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**Report**

# **Employee Volunteerism: Employer Practices and Policies**

by Kenneth D. Hart

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Report 14-86-E



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Cette publication est aussi disponible en français.

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# Preface

Each year the officers and employees of Canadian organizations face more and more requests to serve as volunteers in activities ranging from the United Way to the Winter Olympics. These voluntary activities make an important contribution to Canada's social and economic fabric. However, the volunteer activity of employees raises certain issues for the employer. These issues include the potential for conflict of interest, different situations for salaried and hourly paid employees, and maintaining productivity while accommodating temporary absence. Canadian employers have adopted a wide range of innovative policies and practices in response to these challenges. These responses have yielded important dividends in both the public affairs and human resource management areas. This report documents how Canadian employers are recognizing and responding to the growth of employee volunteerism and how they are benefiting from their responses.

In this study, The Conference Board of Canada has been fortunate to have had the support and co-operation of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada. The department regards volunteerism as an important force in Canadian society for, as a former Secretary of State said in introducing his department's role in this research: "Certain areas of human endeavour in the life of the community depend almost exclusively on the voluntary participation of citizens to achieve diverse humanitarian, socio-economic, cultural and other objectives."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hon. Benoît Bouchard, P.C., M.P., press release, October 28, 1985.

The co-operation of many people was required to make this study a success. The Conference Board of Canada wishes to thank the nearly 1,000 executives who participated in the study. Without their help, this research could not have been as complete and helpful to Canadian employers as it is. The 25 professionals from all sectors of the economy who participated in developing the questionnaire improved the survey and, with it, the value of this study. Our thanks go to them for this service. The officials of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada deserve special thanks. Their professionalism and encouragement throughout this project were a great help to all concerned.

This project has been carried out with financial and other assistance from the Voluntary Action Programme and the Social Trends Analysis Directorate of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada.

This report was written by Kenneth D. Hart, Principal Research Associate in The Conference Board of Canada's Corporate and Public Issues Research Group under the direction of Ranga Chand, Director of the Corporate and Public Issues Group and under the overall direction of Charles A. Barrett, Vice-President, Research, The Conference Board of Canada.

James R. Nininger  
President

The Conference Board of Canada      October 1986

## Author's Acknowledgements

The nearly 1,000 executives who participated in this study provided not only information but also great encouragement. The 25 professionals who were asked to comment on the questionnaire gave freely of their time and made a great contribution to the success of this research. All the officials at the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada who dealt with this project were very helpful. Two of these officials made special efforts. Ruth Watson of the Social Trends Analysis Directorate and Douglas McKercher of the Voluntary Action Programme were very

helpful in facilitating the research. At the Conference Board, Duncan McDowall commented on drafts of the report and Charles Barrett was always a source of helpful ideas. Alison Taylor provided invaluable editorial support and Steve Bain contributed professional production work. Finally, Ranga Chand, who supervised this project, provided on-going support and encouragement that would be the envy of any author. To all these individuals the author extends his heart-felt thanks.

# Executive Summary

Volunteerism has always been an important part of Canadian life. In 1980, it is estimated that 2.7 million Canadians donated about 200,000 person years of work with a value of \$2.0 billion. Many of these volunteers were not employed full time in paying jobs. However, today more and more volunteers are also members of the paid labour force. As a result, Canadian employers are expressing a great deal of interest in the volunteer activities of employees. Many of them have developed policies and processes to facilitate employee volunteerism while maintaining a productive and efficient workplace.

## Overall Results

A Conference Board survey of employers on their policies and practices with respect to employee volunteerism produced the following findings.

- Employee volunteerism is an important new force in Canadian society.
- Canadian employers have, for some time, been responding to the new challenges posed by employee-volunteers, with the result that policy and practice in this field are evolving in a positive way.
- There are several issues with respect to employee volunteerism that will be resolved in the next few years as employers and employees adapt volunteering practices to various types of employing organizations.
- The relationship between employers, employee-volunteers, and voluntary agencies is growing and moving in directions with very positive implications for the development of Canadian society.

## Employer Support

Specific results of this research included the following observations.

- Seventy-two per cent of respondents indicated that employees of their organizations carry out "community-wide" volunteer activities while in the workplace.
- In 51 per cent of the responding organizations, employees carry out, in the workplace, voluntary activity with a specific focus, such as fund raising for a hospital or recruiting labour to build a little league baseball diamond.

- A general approach of encouraging and supporting employees when they engage in voluntary activity, was adopted by 69 per cent of all respondents.

## Organizations Supported

Many of the employers adopting a generally encouraging and supportive approach to employee involvement in volunteer organizations offer specific support to employees involved in selected organizations. Sixty-five per cent of respondents indicated that there were some voluntary activities their employees were especially encouraged to undertake. Among voluntary activities especially encouraged, the United Way ranks first. Other voluntary activities near the top of the ranking include professional associations, business and trade associations, and Chambers of Commerce. The bottom of the ranking is mainly occupied by activities in support of large institutions—the militia, elementary and secondary school activities, and university alumni. Programs for the aged are also ranked near the bottom of this listing.

Only 23 per cent of these respondents answered that they specifically exclude some activities from their active support. Many others noted that specific activities were not excluded, though a general concern with the potential for conflict of interest was communicated to employees.

## Forms of Employer Involvement

One-third of all respondents to this survey indicated that they had loaned or temporarily assigned an employee to a voluntary or charitable organization. A slightly larger number of organizations indicated that they were quite likely to do so in the future.

Eighty-five per cent of all respondents to the survey indicated that they had never acted as a "clearing house", that is, providing employees with lists of available volunteer positions and compiling lists of employees interested in volunteering to give to voluntary agencies that were recruiting. However, almost half of these respondents (32 per cent of all the organizations replying to the questionnaire) indicated that they would consider such involvement. This indicates a possible new direction for the expansion of the employer-volunteer partnership in the future.

### *Types of Support*

The support and encouragement employers offer to employee-volunteers take many forms. The most common form of support or encouragement offered to employees who engage in volunteer activities, selected by 61 per cent of respondents, is the use of organization facilities. Examples used to illustrate this form of support were vehicles, rooms, grounds, photocopying, computing, and word processing.

Allowing the employee to take time off work or to adjust the work schedule is also a frequent practice. Fifty-eight per cent of organizations offering encouragement or support said that they allow time off work for voluntary activity. Examples of this practice included lengthened lunch hours, early leaving and long weekends. Of those allowing time off work, 79 per cent indicated that they allow some of this time with pay, and 55 per cent allow employees to adjust work schedules to accommodate voluntary activity.

### *Employer Objectives and Processes*

Employers with a generally supportive approach to employee volunteerism tend to have developed objectives for their support and have created processes for accommodating employees' volunteer activity.

- Sixty-six per cent of these respondents indicated a public affairs objective for organizational practices with respect to employee volunteerism. Human resource management objectives were selected by 28 per cent of employers.
- More than 70 per cent of respondents indicated that they do not consider voluntary activity in employee evaluations.
- Slightly more than half the organizations responding to this survey indicated that they look at experience working in a voluntary organization when considering a candidate for employment.
- Volunteer experience is seen primarily as evidence of the right sort of attitudes by the largest group of organizations that consider this experience when making hiring decisions.
- For more than half of responding organizations, questions or issues regarding the impact on the workplace of employee involvement in voluntary activities are resolved on a decentralized basis.
- The individuals making the decisions on

employee volunteerism in these decentralized organizational units tend to be at or near the top of the unit. Questions arising from an individual's request for some special dispensation connected with voluntary activity tend to be dealt with two, and sometimes more, levels of authority above the requesting individual.

