

# **LEADERSHIP GAP: PERCEPTION OR REALITY**

## **VOLUME I**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COUNCIL NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR**

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## **The Community Services Council Newfoundland and Labrador**

The Community Services Council (CSC) of Newfoundland and Labrador is an independent voluntary organization founded in 1976. It is a registered charity under the direction of a nineteen member Board. CSC aims to identify unmet community needs; to stimulate interaction amongst voluntary organizations; to enhance the voluntary sector's capacity to work effectively with the public and private sectors; to provide a forum for citizen participation in social policy development; and to support volunteerism. CSC works with individuals and groups in hundreds of communities throughout the province and across the country.

CSC acts as a social entrepreneur, evolving with the province's needs and bringing a dynamic, creative approach to the issues of the day. At any given time we work on dozens of different projects to support citizen involvement, promote the integration of social and economic development, and provide leadership in shaping public policy. We achieve our goals by:

- collaboration with individuals, organizations, the private sector and governments
- information sharing and public dialogue
- research and analysis
- advocating policy positions
- pioneering innovative programs and services
- networks and strategic alliances
- advancement of the voluntary sector and promotion of volunteerism
- provision of services
- building bridges and cultivating collaboration
- harnessing the power of technology.

These activities nurture social inclusion, build social capital and improve community capacity. Strategic thinking and innovative approaches address critical economic and social issues and facilitate the management of change.

This report was written by Penelope M. Rowe, CEO Community Services Council and Director of Values Added Community University Research Alliance, with Lisa Dwyer, Research Assistant. Research design and data collection was supported by Dr. Larry Felt, Co-Director of Values Added Community University Research Alliance; and Dr. Michelle Sullivan, Research Associate.

### **Acknowledgements**

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Fran Locke, Dr. Carla Wheaton, Melanie Thomas, Louise Woodfine and Kelly Anne Meadus of the Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador and Mark Shrimpton, Consultant.

The Community Services Council particularly thanks all individuals and organizations who participated in this research.

*The Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador gratefully acknowledges the financial support provided by Canadian Rural Partnerships Program of Agriculture Agri-foods Canada, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council through the Values Added Community University Research Alliance. Supplementary research surveys were carried out with the support of the Student Work and Service Program. Original research was conducted in 2002 and 2003. This edition of the report was updated in 2004.*

### **Disclaimer**

The research findings are based on information gathered from the study participants. The conclusions and recommendations are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the funders.

## FOREWORD

*Rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador rely heavily on voluntary action and volunteer leadership. Volunteer engagement is fundamental to community sustainability and a small population must draw upon its limited human resources to provide basic services that are usually the domain of paid positions in urban areas. Volunteers act as firefighters, ambulance drivers, municipal councillors, and deliver a range of other services. People's involvement in economic, cultural and social development is often connected to their overwhelming desire to secure the future of their way of life. In addition to providing an array of programs and services, the voluntary, community-based sector plays a key role in forming human and social capital. It provides a means for people to become involved in community affairs and creates opportunities for personal growth and development.*

*During this study, as we met with people from across the province, it became clear that there are increasing stresses and strains as the demand on volunteers and organizations becomes greater. Little research on this topic had been carried out at a local level. The Community Services Council, therefore, initiated several consultative and research activities to produce a profile of the voluntary, community-based sector. We set out to learn more about what is occurring in various organizations and localities and to see firsthand if the concerns were widespread or more prevalent in some communities.*

*This study, **The Leadership Gap: Perception or Reality**, focuses on issues of volunteer involvement and the perception that people are becoming more reluctant to assume positions of responsibility. We have learned that even though many people are contributing huge efforts to the public benefit of their regions, the leadership gap is a real and growing concern. At the moment, this gap is being offset by the extraordinary work and numerous roles being shouldered by a dedicated minority. In our view, this dependence is a potential threat for many organizations and thus for community sustainability.*

*People's love of place and passion for their community are powerful. Nonetheless, volunteer leaders are increasingly frustrated with the amount of responsibility and work required of them. A growing weariness with the lack of acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of non-profit, voluntary organizations is causing considerable pressure on leaders, volunteers and organizations.*

*Newfoundland and Labrador is known for the willingness of its residents to lend a helping hand. This is the defining feature of many communities. The Community Services Council believes the voluntary sector is vital to community development and sustainability. We hope this report and its recommendations will provide a framework for more coordinated approaches at local and regional levels, and more support, targeted to those who already give so much, as well as for those who have yet to become involved.*

*This report is dedicated to the thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who contribute to the spirit and shape of our province. It is always a profound pleasure to know and work with so many of you.*

Penelope M. Rowe

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*Voluntary, community-based organizations and volunteer leaders play an instrumental role in improving the quality of rural life and thus in promoting rural Canada as a place to live, work, and raise a family.*

Penelope M. Rowe

## **1.0: INTRODUCTION**

Newfoundland and Labrador has been undergoing a series of demographic, economic, and social changes resulting in population decline in rural areas. There is a perception that these changes, especially depopulation, are negatively affecting the level and nature of volunteer activity and creating a leadership gap in many communities. The Community Services Council (CSC) wanted to explore the reality of this perception and to determine if other factors might be contributing to diminishing volunteerism and community leadership. We were particularly interested in understanding the issues from the perspective of individual volunteers and the implications for voluntary, community-based organizations' capacity to meet the needs of their communities.

### **1.1: Statement of the Issues and Relevance of the Research**

To put our research in context it is important to recognize that there has been a decline in volunteerism across Canada as well as in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. According to a Statistics Canada survey conducted in 2000<sup>i</sup> the number of Canadians 15 years and older who volunteer has dropped substantially (from 31% to 27%) since an earlier survey in 1997. In Newfoundland and Labrador 31% were active volunteers in 2000 compared to 33% in 1997. The reported decline in this province, therefore, was considerably less than the Canadian average decline. Astonishingly, over the same time span the average number of hours contributed by volunteers in this province jumped from 136 hours to 206 hours<sup>ii</sup> - the equivalent of five full working weeks on average per volunteer per year. This is a substantial 51% increase in real effort. Given that the median hours of volunteer work is 96 per year<sup>iii</sup> and that many volunteers contribute only a few hours per year, these statistics indicate that a small group of people are shouldering a heavier burden, meeting more demands, assuming more responsibility and performing more work.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the sample base of the Statistics Canada survey is not large enough to enable a community level analysis or even an urban-rural comparison. Furthermore, because of the small sample base an analysis across cohorts and demographic groups is not possible.



Many observers attribute these trends in rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador primarily to the loss of population. However, in light of similar trends in other parts of the country, where the population is not declining, it can reasonably be assumed that other factors contribute to the apparent decrease in the numbers of people who volunteer and the perception of a leadership gap. The high expectations placed on those who do volunteer may deter some people from participating at all, thereby reducing attachment to the voluntary sector and limiting the number willing to assume community leadership positions. People describe situations where volunteers and leaders are overloaded to the point where they quit, and others, especially youth, are reluctant to become involved. Representatives of many organizations all worried about the future of these groups. Such views have been recorded in numerous reports<sup>iv</sup> and are recurring themes in public discussions and within voluntary, community-based organizations.

The Community Services Council was concerned by these trends and by the fact that voluntary groups were struggling to meet their objectives and in some cases for mere survival. In launching this study CSC hypothesized that loss of population may not be the only, or even the primary, reason contributing to the perceived leadership gap. We speculated there might be other issues at play such as the proliferation of organizations and bodies, including government appointed boards, which draw on volunteer leadership. In this province, hospital boards, school boards, regional health and community service boards and economic development organizations (44 boards in total) oversee the expenditure of approximately 50% of the provincial budget.<sup>v</sup> Individuals serve on these bodies as volunteers. As well, elected municipal councillors in most communities do not receive remuneration, so they too, act in a volunteer capacity. The development of six Strategic Social Plan Steering Committees in 1999 (see section 1.4) added to the commitment of community leaders. Furthermore, we wondered if styles of organizational management and operational practices or a lack of resources and coordinated infrastructure to support volunteer engagement might be contributing to the stated problem, and, some people may feel little affinity toward certain organizations.

But whatever the reasons for the perception of a decline in the leadership base and volunteer pool, the CSC was concerned that there may be serious implications for the capacity of local and grassroots organizations, with a related impact on the general health and well-being of rural communities.

### **1.2: Research Objectives**

This study was undertaken to determine if the perception is correct that the volunteer leadership base is declining in rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and, if so, to identify the array of contributing factors. Specifically, we set out to explore:

- the community dynamics that influence the perceived or real loss of leadership, and whether there is variation among communities;
- whether there is a movement away from certain types of traditional organizations toward more recently formed groups or if there is simply more competition for volunteers; and
- other contributing factors such as organizational attitudes, changing lifestyles, and other issues which affect people's willingness and ability to become involved.

Based on the research findings, this report contains a series of recommendations and strategic actions which might be pursued to foster attachment to community involvement, increase volunteerism and strengthen leadership skills, thereby building the capacity of community organizations and rural communities.

### **1.3: The Context: Population Trends**

Newfoundland and Labrador is experiencing substantial population change. The populations reported in the national Censuses of 1996 and 2001 reveal a loss of 7.1% (compared to the overall population growth of 4% in Canada).<sup>vi</sup> The decline is primarily a result of out-migration, compounded by a significant drop in the birth rate. This has resulted in a rapidly aging population, a trend which is more pronounced in rural areas. Approximately

54,732 people left the province between 1991 and 2001.<sup>2</sup> <sup>vii</sup> Of that figure, 82% were between the ages of 0 and 29,<sup>3</sup> and 18,261 of those individuals were at prime labour force age.<sup>4</sup> Some communities have been devastated by such losses. The number of reported births continues to drop each year (4,679 in 2001, which is 2,656 fewer than in 1991), while the number of deaths continues to increase (4,531 in 2001, which is 711 more than in 1991).<sup>viii</sup> The trend is especially remarkable in rural areas;<sup>ix</sup> with all regions recording a population decline in 1996.<sup>x</sup>

Numerous documents exploring how these demographic trends will affect rural Newfoundland and Labrador have been released. One report stated that many Newfoundland youth not only anticipate leaving the province to pursue education or employment, but also expressed *a desire* to leave their hometowns following high school.<sup>xi</sup> Another study published by the Canadian Rural Partnership Program of Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada concluded that all rural areas in this province experienced a net loss of approximately 25% of their teenage population in recent years, which is about twice that experienced in the rest of Canada.<sup>xii</sup>

#### **1.4: Newfoundland and Labrador's Strategic Social Plan**

An important backdrop to our study is the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Strategic Social Plan, *People, Partners and Prosperity*, released in 1998 after extensive public dialogue.<sup>xiii</sup> The Strategic Social Plan (SSP) is a deliberate policy instrument, which creates an unprecedented foundation for more collaborative relationships between government and the wider community.

