



Initiative to increase Volunteerism in Canada. Update May 28, 2010

Four years ago, a Montreal grassroots movement was started - ***to promote, support and increase volunteerism in Canada.*** A coalition of concerned community groups gathered together to celebrate this initiative including “Sun Youth”, “Generations Foundation”, “Dreams Take Flight”, “The Shield of Athena”, as well as the “Freedom from Poverty Foundation”. We have also added new groups including “The American Women’s Club of Montreal”, “Playmas Cultural Association” and the Montreal arm of the “Canadian MS Society”, to name a few.

Over the years, we have continued to send this to various government officials in the hopes that this initiative would be considered, studied and ultimately implemented. As we have seen once again with this year’s federal budget – there will be some serious “belt tightening” and, of course, it’s the volunteer and community groups who will pick up the slack

This idea has been presented to all parties every year since 2006 including the PMO, federal ministers in the House of Commons, and all federal party leaders including the Liberal Party, Bloc Quebecois, Green Party and the NDP. In addition, it was sent to all party leaders in Quebec including the Liberal Party, Parti Quebecois, ADQ and Quebec Solidaire. We have heard from – **NDP Leader Jack Layton**, a big advocate of Volunteerism. We also heard from the offices of the **Premier of Quebec Jean Charest**, **Green Party Leader Elizabeth May** – as well as from many political leaders and ministers across the country.

There is definitely **one thing** that unites Canadians of all backgrounds - regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or political affiliation: **volunteer work**.

According to the most recent survey conducted by STATSCAN: Each year **12 million Canadian volunteer workers*** (***Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating**) give their time and energy to raise money for everything from breast cancer research, to finding cures for multiple sclerosis, helping victims of family violence, providing heart and stroke preventative education, assisting environmental associations, recreational community resources for children and senior citizens, and so much more.

The benefits and implications of Volunteering are immense and broad-ranging. Just a few of these are, according to www.Volunteer.ca:

- **Volunteering builds social networks, increases your skills, reduces stress and promotes health and wellness,**
- **Volunteering boosts community ties,**
- **Canada is well served by over 161,000 non-profit community organizations, charities, service clubs, foundations and aid agencies.**

Volunteerism is one of the greatest natural resources that Canada possesses!

To recognize, reward and promote more volunteerism in Canada we suggest that federal, provincial and municipal governments consider the following:

- Increase the tax credit for charitable donations,
- Recognize and quantify the time given by an organization or a volunteer to a charitable organization as a tax credit,
- Provide Incentive for all schools to include volunteer work in their curricula,
- Municipal governments provide a volunteer training and recruitment center in each municipality to encourage more volunteerism.

We already have the government agencies in place to deal with this - for example on the federal level The Minister of National Revenue, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, the Minister of Finance, and "Volunteer Canada." Given the current state of the national and global economies, now is an extremely opportune time to consider this proposal and tap into one of our best assets.

Trying to raise Volunteer awareness is a tough sell because most people think "someone else is doing it" or "I don't have time" and it doesn't garner the media and government attention as much as it should because it is neither controversial nor "sexy"*. (*as in scandalous or sensationalistic news) **But could you imagine what we could accomplish if every Canadian gave just one hour a week – imagine – 30 million plus hours a week of miracles!!!**

In my 37 years in broadcasting and volunteering, I have met hundreds of extraordinary people who have accomplished remarkable things for their community, country and the world. They lead, inspire and foster change and growth. It's time we put this resource front and center!

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this important matter and would be happy to put you in contact with some of the groups I work with, so you can hear, first hand the great progress and differences being made by these amazing individuals and organizations.

For more information, please contact:

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For more information on "Volunteer Canada" go to www.volunteercanada.ca
For more information on "Volunteer Bureau of Montreal" go to www.cabm.net