- Among organizations supporting employee voluntary activity, four out of five report that they apply their practices in this regard to all permanent employees.
- Three-quarters of the employers that offer employee-volunteers support indicate that they make no distinctions among groups of employees in applying the practices.

### *Policies on Volunteerism*

Relatively few organizations have developed formal policies on employee volunteerism. Only 6 per cent of respondents replied that they had policy documents in this area. Among those that do have written policies, a range of approaches has been adopted. Policies on employee voluntary activity fall into three broad categories: encouraging, enabling and promoting.

#### *Encouraging Policies*

Encouraging policy statements can either stand alone or form part of a larger package. In some cases, they set an organizational tone for policies that will be given flesh and bone in the business units. In others, they serve as a preface to policies that anticipate the queries of employee-volunteers and the conundrums faced by their supervisors.

#### *Enabling Policies*

Policies that anticipate employee and supervisor queries do more than encourage. By setting boundaries and establishing procedures they define what might be called "enabling" practices. These assist employees and supervisors in resolving any competing demands made by the job and the volunteer activity.

#### *Promoting Policies*

Policy statements that promote employee involvement do so by rewarding employee achievement in the voluntary, civic, artistic or athletic fields.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Emerging areas of corporate practice always generate new challenges and opportunities. Employee volunteerism is no exception.

### *Recognizing the Human Resource Contribution*

One challenge for employers, employee-volunteers, and volunteer sector officials is to recognize and account for the human resource contribution made by the organization in supporting volunteerism.

For example, organizations that earn revenue strictly from the time of their personnel (e.g., accounting firms) may be asked to contribute more to the volunteer system than employers that use their employees' time to produce goods or services. This issue also arises in organizations with "charge back" systems for staff functions, and is also reflected in the distinction that some organizations make between salaried and hourly paid employees.

Working out arrangements to accommodate employees whose time is billable or who are compensated on the basis of time spent will present a major challenge in the years ahead.

### *Collective Agreements*

A related challenge lies in the field of developing policies for employee-volunteers who are covered by collective agreements. Often, the hourly compensation issue affects this area as well. Some employers and bargaining units have worked out comprehensive memorandums of agreement on ways of dealing with the difficulties posed by organizations offering selective support for non-work activities by unionized employees.

### *Jurisdictional Challenges*

A further challenge, especially relevant in times of industrial adjustment, might be

characterized as "jurisdictional". A union may be concerned that volunteers are doing jobs that are sometimes done by the members of other unions. Similarly, an employer may be concerned if work that is sometimes contracted to profit-making businesses is being performed by non-profit agencies using volunteers.

### *Retired Employees*

Programs for the aged have not been the focus for much encouragement on the part of employers to employee-volunteers. Nevertheless, the place of the "retirer" in society, especially with reference to his or her previous employer, is emerging as one of the most important subjects of debate in Canada today. Although relatively few respondents to this survey placed special emphasis on volunteer work with the ageing, many organizations include a role for retired employees in their voluntary activity programs. Some go further and develop voluntary programs that rely on their retired employees.

### *Role of Government*

The role of government in carrying out many community activities is much debated in the 1980's. Although most commentators doubt the ability of the volunteer system to meet all community needs, the possibilities offered by a partnership between business and volunteer organizations for meeting some of these needs are truly great.

### *Employer-Volunteer Co-operation*

Employers appear interested in a "clearing house" role to help facilitate employee volunteerism. This suggests that there may be an opportunity to attempt the construction in Canada of a system of Corporate Volunteer Councils similar to those operating in the United States. These organizations bring community employers together to help promote voluntary activity and match needs with resources.

# About this Report

## Background

This report was initiated in response to inquiries from several Conference Board Associates in the private sector. They were interested in two issues. One was a pattern of growing demands on senior executive time for service on the boards of directors and finance committees of volunteer organizations, including arts groups, charities, hospitals and universities. The second was a desire on the part of the executives themselves for guidance in allocating and accounting for the time they were spending on what they saw as worthwhile endeavours. They wanted to know what others were doing in order to help them fit these important tasks into their already busy lives.

At the time these inquiries were being made, the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada was also considering a survey of employers on employee volunteerism. The department had developed a research program to document the role of volunteering in Canada and to assist government in facilitating the work of the volunteer sector. Thus, there was an opportunity of combining the needs of both organizations. As a result, the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada became interested in sponsoring the research.

## Objectives

This report represents basic research. Its objective is to develop an understanding of the range of experience Canadian employers have had with respect to employee voluntary activity. Questions addressed in this research include:

- What views of voluntary activity are held by employers?
- What practices are in place to help the employer respond to employee requests for assistance with volunteer work?
- What kinds of policies have employers developed in this area?
- What issues arise for employers in the course of dealing with employee volunteerism?

## Benefits

The benefits of this research accrue to employers, employee-volunteers, voluntary agency staff and government officials concerned with the voluntary sector.

For the employer, this report presents a comprehensive examination of the practices that Canadian organizations have found to be helpful in responding to requests for assistance from employee-volunteers and from voluntary groups. Also included are examples of policies that some employers have found effective and discussions of issues, both current and potential, that are raised by the growth of employee-volunteers.

For the volunteer, this report presents a summary of employer concerns so that requests to accommodate volunteer activity can be made in a way that will allow the needs and interests of both the employer and the voluntary activity to be fairly represented.

Voluntary sector staff will find information about the practices and policies employers have in place affecting one of the fastest growing parts of the voluntary sector—the employee-volunteer.

Finally, governments at all levels will be able to use this information to design their practices with respect to volunteerism—as both employer and policy maker—to accommodate the needs of the private sector.

## Information Sources

The data for this study were collected in February 1986 using a mailed questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to 4,354 Canadian organizations. Usable responses were received from 926 organizations (21 per cent) employing more than 1.5 million Canadians. An additional 45 responses were received but, because they were late or contained incomplete information, were not analysed and tabulated in the overall results.

The responding organizations represent all sectors of Canadian business and institutional life. Manufacturing companies account for the largest group of respondents, approximately one-third of the total. The organizations range in size from 3 employees to 66,000, with a mean of approximately 1,700 permanent employees. Responses were received from all regions of the country, with about half coming from Ontario.



# 1 Employee Volunteerism in Canada

## Introduction

Volunteerism, that form of philanthropy in which time and talent are contributed rather than money, has always been an important part of Canadian life. One student of the subject has argued that:

Canada's first 60 years as a nation were marked by a blossoming of philanthropy and personal service, The Golden Age of Philanthropy. Charitable activity in the form of both dollars and time was most certainly an important element in the lives of many Canadians in all walks of life. It was the accepted and expected norm of behavior.<sup>1</sup>

