



**REPORT
for
IMAGINE CANADA**

from September 30, 2010 Provincial Forum
Newfoundland and Labrador

Framework for Action

*prepared by Fran Locke
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FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

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Seventy-eight people from across Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) representing the community (nonprofit) sector, government and academia attended [Imagine Canada's](#) September 30 day-long session to discuss a national framework for action for the nonprofit sector. This was Day 2 of a 3-day NL Provincial Forum ([New Thinking For the Next Decade](#)) organized by [Community Sector Council NL](#) (CSCNL) and held at the Capital Hotel in St. John's.

Opening Remarks

Penelope Rowe, CEO of CSCNL, opened the morning with a welcome that urged participants to think beyond provincial boundaries to feed into the national framework.

Brenda Cameron-Couch, Director of Community Outreach for Imagine Canada, introduced the cross-country initiative as a way to identify priorities for collective action to help the nonprofit and charitable (community) sector in going forward into the next decade. It was an opportunity to step back from day-to-day challenges and come together for a different level of conversation. Brenda warmed up the audience with a short quiz on the voluntary, nonprofit sector nationally, regionally and provincially.

Imagine Canada's Presentation

Michelle Gauthier, VP of Public Policy and Outreach for Imagine Canada, then gave a 30-minute [presentation](#) on Imagine's [National Engagement Strategy](#), which is using a draft [Framework for Action](#) to facilitate a nation-wide conversation about what is driving change in the voluntary nonprofit sector and what actions must be taken to maximize the contributions of the sector to Canada and the world over the next decade. Michelle's presentation included a quick overview of Imagine's work in several areas (public policy, knowledge development and mobilization, governance and accountability) and an outline of [National Engagement Strategy](#) activities from 2009-2011. This includes 13 provincial/territorial engagement events such as the one on September 30 in St. John's, and will culminate in a multi-sector national [summit in November of 2011](#). She talked about the sector's contributions to Canadian society before launching into the eight [drivers of change](#) that Imagine has identified through its consultations and research, and six [actions to consider](#) as part of a pro-active approach for planning and working with change. Michelle invited all participants to continue the conversation after today within their own organizations, to reach out to their communities and to engage politicians at all levels.

NL Perspective

Before moving into the interactive part of the morning, Penelope Rowe made a few comments about the NL perspective and shared slides illustrating the make-up of the NL community sector (aka the nonprofit, voluntary or third sector, NGO's or the social economy). There are well in excess of 5,000 community groups, about 197,000 volunteers and 22,000 paid employees in the community sector in this province, distributed across all regions. Common issues include planning for the future, recruiting strong staff and attracting new leadership. According to the

National Survey on the Quality of Life in Canadian Communities (Strategic Counsel, 2005), 91% of Atlantic Canadians think the contribution of volunteer groups has the biggest impact on the quality of life in communities.

Penny stated that what is happening nationally is the same as what is happening here, though the nuances may be different. On the ground and within our own organizations we are all familiar with the issues. The challenge is in taking that knowledge from both large and small organizations and communities and connecting with what others are doing. Even in small communities, organizations do not know about each other. The perception that we are well-acquainted is false. She mentioned [CSC's Voluntary Sector Clusters pilot project](#), which is starting to break down isolation in two rural regions of NL. The project has been successful in bringing people together from across organizations and communities for discussions, events and regional planning. In one region, peer learning sessions are taking place, which appear to be less intimidating than more formal training activities.

Reflections and Small Group Discussions on Drivers of Change

Brenda then took over facilitation of the Reflections and Small Group Discussions around the drivers of change. Participants were asked to complete a [Reflections Template](#), wherein they were asked to:

- 1) Give an example of how their organization is effectively or creatively addressing one driver
- 2) Identify one driver that is particularly challenging for their organization and why
- 3) Rank the drivers in terms of impact on their own organization and
- 4) Rank the drivers in terms of likely impact on the sector over the next decade.

After a health and networking break, each table discussed the questions for reflection and tried to develop a group sense of the top three drivers of change for the sector over the next 5-10 years.

