

Voluntary Sector Initiative

*An Accord
Between the
Government of Canada
and the
Voluntary Sector*

December 2001

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PRIME MINISTER · PREMIER MINISTRE

Throughout their history, Canadians have worked together to build a strong, just, inclusive and caring society. The result of our efforts is a country like no other, a welcoming nation that recognizes diversity, and believes in sharing opportunity as well as prosperity.

Today, more than ever before, Canada depends on the combined strength of its private, public and voluntary sectors. While each of these contributes to our quality of life and deserves recognition, we are showcasing today the special value of the voluntary sector. A sector that engages Canadians across the country in the life of their communities, providing services and giving voice to shared concerns. A sector that is, in short, essential to our collective well being.

The Government of Canada and the voluntary sector have long worked side-by-side. Now, the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* marks the launch of a new era of co-operation and respect.

I believe that this *Accord* is the blueprint for a strong and vibrant relationship between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada. As such, it will show us how we can continue to work together to build a better country. This has always been the Canadian Way, and it is a tradition our government is proud to carry into the 21st century.

OTTAWA
2001

Foreword

The Government of Canada and the voluntary sector have a long history of working together for the common good of Canadians. We share a commitment to improving the quality of life in Canada and to fostering the development of vibrant, healthy communities. Our relationship is built on a sound foundation of trust and mutual respect.

Over a year ago, we launched the Voluntary Sector Initiative, a joint endeavour to better serve Canadians by strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector and enhancing the relationship between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada. The Reference Group of Ministers on the Voluntary Sector provided oversight on behalf of the Government of Canada. A Voluntary Sector Steering Group performed a parallel function on behalf of the voluntary sector. A key element of the Initiative has been the joint development of this Accord, a document to guide the relationship, making it clearer, making it better.



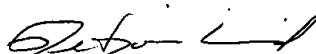
*The Honourable Lucienne Robillard
Chair, Reference Group of Ministers
on the Voluntary Sector¹*

¹ List of members included in Annex

The joint process that led to the Accord reflects the strong links between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada. The work of the Joint Accord Table, which was responsible for drafting the document and consulting across Canada, was open and respectful. The Accord itself will, we believe, encourage everyone to continue on this path.

We view the Accord as a step toward the enhancement of the relationship between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada. We must now take the next step and put this agreement into practice. It will be judged a success when it results in a more effective working relationship based on the shared values and principles outlined in the Accord.

We look forward to continuing our shared journey on the basis of this Accord and to building the next stage of our relationship for the benefit of Canadians.



*Marlene Deboisbriand
Chair, Voluntary Sector Steering Group¹*

Letter of transmittal

It is with great pleasure that we present this *Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*.

The purpose of the Accord is to strengthen the ability of both the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector to better serve Canadians. We believe that this Accord moves the two sectors toward greater mutual understanding and provides the framework within which the relationship can develop and evolve.

The Accord document was written by a working group, the Joint Accord Table, comprising fourteen individuals from the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. The Table members were selected to reflect a cross-section of federal government departments and the voluntary sector.

To ensure that a broad range of viewpoints was heard, the Joint Accord Table held two rounds of consultations during the summer and fall of 2001. People from a wide range of voluntary sector organizations and from the

departments and agencies of the Government of Canada offered their views. Special effort was also made to reach rural Canadians and visible minorities. Provincial and territorial officials and representatives from Aboriginal groups, the private sector, labour unions and the academic community were consulted.

What emerged was a remarkable consensus about the content of the Accord and the values, principles and commitments necessary for a stronger relationship between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector.

We want to thank the more than 2,000 Canadians who participated in the consultation process. It is our hope that the Accord will lead not only to more effective and fruitful relations between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada, but also to a greater understanding of the important contribution made by the voluntary sector to our quality of life.