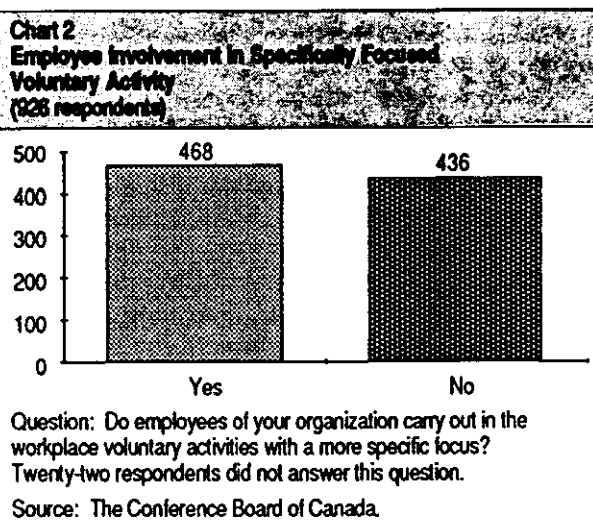
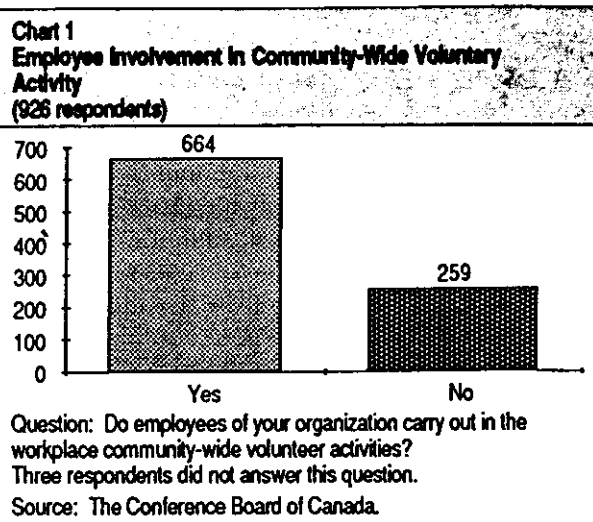
This tradition continues today and has a major impact on the economy and society. It has been estimated that in 1980 "2.7 million Canadians donated an average 2.9 hours per week to organized volunteer work". The same report estimated the value of the economic contribution of this work at \$2.0 billion. The report also estimated that "the total of volunteer activity amounted to about 200,000 person years of work—for comparative purposes, more than the amount of work performed by the combined labour forces of Saskatoon, Regina and Victoria".<sup>2</sup>

Today, the volunteer work force has taken on a new characteristic. More and more of its members hold paid jobs. The corollary of this change is that more and more members of the paid labour force are also volunteers.<sup>3</sup> The employers of these volunteers find with increasing frequency that the voluntary activities of their employees present the employing organization with both new challenges and new opportunities. This study

<sup>1</sup>Samuel A. Martin, *An Essential Grace, Funding Canada's Health Care, Education, Welfare, Religion and Culture* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>David P. Ross, *Some Financial and Economic Dimensions of Registered Charities and Volunteer Activity in Canada* (Ottawa: Social Trends Analysis Directorate, Policy Coordination Analysis & Management Systems Branch, Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1983), p. i.

<sup>3</sup>Teresa Carson, "Getting Involved by Volunteering", *Business Week*, (March 17, 1986), pp. 146-7; K. K. Allen, "Volunteers from the Workplace: A New Resource", in Mel S. Moyer, ed., *Managing Voluntary Organizations* (Toronto: York University, 1983), pp. 168-75; The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto, *Corporate Involvement in Volunteerism in the Metro Toronto Area*, (Toronto: Urban Affairs Department, November 1985).

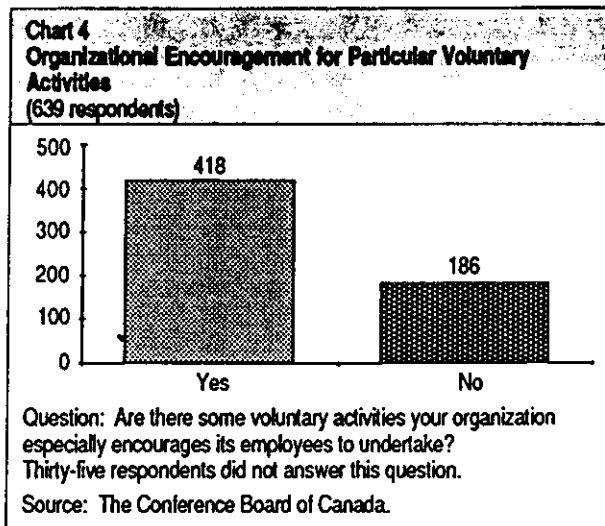
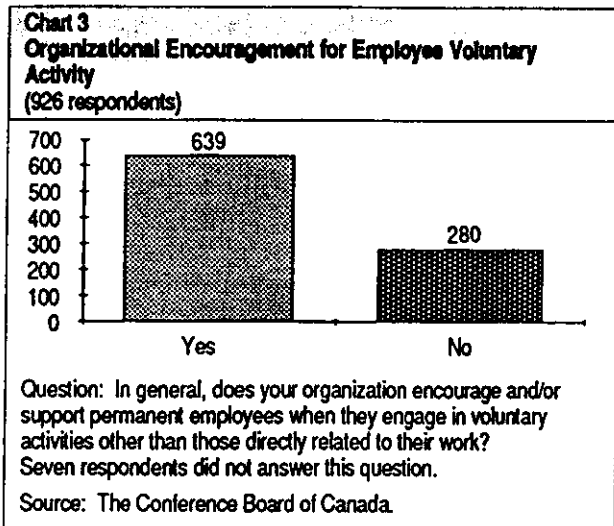


examines these challenges and opportunities and documents the employers' responses to them.

## Employers' Response to Volunteerism

Canadian employers are expressing a great deal of interest in the volunteer activities of employees. More than 900 executives participated in this study. This is itself a major indicator of interest as the questionnaire was lengthy and complex.

Seventy-two per cent of respondents indicated that employees of their organizations carry out "community-wide" volunteer activities in the workplace (Chart 1). These "community-wide" activities were exemplified by the United Way campaign and Red Cross blood donor clinics.



Among the organizations in which these community-wide volunteer activities take place, 93 per cent indicated that they encourage the activity. In 80 per cent of these organizations, executives answered that the activities take place during working hours. Almost 75 per cent of these firms said that they promote and help to organize the employee participation. Nearly 60 per cent indicated playing some role in initiating the involvement of their employees.

When asked whether employees carry out, in the workplace, voluntary activity with a "more specific focus" than the community-wide activities referred to earlier, 51 per cent of the responding organizations answered in the affirmative (Chart 2). Examples used in the question to illustrate voluntary activity with a "more specific focus" included hospital fund-raising and recruiting labour to build a little league baseball diamond.

Among organizations with employees engaging at the workplace in volunteer activity with a specific focus, 27 per cent said that they initiate some such activities themselves, 40 per cent indicated that some activities are initiated by employees without management involvement, and 54 per cent said that some activities are initiated by employees but approved by management. In some firms, two or all three of the approaches are followed.

Asked about their general approach to encouraging and supporting employees when they engage in voluntary activity, 69 per cent of all respondents answered that they do (Chart 3). Although 30 per cent of participating organizations did not encourage voluntary activity, only 6 organizations (out of 926

**Table 1**  
Voluntary Activities Especially Encouraged by Employers  
(418 respondents)

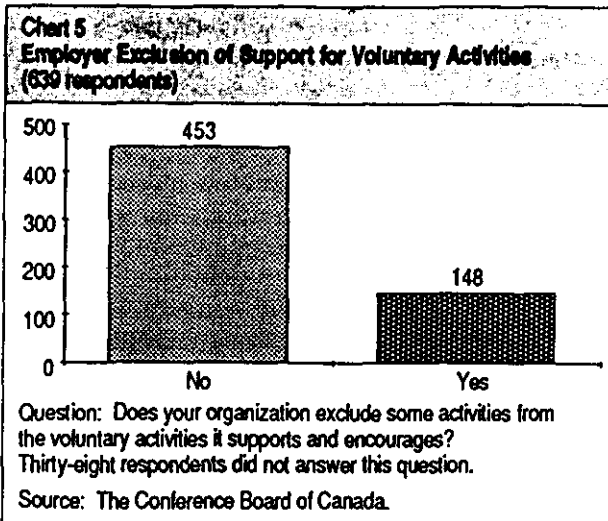
Activity	No. of respondents
United Way	299
Professional associations	297
Business and trade associations	261
Chambers of Commerce	221
Service clubs	180
Junior Achievement	137
Community athletic activities	121
Youth programs	107
Activities in support of a hospital	105
Community cultural activities	103
Self-help programs	86
Community economic development initiatives	84
Elementary/secondary school educational programs	66
University alumni	52
Programs for the aged	47
Elementary/secondary school athletic programs	26
Elementary/secondary school cultural programs	14
Militia	11

Question: If there are some voluntary activities employees are especially encouraged to undertake, are any of the following among them?  
Numbers may not add to 418 because respondents could choose more than one response.  
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

respondents) indicated that they discourage employees from engaging in voluntary activity.