The SSP provides a unique framework for linking economic and social policy development, building on community and regional strengths, and investing in people. The plan was conceived as a process for social policy renewal by finding new ways of doing business within government and new approaches

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<sup>2</sup> Peak inter-provincial migration occurred during the year 1997-98, reaching a high of 9490.

<sup>3</sup> Human Resources Development Canada defines youth as ages up to 30.

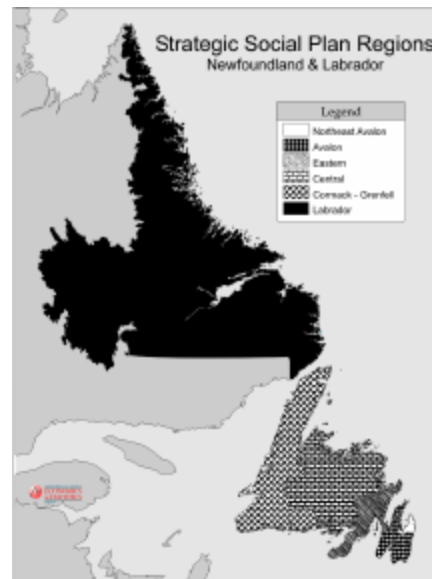
<sup>4</sup> According to Newfoundland Statistics Agency, prime labour force age is defined as ages 25 to 54.

to building stronger, more vibrant communities. The SSP acknowledges that “effective solutions arise from a shared sense of responsibility and a capacity to act which come from involving people” and “fostering broad participatory processes”.<sup>xiv</sup>

It recognizes the voluntary, community-based sector as a key vehicle in meeting the values and vision of the SSP.

Participation in voluntary organizations is deemed a basic building block of community leadership and essential to capacity building. According to the SSP, the development of community capacity means supporting active involvement of community groups, volunteers and all citizens who ultimately build healthy, supportive communities”.<sup>xv</sup> The SSP calls for a shift to place-based development (which may be interpreted to mean support to rural communities) and is intended to address key challenges including supporting people to achieve their potential, supporting employment and economic security, and achieving community stability.

For implementation purposes a central office has been created within government. Six regional Steering Committees have also been formed, five of which cover large geographic areas. Each comprises representatives (senior staff and volunteers) of various boards and agencies such as Hospital, School, Regional Health and Community Services and Regional Economic Development Boards, all three levels of government, and others. The committees have each developed strategic plans with different priorities; several have identified the importance of the voluntary, community-based sector.

**Figure 1: Strategic Social Plan Regions**

The SSP acknowledges that contributions of the community-based sector and its many organizations are critical success factors in building resilient, self-reliant communities. It states that voluntary organizations play a significant role in fostering self-reliance, providing employment, training and leadership development, delivering services and strengthening social and community capacity. And further, that these organizations play a vital role in the cultural, social and economic life of the province.

The SSP relies upon the voluntary, community-based sector as a vehicle for community and individual development. This underlines the importance of understanding the issues affecting volunteers and their organizations in addressing leadership issues.

### **1.5: The Voluntary, Community-based Sector**

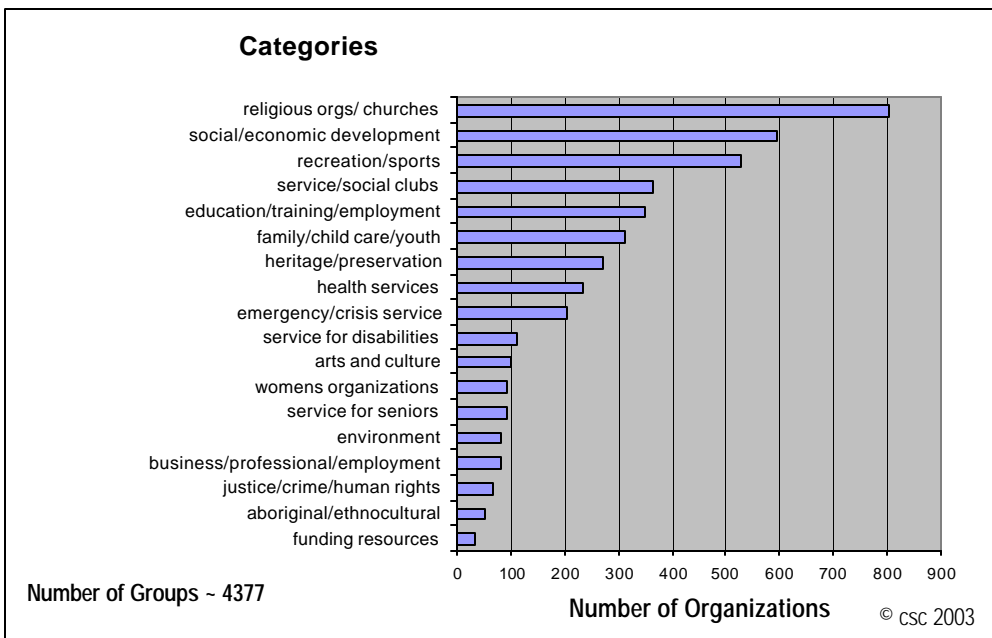
An underlying assumption of this study is that the voluntary, community-based sector is a conduit for individual citizen engagement and provides a locus for personal growth and leadership development. Groups emerge to help people in need, to advocate for new policies, to deliver programs, to raise money for worthwhile causes and to fill gaps not served by government or the

private sector. For the purposes of this study the term voluntary, community-based sector refers to the collection of organizations – charities, registered non-profits and other less formal, local, grassroots and mutual support groups – and all their combined capacity and resources, including volunteers, board members, employees, infrastructure and financial resources. Together these groups fill an enormous economic, social and cultural space and play a substantial role in fostering community well-being. They produce and consume goods and services and contribute to labour market development.

**1.5.1: Snapshot of the voluntary sector in Newfoundland and Labrador**

The voluntary, community-based sector is diverse and includes faith organizations, social, economic and community development groups, health and social service providers, sports and recreation, arts, cultural, heritage and tourism groups. Over many years, CSC research has identified more than 4,300 non-profit groups in 520 communities. We classify the groups according to 18 categories. (See Figure 2.) Of the 4,300 organizations, about 1,150 are registered charities, while approximately 2,300 are provincially registered as non-profits. The rest are informal and grassroots groups.

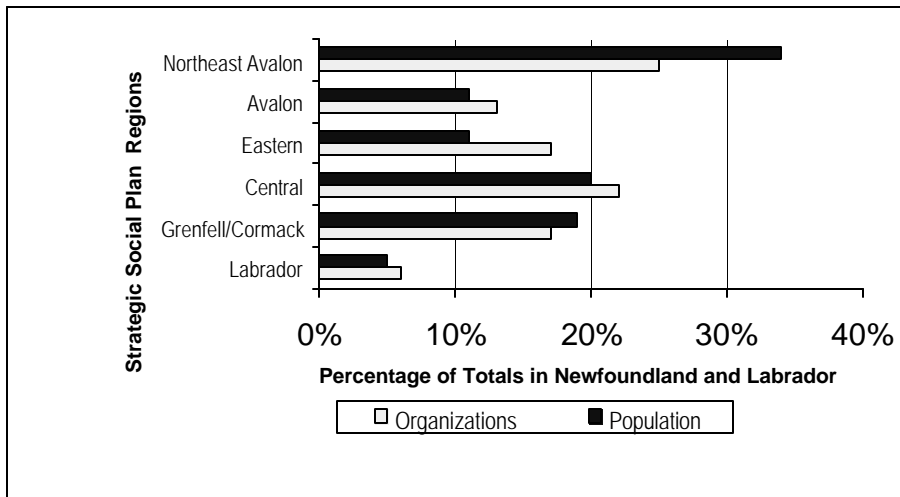
**Figure 2: The Sector in Newfoundland and Labrador by Category**



Source: CSC, 2003 Non-profit Database

These organizations are scattered throughout the province. Approximately 75% are located outside the main urban area of St. John’s and Mount Pearl (the Northeast Avalon Region). As is evident in Figure 3, there is a reasonable correlation between population size and the percentage of organizations in each of the five strategic social planning regions outside the Northeast Avalon area.

**Figure 3: Organizations to Population by Strategic Social Plan Region**

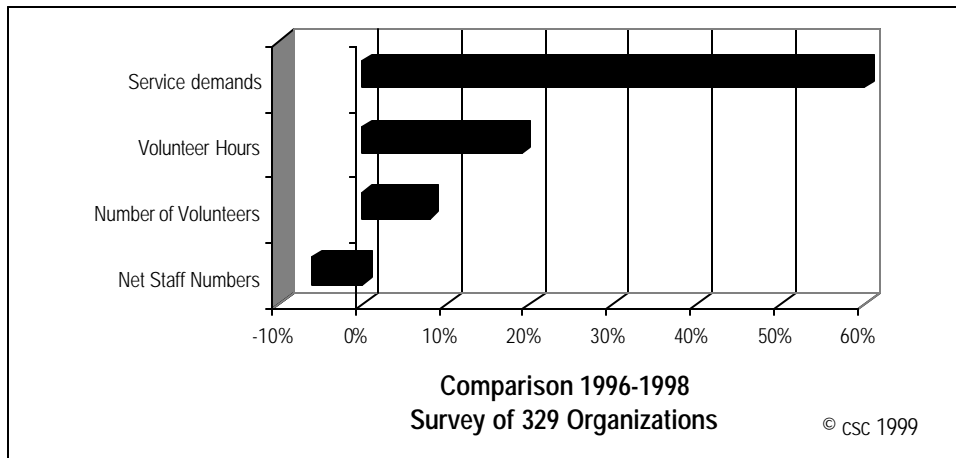


Source: CSC, 2003 Non-profit Database

**1.5.2: Increasing demands on the sector**

Organizations are experiencing a burgeoning demand for their services, according to a purposive survey conducted by CSC in 1999<sup>xvi</sup> in which groups reported a 60% increase in demand between 1996 and 1998. As evident in Figure 4, this is being met primarily by increased volunteer contribution. This finding is consistent with the jump in annual average hours contributed by volunteers as reported in the Statistics Canada Survey – up 51% from 1997 to 2000 as described in section 1.1.

