



**United Way**  
Social Purpose Institute

**Purpose Policy**  
**Policy Options for Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments**  
**in Canada**  
**to Accelerate Social Purpose in Business**

**Propelling Purpose Summit Consultation Document**

**Policy Brief**  
**October 2021**

**Social Purpose Institute at United Way**

# Promoting Purpose in Canadian Public Policy

## Policy Options for Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments in Canada

### Consultation Document

#### Introduction

The Propelling Purpose Summit is being held November 17-18, 2021. It is the first national convening of the social purpose business community and is designed to co-create a roadmap to accelerate social purpose in business. The Summit will explore and advance the current draft of [Canada's Purpose Economy Roadmap](#). The existing Roadmap sets out six levers to mainstream social purpose in business, one of which is Public Policy. The Public Policy Aspirational Future State is that by 2030 "all levels of government in Canada are building and accelerating the Canadian Purpose Economy. All public policy levers will be harnessed to advance the Purpose Economy and other jurisdictions are replicating the Canadian model in their countries."

The actions are:

- Raise awareness of the Purpose Economy and its benefits with all levels of government.
- Advocate that governments accelerate authentic social purpose in business using their policy levers.

This consultation document is the first step toward this ambition. It explores government reforms and policy measures to help support and incentivize businesses and entrepreneurs to adopt and implement a social purpose as the reason they exist. These reforms will help social purpose business thrive, flourish, and grow - and make Canada a great place to operate a social purpose business.

They are designed to *mainstream* social purpose in business, including small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and large companies<sup>1</sup>, so that being a social purpose company becomes the standard and expected way of doing business in Canada. The Policy Brief recognizes that the ecosystem that supports social purpose business in Canada is in its infancy and needs cultivating for social purpose business to become the new norm. Together, these policy measures create a package of reforms governments can pursue to help grow the enabling operating

#### About the Social Purpose Institute at United Way

The Social Purpose Institute exists to grow business for good, partnering with companies and collaborating with governments, allied organizations, and others to grow the Social Purpose Business movement. We achieve this in several ways. We help businesses define and implement their social purpose to drive both business growth and societal good. We champion a Purpose Economy, accelerating the new business ethic to create long-term well-being for all. We are thought leaders, creating and curating insights and knowledge to define the transition pathway to the Purpose Economy. We convene the social purpose ecosystem - the partners and actors needed to bring social purpose to life in communities across Canada. Together, we build a better world through business. For more information, visit us at [www.socialpurpose.ca](http://www.socialpurpose.ca)

#### About the Author

Coro Strandberg is the co-founder and principal advisor to the Social Purpose Institute. In her capacity as President, Strandberg Consulting, she provides advice to business, associations, and governments on strategies to leverage the marketplace as a tool for good. In 2018 Coro was appointed by the BC Government to the Emerging Economy Task Force which recommended a purpose-driven vision for the BC economy. Prior to her consulting role, Coro was the Director of Social Policy for the BC Government and the Social Planner for the City of Burnaby. She publishes her work and thought leadership on her website at [www.corostrandberg.com](http://www.corostrandberg.com).

<sup>1</sup> All of these policy initiatives are intended to benefit SMEs, co-operatives, and large companies, except where noted.



context for social purpose businesses to be the default approach to business in Canada. In so doing, policymakers can better align corporate behaviour with public interest and create allies for the work that lies ahead to build a sustainable future for Canadian communities and business.

These policy options are designed to position Canada, provinces, and municipalities as international leaders in redefining the role of business in society.

## Methodology

The ideas in this paper were developed through the following process:

- Literature review.
- Scan of approaches taken in UK, France, and Quebec to encourage business to adopt a social purpose and support the social economy.
- Interviews of 13 policymakers within local, regional, provincial, and federal governments.
- Interviews of nine thought leaders in Canada and UK.

## Policy Options

The following section sets out the policy array federal, provincial, and local governments can implement to accelerate the start, transition and growth of social purpose entrepreneurs and business in Canada.

### What is a social purpose business?

A social purpose business is a business whose purpose is to build a better world (environment, social, economic, and cultural). It mobilizes its assets, competencies, resources, relationships, and platforms towards its societal aims and embeds its purpose across its governance, culture, and operations, domestically and globally. For a detailed definition see: [Link](#). Note that this paper refers to authentic social purpose businesses, those who are demonstrably embedding their purpose across all their operations and in their relationships and who are actively reducing their negative social or environmental externalities. The paper does not pertain to businesses who are not implementing their social purpose.

