Submission to

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON RENEWING AND STRENGTHENING OUR PLACE IN CANADA

from the

COMMUNITY SERVICES COUNCIL
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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December 16, 2002
“Strategic thinking and innovative approaches are essential in addressing critical economic and social issues and facilitating the management of change. The public, private and voluntary sectors – the three pillars of society – must work collaboratively for greater integration of policy and action.

As the Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador embarks upon its second quarter century of service, we will continue to take a leadership role in social planning, research and development. And we will continue to highlight the pivotal role of voluntary, community-based organizations to the future of our province and the well-being of the nation.”

Penelope Rowe 2002

Who We Are

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 16-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:

- Advancing the voluntary, community-based sector
- Conducting leading-edge research
- Advocating policy positions
- Pioneering innovative programs and 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.

What we do

CSC’s current priorities and activities include:

**www.enVision.ca** - a dedicated Internet Vortal for the voluntary sector in Newfoundland and Labrador, including a virtual resource centre which provides skills enhancement;

**Volunteer Centre** - providing training, organizational development, volunteer opportunities and youth involvement;

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1 Social capital includes institutions, patterns of behaviour and the trust and reciprocity that enable citizens to solve problems, adapt and grow. It is the capacity and willingness of people to engage in collective, civic activities.
**Provincial Volunteer Week** – promoting and celebrating volunteerism (April 27 – May 3, 2003) in concert with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Municipalities whose president, Randy Simms, is the week’s honourary chairperson;

**Regional Volunteer Resource Networks** – building capacity in the voluntary sector;

**Volunteer Leadership Forum** – working with the voluntary sector across Canada and the federal government to foster a climate for growth and development (this is the next phase of the Voluntary Sector Initiative);

**Leadership in Progress** – building the next generation of community leaders by bringing together emerging leaders from various sectors in a new and innovation program for leadership development (pilot phase);

**Public Access** – providing access to information to individuals and organizations regarding the Income Support and Policy Manual and providing advocacy support for persons seeking appeals;

**Student Work and Service Program** - arranging placements in the non-profit sector for post-secondary students; each year over 500 students are placed with 400 organizations in 200 communities; after 280 hours of community service the students receive a tuition credit voucher redeemable in any post secondary institution; the program is a three way partnership with the Federal and Provincial governments;

**Youth Mobilizing Youth** – engaging youth in structured, youth-driven volunteer opportunities that build skills and instill an appreciation for the value and enjoyment of volunteering – especially geared to youth at risk; this year placements are being made in partnership with the Avalon East School District and the Labrador School Board;

**Data base development** - of over 4,000 non-profit organizations;

**Research** – including the Leadership Gap: Perception or Reality; and research around volunteer recruitment issues in local communities; work underway in Glovertown, Twillingate, Gander, Springdale, Grand Falls – Windsor, Lewisporte and Peterview;

**Community University Research Alliance (CURA)** - a partnership with Memorial University, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, to undertake research about the voluntary, community-based sector and other issues in the context of the Strategic Social Plan;

**Expanding Their Universe – Reshaping the Future** – addressing social inclusion in the lives of school-aged children and their families (project of CSC and the MacMorran Community Centre);

**Youth Volunteer Corps** - participating youth aged 11-18 learn about their community, help others, and gain valuable experience by engaging in a variety of worthwhile service projects designed by youth volunteers and non-profit agencies;

**Canadian Federation of Voluntary Sector Networks** – in collaboration with networks of groups across the country, working to find ways to share information and to learn best practices and advancing the voluntary sector.
INTRODUCTION

One of the often cited defining and distinguishing features of this province is our community spirit. Residents of this province are generally known for their community spirit and willingness to help each other. In fact, we take great pride in having a high rate of volunteerism. Interestingly, however, according to a Statistics Canada survey conducted in 2000, our level of volunteerism now ranks number six behind Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. This slippage indicates a tradition in trouble or at the very least needing attention. We also take pride in being a generous population having a high median donation level.

