

National Volunteerism Initiative

Final Report

March 2003

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Introduction

Volunteers make Canada strong

Much of Canada's reputation as a humane, caring and prosperous nation is due to the contribution of more than 6.5 million dedicated volunteers. Giving their time to a diverse network of approximately 180,000 charities and not-for-profit organizations, volunteers contribute to the well being of individuals and our communities. Their work is equivalent to 549,000 full-time jobs.

The millions of Canadians who volunteer their time and energy to sports, the arts, hospitals, museums, fire-fighting, law enforcement, libraries, the environment, children and youth help make Canada a better place to live. From community soup kitchens to the national health-care agencies, those who volunteer demonstrate one of Canada's most fundamental values — mutual responsibility and active citizenship.

Canada is celebrated for its quality of life and the fundamental values of freedom, respect and community. Our compassion, dedication to caring for those in need and our sense of togetherness allow us to enjoy times of relative peace and harmony and to navigate turbulent times confident in our commitment to one another. Those who volunteer actively demonstrate what it takes to build a caring society.

The Voluntary Sector Initiative

The voluntary sector and the millions of volunteers who support it play a crucial role in shaping strong communities and form the basis for citizens' participation in our democratic society. The federal government has a vested interest in working with the sector and volunteers to address issues of mutual concern.

In recent years, changing government roles, increasingly diverse populations, and new social and economic realities have only reinforced the need for the government and the voluntary sector to work in partnership to serve the needs and interests of Canadians.

For this reason, the federal government and voluntary sector jointly launched the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) in June 2000 with the dual goals of strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector and enhancing its relationship with the federal government. To carry out the work associated with these goals, the VSI established six joint tables, of which the National Volunteerism Initiative Joint Table (NVI-JT) was one.

The National Volunteerism Initiative Joint Table

The federal government and the voluntary sector share a long history of joining forces to achieve mutual goals. The purpose of this collaboration is to strengthen the ability of both the government and the sector to achieve their common goals of enhancing the quality of life for Canadians.

According to the report [Working Together](#), which formed the initial basis for the VSI, there was a need to “establish a National Volunteerism Initiative that would encourage Canadians to participate in voluntary organizations, and that would expand the capacity of organizations to focus, manage and benefit from volunteer contributions.”

The 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) showed that Canada lost a million volunteers between 1997 and 2000. The survey data made it clear that Canada could not hope to sustain volunteerism — and the quality of life associated with it — without some renewed effort on the part of both the government and the voluntary sector.

The NVI-JT was created to examine how to build supports that would maintain and sustain the volunteer activity that is so critical to Canada’s civil society. Much of our quality of life depends upon the commitment and service of these volunteers and their organizations.

Membership

The NVI-JT consisted of seven senior representatives from the voluntary sector and six from the federal government. The Department of Canadian Heritage provided secretariat support to the NVI-JT and will be responsible for implementing its recommendations.

Voluntary sector representatives

Colleen Kelly (Co-chair)

*Executive Director
Volunteer Vancouver*

Mary Anne Chambers

*Chair
United Way Canada - Centraide Canada*

Anthony Knight

*Executive Director
Youth Council of New Brunswick*

Cynthia Lam

*Former Chief Executive Officer (Retired)
Chinese Family Services of Greater
Montreal*

Government representatives

Tom Ring (Co-chair)

*Director General
Citizens' Participation & Promotion
Branch
Canadian Heritage*

Jim Dooley

*Executive Advisor, Oceans Sector
Office of the Assistant Deputy Minister
Fisheries and Oceans Canada*

David Fransen

*Associate Assistant Deputy Minister
Spectrum, Information Technologies and
Telecommunications Sector
Industry Canada*

Geoff Gruson

*Director General
Strategic Planning and Policy
Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

Gabrielle Moule
*National Director, Volunteer Resources
Canadian Red Cross*

Marilyn Hay
*Director General
Manitoba Region
Human Resources Development Canada*

Tom Myers
*Vice President
Telephone Pioneers*

Rick Herringer
*Director
Refugee Resettlement
Citizenship and Immigration Canada*

Pierre Riley
*Directeur général
Fédération des centres d'action bénévole
du Québec*

Mandate and Objectives

Recognizing that volunteering is integral to both Canadian identity and experience, the mandate of the NVI-JT was to make recommendations for a Canadian "legacy" of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) 2001. This legacy would have a sustained and significant impact on Canadian society by strengthening participation in and support for the voluntary sector and specifically its volunteers, over time.