We also wish to thank the staff members, from the Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat and the Voluntary Sector Task Force of the Privy Council Office, who provided content and logistical support to the Joint Accord Table. They carried out their work in a professional manner, displaying the spirit of collaboration that the Accord hopes to build.

The Joint Accord Table will dedicate the coming months to developing recommendations to implement the Accord.

This includes a plan for monitoring and reporting on progress and draft codes or standards of good practice to help guide future interactions.

Since the consultations indicated wide acceptance and support for the content and purpose of the Accord, we are proud to commend it to the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector.



Lynne Toupin
Sector Co-chair
Joint Accord Table²



Bill McCloskey
Government Co-chair
Joint Accord Table²

² List of Table members included in Annex

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Introduction

CONTEXT

Every day in Canada, volunteers and staff working in thousands of voluntary sector organizations are actively involved in making a difference in improving their communities. This is the Canadian way. The voluntary sector³ is one of three pillars that constitute Canadian society, together with the public⁴ and private sectors. Our quality of life, our economic strength and the vitality of our democratic institutions depend on the vibrancy of these interdependent sectors and the support they provide to one another.

Voluntary sector groups touch virtually all aspects of our society from social justice, human rights, environment, health and faith to arts and culture, sports and recreation. They deliver services critical to Canadians, advocate for common causes, support economic and community development in Canada and worldwide, and raise funds.

The voluntary sector has also been instrumental in the development of most of the public services we rely on today as essential aspects of a caring society – schools, hospitals, assistance

to the disadvantaged, and care for children in need. All of these began as voluntary initiatives. Today, both the public and voluntary sectors are involved in the delivery of these services.

Voluntary sector organizations bring their knowledge, expertise and compassion in working with communities and individuals to public policy debates and identify priorities to governments. By encouraging people to participate and work together for common causes, the sector strengthens citizen engagement, gives voice to the voiceless, allows for multiple perspectives to be heard on a variety of issues, and provides opportunities for people to practice the skills of democratic life.

The voluntary sector provides opportunities for millions of volunteers to contribute to the life of their communities. The term “volunteer” refers to all who work by choice, without remuneration, on causes or for people outside their personal sphere. People volunteer formally, through organizations, or informally by participating and helping others. Volunteering takes different forms in different cultures and

³ *The voluntary sector – also described as non-profit, third sector, non-governmental, community-based, and charitable sector.*

⁴ *The public sector includes all levels of government – federal, provincial, territorial, regional and local.*

different regions of the country. People work and volunteer in the voluntary sector because they are committed to making a difference and believe deeply in the work they are doing.

Aboriginal people have a special place in Canadian society, and the content of this framework agreement needs to be interpreted or applied differently to reflect their point of view.

Volunteers are involved in all three sectors⁵ but it is the voluntary sector that has been built by volunteers and continues to do the most to mobilize their efforts. The rich network of organizations, called the voluntary sector, helps make Canada the humane, caring and prosperous nation it is and is one of the strengths for which Canada is known around the world.

THE PARTIES TO THIS ACCORD

The Voluntary Sector

This Accord applies to the voluntary sector. This sector consists of organizations that exist to serve a public benefit, are self-governing, do not distribute any profits to members, and depend to a meaningful degree on volunteers. Membership or involvement in these organizations is not compulsory, and they are independent of, and institutionally distinct from the formal structures

of government and the private sector. Although many voluntary sector organizations rely on paid staff to carry out their work, all depend on volunteers, at least on their boards of directors.

The voluntary sector is large, consisting of an estimated 180,000 non-profit organizations (of which 80,000 are registered as charities) and hundreds of thousands more volunteer groups that are not incorporated. In 2000, 6.5 million people volunteered their time to a voluntary sector organization and the sector employed a further 1.3 million people. This diverse multitude of organizations ranges from small community-based groups to large, national umbrella organizations and includes such organizations as neighbourhood associations, service clubs, advocacy coalitions, food banks, shelters, transition houses, symphonies and local sports clubs.