Eight Drivers of Change

Through earlier community conversations across the country, Imagine Canada identified '*The changing demographics of Canadian society*' as an *Overarching Driver*. The other seven drivers identified are:

1. The increasing importance and influence of social innovation in Canada
2. Structural shifts in the revenue base which supports the work of charitable and nonprofit organizations
3. Shortage of talent to strengthen and lead charitable and nonprofit organizations
4. Lack of growth in the number of volunteers to govern, support and promote civic and community organizations
5. Heightened demand for transparency, accountability, communication of impact and public policy engagement
6. Growing need for transformative partnerships among charities and nonprofits and with other sectors
7. Increased use of social media and new technologies for community engagement, outreach to youth and networking

Drivers of Change – Table Discussion Flipchart Notes

At the end of the table discussions, each group wrote on flipchart paper their table consensus on the top drivers of change for the sector over the next decade. Some groups made comments to go along with the drivers. The flipchart notes were as follows:

Table A

1. Accountability driver is creating barriers (So give organizations some support to meet requirements! Or ensure requirements are appropriate: small projects require less, big projects more.)
2. Organizations need help with recruiting process (old volunteers are looking after the elderly; we need more youth, and this is an accountability issue). Will social media reach, mobilize youth?
3. Revenue base issue is critical to growth and survival. Organizations need stability; please work on this.

Table B

1. Revenue base
2. Demographics
3. Talent / leadership shortage

Table C

1. Demand for transparency
2. Lack of growth in number of volunteers
3. Growing need for partnerships
(Conflict between public telling government to be more accountable but government telling organizations to be more collaborative.)

Table D

1. Lack of growth in number of volunteers to govern, etc.
2. Funding issues and shifts in revenue base
3. Increased use of social media and new technology

Table E

1. Lack of growth... (e.g., boards being run unilaterally by one person)
2. Shortage of talent... (with limited staff / volunteers there is lack of succession planning because no time for / fear of)

Table F

1. Structural shifts in revenue base
 - a. Need for research about funding base

- b. Cannot fundraise for core operations
 - c. More \$ = more innovation
 - d. Evolution of transfer of programs from federal government to province – slow and inefficient
2. Shortage of talent
 - a. Lack of benefits, competitive wages, long-term employment
 - b. Attract and retain staff in other ways (flex time, e.g.)
 - c. Sector not seen as career choice (schools, transfer knowledge)
 - d. Succession planning; governance structures may need shifting
 3. Heightened demand for transparency
 - a. Increased accountability to public and government
 - b. Increased organizational and volunteer liability
 4. Lack of volunteers

Table G

1. Revenue
2. Talent
3. Demographics

Table H

1. Changing demographics – ageing: large pool of people (boomers) but also asked to return to work to consult; also demands on sector, looking for services from sector
2. Human resources (drivers 3 and 4) – shortage of talent / of willingness to be leaders and be committed; recruiting and retaining the talent
3. Transparency, accountability and public engagement – government and public require more; evaluation of outcomes; public policy engagement is part of this – involved in discussion, shaping policy through contribution to the process; asked to contribute ideas and probable solutions

Synopsis

An examination of the detailed discussion notes from all the tables revealed that human resource concerns (shortage of talent to strengthen and lead charitable and nonprofit organizations, and lack of growth in the number of volunteers to govern, support and promote community groups) were uppermost in people's minds. The overarching driver of changing demographics (ageing population, urbanization, loss of young people from rural communities) has a big impact on recruitment and retention of staff, boards and volunteers.

Structural shifts in the revenue base and the heightened demand for transparency and accountability were also deemed important drivers.

In a nutshell, organizations are first concerned about their people, next about money and then about demonstrating impact. The right human and financial resources may enable innovation, collaboration, the learning and use of new technologies, better compliance with accountability requirements, communication of impact and engagement in policy discussions. Without human

resources, community organizations would not exist, and without sufficient financial resources, their work is hindered.

Plenary Discussion

Several people shared information about innovative responses, as well as other thoughts, at the plenary session which followed the table discussions around Drivers of Change:

1. The NL [Department of Health and Community Services](#) is engaged in community health needs assessments focused on small geographic areas around the province. They have advertised, formed advisory committees, conducted surveys and focus groups, and are developing an action plan based on community input.
2. [Vibrant Communities St. John's](#) is working with low income residents in NL Housing to build community leaders and find 'gifts' – what individuals can contribute – through the [capaCITIES™](#) program.
3. [Cabot Loop Clusters](#) Leadership Team has initiated a pilot project to determine skills, talents and interests of people in a small area, and willingness to volunteer. This is the beginning of an inventory, and individuals will be matched with volunteer opportunities.
4. The [Voluntary, Nonprofit Secretariat](#) has launched its [Who Cares?](#) promotional campaign to recognize the work of volunteers. Anyone can submit a thank-you to be posted on the website. There are now well over 1,000 thank-you's. The number has increased since Hurricane Igor.

One participant noted that it is critical to keep in mind that things affect us (a small province) in different ways. He also mentioned that the devolution of the Labour Market Development Agreement has worsened the rules for grants and contributions (G&C). Organizations in NL rely on G&C.