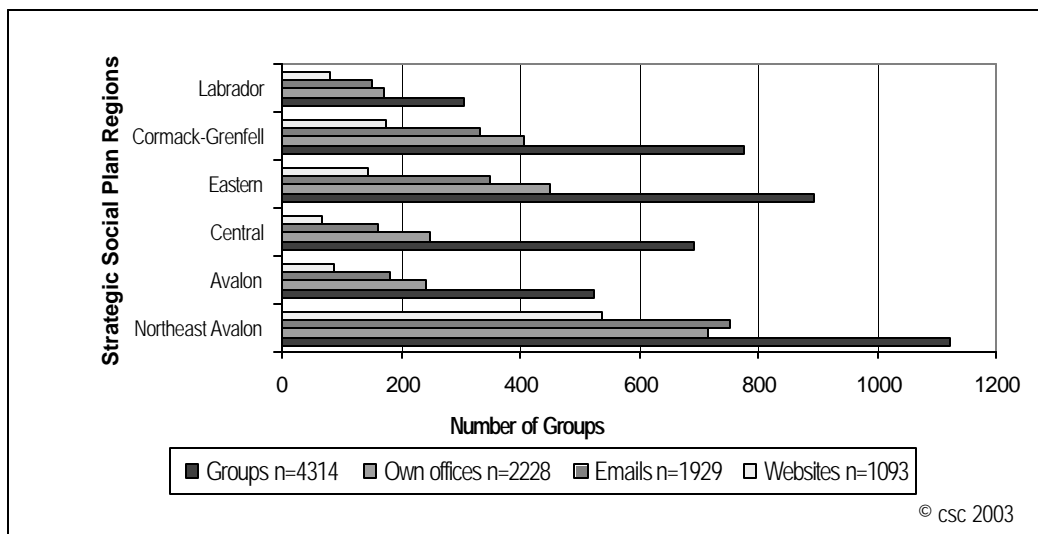
Figure 4: Service Demands on Voluntary, Community-based Organizations



1.5.3: Infrastructure of the sector

According to CSC’s database, about 50% of organizations do not have their own offices. This likely implies that they do not have paid staff and operate with limited financial resources. A significant portion of the sector manages with limited infrastructure with only 44% having email addresses.

Figure 5: Distribution and Infrastructure by Region



Source: CSC, 2003 Non-profit Database



**1.6: Strengthening Rural Community Capacity and Leadership**

One of the objectives of this current study was to create a better understanding of the complex issues affecting attachment to volunteerism. The identification of opportunities, as well as barriers to volunteer recruitment, retention and leadership development may help voluntary groups maintain and improve their capacity. From a broader perspective, skills acquired in the voluntary sector are increasingly viewed as a means to improve employment prospects<sup>xvii</sup> and labour market development, with a related impact on the capacity for social and economic development. This study, therefore, should be useful to both federal and provincial governments in considering priorities and adjustments for certain policy and program directions.

## **2.0: METHODOLOGY**

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in this research; however, the analysis is primarily qualitative. Several methods were used to inform the study, collect data and formulate the findings and conclusions as described below.

### **2.1: Literature Review**

A brief review of literature relating to leadership, rural volunteerism, barriers to volunteerism, community development, community capacity building and the voluntary sector, as well as current socio-economic conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador was carried out. While recent socio-economic adjustments and demographic trends, especially population decline, are likely contributors to the perceived leadership gap, national and international studies suggest other possible reasons for a decline in volunteerism, with an associated impact on voluntary leadership. Canadian national survey data show that leadership and volunteerism are influenced by many factors, such as age, education and income levels, and inadequate recruitment campaigns and retention practices. People frequently state they do not volunteer or assume leadership roles because they are not asked or do not know how to become involved.<sup>xviii</sup> Other research suggests that people refrain from volunteering because of lack of time and an unwillingness to commit year round.<sup>xix</sup> (*The Literature Review is available in Volume II*).

### **2.2: Key Informants Interviews**

An environmental scan through a key informant process identified key issues and tested the qualitative approach to data collection as the main method for this study. Twenty-two key informants representing a mix of interests, backgrounds and volunteer involvement, as well as geographic regions, organizations, professions, genders and ages, participated in semi-structured, open-ended, telephone interviews. The responses to interviews formed the basis of inquiry for the case studies, roundtables, questionnaires and in-person interviews. (*Key Informant Report is available in Volume II*).

**2.3: Community Case Studies**

The core research was conducted through four community case studies.

**2.3.1: Community selection**

The original research plan had intended to select four rural communities with a population of less than 5,000, each facing different economic circumstances and population trends, i.e. two experiencing growth and two experiencing decline. However, researchers were unable to identify any communities experiencing population or real economic growth. This necessitated a revised approach to community selection. In an attempt to conduct the case studies in communities experiencing differing conditions, the project team selected four rural communities in distinct regions of the province, each of which was experiencing population decline and economic challenges to varying degrees but which had somewhat different social and economic conditions. Profiles of the case study communities were prepared based on information gathered from numerous sources such as Statistics Canada and the provincial government's Community Accounts. The similarities amongst the communities in terms of average and median income, rate of population decline, and the number of voluntary organizations are apparent in Table 1. The only major difference is that community B has a significantly higher unemployment rate. For reasons of confidentiality, the four communities have been labeled A, B, C and D.

**Table 1: Selected Statistical Information for the Four Case Studies\***

COMMUNITY	A	B	C	D
Population				
1996	667	2290	2292	3613
2001	607	2079	2163	3221
Total Gain or Loss	-60 (-9%)	-211 (-9.2%)	-129 (-5.6%)	-392 (-10.8%)
Median Income 2001	\$15,024	\$16,010	\$13,600	\$14,496
Average Income 2001	\$15,576	\$14,296	\$16,923	\$18,432
Unemployment Rate 2001	29%	52%	26%	23%
<i>Source: 1996 and 2001 Censuses, Statistics Canada.</i>				
Organizations In CSC Data Base	16	38	24	38
<i>Source: Community Services Council 2002</i>				

(\*For detailed community profiles and case studies see Volume II).

### **2.3.2: Roundtables in case study communities**

Local organizers were contracted to coordinate a roundtable in each community. Thirteen to 18 participants were convened in each, representing a cross-section of local voluntary groups such as: environmental, heritage, community and rural development, economic development, town councils, volunteer firefighters, fraternal, religious, youth and seniors groups. The sessions opened with a presentation on the project. Discussions were semi-structured, with participants asked to identify issues they believed to be affecting the ability of organizations to recruit volunteers and achieve stable leadership. They also discussed the types of strategies that might enhance the level of volunteer activity, especially at the leadership level.

### **2.3.3: Interviews and surveys with volunteers and non-volunteers**

More in-depth information was gathered through interviews (telephone or in-person) and self-administered questionnaires. Among the active volunteers interviewed were representatives of town councils,<sup>5</sup> local Regional Economic

<sup>5</sup> In most Newfoundland and Labrador communities, persons serving on municipal councils and various government boards do so without remuneration and thus fit the study's definition of volunteers.

Development Boards, the School Boards or Councils, the Health and Community Services Regional Boards, and seniors, youth, sports and recreation groups. An important element of this research was interviewing individuals who are not currently active volunteers. Those interviewed included youth, seniors, single parents and married dual-income parents. (*See Volume II for interview schedules*).

**Table 2: Participants in Community Case Studies**

Community	Completed Questionnaires or Interviews		Roundtable Participants *	Number of Organizations Represented
	Volunteers	Non-volunteers		
A	20	6	15	14
B	7	7	18	30
C	7	6	13	14
D	17	6	18	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>78</b>

\* Some of those who participated in roundtable discussions were also interviewed.

Most volunteers (n=31; 61%) and non-volunteers (n=23; 95%) worked outside of their homes. Several volunteers were also retired (n=9; 18%). Though many people chose not to answer questions concerning income, most of the volunteers who did respond were financially well-to-do. The average household income for volunteers was between \$40,000 and \$60,000, considerably higher than the average wages in the case study communities. The non-volunteers were somewhat less well off, earning household incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000. These results also confirm what is already present in the literature: the majority of non-volunteers generally have lower annual incomes than their volunteer counterparts. <sup>xx</sup>

Most people who answered questions concerning educational attainment had completed some post-secondary education. Many volunteers had a university degree (n=17; 33%) or a post-secondary certificate or diploma (n=12; 24%). Similarly, the non-volunteers had post-secondary diplomas (n=9; 36%) or degrees (n=5; 20%). Though the project team did not aim to interview non-volunteers from any particular age category, it is noteworthy that the age of the non-volunteers surveyed substantiated existing studies.<sup>xxi xxii</sup> That is, most non-volunteers consulted for this project were also young adults.

**2.4: Online Survey**

An online survey, consisting of ten multiple response and open-ended questions, was posted on CSC's vortal, [www.enVision.ca](http://www.enVision.ca), to gather additional views on the perceived leadership gap and to validate information collected through the case studies. The online survey, which generated 42 responses, was not restricted to the case study communities and thus produced an additional perspective on key trends. (See *Volume II for the survey instruments*).

**2.5: Supplementary Research, *Pan Provincial Survey***

Additional interviews carried out in the fall of 2002 and winter of 2003 by the Community Services Council were used to amplify the research in the *Leadership Gap: Perception or Reality* and validated the study's findings. Six hundred and thirteen selected organizations and 1,182 residents in approximately 150 rural communities were contacted using a convenience survey.<sup>6</sup> Interviews were conducted by several interviewers primarily by telephone, with a few done in person or by dropping off questionnaires. Organization interviews probed a number of issues including: their need for volunteers and board members, attitudes to recruitment practices, and coordination with other groups to share information and resources. Individual resident interviews addressed current volunteer activity, willingness to volunteer, and perceptions about why people don't volunteer. While neither organizations nor residents were chosen through a scientific random sampling process, the sheer volume of interviews allows important conclusions to be drawn that support the findings of the *Leadership Gap* research. The views gleaned from the *Pan Provincial Survey* enable the authors to frame recommendations and strategic actions with a high level of confidence.