The Government of Canada

This Accord applies to the departments and agencies of the Government of Canada.

Almost every aspect of Canadian life is in some way affected by the Government of Canada. Every day, millions of Canadians rely on essential services provided by the Government of Canada including national security,

⁵ Paid staff also work in all three sectors. Many are represented by labour unions that also provide for where employees can take part in activities of benefit to them, their organization or their community.

peacekeeping, protection of rights and freedoms, protection of the environment, protection of the health of Canadians, maintenance of national parks and treasures, communication and technology development, transportation guidelines and services, and many more.

The Government of Canada also plays an important role in the development of Canadian and global economies. Further, it sustains relations with other countries. Finally, the Government of Canada makes laws and rules that apply to all and affect many aspects of Canadians' daily lives.

SCOPE OF THE ACCORD

The Accord's focus is on the relationship between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada. Both the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector have relationships with other levels of government (provincial, territorial, local), private sector entities and labour unions. Each of these relationships has its own history and dynamics. The Accord recognizes the importance of these relationships but it does not apply to them.

The Accord also recognizes that many voluntary sector organizations do not work directly with the Government

of Canada but are affected by the regulatory, economic and social context it shapes. It acknowledges that there are circumstances where the Government of Canada and voluntary sector organizations may advocate different courses of policy action or choose to tackle issues of common interest separately.

This Accord does not compel the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector to work together; rather, it outlines the values and principles that will govern the relationship when they choose to work together.

REASON FOR THE ACCORD – WHY AND WHY NOW

The voluntary sector and the Government of Canada share a long tradition of joining forces to achieve common goals. Both sides believe, however, that there is benefit in formalizing the relationship with an Accord that will facilitate greater mutual understanding and more co-operative ways of working together.

A number of factors have led to the development of this Accord:

- At the end of the millennium, globalization, an increasingly diverse population, new economic and social realities, and changing government roles resulted in increased pressure on the voluntary

sector which in turn led the sector and the Government of Canada to search for better ways of working together and with others.

- The last decade also saw a greatly increased awareness of the voluntary sector and the contribution it makes to civil society in giving voice to citizens, identifying important and emerging issues, shaping policies and providing important services. The concept of the “voluntary sector as a sector” has been growing in the public consciousness and in the sector.
- Both the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada are large and diverse. It is important for each to know what to expect and to appreciate the roles, goals, and perspectives of the other.
- A number of provinces and other countries have seen benefits from setting out in writing the vision and expectations of the relationship between their governments and the voluntary sector. For example, in 1998, the development of Compacts between governments and the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom attracted worldwide interest.

THE PROCESS LEADING TO AN ACCORD

In 1995, twelve national umbrella organizations covering most parts of the voluntary sector came together as the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) to strengthen the voice of the sector. Its goals were to enhance the relationship between the sector and the Government of Canada, to strengthen the sector's capacity and to improve the legal and regulatory framework governing the sector.

In 1999, the VSR released the final report of an independent panel of inquiry it commissioned in 1997 to study issues of accountability and governance in the voluntary sector. Known as the "Broadbent Panel", the report it prepared was called *Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada's Voluntary Sector*. This report contained 41 recommendations for the voluntary sector and for governments that would strengthen the sector's ability to function effectively.

During this same period, the Government of Canada was also looking at its relationship with the voluntary sector. The Government recognized the need for a strong and vital voluntary sector if it was to meet its goal of improved quality of life for Canadians.

Following the release of the Broadbent Panel report, voluntary sector members and federal officials met in three groups, called "joint tables", to make recommendations on sector/government relationships, to strengthen the voluntary sector's capacity, and to improve regulations and legislation. They tabled a report in August 1999 called *Working Together*, containing 26 recommendations for action.

The 1999 Speech from the Throne reinforced the Government's commitment to build its relationship with the voluntary sector. This was followed in June 2000, with the Government of Canada's announcement of funding for the Voluntary Sector Initiative, which included the development of an Accord.