Specific objectives included the development of policies and tools to strengthen volunteer efforts, promote volunteering, and enhance the capacity of the sector to better engage and support volunteers and provide them with mutually rewarding experiences.

Working Parameters

To guide its work, the NVI-JT developed a set of assumptions and principles that enabled the NVI-JT members to come together with a common language and to work toward a shared commitment and common goals. Establishing these parameters was critical to the work the NVI-JT tackled and the results it obtained.

Assumptions

Assumptions about volunteering

Volunteering provides each person with the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of others and the betterment of Canadian communities. Its value infuses the spirit, gives personal satisfaction to the individual, transcends purely economic contributions, and is intrinsic to citizen engagement that strengthens society.

Assumptions about opportunities to support and enable volunteering

Given the impact of volunteering upon personal and societal health, there is a need to increase volunteering in Canada over time. However, this increase will not occur spontaneously — there are barriers such as cynicism in the sector, organizational costs to ensure best practices in volunteer screening and management, as well as resourcing challenges that need to be addressed. These barriers can be overcome. Finding solutions will improve our collective quality of life, providing that the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors can find ways to collaborate effectively.

Assumptions about the role of governments

The federal government is committed to supporting policies and programs that will increase and contribute to volunteerism. But ultimately, success will require the engagement and commitment of all levels of government.

Both formal and informal volunteering is promoted in Canada because volunteering has value for both individuals and communities and is integral to effective civil society. It enables participation in active citizenship for all those who are able and interested; and it contributes to the economy without competing with paid employment.

Principles

Principles about choice

Volunteering cannot be imposed or mandated. It is an individual act of self-motivation that has as its goals making a difference and having an impact. Individuals have their own reasons for the contributions they decide to make.

Principles about inclusion

The NVI-JT will make an effort to engage people in all sectors in a collaborative way. Our multicultural society requires that any strategy to increase volunteering be inclusive and culturally sensitive. Inclusion means respecting, welcoming, and celebrating diversity.

Principles about consultation

The NVI-JT will avoid wherever possible the danger of consultation fatigue by building on existing information and previous or tangential consultation activities (e.g., by other joint tables). Any consultation will have a clear purpose and will focus on two-way communication processes.

Goals

The goals of the National Volunteerism Initiative (NVI) were set out in [Working Together: A Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative](#), the August 1999 "Report of the Joint Tables".

These goals were stated as follows:

- *To encourage Canadians to participate in voluntary organizations; and*

- *To improve the capacity of voluntary sector organizations to better benefit from the contribution of volunteers.*

Given the importance of volunteering to Canada's civil society and its contribution to the high quality of life experienced by Canadians, the NVI aims to position Canada toward a dynamic, inclusive and productive future by:

- *Identifying sustainable strategies that have sufficient flexibility over time;*
- *Building on existing capacity and, where necessary, increasing the capacity of the voluntary sector to provide meaningful volunteer experiences, through the effective management of volunteers (i.e., screening, placement, leadership, training and motivation);*
- *Sharing best practices, monitoring results, and building upon successes; and*
- *Engaging people in all sectors in initiatives to support and enable volunteerism in Canada.*

Challenges

NVI-JT discussions determined that developing an initiative that would satisfy the diverse needs of the sector would be difficult. National organizations face different challenges from local community organizations. Both want the NVI to deal with their inherent and critical issues. The NVI-JT's task was to recommend an NVI that would provide the most benefit from limited resources.

To help frame their ideas, the NVI-JT drew up a list of challenges and issues against which they could assess their ideas as they worked on the components of the NVI.

These challenges included:

- *How to find and retain volunteers with awareness, motivation and time to volunteer;*
- *How best to train and manage volunteers so that their contributions satisfy their own expectations and the expectations of the organizations for which they were volunteering;*
- *How to provide meaningful recognition of the contribution of volunteers;*
- *How to provide compensation for the out-of-pocket expenses of volunteers;*
- *How to find financial and labour resources to handle peak workloads resulting from emergencies, unforeseeable events, special opportunities and requests;*
- *How to provide organizations and volunteers with ready access to practical information, expertise, advice, and mutual support;*
- *How to build and sustain public understanding and appreciation of the nature, opportunities and benefits of volunteerism;*
- *How to engage people in volunteering as a component of citizenship and community stewardship;*
- *How to develop a strong knowledge base about the voluntary sector nationally, provincially and locally;*

- *How to design volunteer positions that consider trends in volunteerism and that effectively match the talents, interests and available time of volunteers with the organization's capacities to ensure successful delivery of the organization's mission; and*
- *How to ensure that organizations can absorb and benefit from an increase in the number of volunteers.*