### Employers' View of Volunteerism

Canadian employers take a broad view of volunteerism, giving special emphasis to



**Table 2  
Voluntary Activities Sometimes Excluded from Employer Support  
(418 respondents)**

Activity	No. of respondents
Trade union (not in collective agreement)	93
Political party	78
Religious	70
Special interest advocacy groups	59
Activities not directed by an organization	31
Employee is a beneficiary	27
Non-partisan political	11

Question: If your organization does exclude some activities, are any of the following excluded?  
Numbers may not add to 418 because respondents could choose more than one answer.  
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

organizations that serve the whole community service sector and to those that are "member-serving".<sup>4</sup>

Organizations that say they do, in general, encourage or support permanent employees engaging in volunteer activity were asked whether there were some voluntary activities their employees were especially encouraged to undertake. Chart 4 indicates that 65 per cent answered "yes".

Although the general concept of "volunteer activity" is well understood, defining it precisely is problematic.<sup>5</sup> Everyone includes or excludes

different activities. In the face of this difficulty, rather than imposing an arbitrary definition, respondents whose organizations encouraged particular voluntary activities were asked to select these activities from a list presented to them. As Table 1 shows, the United Way ranks first among voluntary activities especially encouraged. It is followed by professional associations, business and trade associations, and Chambers of Commerce. These activities are followed by voluntary endeavours providing various services.

The bottom of the ranking is occupied—with the exception of programs for the aged—by activities in support of large institutions, such as the militia, elementary and secondary school activities, and university alumni. This may indicate that governments are still seen as the most appropriate source of resources, including human resources, for these institutions. Since one aspect of policy debate in Canada in the 1980's centres on the appropriateness of this sourcing, these findings are especially interesting. They indicate that the role of volunteers in the military and educational establishments of the nation will have to be addressed more thoroughly by all participants in the debate before a resolution can be forthcoming.

Programs for the aged have also not been the focus for much encouragement from employers to employee-volunteers. This is a significant finding because an ageing population is beginning to put more demands on the voluntary sector for service. The need for volunteers in this area will become even more pressing in the future. As retirement practices become more varied, this is an area that may very well give rise to significant challenges for Canadian employers.

An open-ended supplement to the list of activities in which employers might especially encourage employees to volunteer elicited a wide range of responses. Four groups stood out: Red Cross blood donor clinics, the Variety Club, conservation groups (especially Ducks Unlimited), and groups raising funds for research on various medical conditions.

A complementary question asked if some activities are excluded from the activities the organization encourages. It is important to bear in mind that this does *not* mean that employees are discouraged from participation in these activities, only that the organization takes no part. Only 23 per cent of respondents answered that they did exclude some activities from their active support (Chart 5). The question was frequently answered with a note to the effect that

<sup>4</sup>Jon Van Til, "Voluntarism and Social Policy", *Social Policy*, vol. 15, no. 4 (Spring 1985), p. 28.

<sup>5</sup>DPA Consulting Limited, *The Development of a Typology of the Voluntary Sector in Canada* (Ottawa: Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, 1983).

specific activities were not excluded, though a general concern with the potential for conflict of interest was communicated to employees.

Organizations indicating that they did exclude certain activities from active support were presented with a list of activities and asked if any of them were among the excluded group. The resulting list of activities with which organizations do not involve themselves is presented in Table 2; however, this table requires some elucidation.

The most frequently selected answer—"trade union activities other than those covered in a collective agreement"—evidently presented some ambiguities for respondents. The item was intended to cover benevolent activities undertaken through the union. These might include assistance for members suffering from illness, activities for retired members, or programs for the families of members. Some of the answers indicated that it was understood to include both benevolent activities and organizing activities. Thus, the extent to which the benevolent activities are actually not encouraged is unclear.

Perhaps the most significant result to be found in the answers to this question is the relatively small number of organizations that explicitly exclude "activities not directed by an organization". The example given in the question was "taking a neighbour to a cancer clinic". This type of undertaking clearly stretches the definition of voluntary activity. Equally clearly, it is the type of benevolent behaviour on which important basic values of Canadian society rest. As one commentator has pointed out, this type of individual volunteer activity has been seen in Canada as an expression of a "sense of connection and belonging, and...feelings of community duty".<sup>6</sup> Recent increases in the proportion of the population in the labour force have reduced the number of people free to carry out this type of activity. In addition, since the administrative difficulties inherent in accommodating such individual efforts loom large, it might have been hypothesized that organizations would not want to address them. The answers to this question indicate a very flexible employer approach to volunteerism in Canada.

These findings make it clear that Canadian employers have a broad, inclusive, but clearly defined view of volunteerism. Starting from this perspective, employers have found ways of working with employee-volunteers in a

partnership that goes some way to meeting the needs of both the employing organization and the voluntary activity.

## Fostering a Partnership

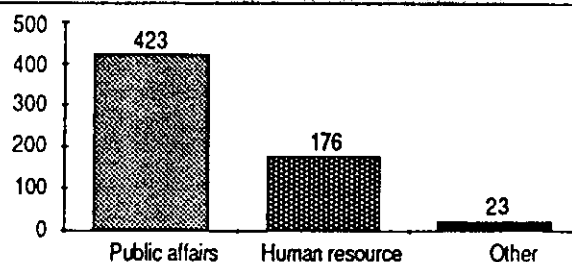
"Good corporate citizenship" is the objective most frequently chosen by employers to describe the goals of their organization's policies and practices with respect to employee voluntary activity. A second choice is "increased employee satisfaction". Only organizations indicating that they encourage or support permanent employees engaging in voluntary activity (639 respondents) were asked to answer this question and, unless otherwise noted, subsequent questions discussed in this chapter.

Chart 6 illustrates that, when related responses are combined, 66 per cent of respondents indicated a public affairs objective for this area of organization practice. Human resource management objectives were selected by 28 per cent of employers, and other objectives by 6 per cent.

Although employers see an advantage in supporting and encouraging employee volunteerism, most leave the initiative to the employee. Slightly more than one-third of all respondents to this survey indicated that they had loaned or temporarily assigned an employee to a voluntary or charitable organization (Chart 7). A slightly larger number of organizations indicated that they were quite likely to do so in the future.