Penelope Rowe said that the CSC will form a consultation group post-forum to work on the issues and themes arising from the Provincial Forum meetings – both September 29th and 30th.

Guest Speaker: Minister Responsible for the Voluntary Nonprofit Secretariat

The Hon. Dave Denine, Minister Responsible for the [Voluntary Nonprofit Secretariat](#) (VNPS), a life-long active volunteer, was introduced by Libby Crawford, Secretary of the Board of the CSC. He spoke to the group for about 20 minutes.

Minister Denine stated how pleased he was to be here with people who make things happen in communities. He spoke about the volunteer efforts during and post Hurricane Igor and recognized what volunteers do to enhance communities. He talked of the importance of keeping up with changes and realities, keeping the conversation going, being innovative, using our strengths and collaborating. Minister Denine outlined some of the things the VNPS is doing, including their website, which provides access to all government resources; the examination of government grants processes; events to support community sector organizations; and efforts to recognize volunteers.

The Province recognizes young people through the annual [URock Volunteer Awards](#). Through consultations around the province and the Provincial Counterparts Summit, government is working with the sector to discuss areas of concern and to develop a road map for the Secretariat, realistic goals and reasonable solutions for moving forward. They are concerned about the training needs of volunteers and staff. Government is working with young leaders through the [Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy](#); they are working with many groups such as [CSC's Clusters project](#), sharing expertise and best practices. Minister Denine spoke of the need for mutual support, mentoring, sharing innovation and creative ways such as was seen during Igor.

The Minister closed by emphasizing the importance of keeping lines of communication open, learning from others around the world, taking ideas and adapting them. Relationships shape the future, he said, and they will have an impact on how Government develops programs. The voice of the VNPS is heard within government whenever policy is developed. The VNPS brings volunteerism to the forefront. Minister Denine then responded to several questions from the floor with the following information:

1. The VNPS has no funds to disburse. Grants remain with line departments and will not be centralized. This would not be a practical way to award grants.
2. There is an idea for resources located in regions, but nothing definite yet. There are learnings from the Clusters project in this regard.
3. There are links on the VNPS website to other government departments awarding grants and contributions to the community sector.

Group Discussions on Actions to Consider

Imagine Canada has identified six areas of action, each with a list of possible priorities. Participants were asked to select one area of action to join in a table discussion. They were encouraged to add other potential priorities to the list. The six action areas for consideration were:

1. Solidify our funding base
2. Invest in our human resources
3. Introduce more sustainable operating models
4. Foster knowledge mobilization and social innovation
5. Strengthen governance, transparency, accountability and public policy engagement
6. Develop greater awareness of the sector's contributions and impact

Six facilitators had previously selected an area of action, and a recorder had also been assigned to each table. Individuals then self selected and moved to their table of choice, where they were asked to consider all the possible actions under their chosen area (those listed by Imagine Canada and any others that came to mind) and identify the top two or three priorities. These were reported back to the large group, and the flipchart sheets with the priorities from each table were posted on a wall for a dot vote exercise. At the end of the afternoon, everyone was given four dots and asked to cast their votes for the four priority actions they considered most important.

Following is a report on the consensus priority actions from the flipcharts from each table, the number of votes each action garnered during the dot exercise, additional points from each table discussion and, finally, a synopsis from the reporter.

Table 1. Invest in our human resources

This table attracted the most people (**13**) and three of the four priorities identified received among the highest number of dot votes (**indicated in brackets**).

1. Develop advice and plans to recruit, develop and retain younger volunteers and staff (**18**)
2. Investigate ways to establish pooled pension and benefit plans (**18**) [OASSIS, a company that provides access to affordable, comprehensive employee benefits for community-based organizations on a not-for-profit basis, was mentioned. Note: CSC has done some preliminary research in this area, as has the NL Federation of Co-ops. It is a complex issue.]
3. Investigate ways to increase incentives and compensation for staff, including non-monetary benefits, e.g., flex time, 'space' to develop new ideas (**20**)
4. Identify and recognize difference between volunteers and staff and their different roles in the sector (**3**)

Additional points from the table discussion:

- Work of nonprofit staff is undervalued and underpaid, though the sector does much of government's work (one young person at the table was receiving less remuneration than the clients she was helping)
- Much of the work of volunteers is organized and supported by paid staff
- Paid staff often work some hours as volunteers within their organizations
- Project funding leads to instability
- The sector is fragmented; we need to get organized and develop a provincial action plan – takes work and resources and desire to work as a group – CSC is a possible leader

Table 2. Solidify our funding base

Nine (**9**) people sat in on the discussion about funding, and three action areas were highlighted, one of which (regional resources to support small organizations) received top votes at the end of the day.