Work Plan

<i>Work Items for the National Volunteerism Initiative Joint Table</i>
<i>1. Development of mandate and objectives</i>
<i>2. Establishment of working parameters</i>
<i>3. Refinement of goals</i>
<i>4. Determination of the challenges that an NVI should address</i>
<i>5. Development and agreement to a work plan</i>
<i>6. Research, including:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Environmental scan and needs analysis re: volunteerism;</i> ➤ <i>Analysis of the NSGVP 2000, including a comparison to 1997 data;</i> ➤ <i>Understanding social marketing;</i> ➤ <i>A focus on youth;</i> ➤ <i>Perspectives from communities of interests;</i> ➤ <i>A view through two matrices/lenses – lifestyles and settings; and</i> ➤ <i>Links with other tables.</i>
<i>7. Development of possible components for an NVI</i>
<i>8. Communications and consultations</i>
<i>9. Development of recommendations</i>
<i>10. Presentation to Joint Coordinating Committee and other coordinating bodies</i>
<i>11. Development of final report</i>

Research

Environmental scan

The NVI-JT commissioned the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy to scan existing literature and research, and to conduct key informant interviews to help scope the NVI and contribute to the knowledge used to help the NVI-JT determine what an NVI should include.

The findings were presented under five themes. See [Environmental Scan Summary Report](#):

1. *The perceived role and value of volunteers and volunteering;*
2. *Current trends affecting volunteering and volunteers;*
3. *Understanding the motives and barriers to volunteering;*
4. *Satisfaction with volunteering and its perceived benefits; and*
5. *Approaches to improving volunteering.*

The scan revealed that Canadians generally appear to value volunteering, but the sector appears to be facing a number of formidable challenges. Research on the nature and scope of volunteering is limited; however, the research that does exist reveals fairly consistent messages that are reinforced both by key informant interviews and the results of the [National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating 2000](#).

There appears to be a general consensus that:

- *Changing demographics and inclusiveness are challenges facing the voluntary sector;*
- *Social change and changing community needs are affecting the sources of volunteers;*
- *Faith groups have been an invaluable source of volunteers in the past, but with the influence of faith groups diminishing in society, there is a need to seek out volunteers in other sectors;*
- *There is a need for improved volunteer recruitment, management, recognition and training;*
- *There are capacity issues including role, design and management of resources, infrastructure and governance; and*
- *Further research is needed to fully explore the issues associated with volunteering.*

The 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating

The NIV-JT had the results of the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (the Survey) examined and compared to the 1997 findings. See the [NSGVP Summary/Analysis Report](#).

The Survey clearly identified that volunteering had declined significantly between 1997 and 2000. Canada lost 1 million volunteers in that time period. What the Survey did not reveal is why that happened.

The second piece of information of concern to the voluntary sector and the NIV-JT was that seven percent of Canadians contribute 73 percent of all volunteer hours — a level that clearly cannot be sustained over time.

While volunteering was down, there was an 11 percent increase in financial donations over the same period of time. The factor most often cited for not volunteering in both the 1997 and 2000 surveys was a lack of time.

These results suggest that an NVI that helps organizations with the recruitment, training and retention of volunteers would be useful to the overall health of the sector.

Understanding social marketing

The NIV-JT invited an expert speaker to generate an understanding of social marketing and how it could help to raise the profile of volunteering as part of the NVI.

The social marketing discussion helped the NVI-JT focus on the potential impact on voluntary organizations, including the following lessons:

- *To create a demand you need to understand the problem you are trying to solve or what demand you are trying to fulfill;*
- *There may be a need to create public awareness first (as in, for example, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving program) or create the demand first. Decisions have to be taken before undertaking a social marketing campaign;*
- *Programming is concerned with meeting the demand that you have created. In this case, whether the sector can absorb the significant numbers of volunteers you may generate and whether the sector has the capacity to manage them.*
- *The long-term — 10 years minimum — must be considered and this will be expensive.*

A focus on youth

Seeking a perspective on whether youth should be a focus of the NVI, the NVI-JT requested a presentation from D-Code, a research organization specializing in youth. Key points included:

- *Social and civic responsibility: community is very important to youth. Many are involved in volunteering but for less time than in previous generations;*
- *Youth expect corporations to be socially responsible, are highly distrustful of politicians and governments, and want to be socially responsible consumers;*
- *Youth perceive that not-for-profit organizations are moving too slowly, that government departments are not marketing effectively, and that the private sector needs to be more socially responsible;*
- *Youth want to use their volunteer experiences to build their skills; they don't want to be tied to a schedule, i.e., "give me a project and let me do it on my own time;"*
- *Youth want to see direct impacts and tangible results. They want to bond with their community but they expect to see the impacts faster than their parents' generation. They are concerned with who they are going to meet, what will they learn, and how it will impact the environment; and*
- *Traditional methods of volunteering are not as important to today's youth. They want an entrepreneurial experience, and this could be within an organization.*

Personal connection is important such as getting involved with an organization due to the illness or death of a loved one.