There is, however, evidence that some organizations are interested in a more active approach. Eighty-five per cent of all respondents to the survey indicated they had never acted as a

**Chart 6**  
**Employers' Objectives for Volunteerism Policies and Practices**  
(639 respondents)

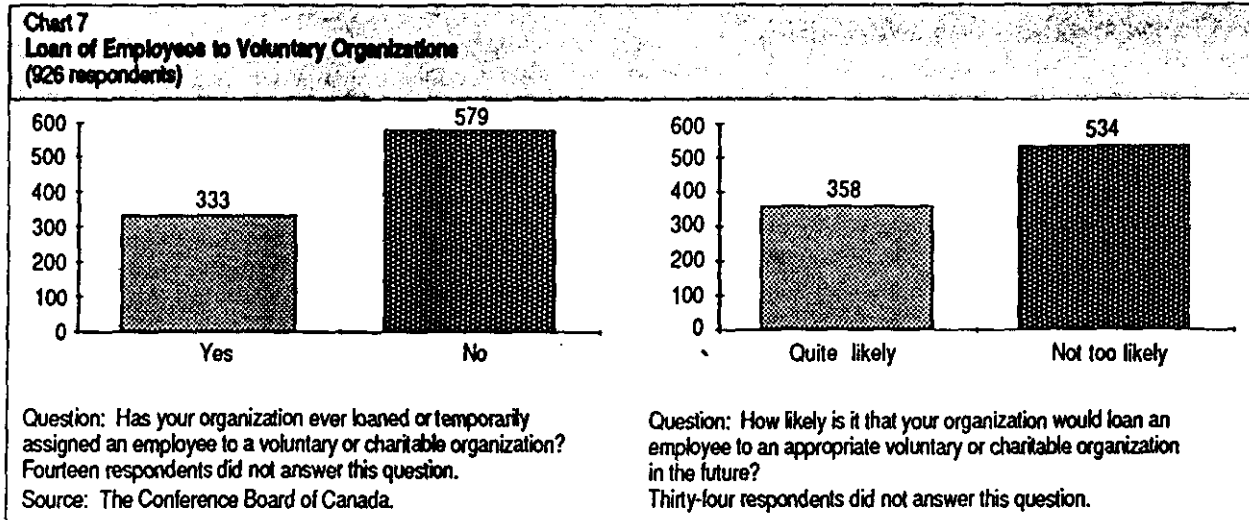


Question: Which objectives best describe your organization's goals for its policy/practices with respect to employee voluntary activity?

Seventeen respondents did not answer this question.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Fulford, "The Way We Were", *Saturday Night* (March 1985), p. 5.



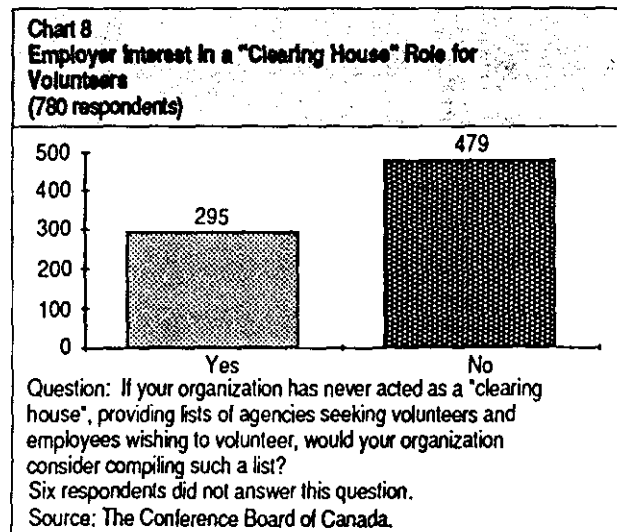
"clearing house", that is, providing employees with lists of available volunteer positions and compiling lists of employees interested in volunteering to give to voluntary agencies that were recruiting. However, as Chart 8 shows, almost half of these respondents (32 per cent of all the organizations replying to the questionnaire) indicated that they would consider such involvement. This response mirrors the success of the "Young in Art" program of the Council for Business and the Arts in Canada. This program actively recruits, with the assistance of the employer, young executives to serve on the boards of arts organizations.<sup>7</sup> This new direction indicates a possibility for the expansion of the employer-volunteer partnership in the future.

The most common form of support or encouragement offered to employees who engage in volunteer activities is the use of organization facilities (Chart 9). Examples used to illustrate this form of support were vehicles, rooms, grounds, photocopying, computing and word processing. Sixty-one per cent of employers offering encouragement or support indicate that they provide some access to organization facilities. The major conditions on the use of these facilities are the availability of proper supervision, the absence of a prior organizational requirement for the facility, and "common sense".

Allowing the employee to take time off work or to adjust the work schedule is also a frequent practice. Fifty-eight per cent of organizations offering encouragement or support answered that they allow time off work for voluntary activity. Examples of this practice included lengthened lunch hours, early leaving and long weekends. Of

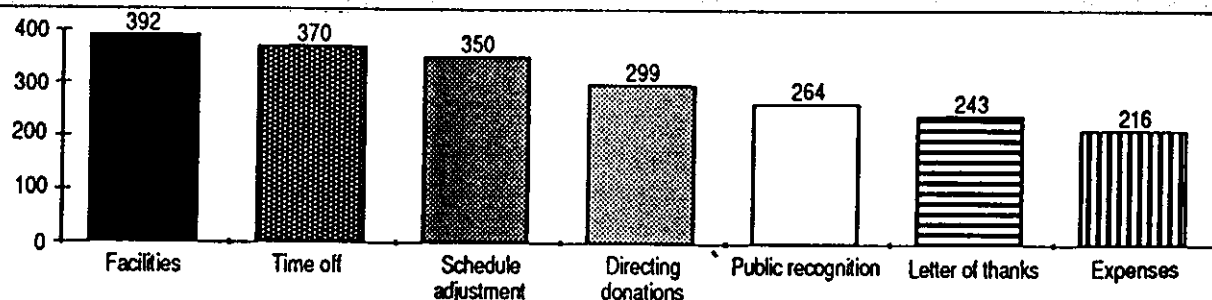
those allowing time off work, 79 per cent indicated that they allow some of this time with pay (Chart 10). Fifty-five per cent of respondents report allowing employees to adjust work schedules to accommodate voluntary activity. Examples of this include changing vacation schedules, shift changes, and the beginning or ending of the work day.

Forty-seven per cent of organizations reported that they offer support by "directing organization donations or sponsorships to voluntary activities or organizations to which employees donate their time". The large proportion of organizations answering in the affirmative may indicate a very positive attitude to the role of the volunteer. This affirmative response is substantially larger than the proportion of organizations that report "matching grants" programs in surveys that investigate corporate donations. Matching grants programs generally involve directing organization



<sup>7</sup>Council for Business and the Arts in Canada, *CBAC Policy Questionnaire: Results*, (October 1985), p. 8.

**Chart 9  
Employer Encouragement to Volunteering Employees  
(639 respondents)**



Question: Does your organization use any of the following methods to encourage employees to undertake voluntary activities not directly related to work?

Numbers may not add to 639 because respondents could choose more than one response.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

donations to activities or groups to which employees donate money rather than time.

Further, more than one-third of responding organizations report offering at least some assistance with personal expenses incurred by employees undertaking voluntary activities. The expenditure of discretionary funds in support of employee voluntary efforts represents one of the strongest forms of commitment an employer can make to these activities.

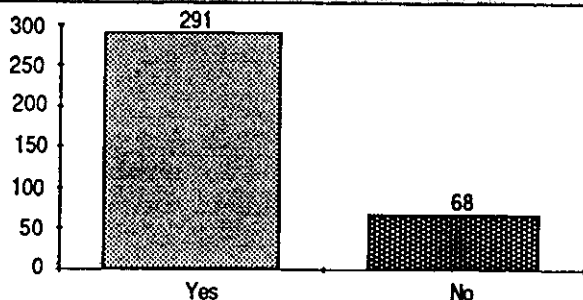
Many organizations also extend special recognition to employees who have exhibited outstanding performances in the volunteer sector. These efforts are recognized "in organization publications or at organization information or awards meetings, picnics, etc." by 41 per cent of the respondents. Only slightly fewer offer such recognition in "a letter or memo of thanks from a manager or executive".

