

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

## MANDATE

PARO is primarily focused on delivering programs to enhance enterprise development and to provide for the development and support of peer lending circles.

### 1. Growing women-led companies (Start-up Support)

This pillar will encourage greater economic participation of diverse women through the delivery of enhanced and specialized supports for women owned businesses, from Start-up to Scale-up

### 2. Accessing new growth opportunities by expanding and strengthening PARO's Hubs (Scaling Support)

By facilitating connections to growth capital and increasing the knowledge and skills of women entrepreneurs so they can take advantage of growth opportunities

### 3. Expanding access to domestic and export markets by providing resources and supports to build export readiness and capacity.

This pillar will encourage greater economic participation of diverse women through the delivery of enhanced and specialized supports for women owned businesses, from Start-up to Scale-up

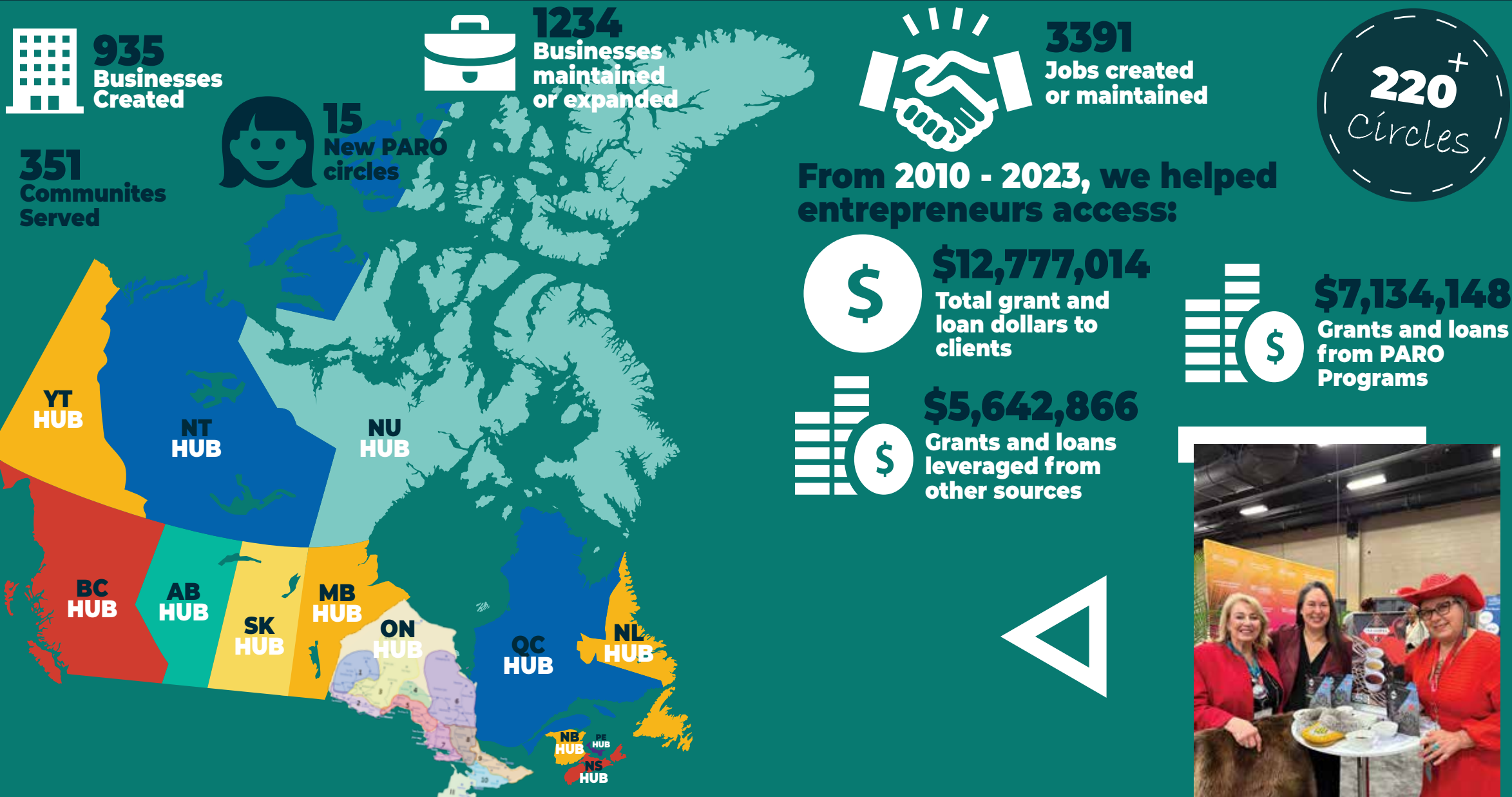


## OUR VALUES

Cooperation   Ownership   Integrity   Responsibility  
Simplification   Peer Support

