



Volunteering in Canada

This backgrounder on volunteering, prepared by the Social Economy Centre of the University of Toronto, is designed to give Ontario's Guidance Counsellors information that could be of use in advising students participating in Ontario's Community Involvement Activities program.

Many Canadians volunteer at some point in their lives. According to a Statistics Canada survey for the calendar year 2003, more than 2 billion hours were volunteered through nonprofit organizations. Two billion hours represents the equivalent of more than 1 million full-time jobs, larger than the workforce of all but four of Canada's provinces. Volunteers undertake many different functions. Some participate on the board of directors and committees of nonprofit organizations; others undertake frontline services for the organization such as reception, clerical duties, or a helping role in the community. The range is vast, and the imagination is the only limitation.

Formal volunteering occurs through such organizations as nonprofits and co-

operatives. These are organizations set up for a social purpose, though they may earn all or part of their income from the sale of services. Some examples of nonprofits with many volunteers are: food banks; literacy associations, community centres and after-school programs, environmental association; religious organizations, hospitals and community health clinics; and sports teams. In addition to volunteering through nonprofits and co-operatives, you can also volunteer informally – as when members of a community assist neighbours in need, for example, a senior citizen who is a shut-in. Also, with the increased use of the Internet, there are now virtual volunteers who play pivotal roles for online communities.



2009

Produced by the Social Economy Centre of the University of Toronto, 2009.

Contact: sec@oise.utoronto.ca



Statistics Canada estimates that there are 161,000 nonprofit organizations in Canada. In addition to serving as a venue for volunteering, they are also major employers, as there is the equivalent of about 1.5 million full-time jobs in nonprofit organizations, about 7 percent of the workforce. Nonprofit organizations also contribute more than 7 percent to Canada's Gross Domestic Product, or the value of all goods and services produced by Canadians.

In Canada, about 84,000 nonprofit organizations are also classified as charities. To qualify, the federal government (Canada Revenue Agency, Charities Directorate) approves them as meeting such criteria as: the relief of poverty; education; or religion. Often such organizations may engage in international service as well as in Canada. Charities can issue tax receipts to donors for their contributions, and therefore can make it easier to raise funds.

In addition to nonprofits, another type of organization that students may volunteer for is a co-operative. A co-operative is an association of people who share social, cultural and economic needs. Like nonprofits, they too come in many forms – farmers who come

together to market their products; housing co-operatives; childcare co-operatives; financial service co-ops or credit unions; and worker co-operatives. In Canada, there are about 9,000 co-operatives and credit unions, ranging from small (for example, Beach School Co-operative) to huge (for example, Desjardins financial institutions or Gay Lea in dairy marketing and production).

Get inspired!

Volunteer Canada

Search for a volunteer centre near you at <http://volunteer.ca>

National Volunteer Week

Share your volunteering stories at <http://nvw-sab.ca>

United Nations International Volunteer Day

Listen to Craig Kielburger, David Suzuki and Luba Goy on volunteering at <http://volunteer.ca/sites/volunteercanada/files/ivdvolunteers.html>

TVO Get Involved

Check out TVO's new documentary site and see how others are getting involved at <http://getinvolved.ca>

Explore!

For more information on nonprofits and co-operatives, or what is also labeled the social economy, here are some valuable online information sources:

Imagine Canada

Imagine Canada's mission is advancing knowledge and relationships to foster effective and sustainable charitable and nonprofit organizations. Check out their many reports on charities and the nonprofit sector at:

<http://imaginecanada.ca>

<http://givingandvolunteering.ca>

Canadian Co-operative Association

The Canadian Co-operative Association promotes, develops and unites co-operatives and credit unions for the benefit of people in Canada and around the world. Their site has lots of information about starting a co-op and for learning about the different types of co-ops and what they do:

<http://coopscanada.coop>

Ontario Co-operative Association

Did you know that there are over 1,300 co-ops in Ontario? Find out more about them, and also about some great programs for youth at:

<http://ontario.coop>

Social Economy Centre of the University of Toronto

The Social Economy Centre promotes and disseminates multidisciplinary research and policy analysis on issues affecting the social economy. The centre also has a great speakers' series that is webcast, podcast and available to view online:

<http://socialeconomy.utoronto.ca>

Youth Connect Ontario ©



<http://youthconnect.ca>