The Joint Accord Table was established

The Accord

I. PURPOSE OF THE ACCORD

The purpose of the Accord is to strengthen the ability of both the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada to better serve Canadians.

The strength of this Accord derives from the joint work that produced it. While the Accord is not a legal document, it is designed to guide the evolution of the relationship by identifying the common values, principles and commitments that will shape future practices. It focuses on what unites the two sectors, honours the contributions of both, and respects their unique strengths and different ways of working.

The Accord represents a public commitment to more open, transparent, consistent and collaborative ways of working together. When working together, the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector seek to fulfil the commitments set out in the Accord and in so doing enhance the quality of life of all Canadians.

II. VALUES

The Accord is based on the following six Canadian values that are most relevant to the relationship between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. These values are

interrelated and together create the climate for improving and enhancing the lives of all Canadians:

Democracy – upholding the right to associate freely, to express views freely and to engage in advocacy.

Active Citizenship – welcoming the active involvement or engagement of individuals and communities in shaping society whether through political or voluntary activity or both.

Equality – respecting the rights of Canadians under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, and the rights of individuals worldwide as defined by the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

Diversity – respecting the rich variety of cultures, languages, identities, interests, views, abilities, and communities in Canada.

Inclusion – welcoming the expression and representation of diversity and upholding the right of each to speak and be heard.

Social Justice – ensuring the full participation in the social, economic and political life of communities.

III. PRINCIPLES

The Accord is based on guiding principles:

Independence

The Government of Canada and the voluntary sector are autonomous, have unique strengths and separate accountabilities, and agree that:

- The Government of Canada is accountable to all Canadians for its actions and has a responsibility to identify issues of national concern and mobilize resources to address them, establish policies and make decisions in the best interest of all Canadians;
- Voluntary sector organizations are accountable to their supporters and to those they serve in providing services, organizing activities and giving collective voice at the local, national and international level;
- The independence of voluntary sector organizations includes their right within the law to challenge public policies, programs and legislation and to advocate for change; and
- Advocacy is inherent to debate and change in a democratic society and, subject to the above principles, it should not affect any funding relationship that might exist.

Interdependence

The voluntary sector and the Government of Canada recognize that:

- The actions of one can directly or indirectly affect the other, since both often share the same objective of common good, operate in the same areas of Canadian life, and serve the same clients; and
- Each has complex and important relationships with others (business, labour, provincial, territorial and local governments, etc.) and the Accord is not meant to affect these other relationships.

Dialogue

The voluntary sector and the Government of Canada, recognizing that sharing of ideas, perspectives, and experiences contributes to better understanding, improved identification of priorities, and sound public policy, agree that:

- Dialogue should be open, respectful, informed, sustained, and welcome a range of viewpoints;
- Dialogue should be carried out in a way which respects each party's confidential information, and builds and maintains trust; and
- Appropriately designed processes and governance structures are necessary to achieve sustained dialogue.

Co-operation and Collaboration

The Government of Canada and the voluntary sector agree that the social fabric of communities is strengthened and civic engagement is increased when they work together to address issues of mutual concern, and that:

- Working together to identify common priorities or complementary objectives will help facilitate co-operation and collaboration; and
- Working relationships should be flexible and respect what others contribute and the challenges and constraints under which they operate.

Accounting to Canadians

In addition to their separate accountabilities, the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada are accountable for maintaining the trust and confidence of Canadians by:

- Ensuring transparency, high standards of conduct and sound management in their work together; and
- Monitoring and reporting on the results.

IV. COMMITMENTS TO ACTION

The values and principles of the Accord are the starting point for the development of the relationship. Success in building the relationship will depend on the actions and practices of both the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector for the benefit of all

Canadians. In moving into the future the following commitments will be essential.