#Proud PARO Women

# HOW WE MADE AN IMPACT



## PAROntario

- 1 Kenora / Sioux Lookout
- 2 Fort Frances / Atikokan
- 3 Dryden / Ignace & North
- 4 Greenstone
- 5 Thunder Bay / Superior North
- 6 Hearst / Timmins and North
- 7 Sault Ste. Marie / Sudbury
- 8 Temiskaming / Bracebridge
- 9 Renfrew / Ottawa / Belleville
- 10 Huntsville / Durham
- 11 Greater Toronto Area

PARO has supported  
**30,952**

women and social entrepreneurs



# PARO Prosper BIZCamps and Prosper Circles

PARO is pleased to announce that in April 2023, the PARO Prosper Circles Program spread its wings across 7 provinces, igniting the entrepreneurial spirit of Canadians in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Programs and services available across Canada:

- Prosper Circles Peer Support and Microlending Program, a lifeline for aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Business Advising services, featuring the dynamic PARO GoForth on-demand learning experience.
- BIZCamps designed to fire up Foodpreneurs, gear up for investment readiness, and champion the Green Economy (plus many more thrilling options).
- The formidable Business Advisory Committees, standing strong to guide and elevate businesses.
- Webinars in both English and French, accompanied by a treasure trove of training and funding opportunities!

The Prosper team is on a relentless mission to supercharge these services, spreading prosperity to every corner of the Great White North. Unveil the epic journey at [www.paro.ca/canada](http://www.paro.ca/canada), and join the revolution!





# 2023 Award Winners

## Mooka'am Kwe She Rises Indigenous Woman Business Award



**Kathleen Sawdo**  
Sister Bear Designs

This award celebrates successful, accomplished, and committed Indigenous business women.

## Rising Star Award



**Jessie Jones**  
Jess Jones Recreation Therapy

A Rising Star is a current woman leader or an aspiring future leader who is starting out in Business with a successful and notable track record for less than 3 years, has built in ecofriendly practices, and is quickly rising through the ranks

## Rising Star Award



**Adebola Adefioye**  
AWFO - Afro Women and Youth Foundation

A Rising Star is a current woman leader or an aspiring future leader who is starting out in Business with a successful and notable track record for less than 3 years, has built in ecofriendly practices, and is quickly rising through the ranks

## Trailblazer Award



**Liana Frenette**  
TBT Engineering Limited

The recipient is a woman who is demonstrating that there is a space and a place for women in male-dominated fields or has successfully challenged a world of work or industry typically occupied by males.

## Business of the Year Award



**Brette Cain**  
Next Step Foot Care

This award recognizes a woman's business with a successful and notable track record for 3 years or more. A woman who has established a business, taken financial risks, managed the business successfully, and given back to the community.

## Social Enterprise Award



**Suzanne Christie**  
Shout Media

A woman or organization demonstrating excellence in creating positive social or environmental impact an outstanding social enterprise who has made impactful, innovative and sustainable contributions to their community.

## PARO Circle of the Year Award



**The Whole Woman Network**

This Award recognizes a Peer Lending Circle's efforts to "Give Back" to each other, to PARO and to their community.

# Letter from the CEO & President

As we reflect on another successful year at PARO, we express our deep gratitude to the funders, members, partners, board members, and the PARO Team for their continued support as we start our 29th year of working with women entrepreneurs.

Over the past year, PARO has remained committed to its mission of empowering women in business while witnessing their remarkable courage and achievements. Despite rapidly changing business environments and trends, PARO and the women we work with have adapted swiftly, embracing innovative technologies and building new programs to ensure survival in entrepreneurial pursuits. Confirming our success in prioritizing empowerment, through training, self-determination and inclusivity, we once again received national recognition through the "Empowerment of Women in Business Award" from the inaugural Canadian Women Entrepreneur's (CWE) Gala 2023. A highlight for the year! This national award attests to the increasing demand for our services and the recognition of PARO as a leading platform for women entrepreneurs across the country.

