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Volunteer Canada Responds to Federal Budget 2025: “You Can’t Build a Strong Canada Without the People Who Hold It Together”

Ottawa, November 4, 2025 — The federal government’s 2025 Budget speaks of “Building a Strong Canada.” But how can we build strength while leaving behind the people and organizations that hold our country together?

Volunteer Canada expressed deep disappointment today that the 2025 Federal Budget, framed as a plan to “Build a Strong Canada,” makes no meaningful mention of Canada’s non-profit and charitable sector, volunteer infrastructure, or the millions of Canadians who hold communities together every day.

“Building a strong Canada begins with investing in people,” said Dr. Megan Conway, President & CEO of Volunteer Canada. “Volunteers are the backbone of our country’s social and economic systems. They feed families, support seniors, welcome newcomers, and strengthen every place Canadians call home. Yet their contributions are invisible in our national economic plan.”

Canada’s non-profit and charitable sector represents 8.3 per cent of GDP, employs 2.5 million people, and engages over 24 million volunteers. Together, Canadians contributed 4.1 billion hours of volunteer time in 2023, equivalent to 2.4 million full-time jobs and valued at \$45–50 billion annually. Yet formal volunteering has declined 28 per cent since 2018, representing the loss of 1.2 billion hours of community support at a time when food banks, hospitals, and seniors’ programs are struggling to meet rising demand.

Volunteer Canada’s pre-budget submission called for modest, high-impact investments including \$1.5 million to complete the National Volunteer Action Strategy (NVAS), \$1 million to celebrate the 2026 International Year of Volunteers, and \$50,000 to reinforce National Volunteer Week, the country’s largest civic recognition campaign. None of these priorities were included in the 2025 budget.



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“The government talks about economic strength, social resilience, and national unity,” added Dr. Conway. “But there is no path to any of those goals without the non-profit and charitable sector. Volunteers are not free; they are the unpaid workforce of Canada’s social safety net. Without investment in this infrastructure, we weaken the foundation that keeps our country strong.”

Volunteer Canada is calling on the federal government to re-engage with the sector through the National Volunteering Action Strategy and to establish a permanent fund for volunteer and non-profit infrastructure to ensure Canada’s communities remain strong, connected, and ready to meet the challenges ahead.

Our strength is not measured only in dollars or spending. It is also measured in connection, compassion, and the people who show up for one another every single day.

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About Volunteer Canada:

Founded in 1977, Volunteer Canada is the national voice for volunteerism. A registered charity with over 1,100 organizational members, Volunteer Canada strengthens the quality, accessibility, and impact of volunteering nationwide.

VOLUNTEERING CREATES CONNECTION, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

LE BÉNÉVOLAT CRÉE UN SENTIMENT D’ATTACHEMENT, DE COMMUNAUTÉ ET D’APPARTENANCE