Prior to Confederation much volunteer activity was carried out on a one-to-one basis or through a limited number of organizations. Now more voluntary activity takes place through formal groups. Since the 1950’s, but especially since the 1970’s, there has been a growth in the number of organizations; and, the nature and operating framework for many organizations has changed substantially. Groups are less likely to be paternalistic in nature, more likely to have a wide cross section of society serving on their boards and quite often are consumer driven. Evidence indicates that organizations are well spread throughout the province.

The face of the voluntary, community-based sector is changing. With changing demographics and other social changes, people throughout the province indicate that there are fewer people volunteering, that it is hard to attract younger people, that people in communities expect the same few people to assume responsibility, that there is a declining base of people willing to assume a leadership role and that people do not wish to make a long term commitment. These are disturbing trends, which may have a significant impact as the province strives to achieve prosperity and self-reliance.

Participation in voluntary, community-based organizations (VCBOs) has long been an activity where people build their skills, meet new people, hone leadership talent and build networks (so critical in the new, knowledge based economy).

The Community Services Council believes that the integration of social and economic development and a vibrant civic society are fundamental and instrumental in building a strong robust economy - essential to prosperity. In a time of dynamic economic and social change such as we are experiencing in our province, the skills and capacities of all sectors of society need to come together to build economic and social development.

To build prosperity in the midst of this environment requires a better understanding of all of the forces at play linked with new ways of generating economic growth, creating employment opportunities and enhancing job and skill development.

Strong citizen participation is key to enhanced local development as well as to overall strategies for the province as a whole.

Until recently little coherent attention has been placed on the critical role and untapped potential of the voluntary community based sector. Generally people think about the work and activity of individual organizations, each working to meet their own particular objectives. More recently we are starting to recognize that collectively these groups form a distinct sector. Alongside the public and private sector, the voluntary, community-
based sector is now recognized as one of three pillars of society. VCBO’s contribute to the overall health and well being of communities. They provide a venue for people to become involved in community life.

This submission
This presentation covers five main points:

1. The voluntary, community-based sector as an essential contributor to the province’s prosperity and self-reliance.

2. The unique and deliberate policy framework established by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador’s Strategic Social Plan: People, Partners and Prosperity.

3. Ensuring technology capacity, especially Internet connectivity and skills for the voluntary, community-based sector.

4. Recommendations to the Royal Commission.

5. Other observations regarding perceptions of regionalism and social research.

THE VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY BASED SECTOR

“The voluntary sector – one of three pillars of society along side the public and private sectors – enables civic participation and encourages citizens to become involved in a meaningful way. Voluntary organizations are a force for social cohesion – a force for stability and growth.”

Canadian Volunteerism Initiative 2001

The Voluntary, community-based sector’s contribution
The voluntary, community-based sector (VCBS) is central to healthy and vibrant communities. Voluntary organizations provide a conduit for individual citizen engagement. They emerge to help people in need, to advocate for new policies, to deliver programs, to raise money for charitable causes and to fill gaps not served by government or the private sector. Voluntary organizations serve as an early warning signal as people come together to respond to unmet needs through the voluntary sector.

Definition
The term voluntary, community-based sector refers to the total collection of groups – charities, registered non-profits and other community groups such as sports and recreation, faith organizations, self help and mutual aid, economic and community development, health and social service providers, arts, cultural, heritage groups and so forth – and all their resources, including volunteers, board members, employees and financial resources. Collectively these groups form the voluntary, community-based sector which fills an enormous role in fostering social, economic and community well being.
The voluntary sector
While the public is generally familiar with the activities of individual organizations, knowledge about the combined contribution of voluntary groups is limited. There is often an assumption that the voluntary sector refers primarily to people who volunteer their time and little recognition that to work effectively with volunteers, organizations require coordination and a solid infrastructure. To fully harness and maximize volunteer potential, dedicated professional personnel are required to mobilize and coordinate volunteer engagement.

Economic value of the voluntary sector in Newfoundland and Labrador
Assuming 35 hours per week at an average wage of $612 per week, the value works out to an economic contribution of $334.8 million annually. As well, there are approximately 378,000 people in this province who donate to charities, giving an average donation of $182 a year (as recorded by income tax receipts). This means we can add another $68.8 million to the value. The total annual economic value of time and donations of the voluntary community based sector is $403.6 million. This is almost twice the landed value of the crab fishery.

