

## Executive Summary

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In Canada, the social, spiritual and communal value of local congregations has long been accepted. The economic value of these congregations to society, however, is a different matter altogether. Where the monetary valuation of “soft assets” has gained increasing traction in the social services over the past couple of decades, only recently have researchers begun to explore this question in the Canadian religious context.

This study of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, stems from a larger Canadian study designed to examine this question of religious impact. Based on a 2010 study carried out in Philadelphia by Partners for Sacred Places and the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Social Policy and Practice, the Halo Canada Project seeks to explore the socio-economic benefit of local congregations on their surrounding neighbourhoods and towards Canadian society in general.

*“What if we could measure the economic value local congregations contribute to their surrounding communities?”*

Based on in-depth research from more than 75 congregations, representing a wide variety of faith traditions from across the country, we present a case for applying financial benefit to many types of congregational activities that have previously been considered intangible.

By applying values derived from these in-depth studies to congregational spending, we are able to approximate the impact of broad groupings of religious communities. It is important to note, that throughout our research, we have made a deliberate attempt to be conservative in at least three ways: 1) first, if staff or program leaders were unable to estimate or document a particular service or activity we assigned a value of zero; 2) where supporting studies from other sectors suggest a range of value we have chosen to apply the lowest range value, 3) we have elected to ascribe value only in situations where we can demonstrate clear cause and effect. Nor do our values take into account the many secondary contributions of empowered church and community members that exponentially magnify these congregational impacts.

*Essentially the study asks,  
“If the Anglican congregations of Niagara Diocese ceased to exist, what would it cost their respective municipalities to replace the programs and services these congregations provide to the wider community?”*

Taking these factors into account, it is clear that the Anglican Diocese of Niagara plays a key role in the social and economic life of Southwestern Ontario with a Halo (socio-economic) contribution of approximately \$100.1 million in the neighbourhoods to which they minister. This figure swells to approximately \$106.9 million when their contributions to denominational programs and other ministry and service organizations outside their neighbourhoods are taken into account. Finally, when parishioner’s secondary volunteer contributions to organizations outside their local congregations are considered, congregational impact increases further to approximately \$114.5 million.