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<sup>6</sup> For purposes of this report responses from rural communities have been analyzed separately from the complete survey which included urban areas. A total of 828 organizations and 1549 individuals were interviewed.

**3.0: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The several research methods employed in this study reveal similar trends with few substantial variations amongst communities. There was a high degree of convergence regarding the issues affecting volunteerism and the leadership gap. None of the four case studies produced any outstanding differences amongst the communities. The findings also correlate closely with the opinions expressed by key informants, responses to the online survey and the supplementary *Pan Provincial Survey*. The research findings, therefore, are presented as a composite set of priority issues.

**3.1: Decline in Volunteer and Leadership Base**

The perception that there is a leadership gap has been substantiated by this research. The majority (85%) of people consulted believe community-based organizations are experiencing a decline in volunteer activity, especially in the number of people willing to assume leadership roles.

**Table 3: Is There a Declining Base of Volunteers to Assume Leadership Roles?**

<b>(Number of Respondents = 115)</b>				
<b>Source</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know or no answer</b>	<b>Total</b>
Online Survey	36	6	2	42
Volunteer Survey	43	6	0	51
Key Informant Interview	19	3	0	22
Total	98	15	2	115
<b>% of total</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>100%</b>

The few people who think that the perception is exaggerated and that the number of volunteers might not really be declining believe it is more likely that the type of positions volunteers will assume has changed and that people will volunteer only with selected organizations.

That there is increasing difficulty to recruit volunteers and potential leaders was corroborated in the *Pan Provincial Survey*. Fifty-nine percent of 423 organization respondents expressed a need for more volunteers while 41% of 542 respondents said they were having trouble recruiting board members. Most interestingly, in the interviews with individuals, a substantial number (38%) said they were interested in becoming active or in volunteering more. This is an important finding because it offers some indication that there is a pool of potential volunteers in many communities. Of particular significance, however, is that when presented with a list of potential activities very few people were interested in serving on a Board of Directors, i.e. serving in a leadership capacity. People were more interested in short-term volunteering, such as for special events.

### **3.2: Other Factors Contributing to the Leadership Gap: Key Themes**

Based on feedback from all sources, it is evident that population decline is not the only factor contributing to the leadership gap. There is significant evidence that the difficulty some community organizations are experiencing with recruiting volunteers and leaders, goes well beyond this.

The nine most common issues relating to volunteer recruitment and retention are:

- inadequate recruitment and retention practices
- changing social environments
- exclusion of potential volunteers and leaders, especially youth
- burnout and leadership stagnation
- lack of appreciation
- lack of training
- competition amongst groups
- resistance to change and perceived lack of relevance of some groups
- concerns about volunteer liability and government downloading.

These themes are discussed in more detail in the following sections.



**3.2.1: Recruitment and retention practices**

Inadequate recruitment practices were cited as a prime reason why some people do not get involved. Researchers asked the participants whether they thought some community groups were better than others at recruiting volunteers. Most respondents believed that this is the case as indicated in the following table.

**Table 4: Do Some Organizations Recruit More Effectively Than Others?**

(Number of Respondents = 109)				
Source	Yes	No	Don't know or no answer	Total
Online Survey	18	9	9	36
Volunteer Survey	41	6	4	51
Key Informant Interview	17	1	4	22
Total	76	16	17	109
% of total	70%	15%	15%	100%

*Organizations that get their message out to the community usually are more successful at recruiting and retention.*

Several factors were thought to contribute to an organization’s success in recruiting volunteers. Many organizations do not sufficiently promote themselves to attract new members and should target campaigns to specific audiences such as youth, seniors and persons with disabilities. More attention should be placed on specific campaigns to attract experienced leaders.

*There needs to be more public education. Non-volunteers may have no idea exactly what organization “X” does on a monthly basis.*

*Groups with a clear vision and clear goals have the greatest success in attracting volunteers, and volunteers are likely to remain in their positions longer and be more productive when they know exactly what is required of them. Organizations should state what they expect of volunteers through well-defined descriptions of roles and tasks to be performed, and they should try to match the skills and interests of volunteers to available positions. The onus is on organizations to actively promote volunteer opportunities, and to seek out and encourage participation. Many informants believe that organizations with secure funding are more successful in recruiting volunteers, not least because they can afford active recruitment campaigns.*

Seventy-two per cent of the non-volunteers consulted felt that organizations were not recruiting effectively in their communities. The respondents indicated that there were rarely visible signs of recruitment (advertisements, posters, word-of-mouth, etc.). It was also evident during roundtable discussions that some people knew very little of the work of other groups and that residents who are interested in volunteering often find it difficult to learn about the volunteer needs of community organizations. There are no central visible locations where information is available about volunteer opportunities or recruiting and matching volunteers.

Many organizations do not focus adequate attention on good retention practices. Getting a prospective volunteer into the organization is usually only the first step. Well-run and co-ordinated volunteer activities are more likely to lead to retention of volunteers. People do not like to waste their time. Information gathered in the *Pan Provincial Survey* indicated that a high percentage of organizations do not focus on the task of volunteer co-ordination. This is likely a further inhibitor to volunteer retention.

*The key to maintaining volunteers is making everyone feel a part of the organization and ensuring that the group remains active.*

Numerous non-volunteers said that in the past they had agreed to volunteer temporarily when asked directly. Most did so out of a sense of civic duty or because they felt the cause was important. Others agreed because they were told clearly what the organization expected of them, knew it would not take a lot of time, had the necessary skills, and enjoyed volunteering. Others said they were willing to help groups in which their own children participated.

In the case studies many respondents, both volunteers and those not currently active, said they may be willing to become involved if asked personally to do so. This is consistent with findings in the *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*<sup>xxiii</sup> and with CSC's *Pan Provincial Survey*, in which 31% (n=161/521) of non-volunteers said they are or may be willing to volunteer and 38% (n=247/650) of those who currently volunteer said they would or might volunteer more often in their community.

*More youth should be actively recruited into the affairs of the community.*

When asked about leadership positions, many respondents suggested that the same few people are sought out repeatedly because they are willing to become

more involved, and once recruited, they may remain in these positions to ensure needed activities are performed.

When groups seek to elect new board members, for instance, some informants explained that it is always the same few people who are involved (sometimes in different roles) because of an apparent lack of interest and apathy on the part of others. It was observed that although efforts are sometimes made to place individuals in different positions to ensure variety, the same small group tends to volunteer and accept nomination. The difficulty recruiting new leaders often compels existing leaders to stay on, out of a sense of civic duty and obligation to other members in the organization. On the other hand, there is also the view that some leaders and volunteers like to cling to “power” and resist bringing in new people.

*If people get involved and are perceived to be effective they are sought after and in demand.*

### ***3.2.2: Changing lifestyles***

Social change was frequently identified as a significant factor affecting the level of volunteerism and exacerbating the leadership gap. Changes in family structures have affected the number of volunteers available in many communities. In the past, stay-at-home wives, mothers, and daughters traditionally participated in church and community activities out of a sense of duty and because it provided them with both a social outlet and an opportunity to display their talents and skills. However, many women are now in paid employment or managing as single parents and, as a result, have limited time to devote to volunteer activities.

*My wife works nights. I work days. We have a one-year-old son and can't afford daycare.*

Recognizing that volunteer work frequently requires a substantial time commitment, especially in areas with a small population base, individuals in full-time employment or raising families do not have the time to devote to demanding volunteer positions, especially leadership roles. Roundtable and interview data indicate that because so many groups are under-funded and overburdened, volunteers are often required to contribute excessive time - often equivalent to that put into paid employment - to ensure volunteer tasks are completed. This level of demand is a significant contributing factor to the difficulty some organizations experience in attracting additional people.

*Time is a real factor, volunteers like to be scheduled.*

One purpose of this research was to explore why people do not volunteer. Some non-volunteers in the case study communities were asked to explain what prevented or dissuaded them from participating. Although most (92%) had participated in occasional volunteering (i.e., fundraising), they confirmed the views expressed by the active volunteer respondents. Many non-volunteers believe that few people have the time for, or are not willing to commit to, long-term volunteer responsibilities. Working parents, for example, have little spare time and, when they do volunteer, it is often to assist a group in which their child is involved.

Another significant issue is that many young adults are facing tenuous economic futures and recognize they may have to relocate to find suitable employment. This prohibits or interferes with their willingness to assume a long-term volunteer commitment. There might also be a natural apathy or lack of interest amongst a certain portion of the population.

*Some organizations are dominated by certain types of people that don't make others feel comfortable.*

**3.2.3: The exclusion of potential volunteers**

The majority (78%) of people consulted in the *Leadership Gap* study believe some people are being excluded from volunteerism, thereby reducing the leadership pool.

*Government expects people to volunteer but nobody pays for incidental expenses. Volunteers incur a lot of expenses for travel and meals, etc. Volunteers pay a lot of out-of-pocket expenses for their work.*

**Table 5: Are Some Members of the Community Excluded?**

<b>(Number of Respondents = 115)</b>				
<b>Source</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Total</b>
Online Survey	28	14	-	42
Volunteer Survey	42	8	1	51
Key Informant Interview	20	2	-	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>% of Total</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

It was surmised that individuals are frequently left out because of their socio-economic circumstances. For example, if people are unable to afford out-of-pocket expenses such as transportation and childcare costs or are unable to pay membership fees or the price of special events, they cannot participate

fully in the activities of the group. Rather than being embarrassed or stigmatized they refrain from volunteerism. A number of respondents recommended that voluntary organizations introduce policies and practices to ensure that low-income people are not excluded. For example, they should reimburse volunteers for costs incurred for travel and childcare, and actively enlist members from groups who may be marginalized. It was recognized, however, that selective reimbursements and stipends might be stigmatizing; therefore, it was proposed that remuneration of expenses be available to all volunteers. This, of course, would be very difficult for most organizations, as they have limited resources.

Other causes were cited to account for exclusionary practices. In small, close-knit communities, organizations note that nepotism clauses and conflict of interest guidelines enforced by some contracts limit participation because people are related or have close relationships. Such policies may be difficult to work around in small communities and may preclude some people from becoming involved with particular groups. Sometimes board members are obliged to leave positions to enable relatives to apply for paid employment within organizations.

Some respondents felt that certain organizations may be, or appear to be, unwelcoming to potential volunteers; and sometimes certain people known to cause problems for others or possessing an agenda in conflict with the majority of the group are intentionally excluded. A few respondents thought that certain demographic groups also might be excluded from volunteer activities. A widely held view is that many organizations have difficulty attracting, and indeed seldom actively recruit, youth and seniors.