Support and recognition of volunteer work are not, however, extended through the regular

performance review process in most organizations. More than 70 per cent of respondents indicated that they do not consider voluntary activity in evaluations. Although the great majority reserve the evaluation process for job-related performance, Chart 11 shows that 21 per cent of respondents consider voluntary activity when evaluating an employee for promotion. One organization with an employee complement extending across the nation and a strong presence in many communities indicated that voluntary activity plays an important career role. Although it might have little influence on promotion in this organization, it plays a big part in choosing individuals for specific positions and career paths in the organization. Another respondent indicated, somewhat ominously, that voluntary activity might be considered when an inadequate performance had been recorded on the job.

If volunteer work is not likely to play a role in obtaining rewards through the performance

**Chart 10  
Time Off with Pay for Voluntary Activity  
(370 respondents)**

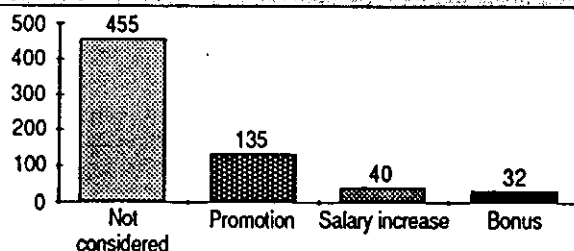


Question: If your organization allows time off for voluntary activity, is this time off with pay?

Eleven respondents did not answer this question.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

**Chart 11  
Place of Voluntary Activity in Employee Evaluation  
(639 respondents)**

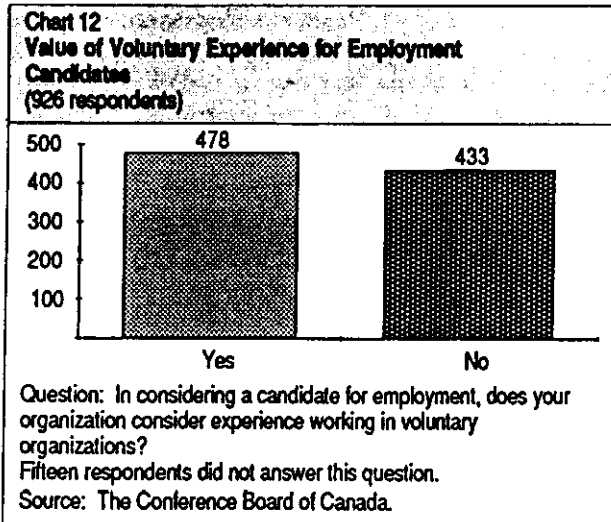


Question: Are an employee's voluntary activities included in the factors qualifying the employee for advancement through: promotion, salary increase or bonus.

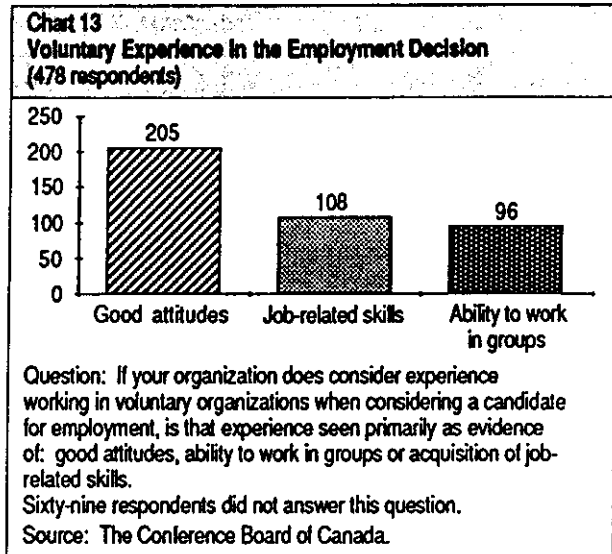
Numbers may not add to 639 because respondents could choose more than one response.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

review process, such work seems very likely to help in gaining employment in the first place. Slightly more than half the organizations responding to this survey indicate that they look at experience working in a voluntary organization when considering a candidate for employment (Chart 12). Volunteer experience is seen primarily as evidence of the right sort of attitudes by the largest group of organizations that consider this experience when making hiring



decisions (Chart 13). About half as many organizations look to this experience for evidence of the acquisition of job-related skills. A slightly smaller group of employers treat volunteer experience as evidence of an ability to work in groups. Those seeking entry or re-entry to the work world will find many potential employers willing to consider their unpaid experience in deciding whether to take them on as employees.



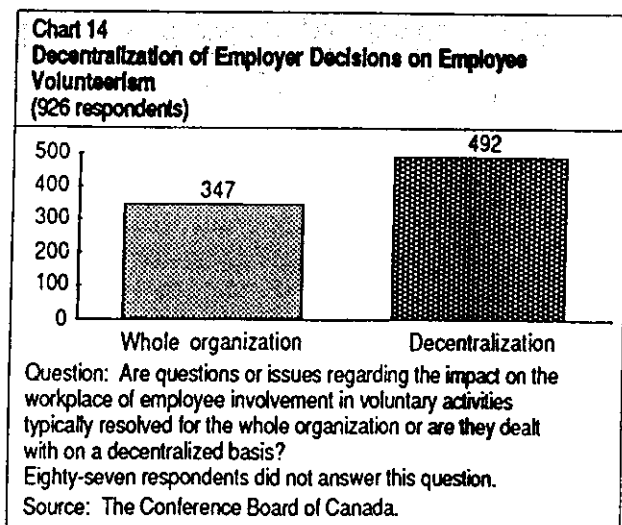
## 2 Policies and Processes Concerning Employee Volunteerism

Employee volunteerism is an area of emerging organizational policy. Only 54 organizations (6 per cent of the participants) indicated that they had prepared a formal policy document on employee volunteerism. Nevertheless, many respondents are able to indicate, with the confidence bred of consistent practice, the process by which decisions are made when issues arise in this area. This chapter begins with an analysis of these processes, then moves to consideration of specific policies.

### Processes

For more than half of responding organizations, questions or issues regarding the impact on the workplace of employee involvement in voluntary activities are resolved on a decentralized basis (Chart 14). The type of organizational unit at which such decentralized decision making occurs is usually what would be considered an "establishment" under the Standard Industrial Classification. Examples include a factory, a sales office, or a regional service centre. Less frequent arrangements place the decision making at the divisional or subsidiary level. Of course, in many decentralized organizations these levels coincide. The important information contained in the responses to this question is that these decisions tend to be made close to the workplace.

The individuals making the decisions on



employee volunteerism in these decentralized organizational units tend to be at or near the top of the unit. This is especially true for broad general questions or issues. However, even questions arising from an individual's request for some special dispensation connected with voluntary activity tend to be dealt with at a fairly high level. For these questions, the general rule seems to be that the resolution is developed two, and sometimes more, levels of authority above the requesting individual.

Among organizations supporting employee voluntary activity, four out of five report that they apply their practices in this regard to all permanent employees (Table 3). Three-quarters of the employers that offer employee-volunteers support indicate that they make no distinctions among groups of employees in applying the practices (Chart 15).

In those organizations that do not apply their practices with respect to voluntary activity to all permanent employees or that apply the practices differently to different groups of employees, two, sometimes overlapping, employee groups are most frequently dealt with as exceptions. Hourly paid staff are sometimes excluded from these practices. Usually this is because employees who use organization time for volunteer work are still expected to complete all the work assigned to them. Applying such a policy to hourly paid

**Table 3**  
Application of Employer Practices on Employee Volunteerism  
(639 respondents)

Employee group	No. of respondents
All employees	507
Managers	102
Executives	93
Professionals	66
Other salaried	48

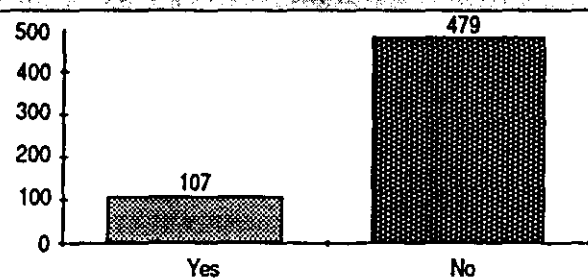
Question: Do your organization's practices of supporting or encouraging employee voluntary activity apply to all permanent employees or only to certain groups?

