 37 CFDCs in rural western, southern, and eastern Ontario.

The Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs (ONE) is a network funded by the Government of Ontario offering a range of programs for starting, growing, and financing a business, including social enterprises. Ontario Catapult Microloan Fund is a social finance initiative providing loans to eligible social enterprises, implemented by the Centre for Social Innovation. Infrastructure Ontario is a long-term program to renew infrastructure in social enterprises mostly for community health and social services hubs, Aboriginal health centres, and nonprofit sports and recreation organizations. The Ontario Centres of Excellence (OCE) holds a Social Enterprise

Partnership Challenge and Student Competition to help build and finance new social enterprises. Finally, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC) provides initiatives for assisting First Nations–based social enterprises in the province.

## **CONCLUSION**

The objective of this article, summarizing research work conducted as part of the “Social Enterprises Models in Canada” research of the International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) Project, has been to examine social enterprises in Ontario, Canada. We began the article by presenting an analysis of the historical, contextual, and conceptual dimensions of social enterprises in Ontario within the broader context of social enterprise development in Canada. The “social enterprise” term, we articulated there, is relatively new in Ontario, but the practice of social enterprise, especially through co-operatives, has a long history in the province. As in other countries or provinces, many factors have an impact on the development of social enterprises in Ontario. Moreover, each institution involved with social enterprises has its own definition of the term, adding further complexity to its conceptualization.

Through five illustrative cases studies, examples of social enterprises were then presented with an overview of the social enterprise, its governance, the institutional trajectory and enabling environments that contextualize the organization, and relevant financial information. We can conclude from these five case studies that there is a diversity of social enterprise models in Ontario in terms of legal structure, purpose, governance, and ownership.

Many institutions in Ontario are related to and support social enterprises, as presented in our overview. We classified these institutions into six main categories: legal frameworks, public policies, university institutions, networks, spaces, and funding agencies and programs.

In sum, we can safely say that the development of social enterprises in Ontario results largely from community innovation and community-based actions. Except for co-operatives, no specific legal framework for social enterprises is in place in Ontario, although several public policies and laws do impact social enterprises. Universities are well positioned in Ontario with regards to research on and supports for Ontario’s social enterprises, with a number of research centres, some more recognized than others, and education programs. A large number of networks exist at the national, provincial, and local levels that also help shape Ontario’s social enterprise sector. Finally, various funding opportunities and outlets exist for Ontario’s social enterprises, including government agencies, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and numerous family and charitable foundations.

## **NOTE**

1. For more about this research, see <http://sprott.carleton.ca/~fbrouard/ICSEMCanadagroup> .

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Groupe Convex, <http://www.groupeconvexpr.ca>  
Haween Enterprises, <http://www.haweenenterprises.com>  
The Renewable Energy Co-operative, <http://www.trec.on.ca>  
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