

Community Dispatch

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Canada Votes! – Supporting the Non-profit & Voluntary Sector

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VOTES!

“Just one question...”

This publication is intended to help you engage with local candidates in the federal election on October 14, 2008. It's all about social issues that impact your community; questions that matter to you; and the role that the federal government can choose to take in addressing them.

Questions raise issues. Questions require candidates to develop a clear position on where they stand. In this document, we cover thirteen social issues affecting communities nationwide today, provide sample questions you can ask your candidates, and include links to more information. By getting involved, you help shape the kind of community in which you live – all it takes is just **one question**.

Supporting the Non-profit & Voluntary Sector

In Canada, 161,000 non-profit and voluntary organizations provide important services in areas as diverse as sports and recreation, the arts, health, social services, and community development. These services are central to how we engage with one another as Canadians, and how we contribute to and build our communities. However, sustainability is now a major challenge for the

non-profit and voluntary sector in the face of unstable funding. The federal government can choose to set funding practices that ensure continued, stable funding, and can engage with the sector to create reasonable reporting and measurement structures.

The non-profit and voluntary sector employs over 2 million Canadians and adds nearly \$30 billion to the Canadian economy (about the same as the accommodation and food services industry and nearly triple the motor vehicle manufacturing sector). Canadians contribute the time equivalent of half a million full-time jobs to the programs, services, and products of non-profit and voluntary organizations.

But studies show that non-profit and voluntary organizations face inadequate and unstable funding, as funders (including governments) have moved away from supporting the core operational costs of organizations, such as rent and salaries, in favour of short-term projects. Organizations are pulled away from fulfilling their mission by the constant search for money to stay afloat. Sustainability is now a major challenge for the sector.

The demands and requirements of funders contribute to this destabilization. Non-profit and voluntary organizations support being accountable for how funds are used; however, funders frequently have disproportionate and often unrealistic requirements for measurement and evaluation, as well as overly complicated application procedures that are onerous for all organizations. These requirements place smaller organizations at a disadvantage in competing for funding.

Governments can acknowledge the importance of the sector by setting an example in their funding practices, providing adequate long-term and core operational funding, as well as ensuring that resources aren't wasted in unnecessary paperwork. Voters can send an important message to governments that the sector is important to their lives by asking their candidates to commit to this kind of support.

For More Information:

Imagine Canada

www.imaginecanada.ca

HR Council for the Voluntary &
Non-profit sector

www.hrcouncil.ca

Sources

Statistics Canada. 2005. Cornerstones of community: highlights of the national survey of nonprofit and voluntary organizations. <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/61-533-XIE/61-533-XIE2004001.pdf> (1 Sept. 2008).

Statistics Canada. 2007. Satellite Account of Nonprofit Institutions and Volunteering. <http://www.statcan.ca/bsolc/english/bsolc?catno=13-015-XIE> (1 Sept. 2008).

Scott, K. 2003. Funding Matters: The Impact of Canada's New Funding Regime on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations. <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/fm/index.htm> (1 Sept. 2008)

Supporting the Non-profit & Voluntary Sector: Key Points & Questions

Sustainability of non-profit organizations is challenged as funders favour short-term projects rather than funding core operational costs.

Complicated application procedures and unrealistic requirements for measurement and reporting are diverting human capacity from fulfilling the organizational mission.

How will your government guarantee the vitality and sustainability of non-profit and voluntary organizations of all sizes?

What will you do to recognize the importance of non-profit and voluntary organizations in Canada?

How will your government improve federal support for this sector?

Canada Votes Papers 2008 is a pan-Canadian collaboration between SPARC BC, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Community Development Halton, Human Development Council St. John, and Canadian Council on Social Development. Social planning organizations across the country are helping to strengthen communities and work on social justice issues. We also recognize the need to work together around key issues affecting our communities. We have come together to provide this publication on the federal election because we believe that democracy works best when citizens engage in dialogue on important issues.

Canada Votes papers outline key social issues and related questions that are important in this election. Asking questions is a way to make sure these issues are on the public agenda. By reading this publication and passing it on, by asking questions and talking about the issues, and especially by voting on October 14, 2008, you can help shape the kind of community in which you want to live.

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