Relationship with provincial government
The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and individual voluntary, community-based organizations have a history of working together. The relationship has traditionally been between individual groups and specific government departments and agencies, and generally ad hoc in nature. There is no formal means of having a broad sector-to-government relationship around issues of mutual interest and concern.

The substantial role of volunteers
Volunteers play an incredible role in serving on advisory boards, elected boards, government and quasi government bodies. In this province, hospital boards, school boards, regional health and community service boards and economic development zone boards (44 boards in total) oversee the expenditure of approximately 50% of the provincial budget. The individuals on these boards serve as volunteers. With the release of the Strategic Social Plan in 1998 a further responsibility was handed to volunteers to serve on the six newly established Steering or Implementation Committees. These committees were initially made up of people from each of the four other boards named above but have now been expanded to include other groups such as municipal representatives. Unlike many boards and elected positions in Canada, the vast majority in Newfoundland serve with no remuneration for services provided to the public. Given the level of responsibility and authority vested in these boards, the individuals involved often pay a personal price especially in small communities.

Demographic changes and the impact of the trends
Decline in volunteer base
There are disturbing trends showing a significant decline in the number of people who volunteer in this province. Statistics Canada reports that over the period 1997 to 2000, the population over 15 years of age who volunteered dropped from 151,000 to 138,000, from 33% to 31%. However, the effort made by those people who do volunteer rose substantially over the same time period: average hours contributed rose from 136 hours per year to 206 hours per year (this equates to five working weeks on average per volunteer) - an indication of fewer people doing more work. Meeting demand is clearly falling to a smaller group of people. Research by the Community Services Council
corroborates there is a decline in the number of people willing to assume leadership roles in many communities, and many organizations are finding it progressively more difficult to recruit volunteers. We are told this pertains particularly to engaging younger people.

**Challenges presented by the trends**

**Declining Base of Leadership**

The Community Services Council has completed a study undertaken through key informant interviews, a series of four case studies in four rural communities, an online survey, and personal interviews with 140 individuals who are active volunteers and those who do not currently volunteer. Representatives of over 120 organizations were consulted. The overwhelming conclusion (85%) is that there are fewer people engaged in volunteer activities and that there is a diminishing base of persons who are willing to assume leadership positions.

While obviously an important contributing factor, the declining population in virtually every community was not cited as the single issue. Many of those interviewed referred to organizational practices such as the manner in which volunteers are recruited, the lack of interest amongst younger people in becoming involved and assuming leadership roles, the changing social environment (for example, two working parents or single parent families and the related lack of time to devote to voluntary activities). Certain organizations appear to be finding it more difficult to attract new members and volunteers. This perhaps points to the perceived lack of relevance of certain groups and activities to the current population and environment.

In the last month we have been validating this information through a more extensive set of interviews with organizations (220) in the central region of the province. The information gathered supports our previous study.

**Profile of the sector in this province**

The number and range of groups is growing. Four thousand non-profits have been identified in 528 communities. Of these, 1100 are registered charities and 2000 are registered as non-profits with the provincial government.
As the above table indicates, (contrary to public opinion which expects that most are in the St. John’s area) organizations are well dispersed throughout the province – with over 75% outside the St. John’s / Mount Pearl area.

**Challenges facing the sector**

The voluntary sector cannot be taken for granted. It must be nurtured and supported if it is to function at an optimal level. Community organizations face many threats and challenges. The following issues are most frequently cited.

**Increased Demand for Services and Funding/ Financing Issues**

- increased demands for service provision
- lack of financial stability and security
- lack of resources to meet demands
- increasing government downloading
- excessive time spent “chasing dollars” and obtaining funding
- short term project versus core operational funding

Many organizations are overburdened and under-funded. They are hampered because funding is not available for core objectives and most funding sources cause groups to undertake activities peripheral to their primary objectives. Short term funding often supports the development of pilot projects but is not available for sustainable programs. Since most of the funding is from federal departments and agencies, this highlights a concern in arrangements with the federal government. While the concerns are shared by groups in other provinces, the ramifications are perhaps more stark in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Human Resource (volunteer and staff) Development Issues**

- volunteer and staff burnout
- diminishing base of volunteers and voluntary leadership
• uncoordinated volunteer recruitment and inadequate retention practices
• barriers to volunteering (exclusion, lack of inclusiveness)
• financial cost of volunteering (meeting out of pocket expenses)
• insufficient staff and volunteer training and development
• high turnover of employees.