Continuing to recognize that socio/economic determinants of health, must also include both peer and community support, we include these factors in all we do, by continuing to grow our 220+ women-centred strong peer lending network, not only in Ontario, but in other provinces across Canada through our new Prosper Circle Project. No less important is hosting Cluster Innovation Tables to ensure partner and community leaders' involvement in strengthening the growth of crucial support for PARO members and program participants. We thank you all again for your participation and support.

I am delighted to report that the number of women starting a business at PARO has climbed significantly this year, as compared to the disturbing BDC's Chief Economist reporting recently, that businesses are starting at less than half the rate of two decades ago. We hope to continue to buck this trend. We realize that business survival is still a challenge for many, and access to funding is part of this challenge. Therefore, we continue to foster strategic partnerships with Alterna Saving Credit Union, the Community Futures Development Organizations, and more recently, the Women's Enterprise Organizations of Canada (WEOC). PARO, is the Ontario Loan Fund Partner for supporting women entrepreneurs with an inclusive approach to lending, providing "robust wraparound services that set women entrepreneurs up for continued growth and success" while providing access up to \$50K in loans through this new Women's National Loan Fund. To date as partners, we provided \$2.089M in loans to women living in Ontario. We remain privileged to serve such a diverse and talented community of women in business, each with their unique visions and aspirations.

Looking ahead, we are committed to driving even greater impact for women entrepreneurs in the coming years. Our focus for the future is clear: PARO will continue to expand and strengthen our programs and services reaching out to diverse women, often located in underserved areas, providing the skills, resources and support needed to prosper in the ever-evolving business landscape. We will continue to forge new alliances with organizations that share our vision for gender equality and economic empowerment. To achieve our goals we depend on your unwavering support and engagement. Your continued collaboration and financial contributions will enable us to make a lasting difference in the lives of countless women. Together, we will break down barriers, shatter glass ceiling, and create a future where women have equal opportunities to succeed in business. Thank you for standing by us on this remarkable journey.

Rosalind Lockyer,  
Founder & CEO



Anne Parr,  
President



# Board of Directors & PARO Team

## President

Anne Parr

## Past President

Levina Collins

## Vice President

Donna Brown

## Treasurer

Mary Sabo-Bandiera

## Secretary

Doris Shewchuk

## Directors

Jodi-Rose Richer

Doris Shewchuk

Summer Reilly

Holly Watson

Juliet Kego Ume-Onyido

## Business Growth Advisors

Karen Tretter

Andrea Zappe

Carol Brazeau-Weisflock

Linda Cryderman

Kaouthar Faouzi

Elizabeth Verwey

Tammy Laws

Victoria Watts

Deborah Hebert

Chantal Fraser

Jennifer Latham

Gabriela Casineanu

Carole Perrin

Linda Farmer

Francoise Briet

Suzanne Tighe

Melissa Maltais

Cathy Tait

## Founder & CEO

Rosalind Lockyer

## Financial Manager

Judith Tiriwepi

## HR & Program Developer

Maria Talarico

## Program Manager

Melissa Cook

## Lead Business Counsellor-Northern

Karen Lynn Evans

## Lead Project Coordinator-Southern

Renee Gendron

## HR & Executive Assistant

Brenda McDougall

## Office Manager

Laura Lynch

## Counsellors/ Coordinators - Ontario

Lori Morin

Kylee Monteith

Dhanisha Mehta

Mary Margaret Laing

Kayla Soomer

Susan Milne

Luciana Palotino

Gitanjali Aggarwal

Haley Lidster

Carmen Farrell-Knapp

Sopheia Bacchus

Maitri Mou

Sandra Langford

## Counsellors/ Coordinators - Ontario

Katherine DeKlerck

Nathalie Plouffe

Loubna Serghini

Montse Galeana Rosales - NL

Lesa Isenor - NS

Joy Idoko - MB

Zulfira Pulotova - AB

Tanya Blake - WESK

Alauna Whelan - WESK

Deborah Lampitt - We-BC



For Women's Enterprise  
pour l'entreprise des femmes

# #Proud PARO Women

**220<sup>+</sup>**  
Circles



**2065<sup>+</sup>**  
Members

Instagram: @paro\_centre  
Facebook: PARO.centre  
LinkedIn: @PAROCentreForWomen'sEnterprise

[www.paro.ca](http://www.paro.ca)