*Certain groups are not embraced fully.*

Several reasons for the perceived decline in youth volunteerism were cited. It was remarked that some young people lack the contacts required to gain entry into community organizations. Unlike in the past, today's youth do not necessarily view volunteering as a social outlet. Computer games, the Internet

and numerous other leisure activities are thought to reduce interest in volunteering.

Surprisingly, especially given recent demographic trends, seniors are often overlooked as potential volunteers. Many people noted the reluctance of groups to invite seniors' participation, even though they possess valuable life experience from which organizations can benefit. Because it is felt that seniors are uninterested in participating, few leaders approach them to get involved.

As well, some respondents believe that the engagement of persons with disabilities may be limited because few organizations have the resources to provide necessary accommodations such as building accessibility, transportation, and special equipment.

A few informants noted that regardless of the effort they put into recruiting new volunteers on behalf of their organizations, they were simply unable to engage additional civic participation - people are not so much excluded by the organization as they exclude themselves or opt to not get involved. It may be unrealistic to assume that all residents desire to become active volunteers.

### ***3.2.4: Burnout and stagnation of leadership***

Volunteer "burnout" was repeatedly mentioned as an important concern because volunteer work is often left to a few regulars. This is consistent with the Statistics Canada Survey referenced earlier that indicates that volunteers in Newfoundland and Labrador contribute on average 206 hours per year. Since most volunteers contribute only a few hours, some others make an extraordinary commitment. Many people felt that the high levels of responsibility and effort expected of volunteers exhaust people to the point where they may quit. Burnout is a particular concern where the population is declining and aging. If current leaders leave their positions or refuse to assume additional duties because of burnout, many groups will experience difficulty sustaining their existence in rural communities. It was felt there may not be enough people left who are willing, or have the time and required

*I do not believe that issues such as income or age should be obstacles to volunteering in rural Newfoundland.*

*Very few want to take a leadership role in an organization ...maybe because they are burnt out or because they did it before and won't take criticism.*

skills, to assume vacated roles. On the other hand, volunteers who are experiencing burnout but remain in their positions may be causing a degree of tension within their organizations and communities. A related issue is that some leaders simply do not relinquish power and retain their positions for very long periods of time. While this may be a sign of continuing commitment, it may lead to stagnation and become a deterrent to new leadership and new ideas.

Individuals consulted suggested that volunteer burnout and stagnation could be alleviated through more inclusive recruitment campaigns, mentoring of new leadership and spreading the burden through the delegation of duties. This might be addressed by offering formal and informal leadership programs and communication workshops.

### ***3.2.5: Lack of appreciation***

More than half our informants indicated that, while volunteers put enormous effort into their work, they are often taken for granted and not accorded adequate appreciation, respect, or encouragement by their organization or the public. Even worse, it was remarked that particular leaders such as town councilors (the majority of whom serve as volunteers) and school and health board representatives, are often the brunt of public criticism.

Many participants believe that the decline in volunteerism and volunteer leadership would be slowed or reversed if organizations more widely and effectively acknowledged the efforts of volunteers. In our interviews with residents of rural areas, 66% of respondents said they think volunteers may not get sufficient recognition. Recognition of new volunteers, especially during their initial involvement, would help them acquire confidence and a sense of self-worth within the organization, encouraging them to stay on. Most people who volunteer do not expect personal glory; nonetheless, it appears that recognition of the effort of volunteers is seen as an important element of volunteer programs.

*Voluntary groups may expect too much from the volunteers. Because there are so few people involved, the volunteers have to do all the work and it is too time consuming.*

*Many volunteers take abuse from the public.*

### *3.2.6: Lack of training for volunteer leadership development*

The fact that many organizations do not provide adequate orientation, training and skills development appears to be an important contributor to the decline in volunteerism. The lack of access to training, particularly for those in leadership and governance positions, was noted as problematic. This is especially worrisome around legal responsibilities and fiduciary duties. There is an emerging concern that the style of leadership in some organizations needs to be addressed. Often people assume leadership roles without the experience to know how to exercise leadership. Furthermore, the role of an individual board member in relation to the collective responsibility as a “Board” is often not well understood. Managing individual and group dynamics can be a challenge. Particularly in small communities people are recognizing the need to encourage new styles of leadership for improved interpersonal relationships.

As well, roundtable participants in each community case study noted that while the rapid pace of technological change requires volunteers to upgrade their skills regularly, they are not always able to access the types of technical training they need.

Organizations need assistance writing proposals, acquiring funding information and guidance regarding the daily operation of voluntary groups. Some suggested that governments could play a greater role in addressing these issues by funding professional development courses.<sup>7</sup>

Access to professional advice is a problem in some small communities. It was felt that having volunteer coordinators and resource centres in various regions to facilitate and deliver training would be a valuable asset. Establishing a paid volunteer coordinator position to serve clusters of groups would also help groups reduce the cost of training. Though groups would likely have to pay for individual training sessions, regional coordinators could visit rural and

*Skills training and leadership training is very important especially with the advances in technology.*

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<sup>7</sup> The Community Services Council offers some training in-person, and online through [www.enVision.ca](http://www.enVision.ca), but CSC’s resources are not sufficient at this time to meet all the needs. Some training is also available from the provincial Regional Economic Development Boards in Community Capacity Building.



remote communities to offer instruction. As a result, groups would not have to provide volunteers with subsidies to cover transportation, meals, and overnight accommodation while receiving training. If such human and financial support were available to organizations, volunteers could more effectively carry out activities and board members could focus more effectively on governance issues.

### *3.2.7: Competition amongst groups*

Various respondents suggested that the decline in volunteerism being experienced by some organizations results from more organizations competing for the same few volunteers and leaders from a small population pool. Because the same people volunteer with a number of groups, it is likely that one or another group will suffer at some time. For example, volunteers may have to overlook their responsibilities with one organization to attend to the needs of another. Volunteers holding leadership positions in several organizations might not be very effective because their time and attention is divided. It was also remarked that government bodies are attracting many strong leaders, thereby draining them from local groups. Many roundtable participants were concerned about the number of organizations operating within the same communities.<sup>8</sup> Because the demand for volunteers is growing, some worry that this will lead to further unhealthy competition. There appears to be an emerging recognition that groups within geographic regions should find approaches to work more cooperatively to meet common needs and to share certain resources.

*Organizations are not working together to achieve common goals.*

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<sup>8</sup> The profiles of the case study communities in Table 1 are evidence that there is a high ratio of groups to population, for example Community A, with a population of 607 citizens and 16 organizations represents, in 2001, a ratio of one organization for every 40 persons. Also, CSC's listing is probably incomplete.

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**3.2.8: The relevance of volunteer groups**

An objective of this study was to explore whether some organizations are experiencing the decline in volunteerism and leadership gap more so than others. Participants were asked whether they feel certain community groups are deemed more relevant than others. Eighty-two percent of those interviewed think this to be the case.

**Table 6: Are Some Types of Organization More Relevant Than Others?**

(Number of Respondents = 60)				
Source	Yes	No	Unsure	Total
Volunteer Survey	43	6	2	51
Key Informant Interview	17	5	0	22
Total	60	11	2	73
% of Total	82%	15%	3%	100%

Generally it was observed that the decline in participation is most likely in fraternal, service, and religious organizations. Noting that certain fraternal organizations are unable to recruit young members, several roundtable participants postulated that this might symbolize the groups’ perceived lack of relevance. Interestingly, fraternal organizations traditionally emerged in small remote communities prior to the election of town councils, and they supplied many communities with essential infrastructure such as community halls, playgrounds, recreation facilities, grounds upkeep and maintenance. After communities became incorporated, the elected council assumed responsibility for such activities, thereby displacing the role of some fraternal service organizations. Fraternal organizations have been slowly dwindling ever since. As well, former club members may have assumed positions in more recently formed organizations.

Many participants indicated that faith-based and children’s organizations appear to be losing volunteers. Some respondents suggested that recent high profile scandals have discouraged new membership and that changing family structures have significantly affected church groups. Formerly, many women

*Few groups really appeal to youth. Youth want to be out in the community helping more than socializing with a fraternal group.*

*No one wants to join a ‘sinking ship’ which is what many rural volunteer organizations are viewed as.*

stayed at home and traditionally participated in numerous church activities. Women are now more likely to be in the work force and may have less interest in, or time to devote to, such groups. Furthermore, it was remarked that parents frequently volunteer with their child's organization (i.e. brownies, scouts, etc.) during the period in which their child is involved. Once the child grows out of the organization, the parent discontinues volunteering with the group as well. Therefore, many children's groups encounter difficulties retaining, if not recruiting, volunteers. The fact that there are fewer young families and children in many communities further affects the level of interest in certain youth and children's groups.

Respondents also felt that youth may avoid the groups to which their parents belong, viewing them as traditional or out of date. Several young adults interviewed explained that these organizations neither address their needs nor appeal to their interests. It was suggested that youth are more attached to groups that are relevant to their immediate needs and interests or that are "global" in perspective, such as social justice and environmental groups. Youth also are reluctant to become involved in incessant committee meetings and appear to be more inclined toward action-orientated volunteering.

### ***3.2.9: Volunteer liability, risk management, government downloading***

The threat of legal suit against volunteers and the vicarious liability imposed on Boards of Directors in our more litigious society is a serious deterrent. People are becoming aware of the responsibilities and potential risk of being associated with a charitable or non-profit organization. Some informants noted that volunteers are shouldering greater responsibility today than in the past - perhaps because there is more community-based program delivery, or as some believe, because of "government downloading". Many program, service and decision-making functions, previously the domain of government departments, are now operated by voluntary organizations with volunteer boards of directors. This places additional pressure on volunteer leaders, who are frequently unprotected by insurance or the indemnification procedures that protect government employees and volunteers on many government boards. Many groups do not carry liability insurance because the cost is prohibitive.

*For many, there's the fear of possible allegations of abuse / harassment if working with kids. People are afraid of the risks.*

Others may not be aware of the importance of potential legal liability. Furthermore, many groups which do carry insurance are facing increases in the cost of insurance premiums and previously covered risks are now sometimes being written out of insurance policies.

Roundtable participants remarked that often people are confused or ignorant about risk assessment and management and the extent to which individual volunteers can be held accountable for the actions of an organization. Thus training and information in this area is required. Several contributors maintained that this is an area where governments really could provide more support and assistance to the voluntary, non-profit sector.