Throughout the province, groups express the desire for regionally based volunteer resource centers to provide training opportunities, community facilitators, tailor-made services to support volunteerism, communication and planning networks, and capacity building for voluntary organizations.

**Risk Management and legal liability issues**
• establishing policies to contain risk
• concern about legal liability and insurance protection
• increased paper work and burdensome accountability requirements
• the need to screen volunteers
• the rising cost of liability and accident and injury insurance.

People are increasingly reluctant to engage in activities for which they could potentially be held liable and they may decide the risk of volunteering is too high. Grappling with the above issues is particularly burdensome or unmanageable for small organizations with no staff.

**Knowledge, research and policy development issues**
• lack of a strong research base for policy and programs
• inadequate resources for programs and policy development
• lack of analyses of past and current experiments in community development
• how to engage rural and remote groups in policy development.

Organizations and their leaders are expressing a desire for more research to build a good knowledge base with which to develop programs and policies and to support evidenced decision-making. The difficulty for small and remote groups to be involved in the policy process is often a concern. This is particularly so for federal consultations which tend to take place only in St. John’s.

**Poorly co-ordinated employment programs/opportunities missed**
• short term, project based programs not always efficient or effective
• high turn over of projects and employees
• emphasis on employment creation more than on community or program needs
• last minute announcements reduce organizations’ ability to plan
• potential for poor supervision and a lack of meaningful work
• projects often peripheral to priority organizational objectives
• should be better matched with community needs.

Various federal and provincial employment programs are an essential part of voluntary organizations’ ability to meet their missions; however, much current program design is short term in nature and not as conducive to supporting the sector as it might be. There is tremendous scope for better planning between the federal and provincial governments. The reality is that for the foreseeable future governments will play a role in job creation; therefore it would make sense for a more adequate planning process for job creation in
the social economy. This could facilitate meeting many pressing community needs such as service provision for seniors.

THE STRATEGIC SOCIAL PLAN

“Economic growth, in the long term, depends on the investments we make in human and social capital – in the resilience of Canadian citizens.”

Judith Maxwell
Eric J. Hanson Memorial Lecture (1997)

Special and unique contribution to Canada
The Strategic Social Plan (SSP), released in 1998, is a deliberate policy instrument, which creates an exciting and unprecedented foundation for an augmented relationship between government and the voluntary, community-based sector as a whole. The SSP - with its emphasis on linking economic and social development, on strengthening communities, on investing in people and the acknowledgement of the voluntary, community-based sector as a key instrument in meeting the values and vision of the SSP - provides a unique framework for enhancing the relationship between government and the voluntary sector.

Simply put the SSP is a process to attain policy shifts and new relationships. It was conceived, in part, as a process for social policy renewal but it goes beyond that to set out a framework for new ways of doing business and new approaches to building stronger, more vibrant communities. It is about linking and integrating economic and social policy development within government and more collaborative relationships between government and the wider community.

As a social policy experiment the Strategic Social Plan is based on the notion of government and the community finding effective ways to work together to address social and economic development issues, that is, to mobilize individual and community development. The SSP reinforces that “effective solutions arise from a shared sense of responsibility and a capacity to act which comes from involving people” and fostering broad participatory processes that support the implementation of the Plan.

Building community partnerships and capacity
In establishing a deliberate policy for investing in people and communities, the SSP calls for new partnerships and alliances among government, the community and individuals. Fundamental to the implementation of the SSP is “increased cooperation with community groups”. Participation in voluntary organizations is deemed to be a basic building block of community leadership and essential to capacity building. According to the Plan “the development of community capacity means supporting active involvement of community groups, volunteers and all citizens who ultimately build healthy, supportive communities.”