Communities of interest — perspectives

To assess the differences between communities of interest, the NVI-JT invited a number of presentations from various voluntary sector organizations.

In March 2001, the following people were asked to participate in the NVI-JT's meeting in Winnipeg:

- *Joan Dawkins, Executive Director of the Main Street Project;*
- *Paul Johnston, Program Coordinator of Services to Older Adolescents, MacDonald Youth Services;*
- *David Northcott, Winnipeg Harvest;*
- *Judy Lister, Volunteer Resources Officer at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature;*
- *Lenore Good, Director of Volunteer Services, Health Sciences Centre; and*
- *Barb Gemmell, Gemmell Training and Consulting.*

These discussions led to the following conclusions:

- *There is a definite need for capacity building and information sharing across and between organizations;*
- *Public education and volunteer recognition should be a component of an NVI;*
- *It is not necessarily the production of new tools that is needed as many of these were done for the International Year of Volunteers, but it is essential to have more effective distribution and information sharing mechanisms so that organizations large and small can benefit from the tools that exist; and*
- *Volunteers and voluntary organizations need immediate support for training and assistance for paid staff. If it is not provided, opportunities will be lost.*

An examination through two matrix lenses

The NVI-JT divided into two sub-committees to examine the development of an NVI through two lenses: lifestages and settings. Ultimately, these matrices helped the NVI-JT to come to terms with many of the issues confronting the development of the NVI.

Links with other joint tables

The NVI-JT received briefings from both the Capacity and the Awareness Joint Tables so that they were clear about potential overlaps in their mandates and to avoid duplication of effort.

As well, the NVI-JT Secretariat maintained linkages with the secretariats of the Awareness, Capacity, and IM/IT Joint Tables to share information and coordinate activities where possible.

Consultations and Communication

Once the NVI-JT members had reached conclusions about what they thought the components of an NVI might look like, they undertook consultations with representatives of the sector from across the country. The purpose was to tap into the experience, expertise and insights of the sector to help finalize the NVI.

A consultation workbook, [Sharing Your Views on Proposals for the National Volunteerism Initiative](#), was developed to facilitate discussion. This workbook outlined the major challenges, solutions, mechanisms and principles that were seen as relevant to the development of the NVI.

People from more than 350 organizations participated in the consultations. Participants included administrators of volunteer resources, managers, executives, members of boards of directors, front-line volunteers, trainers, and support specialists. The NVI-JT co-chairs or their representatives participated in all sessions. Consultations were held in 11 cities from St. John's, Newfoundland to Vancouver, British Columbia, between August 28 and October 16, 2001.

Finding highlights

- *A strong national consensus that the proposals were appropriate;*
- *General agreement that improving the capacity of the voluntary sector to engage and support volunteers would make a difference as well as better equip sector organizations to fulfill their missions;*
- *Agreement that one of the underlying, though not often recognized, roles of voluntary sector organizations is to provide a solid foundation for volunteerism;*
- *Consensus that volunteerism makes a vital contribution to maintaining the civic participation, compassion, and respect for diversity that characterizes Canada's democracy; and*
- *Agreement that the availability of resources is critical to the future viability of the voluntary sector.*

See the [NVI Consultations Summary Report](#) for more information.

Recommendations

The recommendations proposed by the NVI-JT cannot solve all the challenges that volunteers and voluntary organizations face. However, these recommendations respond to the challenges in a measured and practical way.

Each of the recommendations is part of a continuum of initiatives that, taken together, will strengthen volunteerism, improve the capacity of voluntary organizations to engage and support volunteers, heighten awareness of the contribution of volunteers to Canada's quality of life, as well as encourage more Canadians to volunteer.

Networking and information exchange

Although there is a significant amount of knowledge, experience and expertise in voluntary organizations across Canada, it can be difficult to access these resources as networking and information exchanges are not readily available.