*These high insurance premiums are a problem because you risk turning people away.*

**3.3: Perceptions about Volunteer Activity**

Many of the themes discussed above were validated in the supplementary *Pan Provincial Survey* in responses to questions about the perceived reasons why people do not volunteer. The following table provides a striking list of views about what affects people’s willingness to become involved, in descending order of relevance, according to survey respondents.

**Table 7: Perceptions as to Why People Don’t Volunteer**

Number of Rural Respondents = 1182	
	Response
	Yes
Not enough time for long term commitment	83%
Not interested	78%
Cost of volunteering - childcare, meals, transportation expenses	66%
Because they are not personally asked	64%
Don't think they have the right skills	62%
Some people not welcome (age/income/disability)	57%
Organizations don't promote or advertise volunteer opportunities	53%
Some people retain leadership, hard for new people to get involved	52%
Risk of legal liability	47%
Lack of training	45%
Volunteers not appreciated	42%

©csc 2003 Source: CSC Pan Provincial Survey 2002/03

**3.4: Convergence of Views**

We set out to determine if the leadership gap in rural regions of the province is perception or reality and if population decline is the primary reason for a diminishing volunteer and leadership pool. The convergence of views from all aspects of this research (the Key Informant Interviews, Community Case Studies, Online Survey, and the *Pan Provincial Survey*) provides evidence that the perception of a leadership gap is accurate. The findings identify a mix of contributing factors in addition to population change which are affecting people's involvement. This situation is not unique to this Province - the findings are consistent with national research.<sup>xxiv</sup>

**Table 8: Summary of Issues and Barriers to Volunteerism and Proposed Actions**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Problems and Barriers</b>	<b>Potential Responses - Strategic Actions</b>
Recruitment	Shortage of volunteers	Make personal contact with non volunteers Seek out young adults and seniors Launch coordinated local recruiting efforts
Retention	Ill-defined recruitment practices No central place to find volunteer jobs Weak volunteer management Unclear definition of tasks	Promote volunteer opportunities Online inventory of volunteer needs Focus on volunteer coordination/management Define roles and provide job descriptions
Changing Life Styles	Changing family structures Less free time to volunteer Tenuous futures / relocation for work Apathy, lack of interest	Design family volunteering activities Reorganize structure of volunteer work Create more short term “episodic” opportunities Recognize not everyone wants to volunteer
Exclusion of Potential Volunteers	Some people feel left out Some organizations are unwelcoming Cost of volunteering Little support for special needs Nepotism /conflict of interest clauses	Actively reach out to new volunteers Adopt policies to support inclusion Avoid expense, cover out of pocket expenses Accessibility/support for disabilities Adopt conflict clauses to fit small town makeup
Burnout	Organizations demand too much Same few people perform many tasks  Positions of authority too demanding Volunteering is too time consuming Loss of interest and motivation	Be realistic about expectations Mentor new leaders; succession planning Delegate and share responsibility Reduce number of committees and meetings Reduce demands and workload of volunteers Keep programs fresh, rotate responsibilities
Lack of Appreciation	Volunteers taken for granted Lack of recognition /appreciation Public criticism	Acknowledge their contribution Celebrate and thank volunteers Value volunteers’ time and effort
Lack of Training	Lack of focus on governance Lack of orientation to organization Little access to training & development	Promote new governance and leadership styles Assign resources for orientation and training Develop local training and education events New approaches to community-level training
Competition for Volunteers	Proliferation of groups Increased demand for volunteers Government bodies siphoning leaders	Avoid duplication consider mergers and alliances Coordinate community groups to avoid overlap Be realistic about capacity within community
Relevance of Organizations	Staid organizational approaches Resistance to change within some groups Shifting community culture/needs Some groups supplanted by new groups	Conduct organizational self-assessment Ask: Is our group still meeting a community need? Reassess interest and relevance to new volunteers Recognize lifecycle of some groups
Volunteer Liability Risk Management and Downloading	Fear of legal liability Identify risks and insurance needs Cost and affordability of insurance Some groups denied insurance Access to neutral insurance/legal advice  Government cutbacks/reduced services Inadequate funds for community services	Carry Board of Directors and commercial insurance Develop risk assessment and management policies Collective insurance schemes at reasonable cost Legislate Volunteer Protection Act Establish toll-free line to provide advice  Include administrative costs of service provision Establish a Strategic Investment Fund

**Table 9: Leadership Recruitment and Development and Proposed Actions**

Issue	Problems and Barriers	Potential Responses – Strategic Actions
Leadership Recruitment and Development	Population decline, aging population Problem recruiting new board members Perception fewer people willing to serve Stagnation of leadership/same few retain control	Target younger leaders and seniors Reach out to non volunteers/mentor new leaders Encourage community service/early involvement Encourage exit/succession planning Focus on skills building and confidence Encourage peer learning networks
Lack of Respect for Role of Volunteer Leaders	Public criticism of leaders  Individuals don't want long term commitment	Develop public attitudes to respect volunteers  Shorten board tenure Adjust to changing life styles
	Organizational atrophy/resistance to change	Engage in organizational self assessment Conduct annual Board Survey and planning Adopt new leadership styles Improve meeting management
	Little support for leadership development Access to appropriate and timely training	Offer place-based training opportunities Offer better orientation and training
Building Attachment to Community Involvement	Unfair expectations of Board of Directors Boards members assume too many roles Excessive responsibility/demand on individuals	Define and understand roles and responsibilities Enable people to focus on key objectives Ensure board members do not act unilaterally Reduce time demands
	Financial instability/project funding Frustration with changing public policies Increasing paper work and reporting	Address funding instability Longer term funding arrangements Balance accountability and unreasonable reporting

**4.0: CULTIVATING A CLIMATE OF ENGAGEMENT**

In small communities, people acting in a voluntary capacity play a fundamental role in providing social, economic and cultural infrastructure. The demand for volunteers and leaders is greater than the active supply and the nature of the demand is increasingly complex. At present the demand is offset somewhat by the seemingly boundless effort and numerous roles being carried by a dedicated minority. This dependence on committed volunteers is a source of vulnerability for many organizations. The leadership gap poses a threat to community sustainability because it is hampering many organizations’ ability to fulfil their missions.

*One man told us he serves on twenty-seven committees and that he is rarely able to sit down for dinner with his family. Not surprisingly, he was named Volunteer of the Year.*

Population decline (and changing demographics) is just one of several issues contributing to stress in the voluntary sector. Feedback indicates that there are other exacerbating factors related to local dynamics, organizational practices, individual choices, the changing environment for voluntary organizations and shifting public policy directions.

*With a decline in the age group 18-30 in the area, it is plain to see the effect this has on organizations and volunteerism in the area, especially leadership.*

From our research we conclude that:

- there is little perceptible variation across communities
- there is increasing demand for volunteer talent
- the committed minority of volunteers is overburdened
- resources could be utilized more strategically and efficiently
- there is untapped volunteer and leadership potential
- young people are willing to be involved but are selective
- new volunteers must be enlisted, supported and nurtured
- recruitment and retention practices are unfocused and inadequate
- succession planning for new leadership is insufficient
- inter-organizational cooperation and collaboration is uncoordinated
- fear of legal liability is increasing
- organizations should embrace change and new ways of doing business
- volunteers are often undermined and taken for granted



- operating challenges of voluntary organizations is not well understood
- shifts in public policies/programs are hurting voluntary organizations.

If not soon addressed, this combination of factors may further undermine the willingness of people to become or remain involved. Corrective measures are required by the voluntary sector itself and by the federal and provincial governments.

To address these conclusions, organizations and their leaders should:

- work more collaboratively to optimize and share resources
- reach out to those who may not be involved
- work cooperatively around recruitment and training issues
- develop regional and local models of collaboration and coordination
- encourage individual and organizational development
- consider new operational practices
- adopt new leadership and management styles
- establish a stronger collective voice in public policy about sector issues.

To support change governments should:

- acknowledge the special challenges of voluntary organizations in rural areas
- consider place-relevant approaches to help the voluntary sector
- recognize the need of the sector for infrastructure to carry out its work
- understand that self-sufficiency for many groups is constrained
- recognize that excessive accountability and reporting diverts energy
- foster human resource development and new styles of leadership
- address the financial instability of organizations
- help the sector build on its assets and capabilities
- provide financial support for collaborative and coordinated activities for clusters of groups in clusters of communities.

Governments should actively seek more effective ways to provide an environment conducive to building stronger, more widespread community

leadership and strengthening the sector's growth and stability. Finding solutions will only be possible, however, when new directions and greater flexibility in policy and programs supporting voluntary, community-based organizations are endorsed by policymakers across federal and provincial government departments.

#### **4.1 Expanding the Pool of Volunteers and Community Leaders**

In addition to organizations that have existed for many years, there has been a proliferation of new groups to address social, cultural and economic development. With the diminishing population base, the ratio of groups to population is increasing. In addition, numerous government advisory boards and appointed committees rely on the involvement of volunteers.<sup>9</sup> Engaging volunteers in the public policy and program domain is important and the public responds positively to invitations to serve, but this may divert volunteers and leaders away from service with local groups.

Because the demand for volunteers and community leaders is mushrooming it is obvious that strategies must be put in place to support the current volunteer base as well as to increase the pool of participants. For that to occur concerted efforts will need to be made to reach out to those who are not engaged.

##### ***4.1.1 Relieving strain on volunteer leadership***

People's involvement in volunteer activity is often connected to their overwhelming desire to find ways to secure the future of their rural communities and way of life, especially in the face of the economic and social stress.

*Volunteer leadership comes from community pride.*

In each of the case studies, people's love of place and passion for their community were powerful. Nonetheless, volunteer leaders are increasingly frustrated with the amount of responsibility and work required in their

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<sup>9</sup> For example the Provincial Government in its Strategic Health Plan released in 2002, had a stated objective of increasing the percentage of the population who volunteer from 31% (Statistics Canada estimate, 2000) to 36% by the year 2007. This represents an increase of 16% in the current volunteer base, at a time when the population is declining.

volunteer positions. The community roundtables presented a rare opportunity for participants to come together to discuss matters relating to their organizations and the state of volunteerism and leadership in their communities. A lack of respect for and serious acknowledgement of the fundamental importance of non-profit, voluntary organizations is causing considerable strain on leaders, volunteers and organizations.