Contribution to community life
The SSP acknowledges that the contributions of the voluntary 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 community-based organizations play a vital role in the cultural, social and economic life of the province.
The SSP clearly positions the voluntary, community-based sector as a vehicle for community and individual development.

**Place-based development**
The SSP has a decidedly community development approach: one of its specific goals is vibrant communities and regions where people actively participate in their collective well-being. The SSP calls for a shift to place-based development, and is intended to address key challenges including:

- supporting people to achieve their potential,
- supporting employment and economic security, and
- achieving community stability.

To begin to address these challenges the SSP enumerates a number of essential roles for the community-based sector including:

- Partnering with regional boards to plan integrated social and economic development.
- Providing voluntary services on a coordinated client-centred basis.
- Providing employment opportunities in the sector to deliver services, implement programs and carry out social and economic development work.
- Developing leadership skills in localities where the community-based sector is underdeveloped to enable the sector to effectively participate in the SSP.
- Coordinating integrated responses to local needs through community services and voluntary resources.

**Employment creation**
The Plan also highlights opportunities for employment creation in the sector. It calls for:

- A labour market that supports economic development in the private and community-based sectors; the need to identify the range and extent of employment creation opportunities within the community-based sector; and a need to determine how long-term employment in that sector could be created.

- Employment generation strategies in the private and community-based sectors through coordinated federal-provincial partnerships and investments. Specific actions include seeking to secure federal participation with the province in an employment program in the community-based sector, the purpose being to invest in community-based approaches matched to social development goals, while providing new employment opportunities and using integrated initiatives such as increasing support to community-based organizations.

**Research and knowledge**
The Strategic Social Plan refers to the lack of knowledge and information about the sector and states that one of the necessary actions requires “assessing the nature and extent of voluntary agencies and voluntary activity in each region and facilitating the involvement of voluntary agencies”.

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Resources
In the SSP, Government also acknowledges that resources will be required to:

- Assist groups to work together in regional and community partnerships.
- Support strategic directions, particularly the shift to prevention and early intervention.
- Undertake flexible initiatives that support the Plan and build community capacity.

Giving strength and action to the plan clearly requires a vibrant voluntary sector.

BUILDING THE TECHNICAL CAPACITY OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Positioning the province to be a leader in technology
In the recent era of e-government and e-commerce initiatives, we must ensure that the voluntary, community-based sector is not left behind the public and private sectors when it comes to using technology to further its mission and goals. There is already an identified digital divide that should be closed. This is particularly so as governments of all orders become more reliant upon sector organizations to bear responsibility and participate in public dialogue for policy formulation. Through programs such as the VolNet Program (Industry Canada) and CSC’s www.enVision.ca (currently funded by Office of Learning Technologies, HRDC and ACOA), we have been working hard to increase the technical capacity of voluntary organizations, enabling them to venture into the 21st century as a competitive and forward thinking sector.

Cash strapped and human resource challenged voluntary organizations face many challenges when it comes to integrating technology into their day-to-day operations, not least of which is the ineligibility of technology costs in many funding programs. A recent study commissioned by the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) pointed out that voluntary organizations have not only an external need for technology, such as equipment and resources, but also internal information and communications requirements that vary throughout the sector. Both small and large organizations have a need to adopt information technology and to remain current.

Changes to government funding arrangements that hinder technological development
From 1999-2002 CSC was provincial delivery agent for the VolNet Program (Industry Canada), which was initiated to deliver Internet connectivity, reduced cost computer equipment and skills development to voluntary organizations throughout Canada. CSC has assisted 550 organizations in over 200 communities get Internet connectivity. It became obvious to CSC that in order to support groups as they integrate technology into their organizations, low or no cost support was also a necessity. Industry Canada terminated the VolNet program in 2001 even though there are still many groups that need to be connected and require continuing support. The loss of this program is particularly unfortunate for organizations in rural and remote communities. Furthermore, current programs of Industry Canada such as “e- corps”, a program for internships for technology graduates explicitly, discriminate against and disallow applications from voluntary enterprises even though they may have the financial and organizational capacity to offer excellent placements.
As part of the Federal Government - Voluntary Sector Initiative, a $10,000,000 fund has been set aside for Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) related support to the sector; however, it appears that this funding will likely be designed in such a way as to be available primarily to large, centrally based organizations rather than being well dispersed to assist groups across the country.