While technology gives us the ability to improve information sharing, technology alone is not sufficient. Personal interaction is critical to the world of volunteers and voluntary organizations.

Recommendations

- *Establish regionally based, nationally connected volunteer resource networks that would be mandated to provide a range of capacity and knowledge-building services to grassroots organizations;*
- *These networks would form a leadership resource to support and enable the establishment of similar, community-based networks around volunteer development; and*
- *These networks should be developed by enhancing existing organizations.*

Research and innovative projects

Seventy-three percent of all volunteer effort in Canada is provided by only seven percent of all Canadians. To ensure that we maintain our compassionate and caring society we need to improve our understanding of the motivations and behaviours of volunteers. As well, we need to determine which factors and practices encourage and sustain volunteering, and how best to recognize and celebrate volunteer contributions.

Recommendations

- *Dedicate resources to analysis and research that will improve our knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of volunteerism in Canada;*
- *Clearly present and broadly disseminate the resulting knowledge so that voluntary sector organizations at all levels benefit; and*
- *Dedicate resources to enabling innovative pilot projects at the community level.*

Promotion, recognition and outreach

Volunteerism in Canada cannot be taken for granted, nor will it flourish without broad awareness of its many contributions and the importance of the voluntary sector organizations that support it. Without sufficient recognition or understanding of the investment of time, energy, commitment, expertise and excellence of volunteers, we risk weakening this vital force that builds community in Canada.

While the IYV began the process of awareness-building, a sustained recognition, awareness, promotion and outreach campaign is required to ensure that volunteerism and civic participation are recognized as basic elements of Canada's way of life and that the efforts of volunteers are both acknowledged and applauded.

Recommendation

- *Develop a multi-year campaign of promotion, recognition and outreach to help Canadians better understand and appreciate volunteer activity as well as encourage them to volunteer themselves.*

Leadership and engagement

The goals of the NIV-JT were to examine what is needed to encourage volunteerism and improve the capacity of organizations to benefit from the contributions of volunteers. The NVI-JT was asked to undertake this work in order to ensure a lasting legacy to the IYV.

Throughout the work of the NVI-JT, and particularly during the consultations, participants talked about the pressing need for a continuing, high-level dialogue about the role of volunteerism in building the kind of society Canadians want for the years ahead.

Recommendation

- *Establish a forum to lead the involvement of all sectors in this initiative.*

Expected Benefits

The NVI-JT concluded that the NVI should be able to generate these benefits.

For voluntary organizations

- *Greater capacity to engage and support volunteers;*
- *More reliable, sustainable supply of volunteers; and*
- *Improved ability to fulfill their missions.*

For volunteers

- *New opportunities for volunteering;*
- *Better matching of interests, talents and time with meaningful, rewarding volunteer opportunities; and*
- *Greater recognition and support.*

For communities and all Canadians

- *Broader and more accessible range of services;*
- *Better understanding and appreciation of volunteerism; and*
- *Strengthened civic awareness, participation and service.*

Result — The Canada Volunteerism Initiative

On December 5, 2001, to mark the end of the International Year of Volunteers, the Prime Minister announced funding for the implementation of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI).

Coinciding with the Prime Minister's announcement, the NVI-JT released its report [The Canada Volunteerism Initiative – The Report of the National Volunteerism Initiative](#), the result of a year of consultations, research and deliberations. The report is available online at www.vsi-isbc.ca

Status of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative

The Department of Canadian Heritage (PCH) is leading the implementation of the (CVI) on behalf of the federal government, in partnership with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

In March 2002, a small sector/government working group was struck to design a framework for implementing CVI, based on the recommendations contained in the NVI-JT report. The working group was composed of four members from the Voluntary Sector Steering Group, and one representative each from the Voluntary Sector Task Force, PCH, and HRDC.

The working group recommended that the CVI establish three national centres to be housed in existing voluntary sector organizations, and 13 local networks across the country, one in each province and territory. This proposal respects the voluntary sector's priority that CVI programming have maximum impact at the local level, while making use of sector resources at the national level, and meeting the government's requirement for efficient, cost-effective delivery mechanisms.

Under the proposed framework, the three national centres, (1) Community Support, (2) Information, Capacity Building and Awareness, and (3) Knowledge Development, would enter into contribution agreements with the Government of Canada and would be responsible for establishing the local networks and delivering a range of programs and services.

Local networks would be composed of representatives from voluntary sector groups, federal and provincial/territorial governments, foundations, and other stakeholders, as appropriate. The networks would identify the needs and priorities of the voluntary sector at the regional level and provide input to the national centres, vetting and recommending local projects and, in certain instances, designing their own program content and delivery mechanisms.