People frequently expressed concern regarding the new and numerous skills being demanded of volunteers, noting that in some rural areas, suitable organizational training and skills enhancement opportunities are not widely available in a timely and consistent way. An array of place-specific, coordinated strategies for organizational renewal, support for internal management, and for recruitment and retention of volunteers is required. This should include approaches to exit and succession planning to relieve the strain on volunteers, especially at the leadership level.

#### ***4.1.2 Strengthening organizational practices***

Many groups follow the same practices they have for years, without placing much attention on assessing their relevancy or effectiveness. Some may simply have run their course and might be wise to accept that the lack of interest on the public's part is a natural evolution. Other groups may still be relevant but their operational practices may need improving. Many volunteers indicate a desire for a well-structured job description and want to be involved in activities which interest them. It has also been observed that considerable volunteer effort is invested in frequent and excessively lengthy meetings which may result in unproductive use of time.

Organizations themselves might benefit from a little stocktaking by conducting a self-assessment of their purposes, objectives, practices and procedures to help them determine if their group is still of interest to other members of the public and how they might adapt. An organizational assessment might also focus on mission, governance, general operations, volunteer orientation and coordination. In addition, a helpful exercise might be to carry out a self-administered board survey to enable the board

collectively as well as individual board members to review their participation and contribution. Such surveys can help the leadership of the board know where improvements can be made.

Access to technology and online connectivity is particularly important in rural and remote areas. The advent of technology opens up wonderful new opportunities but it also brings an additional burden for low budget groups that rely on people who may not yet have acquired technical skills. Unfortunately, the lack of broadband and high speed internet access may also be problematic.

#### ***4.1.3 Encouraging the involvement of younger adults***

Attracting young adults is of primary importance for many groups. There is a prevailing view that many young people are simply not interested in community affairs. Based on our research, however, we divine other reasons why younger people may not be fully participating with certain groups. The prevailing view does not appear well-founded. According to the *National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating* (2001), people in the age range 15 to 24 have the highest rate of volunteer participation (40%) in Newfoundland and Labrador. The rate drops somewhat (to 33%) for the next age cohort (ages 25 – 34) but this is still higher than the national and provincial norms. It is assumed that young adults do not get involved because their lives are in transition - they may be pursuing their education, engaged in building their careers, have family responsibilities or be concerned with continuing uncertainty with regard to how long they will remain in their home communities.

It appears also that there is move away from certain (more traditional and fraternal) organizations and that there is a disjuncture between how some organizations operate and the interests and lifestyles of younger adults. Many younger people seem to have little interest in lengthy and frequent meetings, so this is a deterrent to their engagement. Their preference is to more action-oriented, specific voluntary activities which are in line with their own interests. We have also learned that many young people do not know what

*Few groups really appeal to youth. Youth want to be out in the community helping more than socializing with a fraternal group.*

opportunities exist in their regions and communities and do not know how to connect with many voluntary organizations.

#### ***4.1.4 Nurturing social responsibility and civic-mindedness***

One of the most common reasons people volunteer is because they are personally asked. As we learned in our *Pan Provincial Survey*, many people do not volunteer because they have not been asked to do so. The importance of making personal contact has been highlighted in numerous Canadian and international studies<sup>10</sup> but it is often an overlooked approach for voluntary organizations. We also know that positive early experiences in volunteering have an influence on continued involvement. A study conducted by the Community Service Council with former participants in the Community Service Component of the Student Work and Service Program showed an influence on the development of leadership skills and assumption of leadership roles.<sup>xxv</sup> It is important, therefore, for organizations to make concerted efforts to make people's experiences well managed and meaningful so that they do not lose interest. Taking time to develop interesting activities which offer appropriate challenges and opportunities for skills development and which meet people's expectations can help to nurture and support civic-mindedness. People lose interest if their early experiences are negative. Organizations should carefully review their efforts to attract youth and others who are not in the habit of volunteering.

#### ***4.1.5 Building community-wide and inter-organizational coordination***

We found little evidence that organizations were coming together in any structured or coordinated manner to deal with the increasing demand for volunteers or to develop community-wide approaches to encourage more effective use of local talent. Many local groups work in isolation of each other and none of the communities had locally-based coordinators tasked to

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<sup>10</sup> See NSGVP (2001) and Independent Sector, *America's Teenage Volunteers: Civic Participation Begins Early in Life*, (1996) An American study reported that, when asked, 93% of teens volunteered, in comparison to 24% of the general population of teens.

provide resources to multiple voluntary organizations or to build more collaboration amongst groups.<sup>11</sup>

It was stated throughout this research that it was a challenge for many organizations to meet their objectives and internal management needs. Concerns ranged from the need for more focused attention on clarifying and identifying the role of volunteers, to their desire for better training to help them do their jobs well. In addition, we found that groups often do not mount successful or targeted recruitment campaigns. On the other hand, it appears from the *Pan Provincial Survey* that there are residents in rural communities who do not currently volunteer who might be willing to become involved and others who are willing to volunteer more often. But local residents are sometimes unaware of what groups exist in their communities and regions, and do not know how to make contact to find out about volunteer opportunities.

*There's not a lot of cooperation between groups. More unity is needed.*

The same survey showed that, while the vast majority of organizations stated a desire to work together to share information and for training purposes to build the capacity of local groups, few actually invested concerted effort to connect with other groups in this way. This is largely because their energy is directed to their own priorities and because of limited resources to collaborate.

Most of the identified issues are common to many groups. Inter-organizational infrastructure to support collective activities to promote volunteerism, to improve governance and organizational practices, to recruit volunteers, and to provide training and leadership development could greatly relieve the pressure on individual organizations. Volunteer coordination and management might

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<sup>11</sup> For a brief period in 2002, the Community Services Council, in partnership with voluntary resource networks and the Strategic Social Plan Implementation Committees, had recent graduates working in several regions. The primary recommendations from this project, which was funded by the Canadian Rural Partnerships: Rural Development Initiative, Agriculture Agri-foods Canada, were for the development of longer term more stable Regional Resource Centres.

be undertaken collectively by clusters of organizations to help them reach out to new recruits and match them to local opportunities.

There may also be room for more strategic alliances and perhaps even mergers between like organizations. This could reduce the strain on individuals who serve on numerous boards. A local coordinator working with networks of groups could facilitate this type of dialogue.

#### ***4.1.6 Building inclusive organizations and communities***

Some people may be excluded from volunteering for a variety of reasons, such as feeling intimidated and unwelcome or being constrained by the cost of volunteering. Organizations might benefit by adopting policies to help them be more inclusive by actively reaching out to people who may feel marginalized, particularly people with low or fixed incomes or other barriers. It is worth noting that the non-volunteers we interviewed generally had lower income levels than the volunteers interviewed. While our sample was too small to allow us to draw definitive conclusions, this is consistent with national-level research<sup>xxvi</sup> indicating that people with lower incomes are less likely to volunteer.

Organizations should strive to adopt policies to cover reasonable out-of-pocket expenses or ensure that individuals do not have to incur expenses while volunteering. Having sufficient financial resources to do this may be beyond many groups but other solutions could be considered, such as not expecting volunteers to participate in fundraising activities or expense bearing activities such as the purchase of meals.

Furthermore, there is evidence that some groups form tight knit “cliques”, thereby causing new recruits to feel unwelcome. This is unlikely a deliberate attitude but rather one which occurs because of people’s long term relationships with each other and a comfort level with how they are doing things. Welcoming and orientation events for new recruits might help to overcome this, providing them the opportunity to learn about the organization

and give their views about how the organization might evolve and change. The suggestion to undertake regular internal organizational assessments would also help to identify barriers that need to be addressed. Sessions to help people become more sensitive to attitudes toward social inclusion could be quite valuable.

Volunteers should be shown that their efforts are appreciated, both by the organization and by the public. Organizations and communities should make a point of celebrating their volunteers. This could include an annual event, recognition certificates, or just a thank you for a job well done.

#### ***4.1.7 Tackling legal liability concerns and the cost of insurance***

Legal liability, risk management and insurance coverage are mounting issues for volunteers and organizations. Fears about liability related to serving the public or specialized client groups are compounded by a complex legal environment for insurance holders, rising costs, and less than adequate understanding of risk management requirements.

These issues are particularly difficult to address in small organizations where resources are scarce and there is no staffing, or in smaller communities where access to independent professional advice or customer choice is lacking. Numerous people who participated in this research were unaware of how important liability insurance is for their volunteers and organizations.

Volunteers should be provided adequate training to increase awareness of legal issues, the risks associated with certain volunteer positions, and ways to reduce liabilities. The merits of blanket insurance policies which could be offered at reasonable costs to the widest possible range of voluntary groups should be explored. At a government level, a Volunteer Protection Act might resolve some concerns by imposing a maximum liability assigned to volunteers. As well, many groups need unbiased information about insurance issues – before they deal with people who sell insurance.



## 4.2. Improving Public Policy

Recent initiatives such as the Federal Government -Voluntary Sector Initiative and the Provincial Strategic Social Plan were intended to establish more collaborative relationships and a better environment for the voluntary sector. Moreover, publicly funded research has helped to delineate more clearly the level of engagement of volunteers as well as the challenges volunteers and organizations are facing.<sup>12</sup>

But at the same time, there have been shifts in public policy that are negatively affecting the capacity of organizations. There has been a deliberate move away from long-term, stable funding (on the part of many funders) toward short-term projects. As well, changes to labour market development programs and the narrowing definition of what constitutes economic development by some federal departments and agencies have had a significant impact on many rural organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador. These programs were not necessarily designed for the purpose of supporting voluntary groups. The reality is, however, that various employment creation and skills development programs were the life-line which enabled organizations to meet their missions while delivering programs on behalf of government. Policy and program changes are resulting in less access to employment funding and thus diminishing the capacity of many groups. Additionally, recent directives by some economic development funders have resurfaced a bias against social development as an element of economic development.<sup>13</sup> An outcome of these changes coupled with shrinking government funding sources could be that many communities will not have the social infrastructure to attract economic diversification and new investment. The ramifications in rural areas - where various employment programs are an essential part of voluntary organizations' ability to meet their missions - have been quite devastating because a large number of employees have been paid through these government programs.

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<sup>12</sup> See *Highlights of the National Survey of Non-profit and Voluntary Organizations* (Statistics Canada, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> In particular, the 20 Regional Economic Development Boards in the Province have been asked to limit their focus to economic development.