Numbers may not add to 639 because respondents could choose more than one response.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.



**Chart 15**  
**Differences in Application of Employer Practices**  
 (639 respondents)



Question: Do your organization's practices with respect to employee voluntary activity apply differently to different groups of employees?

Fifty-three respondents did not answer this question.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

employees would give rise to anomalies such as employees working at organization projects on their own time. The second group that is sometimes excluded from these practices is employees covered by a collective agreement. Some employers find it especially difficult to resolve issues that would arise because of inconsistencies between policy or practice with respect to volunteer activities and the terms of the collective agreement.

In other organizations, the policy or practice on voluntary activity is only applied to selected groups of employees. Often these groups include executives, managers and sales representatives, individuals who are seen as representing the organization in the community.

Thus, employers have developed consistent ways of dealing with employees' requests for special consideration so that volunteer projects may be pursued. In a few organizations these processes have led to the formulation of written policies governing this area of employer-employee relations.

## Written Policies

Policies on employees' voluntary activities fall into three broad categories: encouraging, enabling and promoting. These categories can best be understood by looking at some examples of policy statements.

The examples that follow represent the full range of written policies extant. Organizations whose policies are used are only identified if they indicated a preference for such a citation.

### *Encouraging Policies*

Organizations that make positive statements

about the value of voluntary endeavour without giving specific guidelines on how to go about matching work and voluntary responsibilities can be said to have adopted encouraging policies. These instruments may represent a first step in the development of a comprehensive policy. They may also manifest a recognition that, because large organizations are so complex, a detailed, centralized policy on a complicated subject may not yield as effective results as decentralized policies, developed and implemented at levels closer to the workplace.

A Canadian telecommunications firm kept its statement encouraging employee voluntary activity concise: "Employees are encouraged to take an active part in government, social and professional organizations, as well as to support the political party of their choice."

The Guaranty Trust Company of Canada is more explicit in its promise to support the communities in which it does business.

We believe strongly in our responsibility to make a positive contribution to the quality of life in the communities in which we are represented. Both as a company and as employees, we will actively support those organizations and activities which benefit the community. We will contribute time, talent and money to the communities where we do business.

Another financial institution developed a more elaborate pattern for presenting its position to employees, but was equally careful to avoid precise instructions on implementation.

### *Belief*

We have a responsibility as good corporate citizens to contribute to the well-being of the community.

### *Commitments*

We will honour the intent and importance of legislation governing human rights and quality of life in the workplace;  
 We will work with other organizations to achieve mutually beneficial goals within the community;  
 We will encourage and support employee participation in programs that are in the best interests of the community;  
 We will ensure that our business decisions are made with integrity and sound judgement so as to enhance the well being of the community.

Finally, a major pharmaceutical firm developed a comprehensive responsibility statement covering customers, employees, shareholders and communities.

We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work and to the world community as well.

We must be good citizens — support good works and charities and bear our fair share of taxes.

We must encourage civic improvements and better health and education.

We must maintain in good order the property we are privileged to use, protecting the environment and natural resources.

Encouraging policy statements can either stand alone, as do those in the preceding examples, or form part of a larger package. Where they form part of a larger package, that package can be constructed in a number of ways. In some cases, the encouraging statements set an organizational tone for policies that will be given flesh and bone in the business units. In others, they serve as a preface to policies that anticipate the queries of employee-volunteers and the conundrums faced by their supervisors. These policies go beyond encouragement. By setting boundaries and establishing procedures they define what might be called "enabling" practices. These assist employees and supervisors in resolving any competing demands made by the job and the volunteer activity.

### *Enabling Policies*

Some organizations begin with an encouraging statement and then move on to provide some guidance to employees and managers on how to implement the corporate intentions. Ontario Hydro takes this approach.

#### *Membership and Participation in External Organizations*

Corporate supported membership and participation in community service organizations shall be encouraged to the extent that Ontario Hydro is a visible and substantial presence in a local community. Support (Corporate supported membership and participation expenses and/or limited use of facilities) will be at the appropriate levels to discharge our

obligations as a 'good corporate citizen'. Prior approval must be sought before employees will accept executive responsibilities or other time consuming assignments that interfere with normal duties, unless it is an expressed responsibility of the designated position to represent Ontario Hydro in external organizations.

An alternative way of achieving the same objective is followed by a financial company. It sets out the boundaries quite clearly while still encouraging employees to involve themselves.

#### *General*

In meeting its social responsibilities, the Company makes significant contributions of its financial and manpower resources. It also encourages employees at all levels to participate in community affairs of their own choice on a voluntary basis. Such involvement includes a wide variety of worthwhile activities such as school, scout and hospital work, fund-raising, and appointment or election to political office.

#### *Guidelines*

In most cases, the time devoted by the employee and the nature of the volunteer work are quite separate and apart from his or her Company position. Occasionally, however, conflicts arise and priorities should be established in accordance with the following guidelines: It is expected that employees will meet all of the normal requirements of their [company] positions, including overtime when necessary. Where an outside activity temporarily conflicts with job requirements, it is expected that the job will receive first priority.

Other organizations separate the corporate goal from the preferred route to it. Canadian National takes this direction by including a separate section on "Authority".

#### *Non-financial Assistance to Charitable Campaigns*

It is Company policy to assist organizations conducting community sponsored united appeals (e.g. United Way, Centraide, etc.) and other major

charitable campaigns and to encourage and facilitate employee donations thereto by:

- making available, where practicable, the services of officers and employees to assist in the general conduct of campaigns as chairmen, division heads, team captains or in other capacities;
- facilities such as office space, equipment and duplicating services, where available, may also be offered to charitable campaign organizations.

#### *Authority*

##### *Assistance to Campaign Organizations*

It is permissible to loan the services of officers and employees to charitable organizations to assist in the general conduct of their campaigns. Such loans require approvals as follows:

- CN Rail regional employees: by the Regional Vice-President or his delegate.
- Employees within a CN Enterprises division: by the head of the division.
- Headquarter employees (CN Rail, CN Enterprises, Corporate): by the appropriate one of the President, CN Rail; President, CN Enterprises; the President and Chief Executive Officer or a Senior Corporate Vice-President.

A major consumer goods producer is even more specific about how employees should go about obtaining a dispensation for volunteer activities. Not only the authority but also a precise description of the information required to make the decision is laid out.

Employees who have been asked by charitable organizations, hospitals, etc., to devote any of their time during business hours to assist in campaigns or administrative work must first obtain permission from their Department Head and Division Head concerned, who will clear this with the Manager Human Resources Department in order to prevent duplication. After agreement has been reached, a memorandum in duplicate should be sent by the Department Head to the office of the Manager, Human Resources Department, containing the following information:  
Name of the staff employee

Name of the charitable organization, hospital, etc.

Type of work to be done

Expected duration and estimated time the employee will be spending on this work.

Employers with specific activities they wish to advance or employers in situations offering unusual opportunities to make a contribution sometimes develop very explicit guidelines. The government of the Northwest Territories has developed a detailed policy on civic leave. Much of the object of the policy is to enable public servants to be involved in building community organizations, many of them of a self-help and quasi-political nature. To complement this institution-building policy, the government has implemented a policy on athletic endeavours.