**Technical support services**

In the spring of 2001, CSC conducted a needs assessment of the technical support requirements of the voluntary sector in this province. This study showed that the lack of technical support for the voluntary, community-based sector as a whole was a major concern for organizations wanting to make the most of modern communications like the Internet. In an effort to increase access to technical support, CSC launched a 1-800 technical support line in 2001, open to any voluntary group. To date, approximately 600 calls from about 300 organizations have been handled by our technical support service.

**enVision.ca**

In early 2002 CSC launched www.enVision.ca, a virtual resource centre for voluntary, community-based organizations. This dedicated portal (an industry or subject specific portal) is designed to serve the 4,000 + voluntary groups across the province. It is a unique and comprehensive tool for knowledge sharing, information gathering and skills enhancement, designed to strengthen and enhance the voluntary sector. It is premised on the assumption that a vibrant sector is important to economic sustainability and diversification. By providing access to resources unrestricted by geography or size, enVision.ca is helping organizations meet their own goals more easily and thus creating substantial benefits for our communities. A calendar of events, directories of non-profits, funding sources, good news stories, human resource management, and volunteer opportunities are just a few of the features available at www.enVision.ca. The portal is also helping organizations create an online profile by enabling them to easily build and by hosting their websites.

www.enVision.ca, developed right here in Newfoundland and Labrador, is perhaps the most ambitious and comprehensive such site in Canada.

As a part of the enVision.ca project, specific skills enhancement training opportunities are being offered in the areas of volunteer recruitment and retention, leadership building, public reactions, volunteer program planning, screening, human resources planning and liability and risk management. These training programs have been offered in person and will also be adapted online, resulting in an increase in skills development in organizational management – in addition to increasing the technical capacity of the sector. CSC is also developing individualized IT planning sessions to help voluntary organizations integrate technology into their day-to-day operations, and online research opportunities to be undertaken in collaboration with other partners and programs.

The voluntary, community-based sector plays an important role in providing services to individuals and families, generating economic activity, and increasing the well being of all our communities. As we move toward self-reliance, technology has given us a unique opportunity to change the way we communicate and do business. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that the voluntary, community-based sector is able to embrace and integrate technology at a pace equal to government and the private sector. Investment in
the community-based sector is an investment in our communities, and ultimately, our province.

envision.ca offers an incredible tool for consultation with the sector and we propose to the Royal Commission that it be used to augment the proposed Roundtable for the sector to elicit feedback from across the province.

CONCLUSION

Why the Commission should care
Encouraging youth involvement in civic activities is key to the province’s future. Attention to succession planning is critical. Vibrant communities require the involvement of all citizens. If the voluntary, community-based sector is important to healthy communities and to prosperity and self-reliance, then efforts must be focused on providing support to and rebuilding the capacity of the sector throughout the province.

The Community Service Council believes the sector is vital to healthy communities. In addition to providing necessary services, it plays a key role in forming human and social capital. It provides a conduit for people in virtually every community to become involved in activities that meet community needs and creates opportunities for personal growth and development. No other sector (public or private) offers the same opportunity for individuals and groups, regardless of background, socio-economic status, age, educational level or employment status, to come together freely of their own volition for the benefit of themselves and others.

The relevance of the sector needs to be more fully understood and recognized. In carrying out its mandate it would be useful if the Royal Commissioners had an opportunity to explore and understand more fully the role of voluntary sector and how it
supports and interconnects with both the private and public sectors in supporting prosperity and self-reliance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Convene a Roundtable on issues related to the voluntary, community-based sector.

   Purposes: to meet with selected individuals in the sector to discuss the challenges they face in meeting their objectives, in dealing with increased demands and in maintaining their services;

   to explore the increased role that some sector organizations could play in meeting the needs of citizens and communities;

   to better understand the linkages between a strong voluntary sector and the capacity for social and economic development;

   to consider ways in which the capacity of the sector may be strengthened especially with reference to succession planning and the urgency of supporting leadership development and the recruitment of new, especially younger, volunteers; and

   to discuss appropriate financial assistance and government policies and programs to support voluntary, community-based groups, and to build the necessary infrastructure including access to technology.