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Both Federal and Provincial Government	Comments
<p><b>1. Corporate Social Purpose Legislation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Amend the Corporations/Companies Act to require companies to disclose their purpose</li><li>• Require large businesses of a certain size to issue a report annually on their corporate purpose and their progress implementing their purpose</li></ul>	
<p><b>2. Social Purpose Business Act</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adopt a Social Purpose Business Act that commits federal and provincial governments to support the development of social purpose policy tools, enhance knowledge of social purpose business, and facilitate access for social purpose business to government programs</li><li>• Require crown corporations and agencies to adopt a social purpose</li></ul>	
<p><b>3. Social Purpose Education and Research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide resources to intermediaries, accelerators, incubators, non-profits, and network and ecosystem builders to develop information, education, tools, case studies, resources, and capacity building programs to help business adopt and implement a social purpose</li><li>• Provide funding to establish a national social purpose in business think tank that produces research, education, and guidance on social purpose</li></ul>	
<p><b>4. Purpose Blue-Ribbon Commission</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appoint a blue-ribbon commission to consult the public on a vision for social purpose business, identify the barriers to growth and make recommendations</li><li>• Establish a permanent Social Purpose Business Council to advise the government on measures to accelerate the transition to social purpose business</li></ul>	
<p><b>5. Business Support Programs and Venture Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Embed social purpose into existing business support programs</li><li>• In future, require companies to have a social purpose to access business support programs</li></ul>	
<p><b>6. Social Purpose Action Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adopt a five-year Social Purpose Action Plan to address gaps in the social purpose ecosystem, including learning platforms, incubators and accelerators, and awareness raising initiatives</li><li>• Prioritize social purpose business as a priority economic cluster and support the enabling ecosystem to foster growth of the cluster</li></ul>	



<p><b>7. Public Sector Social Purpose Procurement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate existing suppliers on social purpose business concepts; refer suppliers to social purpose resources; encourage them to consider adopting and pursuing a social purpose</li> <li>• Require suppliers bidding for government contracts to state the company’s purpose when submitting their bid as a proforma requirement</li> <li>• Provide support for intermediary organizations, online marketplaces, and certification processes for social purpose suppliers, so purchasers have access to verified social purpose suppliers</li> </ul>	
<p><b>8. Multilateral and International Roles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote social purpose business in multilateral fora and when hosting</li> <li>• Conduct social purpose business trade missions to identify business opportunities and social purpose partnerships and collaborations abroad</li> <li>• Market social purpose leadership abroad, brand companies as purpose-driven leaders</li> <li>• Include social purpose in trade and export strategies and trade agreements</li> <li>• Provide enhanced trade commissioner services to social purpose businesses (e.g., mentorship, incubators and accelerator programs and matchmaking services) (<b>federal government</b>)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Local Government</b></p>	
<p><b>1. Consultation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult social purpose business on what would help them grow and how to mobilize more businesses to transition to social purpose; implement action plans to support social purpose business to start, transition and grow</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2. Business Awareness and Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer local / headquarter businesses to workshops and resources to help them adopt and implement a social purpose</li> <li>• Include social purpose in business welcome and outreach programs, licensee communications and at business touchpoints (e.g., online resources, brochures, fact sheets, flyers)</li> <li>• Profile and recognize businesses who adopt and implement a social purpose (e.g., Mayor’s breakfast or award)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3. Land and Building Assets Incubation and Prototyping</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide subsidized or premium access to city buildings, facilities, technology, and land to social purpose businesses</li> </ul>	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a social purpose precinct or discovery park for social purpose companies to co-locate and collaborate</li><li>• Provide a platform for social purpose businesses to demonstrate and commercialize their products and services</li><li>• Create testimonials of social purpose businesses prototyping their operations on city property and within city processes they can use to attract customers, partners, and opportunities</li></ul>	
<p><b>4. Development, Licensing and Permitting Approvals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Require businesses applying for a business license to state their purpose</li><li>• Expedite / fast-track social purpose businesses in licensing, permitting, and development / re-zoning applications</li></ul>	
<p><b>5. Municipal Declaration and Social Purpose Action Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Declare a commitment to encourage the growth of social purpose business in the local community (e.g., adopt a Social Purpose Business Municipal Commitment)</li><li>• Develop and implement a social purpose strategy and action plan</li></ul>	