At the Federal level, the Accord, signed in 2001 by the Prime Minister of Canada with the voluntary sector,<sup>xxvii</sup> and the subsequent Codes of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue<sup>xxviii</sup> and Funding,<sup>xxix</sup> set out broad principles and values which should underpin the relationship between the two parties. The Code of Good Practice on Funding specifically commits the Government of Canada to “use multi-year funding agreements and to facilitate their use, in appropriate circumstances, in order to enhance organizations’ stability and capacity for longer term planning”. (p.13) The Codes have not yet been well-integrated into government thinking and practice nor are they well-known by most organizations at a community level.

At a provincial level, the Strategic Social Plan (see section 1.4) was established, in part, as a framework to link social and economic development and to create greater collaboration between government and the community-based sector. The SSP (now being reshaped into the Rural Secretariat) administered through a Unit located within Executive Council, assumed leadership for working with the voluntary sector. A Joint Government-Sector Steering Committee was formed in 2003 to oversee the implementation of a six-point plan of action to support and strengthen the community-based sector.<sup>xxx</sup> The plan of action was prepared in 2002 by the Premier’s Council on Social Development at the request of the responsible Minister.<sup>14</sup>

There is tremendous scope for better planning and cooperation between the Federal and Provincial governments about programs which might support the sector while also meeting labour market development requirements. The reality is that for the foreseeable future governments will likely play a role in job creation; therefore a more coordinated planning process for job creation in the social economy would make sense. This could help voluntary sector groups meet pressing community needs, such as programs for seniors, youth and families.

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<sup>14</sup> With the change in administration in 2003 The Premier’s Council and the Joint Committee were disbanded.

### **4.3 Addressing Funding Instability**

Many organizations that provide essential services are overburdened and under-funded. They are hampered because funding is not available for central objectives and administrative capacity and most project funding causes groups to undertake activities peripheral to their primary objectives. Short-term funding supports the development of time limited and/or pilot projects, but then there is no longer-term financing to sustain programs. Most of the funding available to voluntary organizations comes from federal departments. Furthermore, the demands by funders to establish multiple partnerships prior to submission of funding applications can be excessive and time consuming. Expectations by funding departments for project applications to be cost-shared can be daunting, if not defeating, for small rural groups. Policies designed centrally without real understanding or due consideration of local issues can be quite unsuitable. More sensitivity to, and consideration of, the reality of small organizations in rural areas is required on the part of policy and program shapers.

With a small population base and little corporate presence, the ability in small communities to secure funding from non-governmental sources is constrained. It is difficult to raise sufficient funds to apply to programs that require the organization to put forward a significant contribution.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, some of the funding available to the non-profit and voluntary sector is only accessible to organizations with a national presence and within tightly defined and pre-established program parameters. Such policy and funding practices combine to limit innovative, place-specific undertakings and hinder the capacity of organizations to engage in longer-term planning or work cooperatively with other groups.

Lack of access to stable funding is a problem for many groups. Many cannot mount the internal administrative capacity to do their work well and to help them plan for the future. The constant proposal writing to obtain a patchwork

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<sup>15</sup> We have heard numerous complaints about the requirements of some programs for groups to contribute anywhere from 25% to 40% of total project costs.

of short-term projects, and the related accountability and paper work, is depleting the energy of many volunteers and voluntary organizations.

#### **4.4 Fostering Ongoing Dialogue with Governments**

There is a continuing need for a structured mechanism to support ongoing dialogue between governments and the sector as a whole. Individual relationships between voluntary, community-based organizations and government departments are generally episodic around specific issues rather than sector-wide. The result is missed opportunity for strategic planning and understanding of how the sector could even more effectively enhance and add value to government services and programs while developing economic activity in communities throughout the province.

The leadership gap in rural communities is significant. This research points out that no one factor can be held accountable for the gap. Making change, therefore, has to happen in many ways and at various levels. Governments should strive to improve the policy environment in which the voluntary, community-based sector is struggling to operate.

For policies and programs to be place-sensitive, mechanisms must exist for frequent (not one-off) dialogue with rural areas in order to support the ability to convene groups around key issues.

#### **4.5 Furthering Research and Knowledge Mobilization**

Finding solutions to problems requires sound research information. The primary research undertaken to provide information on volunteering trends in Canada is the *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* conducted by Statistics Canada. This survey was conducted in 1997 and 2000 and it is anticipated that it will be done on a regular basis. While the survey produces invaluable information at a national and provincial level, it does not enable analysis at a regional or local level. And the sample base (year 2000) for Newfoundland and Labrador was so small that there are many categories of analysis around which the data is not deemed reliable. This is unfortunate. Perhaps similar survey questions could be administered locally or by

provincial governments to create a more complete profile at local or regional levels. The authors of this report urge Statistics Canada to increase the sample base to allow deeper analysis. It is important for policymakers, researchers, analysts and community planners to have access to good information.

The undertaking of the *National Survey on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations* in 2003 is another welcome step. But again, while this provides a global profile of the sector, the data cannot be analyzed by community nor can a comparison be made between urban and rural regions. The survey should be carried out on a regular basis with some enhancements.

There have also been improved opportunities for local research through initiatives like the Canada Volunteerism Initiative's Knowledge Development Centre and information from regional studies might prove helpful to other regions.

The real challenge however, is mobilizing knowledge – gleaned from many sources, especially from a local level. It is important for perceptions to be challenged and evidence made available to enable organizations and governments to better understand the issues people face. There is little opportunity afforded to rural groups to undertake research or to gain access to what might already exist. We therefore suggest that efforts be made to fund more research at a provincial and local level, and to transfer knowledge broadly across the sector so that non-profit organizations are better informed and can act accordingly.

## 5.0: CLOSING THE GAP

There is considerable potential for rural voluntary organizations to be a powerful force in building rural communities and serving the public. However, the findings of this research indicate the sector is vulnerable because of a declining pool of volunteers, its current dependence on a committed minority, the need to build new leadership capacity and the frustration of many existing volunteers in having to deal with increasingly complex issues. In some quarters there is a sense of increasing apathy amongst a growing number of people. The rural voluntary sector is fragile because it is fragmented and has little means of continuing or constant support. Nonetheless, the outcomes of the research indicate that the leadership gap could be addressed through a cohesive framework geared specifically to building the volunteer and leadership base.

### 5.1 A Framework for Supporting Community Leadership

Reversing the leadership gap and declining volunteer pool will require concerted effort. Many individual organizations do not themselves have the capacity to mount and implement advanced recruitment and retention strategies or to offer leadership planning and skills training.

To address the important directions identified in the previous sections and to cultivate a climate of engagement, we propose the development of **regional voluntary resource hubs** designed to focus on the identified issues. At the heart of the framework is a communal resource which will be available to clusters of voluntary organizations and individual volunteers.

Collective actions and strategies, through regionally-based voluntary resource hubs, could enhance the experience of people who volunteer. The hubs should be light on infrastructure, in essence providing human resources and services to support volunteerism and voluntary organizations.

The hubs would be a convening place to:

- coordinate inter-organizational links and joint responses to community needs

*[We] need a paid person to coordinate activities for the entire Zone. A paid Coordinator could devote time to get people involved.*

- develop inventories of potential volunteers
- develop inventories of organizational need for volunteers
- organize training opportunities for the benefit of multiple groups
- support networking and strategic alliances
- assist groups in locating funding sources and help with funding proposals
- initiate local research and be a conduit for research and consultations
- offer training around governance and organizational development
- build capacity of voluntary organizations by offering management support
- help with organizational self-assessments and board surveys
- organize volunteer recognition events
- build a link for citizens to be involved in public policy dialogue
- offer shared resources and facilities for groups
- link with online information resources such as [www.envision.ca](http://www.envision.ca)
- assist volunteers with Information Management/Information Technology training.

Each hub would have a voluntary resource coordinator. This would be an inexpensive way for governments to support numerous organizations and provide vital links among individuals who are willing to volunteer and potentially take leadership roles. It would also help identify and nurture new leaders. A strong local coordinator could play a significant role in meeting with younger residents to determine what interests them, how they can balance their work and personal time, and how organizations might adjust to meet new realities.

The hubs should be supported by a provincial organization which could train and support the coordinators and build province-wide networks for efficiency and cost effectiveness.

### ***5.1.2 Cost of funding the regional voluntary resource hubs***

The cost for each hub would be minimal - in the range of \$100,000 annually. Assuming nine hubs and central support for development of the hubs and staff training, a total budget of \$1,100,000 is required. These hubs should be for the

benefit of all voluntary groups and should not focus on any particular sub sector.<sup>16</sup>

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This report has focused on the diminishing base of volunteers and has provided substantial evidence that the leadership gap is a reality. It has shown that population decline is only one of many contributing factors. The consistency of the research findings, across the case study communities and with other research initiatives, should resonate with groups and volunteers in rural areas throughout the province.

Rural communities face particular issues and stresses in maintaining voluntary activity. Government policies, programs and practices should therefore be reshaped to be more flexible and place-specific. There is a strongly held view that recent changes in many public policy and program approaches are creating negative impact on rural communities and their organizations. Renewed efforts are required to adjust policies and services according to rural needs to help rural Canadians address their concerns comprehensively and in a way that balances social, economic, environmental and cultural development.

The framework proposed in this report is directed at helping community organizations help themselves by creating an environment that encourages community development and empowers communities to shape their own solutions. Organizations operating in the non-profit, voluntary, community-based sector should use this research and the suggestions to begin a process of renewal and change through self-assessment of their own leadership and management styles and their potential. They should use the findings to reach out to other groups to work in collaboration to cultivate a climate of succession and growth. Community organizations should join forces to call upon governments to restructure policy and program guidelines to more appropriately align with the place-specific needs of the sector in rural areas.

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<sup>16</sup> Logically there might be close affiliation with regional economic development organizations, but the hubs should remain independent of any specific groups to ensure neutrality in the provision of services.



Both the Federal and Provincial governments should acknowledge the findings in this report to recognize the fragility of the voluntary sector and the importance of assisting groups to work collectively to maintain and build community and regional level programs.

The primary conclusion of the Community Services Council is that visible regional resource hubs will be the most cost effective and efficient means to offer an array of support and services to clusters of groups in clusters of communities in order to strengthen and preserve the extraordinary efforts of volunteers and their organizations.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>xxi</sup> Michael Hall, et al, (2001).
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