2. Convene a Newfoundland and Labrador Conference to provide an opportunity for representatives from all sectors to come together to discuss critical issues and to set a path for future cross sectoral and joint planning. We urge that representatives of the voluntary, community-based sector play an important role in the event. While representative in the VCBS come from many backgrounds and interests and many work in the private and public sectors, they should be invited because of their knowledge and expertise in issues pertaining to managing and maintaining voluntary groups in communities throughout the province.

**OTHER OBSERVATIONS**

*How Newfoundland and Labrador is viewed*

*Detrimental perceptions of Regionalism*

Two years ago the Federal Government launched the Federal Government – Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) to improve its relationship with the sector throughout Canada (over 180,000 charities and non-profits and grass roots groups). This joint process has been sealed by a signed Accord that sets out principles and values, which should underpin the relationship between government and the sector. The CSC’s CEO has been one of seven leaders from the voluntary sector across Canada on VSI’s Joint Coordinating Committee. One of her observations has been the tendency of some federal government officials to describe people from outside the central regions of the country as “regional representatives”. Similarly, federal bureaucrats working outside Ottawa are also
considered “regional”. This way of thinking presents a two-tiered view of Canada and sets it up not so much as a federation but rather as a central government that is superior to the parts of the country.

It was also observed that the manner in which the relevance and relative importance of certain issues are weighed and measured varies significantly, with the higher value being given to central views. This trend of relegating certain issues and people to “regional” appears to be increasing in recent years.

This points to the importance of finding ways to give more profile to provincial issues and concerns. One suggestion might be the bringing together of people who bear positions of responsibility on numerous federal boards and agencies to discuss whether this is a widespread concern and, if so, to develop a set of strategies for overcoming this regionalization of issues and people.

**Research Capacity: promoting research and development, leveraging funding**

There is a growing demand for research and development and innovative thinking. In the new economy these are key drivers of growth. Knowledge is an essential building block for diversification, increased productivity and an improved standard of living. At a time when research and development are the foundation for progress, Newfoundland and Labrador is at a severe disadvantage. In fact, we are losing ground. According to Statistics Canada, Atlantic Canada’s share of national expenditures in Research and Development has dropped over time from 5.25% to 3.9% (cited in Working Together for Atlantic Canada: An Action Plan for Regional Cooperation 2001–2003, Council of Atlantic Premiers 2001). Our province’s share of the national pie is miniscule. This is compounded because we do not have adequate funds for leveraging research programs. The announcement of the Atlantic Innovation Fund was an important step in addressing this problem; however, the Fund has fairly narrow restrictions and does not adequately acknowledge or support the full array of potential research undertakings that this province needs, especially in the social sciences and economic arenas.

For instance, the Strategic Social Plan calls for evidenced-based policy-making. This is an ambitious challenge that requires information gathering and analysis at many levels. New knowledge and sound research will be required to support this goal. While the Newfoundland Statistical Agency, through its excellent Community Accounts system, is compiling and generating important data sets, much more research needs to be undertaken to produce a stronger knowledge base to inform policy making, especially in fields beyond science and technical areas.

We know there are a multitude of opportunities for undertaking creative and innovative research in this province. A concerted effort to build a research and development strategy would attract experienced researchers, create employment, provide opportunities for young researchers, encourage students to see research as a potential career, and secure additional funds. Successful research begets creative thinking and the acquisition of further funding.

CSC suggests that the Royal Commission examine the gap between the research capacity of this province and how federal funding programs for research may be constructed in a manner which do not support the requirements of Newfoundland and Labrador. A recent analysis carried out by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council indicates
that universities such as Memorial University of Newfoundland consistently lose out in peer-reviewed competitions, not because the quality of applications is inadequate but rather because there are insufficient funds available to support research in the social sciences and humanities areas. The success rate for funding for this type of research is way below that of other granting councils simply because the allocation to SSHRC is less than that provided to other councils, despite the fact that there is a much higher rate of researchers in these academic fields.
REFERENCES