1. Supportive environment for social enterprise (SE) development (**7**)
 - a. Removing barriers (research barriers, solutions, possible partnerships)
 - b. Understanding SE (Boards, organizations, public)
2. Regional resources to support small organizations (**19**)
 - a. Proposal writing, insurance, etc.
 - b. Offer basic supports
 - c. Encourage mentorship and peer learning, with support for mentors
3. Consistent modernization of grants and contributions (**1**)
 - a. Fund ideas and visions, not just organizations

Table discussion points:

- Understanding / supportive environment for SE: if people knew where their money goes when they buy from a hospital gift shop, they might be more inclined to buy
- Mentoring from larger organizations: small informal groups are reluctant to be accountable for government funding and the safety of citizens – cannot purchase liability insurance
- Public college and community groups can share resources
- CSC could operate a ‘warm’ line
- One-stop-shop for seniors (maybe a program within the university)
- Funding sources are pressuring organizations to become legal entities
- Rules and guidelines interpreted differently across province / from province to province
- Difference between social innovation and social enterprise; calling for new (innovative) strategies to common problems in the nonprofit sector

Table 3. Foster knowledge mobilization and social innovation

This table attracted twelve (12) people. Four priorities were identified.

1. Promote a culture of enquiry and innovation (9)
2. Develop a strategy to engage university and colleges (4)
3. Revise accountability framework for grants and contributions (10)
4. Invest in a social innovation fund (12)

Table discussion:

- Get people together and learn from each other; organize regional and national symposia – but what works nationally will not be best approach provincially and locally
- How to access information in small communities – need to learn the technology and who to contact – get university involved, e.g., Irish Loop peat project
- Municipalities applying for university and college training partnerships – work with Dept. of Tourism to train students and workers to promote a common set of work standards and employ people (e.g., trail building, community gardens)
- Key: develop a strategy to facilitate engagement
- Academic world is disconnected – terminology and jargon; need community-based, easy-to-read and relevant language; strengthen relationships with people doing research
- Almost too much information; hard to judge what is practical
- All levels of government have to partner with community
- There is a way to do evaluation without expecting too much – let it grow and evolve
- As small groups and non-government, we do not have power to revise accountability frameworks for grants

Table 4. Introduce more sustainable operating models

There were nine (9) people at the table, and they outlined four areas for action (#3 and #4 could be rolled into one). Sharing was a big priority, and this was reflected in the voting.

1. Full cost recovery and revise rules where necessary to accomplish (0)
2. Multi-year funding (9)

3. Sharing resources (human, benefits, insurance, physical) = synergy among groups (need to demonstrate through examples) **(12)**
4. Sharing advocacy, evaluation tools, other resources and information **(13)**

Issues identified during table discussion:

- Challenges: lack of core funding, risk-taking
- Role of federal government in supporting community sector
- How to become more efficient

Possible solutions:

- Forming clusters – could be based on issues, on best practices, regional, joint lobbying, etc. Examples: [Take it Without a Grain of Salt](#) (sodium reduction – multi-agency Working Group convened by CSC); [Regional Wellness Coalitions](#); Corner Brook Housing (social workers available to community groups)
- Examples given of groups sharing facilities and resources

Table 5. Strengthen governance, transparency, accountability and public policy engagement

This table of eight **(8)** people listed four points on the flipchart:

1. Training and knowledge **(3)**
 - a. How to access \$\$
 - b. Foundation book should be free for all to access (cost marginalizes)
2. Accountability tools – evaluation tools should come with the funding **(10)**
3. 80-20 – keep it coming! (the general principle – public accountability) **(0)**
4. Imagine Canada document: Sex it Up! **(0)**

Discussion:

- Need scaled fees for different sized organizations (e.g., the book of foundations - \$600 fee is unacceptable)
- Consult with the public and the charitable and nonprofit sector; need updated definition of charity. Put it in documents. Why do you have to adjust your charity to fit the rules? Charity means giving; the new narrative can reflect a different term.
- Transfer of programs from federal to provincial (LMDA) – major area of concern – not very easy to navigate
- Boards need more training for their roles; public needs to understand board roles
- Problem: knowing where the resources are
- Need an accountability template that all organizations can use – enable organizations to demonstrate needs-based, measure success
- Imagine Canada should add best practices and examples to dress up the document and engage people more; a dry read, reflective of different approach – change the language

Table 6. Develop greater awareness of sector's contributions and impact

Seven **(7)** people participated in this discussion and identified three priorities:

1. Provide snapshots and research to inform grassroots efforts **(11)**
 - a. But... do not add another level of bureaucracy
 - b. What organizations already do this? Imagine Canada, CSCNL
 - c. Collate research already being done
2. Appoint a federal Minister Responsible for the sector and a central Secretariat **(8)**:
 - a. Legitimacy
 - b. Higher profile
 - c. Possibly more resources for the sector
3. Identify champions in government and business **(9)**
 - a. Create a mechanism for sector to connect to business
 - b. Business to champion the sector
 - c. How do we engage business to be involved?