To ensure overall coherence of the initiative as well as information-sharing, the working group also recommended the establishment of a Strategic Management and Coordination Committee, composed of one representative from each of the three national centres, three

representatives from the local networks on a rotating basis, and one each from PCH and HRDC. A government secretariat will manage the contribution agreements with the three national centres and provide policy and program direction and oversight.

Canadian Heritage issued a request for proposals (RFP) to run the three national centres on June 28, 2002. A joint government–voluntary sector review committee assessed the proposals and identified the successful bidders. On December 5, 2002, the Minister of Canadian Heritage announced that Volunteer Canada will manage the Community Support Centre and the Information, Capacity-Building and Awareness Centre, while the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy will manage the Knowledge Development Centre. In late December 2002, a process was launched to establish the local networks.

Lessons Learned

Overall, voluntary sector and government members of the NVI-JT found working together a very positive experience. Despite the many challenges the members faced as their work progressed, they were successful in gaining support for their recommendations. A number of lessons learned through the joint process are worth noting as outlined below.

Dealing with overlapping mandates

Although each of the joint tables addressed a specific issue, elements of some table mandates overlapped with others. It was challenging for NVI-JT members to isolate their task from those of other joint tables, particularly the Capacity and Awareness Joint Tables. NVI-JT members had to carefully define their role vis-à-vis the other tables, and do so very quickly since, unlike the other joint tables, the NVI-JT's mandate had to be fulfilled before the end of 2001.

Benefiting from the International Year of Volunteers experience

One of the factors that worked to the NVI-JT's advantage was that it designed its approach during a period of heightened awareness toward and debate about volunteerism and the various factors affecting it, particularly among those that would have a stake in a national volunteerism initiative.

NVI-JT members were able to benefit from the first-hand experience of watching IYV unfold and apply this experience to the development of CVI. In addition, although it meant working under significant time pressures, the NVI-JT likely benefited from having to accomplish its mandate within a specific timeframe – the end of IYV.

Overcoming misperceptions

Voluntary sector members were initially sceptical as to whether their ideas and opinions would be considered seriously during the joint table deliberations, but these concerns were dispelled as they became engaged as equal participants in the process.

Voluntary sector members also gained an appreciation for their own autonomy as well as the constraints facing government colleagues in their work. Overall, voluntary sector and government representatives gained respect for each other and their abilities.

Defining realistic outcomes

Although the NVI-JT members recognized that the simple answer to the issues confronting volunteerism was to provide each not-for-profit organization in Canada with funds for a paid “manager of volunteers” position and related training, they also realized this was not an affordable solution.

Through the joint table process, the NVI-JT learned to apply the principles of creative thinking, widespread consultation and research to identify solutions that were achievable within a limited budget.

Challenging assumptions

Although ultimately responsible for making recommendations on what would be contained in the Canada Volunteerism Initiative, the NVI-JT recognized that crafting the most effective solution would involve consulting broadly with individuals and experts.

Even with this knowledge, the NVI-JT had not anticipated how important the insights and views of consultation participants would be to challenging the basic assumptions both voluntary sector and government representatives had brought to the table.

Benefiting from consultations

NVI-JT members were also surprised at how rewarding the consultation sessions proved to be. In addition to helping refine the NVI-JT’s recommendations, consultation participants expressed appreciation for the work that had been done thus far on IYV, and for the opportunity to network at the local level.

Diverging views on investing in support for volunteerism

While both the voluntary sector and government members of the NVI-JT were convinced of the value of developing an initiative to increase support for volunteerism, all VSI participants did not share this view. A number of issues of concern to the voluntary sector, such as advocacy and the financial situation of the sector, were not being addressed through the joint table process.

Many VSI participants felt that the funds being sought to develop a national volunteerism initiative could be more usefully invested in addressing other priorities of the voluntary sector.

Relevant Documents List

Working Together

<http://www.vsr-trsb.net/publications/pco-e.pdf>

Environmental Scan Summary Report

http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/hr/pdf/environmental_scan.pdf

NSGVP Summary/Analysis Report

<http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca>

Sharing Your Views on Proposals for the National Volunteerism Initiative

<http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/hr/pdf/consultations.pdf>

NVI Consultations Summary Report

http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/hr/pdf/consultations_summary.pdf

The Canada Volunteerism Initiative – The Report of the National Volunteerism Initiative

http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/hr/pdf/cvi_report.pdf