



# Executive Summary

Public Policy Summit on Volunteering and Citizen Engagement  
Richmond, B.C. June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013

The Public Policy Summit on Volunteering and Citizen Engagement was hosted by Volunteer Canada, [Volunteer BC](#) and [AVRBC](#) with support by [Deloitte Canada](#). The summit assembled a 50 delegates representing the public, non-profit and private sector.

The objective of the summit was to highlight salient policy issues and demographic changes impacting volunteerism and citizen engagement in Canada.

Intended outcomes included:

- Increased awareness of public policy issues relating to volunteering and citizen engagement in Canada
- Deeper understanding of multi-sector collaboration around citizen engagement
- Enhance dialogue on measuring the impact of volunteering and citizen engagement
- Networking amongst delegates

Keynote and panel presentations served as a springboard for roundtable discussions.

[Peter R. Elson](#), Senior Research Associate, Institute for Nonprofit Studies, Mount Royal University began the day exploring the place of volunteering in Canadian society. He highlighted the various ways that Canadians are involved in their communities through civic action and the spectrum of formal/informal engagement as well as collective/individual action. He concluded by highlighting the opportunity to re-think ideas of what volunteering is- in terms of the language of measurement, to what volunteers do and their impact on civil society.

## Measuring the value and impact of volunteering and citizen engagement

[Tim Beachy](#), [Laurie Mook](#) and [Rose Anne Devlin](#)

The panel represented a diversity of perspectives as it relates to the benefits and challenges associated with measuring the value and impact of volunteer contribution. Challenges associated with measuring impact include the arbitrary nature of placing economic value on lives changed, suicides averted, and wishes granted. Another theme involved looking at the consequences of excluding volunteer labour in nonprofit accounting systems and how that serves to undervalue the key resource that many nonprofits rely on. It was argued that some of the community outcomes and benefits of volunteering can be valued - while others are more elusive. There needs to be value associated with the various outcomes of volunteer contribution.

[Paula Speevak Sladowski](#), Interim President and COO of Volunteer Canada explored volunteering and changing demographics incorporating research from the 2010 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating as well as Bridging the Gap and a special report done for HRSDC on volunteering and older adults. Key trends of the more than 13.3 million Canadians who volunteered in 2010 were highlighted with a focus on baby boomers and senior adults.

## The impact of changing demographics on volunteering and citizen engagement (with a focus on youth, newcomers and older adults)

[Lorraine Copas](#), [Leila Fenc](#) and [Jill Schnarr](#)

Demographic trends relating to volunteering in British Columbia were shared. It was argued that in order to best engage growing number of seniors as well as the millennials in the province, it will be important not to focus on reinventing tools but to more effectively work across sectors. Deloitte employee volunteer efforts were presented, with discussion on the role of Millennials in changing corporate volunteering at Deloitte. The Telus community investment program was introduced, and a number of initiatives of how team members and retirees were working together through volunteer opportunities to contribute their communities were shared.

## Key Themes from the Summit

A number of key themes emerged from roundtable discussions and plenary sessions during the day.

- **Integrated concept of civil society**- Civil society includes a responsive government, thriving business and vibrant nonprofit sector.
- **Policy Lenses** -Prominent areas of policy focus include skills development, promotion of citizenship, social inclusion and resilient communities
- **Value and Impact** - The value, benefits and impact of volunteering and citizen engagement can be explored from a number of perspectives (community, organization, volunteer, business, participant/members/clients)
- **Public Sector** - There are a number of implications of a government promoting volunteering that need to be considered.
- **Labour Relations**- Reevaluating the role volunteers place in labour relations.

*Volunteer Canada would like to thank partners and participants of the 2013 Public Policy Summit on Volunteering and Citizen Engagement.*