Shared Commitments

The voluntary sector and the Government of Canada commit to:

- Act in a manner consistent with the values and principles in this Accord;
- Develop the mechanisms and processes required to put the Accord into action;
- Work together as appropriate to achieve shared goals and objectives; and
- Promote awareness and understanding of the contributions that each makes to Canadian society.

Government of Canada Commitments

The Government of Canada commits to:

- Recognize and consider the implications of its legislation, regulations, policies and programs on voluntary sector organizations including the importance of funding policies and practices for the further development of the relationship and the strengthening of the voluntary sector's capacity;
- Recognize its need to engage the voluntary sector in open, informed and sustained dialogue in order that the sector may contribute its experience, expertise, knowledge,

and ideas in developing better public policies and in the design and delivery of programs; and

- Address the issue of ministerial responsibility for the continued development of the relationship with the voluntary sector.

Voluntary Sector Commitments

The voluntary sector commits to:

- Continue to identify important or emerging issues and trends in communities, and act on them or bring them to the attention of the Government of Canada;
- Serve as a means for the voices and views of all parts of the voluntary sector to be represented to and heard by the Government of Canada, ensuring that the full depth and diversity of the sector is reached and engaged; and
- Address the issue of responsibility for the continued development of the relationship with the Government of Canada.

V. TAKING THE ACCORD FORWARD

The Accord is the beginning of a journey. Measures are needed to implement its provisions. The voluntary sector and the Government of Canada agree to develop in a timely fashion:

- Appropriate organizational structures in the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector to give effect to the provisions of the Accord;
- Processes for monitoring the Accord, reporting to Canadians on the status of the relationship and the results that have been achieved, resolving disputes, agreeing on next steps, and discussing the strategic opportunities for future collaboration;
- Codes or standards of good practice to help guide interactions between government departments and voluntary sector organizations on aspects of the relationship such as policy dialogue, funding, and other issues as identified;
- A regular meeting between Ministers and sector representatives to discuss the results that have been achieved; and
- Ongoing actions to increase awareness about the Accord within the sector and the Government of Canada, and among Canadians.

The goal is that the Accord and its implementation plan will provide an enabling framework that will help the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada better serve Canadians.

Conclusion

Canadians expect strong, vibrant and engaged communities, and seek to build a solid, just and inclusive society where values and principles count, where the full range of human activities is encouraged, and where individuals and communities can

realize their potential. To better serve Canadians and help them achieve the society they want, the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector seek to strengthen their relationship. The Accord is the starting point of that journey.

Annex A

REFERENCE GROUP OF MINISTERS ON THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Chair:

The Honourable Lucienne Robillard
President of the Treasury Board and
Minister responsible for Infrastructure

The Honourable Herbert Eser Gray
Deputy Prime Minister

The Honourable Brian Tobin
Minister of Industry

The Honourable Sheila Copps
Minister of Canadian Heritage

The Honourable Allan Rock
Minister of Health

The Honourable Martin Cauchon
Minister of National Revenue and
Secretary of State (Economic
Development Agency for the
Regions of Québec)

The Honourable Jane Stewart
Minister of Human Resources
Development

The Honourable Maria Minna
Minister for International Cooperation

The Honourable Hedy Fry
Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)
(Status of Women)

Annex B

VOLUNTARY SECTOR STEERING GROUP

Paddy Bowen
Executive Director
Volunteer Canada*

Marlene Deboisbriand
Chair, Voluntary Sector Steering Group
Chief Operating Officer and
Senior Vice President
United Way of Canada-Centraide
Canada*

Colleen Ford
Executive Director
Canadian Parks and Recreation
Association*

Bonnie Greene*
Program Director, Division of Mission
United Church of Canada

Al Hatton
Executive Director
The Coalition of National Voluntary
Organizations*

Patrick Johnston
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Centre for Philanthropy*

Sol Kasimer
Chief Executive Officer, YMCA Canada
for the Health Charities Council
of Canada*