Additional discussion:

- How to collect empirical data about the sector? Need data about needs of organizations and value of work being done
- Distinctions between federal, provincial and municipal levels
- Operate in a more business-like manner
- Government policy – legislate business to donate a portion of profits to community sector
- Corporations do not do enough at grassroots level
- Federal Minister needs financial power for the position to be powerful
- Need to reverse the ‘70% effort to keep doors open / 30% effort on service provision’
- Community sector is an economic engine that goes largely unrecognized
- Shrinking pool of volunteer resources result in ‘meaner’ communities, as remaining organizations compete for resources to sustain themselves
- How many companies allow employees to volunteer during work time?
- A centre of excellence should conduct surveys and identify the national trends; make sure community is involved in centre of excellence or roundtables – we are experts in our areas – government should not reinvent the wheel
- Stop working in silos and be open to sharing resources / work / responsibilities / failures
- Fear with collaboration – your funding may be reduced or resources considered redundant
- Change from funding revenue stream to earned revenue stream
- Information centre for funding possibilities would be great
- Business and government should be part of national summit and roundtable

Synopsis: Top Areas for Action – Compiled from the Votes

Human resource and capacity building issues came out on the top of the list for priority action. Support for social innovation, along with actions around funding and accountability were next. This is not surprising, considering the top drivers of change that were identified in the morning were connected to human resources, the revenue base, and the increased demand for accountability and transparency.

Capacity Building and Human Resource Development

1. Investigate ways to increase incentives and compensation for staff, including non-monetary benefits **(20)**
2. Regional resources to support small organizations **(19)**: proposal writing, insurance, basic supports; encourage mentorship and peer learning with support for mentors
3. Develop advice and plans to recruit, develop and retain younger volunteers and staff **(18)**
4. Investigate ways to establish pooled pension and benefit plans **(18)**
5. Sharing advocacy, evaluation tools, resources and information **(13)**, sharing human resources; sharing physical resources **(12)**: synergy among groups
6. Provide snapshots and research to inform grassroots efforts **(11)**: collate research being done.

Social Innovation

1. Invest in a social innovation fund **(12)**
2. Promote a culture of enquiry and innovation **(9)**
3. Identify champions in government and business **(9)**: create a mechanism for sector to connect to and engage business
4. Supportive environment for social enterprise (SE) development **(7)**: remove barriers (research), increase understanding of SE (Boards, organizations, public)

Funding, Accountability and Value

1. Accountability tools – tools should come with the funding **(10)**; revise accountability framework for grants and contributions **(10)**
2. Multi-year funding **(9)**
3. Appoint a federal Minister Responsible for the sector and a central Secretariat **(8)**: provides legitimacy, higher profile, possibly more resources for the sector

A further glance over the discussion notes demonstrates:

- An appetite among participants for sharing resources, including on a regional level
- A wish to learn from each other (for example, through mentoring)
- A desire to work with government and the private sector and to identify champions for the community sector
- A need for mechanisms, tools and templates to increase efficiency and effectiveness

Continue the Conversation

Michelle Gautier of [Imagine Canada](#) (IC) spoke briefly about the importance of continuing the conversation after the meeting and recommended:

- Talking to Boards of Directors about the drivers and feeding back to IC any Board response
- Discuss any gaps noted in the report from today
- Use the tips and tools that will be coming from IC
- Take back any beneficial learnings and contacts from around the table

- Contribute to [IC's blog](#)
- Help politicians understand that the sector is more than volunteers. Professional staff, resources and infrastructure are all essential components.
- Participate in [Summit 2011](#)

Wrap-up

Penelope Rowe of the CSC thanked the participants and reminded the group that there are no silver bullets; we have to get people working to make progress in the areas under discussion. Conversation and consultation can trigger new ideas such as the Clusters project. [CSC](#) is a resource centre for the sector – online, phone and in-person – and is here to help. Penny called for volunteers to form a consultative group to help move the agenda forward.

Brenda Cameron Couch of Imagine Canada reiterated the hope that new thinking was helpful and that we would take the ideas back to our individual organizations. She called for collective action, as no one organization can do this alone.

CSC Contributors

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Thanks to everyone who helped make the day a success.