Colleen Kelly
Executive Director
Volunteer Vancouver

Victor Lachance
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport*

Marcel Lauzière
Executive Director
Canadian Council on Social
Development*

Suzanne Lawson
National Executive Director
Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Society
of Canada

Susan Lewis
President
United Way of Winnipeg

Don McCreesh
Chair, Board of Directors
YMCA of Greater Toronto

Esperanza Moreno
Deputy Director
Canadian Council for
International Cooperation*

Ann Mowatt
Past Chair, Board of Directors
The Coalition of National
Voluntary Organizations

* denotes member organization or representative of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable

Martha Parker
Executive Director
Volunteer Calgary

Monica Patten
President and Chief Executive Officer
Community Foundations of Canada*

Lucie Rémillard
President and Executive Director
Sainte-Justine Hospital Foundation

Penelope Rowe
Chief Executive Officer
Community Services Council,
Newfoundland & Labrador

Lynne Toupin
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Co-operative Association

Michael Weil
President and Chief Executive Officer
Montreal YMCA

Megan Williams
National Director
Canadian Conference of the Arts*

Bob Wyatt
Executive Director
The Muttart Foundation

Canadian Environmental Network*

Dr. Anu Bose
Representative of the National Visible
Minority Reference Group
of the Voluntary
Sector Initiative Secretariat

Doreen Saulis
Representative of the Aboriginal
Reference Group of the Voluntary
Sector Initiative Secretariat

** denotes member organization or representative of the Voluntary Sector Roundtable*

Annex C

JOINT ACCORD TABLE

The Joint Accord Table was formed in the fall of 2000 as part of the Voluntary Sector Initiative. The mandate of the Table was to develop the current framework document – the Accord – and associated monitoring and reporting measures that will improve the way the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector work together for the benefit of Canadians.

Lynne Toupin (co-chair)
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Co-operative Association

Huguette Beauchamp
Présidente
Association québécoise de défense
des droits des personnes retraitées
et préretraitées

Colleen Ford
Executive Director
Canadian Parks and Recreation
Association

Al Hatton
Executive Director
The Coalition of National Voluntary
Organizations

Wayne Helgason
Executive Director
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

The Table is composed of an equal number of government officials and members of the voluntary sector and is jointly co-chaired. The work that it produces is a result of consensus between the sectors.

The Government of Canada officials and members of the voluntary sector who developed this Accord are:

Bill McCloskey (co-chair)
Assistant Commissioner
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

Guillaume Bissonnette¹
General Director
Finance Canada

Kristine Burr
Assistant Deputy Solicitor General
Solicitor General Canada

Matthew King²
Assistant Deputy Minister
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Martha Nixon
Assistant Deputy Minister
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Graham Stewart
Executive Director
John Howard Society of Canada

Jean-Guy Saint-Martin
Assistant Deputy Minister
Canada Economic Development

Elaine Teofilovici
Chief Executive Officer
YWCA of/du Canada

Susan Scotti
Assistant Deputy Minister
Human Resources Development Canada

¹ **Guillaume Bissonnette** replaced by:
Réal Bouchard
Director
Finance Canada
September 2001

² **Matthew King** replaced by:
Eva Kmiecic
Deputy Commissioner
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
September 2001

The development and publication of this Accord document by the Joint Accord Table was made possible through the strong support received from a dedicated team composed of staff from the Voluntary Sector Task Force (Privy Council Office) and the Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat. They guided the research and development of the Accord and provided expertise, knowledge and advice to the Joint Accord Table members throughout the process.

The team members who provided this dedicated support were:

Susan Carter
Joanne Cousineau
Gary Evans
Susan Fletcher
Georges Grujic
Rebecca Hales
Kate Humpage
Micheline Lavoie
Peter Mathieson

Many other people were instrumental in providing policy, communication, and consultation support essential to the success of the project.

Observer to the Joint Accord Table: Susan Phillips, Associate Professor,
Carleton University.