##### *Time Off for Participation in Arctic Winter Games, Canada Summer Games, and Canada Winter Games*

It is the policy of the Government of the Northwest Territories to actively support and encourage participation in the Arctic Winter Games, the Canada Summer Games, and Canada Winter Games. Territorial Public Service employees who compete as athletes or who are officially designated as coaches or managers may be granted time off with pay, up to a maximum of eight working days per year to attend preliminary trials and any one session of the Games.

Employees requiring additional time off to participate in the Games must either liquidate annual leave or apply for leave without pay.

In 1984 an additional policy was brought forward by the government of the Northwest Territories covering leave for volunteer firefighters. This provided for emergency leave for firefighting situations and "leave with pay with Commissioner's approval (no loss of leave credits) for training courses required of volunteer firefighters". Clearly, the unique situation of the North creates greater needs to accommodate volunteer activity and, consequently, greater opportunities to make a contribution to building the communities in which the employer is located.

Such opportunities also occur in Canada's main population centres. In 1988, Calgary will host the Winter Olympics. In anticipation, Shell Canada has developed detailed enabling policies

to ensure that its head office employees can participate fully.

#### *Leave of Absence for Olympic Volunteers*

##### *Intent*

Shell recognizes both the unique nature of the Olympic Games, as well as the extraordinary volunteer support that will be required to successfully stage the 1988 Winter Games. As a major employer in the city, Shell would therefore like to accommodate, wherever practical, the volunteer interests and efforts of its employees as O.C.O. '88 [Organizing Committee for the 1988 Winter Olympics] volunteers, athletes or officials and as volunteers in other organizations/functions which are critical to the success of the Olympic Games. The following guidelines offer a possible direction...based upon a philosophy of some 'sharing' or matching of the commitment between the employee and Shell.

##### *Overall Guideline*

Individual employees requesting time off or leaves of absence will be expected to support their request with:

1. Written confirmation of the appointment/position for O.C.O. '88 or from the organization working to support the Olympic Games.
2. Written outline of their duties, responsibilities and specific time requirements between the time of their appointment and the staging of the Games.
3. A written assessment of the knowledge, training and experience required by the position and provided by the employee.

Requests for time off or leaves of absence will then be individually judged on the level of volunteer commitment required and on the degree to which the Company's operating and business needs can be matched with the employee's need for time off the job.

##### *Key Volunteers*

...Shell will work out a suitable leave of absence or time off arrangement on an exception basis...should the need arise, Shell may want to consider extraordinary arrangements for paid leaves of absence/time off, including special

consideration of vacation entitlement in order to prevent 'burn-out' of the employee.

##### *Major Operational Volunteers and Operational Volunteers*

For both types of volunteer, the guideline for time off or leaves of absence would be to provide a 'matching' period of paid time off for an equal portion of an employee's normal vacation entitlement used, normally to a maximum of 10 working days paid time off per calendar year.

##### *Other Considerations*

##### *Performance Expectations*

In all cases, special care will be taken to recognize both the operating/business needs of the Company, as well as the commitment and contribution of the employee. The employee and his/her immediate supervisor should clearly establish work plans and performance expectations for his/her regular duties in order to clarify the performance expected from the employee in light of more time off the job, as well as to recognize any extra work required of the employee's supervisor and/or his/her co-workers.

The organizations examined in the preceding section have all gone to great trouble to facilitate the participation of their employees in voluntary activity. However, in the policies quoted the organization encourages and enables but does not actively promote participation. Some of those organizations, and many others besides, also have award programs to encourage employees to participate in voluntary activities.

##### *Promoting Policies*

The policies discussed earlier might be characterized as being designed to keep the organization out of the way. They recognize that employment and volunteer responsibilities may overlap and they seek to resolve the dilemmas that can arise in such a situation. Except for paid time off and the selection of certain activities for special attention, these policies do not make the employer a participant in the voluntary activity. Another group of policies involve the employer in the thick of employees' volunteerism action. These policies reward employee achievement in the voluntary, civic, artistic or athletic fields.

One such program is the J. H. Moore Awards for Excellence at John Labatt Limited.

The purpose of these awards is to encourage the pursuit of high standards of achievement in daily life and to recognize employees, pensioners and dependent members of their family who are judged to have excelled in personal, voluntary achievements. There is far too little recognition for achievement of this type, far too little publicity given to those who contribute so much.

The program has several components. One of these is the Moore Award Trophy.

A sculpture representing excellence has been especially designed for the awards program. The unique original is displayed in a place of honor at the corporate offices of John Labatt Limited companies throughout the year. Valuable replicas of the sculpture will be presented for permanent possession of each winner, engraved with the winner's name.

In addition, recognizing that a single award can never capture the richness of the contribution a large organization's employees make, a second series of awards is made.

A medallion honoring impressive performance in the pursuit of excellence will be awarded each year to six or fewer candidates whose achievements strike the judges as contributing to the quality of life in an impressive way. Each winner will receive a handsome certificate inscribed with his or her name and signed by both the chairman of the board and the president of John Labatt Limited.

This program does more than fête the individual. It includes provision for recognizing the activity in which the winner was engaged.

The judges may award money grants of up to \$25,000 annually to exceptional causes. There are occasions when the judges see an opportunity to further the efforts of an individual or, through him or her, a group whose contribution could continue to improve the quality of life for others with the assistance of a grant.

The decision to grant money to an individual or group is strictly optional and at the discretion of the Awards Committee. They will make grants only when they recognize an unusual opportunity to encourage a worthy achievement.

This policy goes beyond what is commonly thought of as voluntary activity. It recognizes individual achievement in virtually any field outside of the mainstream of employment.

Achievements may include any worthwhile activity done freely without wages and may include individual sports, crafts, creative arts and music, hobbies, and any other activity where great personal commitment has led to an outstanding performance. Group activities may include voluntary charitable work, education, community activity...any achievement that solves a problem for people or helps the disadvantaged. Personal risk in an act of bravery will qualify a candidate. Leadership in a community undertaking is another example as is outstanding work in a support role.

The awards are intended for the company's "extended family". Those who are eligible include "an employee, a retired employee, or the spouse or dependent son or daughter of an employee or retired employee of a company owned by John Labatt Limited".

Policies such as this one contribute greatly to the possibility for voluntary work to take on an even greater role in Canadian life. As one of the leading experts in the field has commented:

The voluntary spirit does require nurturing in Canada. Personal service must be seen to be important to leaders in business, the professions, arts, sciences, labor—service measured not in the number of lines it attracts in the social column, nor in the number of entries on one's C. V., but recognized as an essential grace of the civilized man.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel A. Martin, *An Essential Grace, Funding Canada's Health Care, Education, Welfare, Religion and Culture* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985), pp. 207-8.

### 3 Challenges and Opportunities

Employee volunteerism is an evolving field in Canada. In the course of this research a number of challenges and opportunities emerged as conditioning the direction and speed of that evolution.

#### Challenges

One challenge for employers, employee-volunteers, and volunteer sector officials is to recognize and account for the human resource contribution made by organizations in supporting volunteerism. A respondent from Calgary wrote:

Firms which earn revenue strictly from the time of their personnel are obliged by the system to contribute far more in total value to the volunteer system.

We are an advertising and PR firm. Our only product is 'professional time'. When we work as volunteers, we sacrifice revenue which we could have earned from those same hours.

This difficulty also arises in organizations with "charge back" systems for staff functions. In a slightly different form it is reflected in the distinction some organizations make between salaried and hourly paid employees as far as volunteer work is concerned. Salaried staff are viewed as being paid to "get a job done", hourly employees are paid to perform a necessary task for a specific period of time. Working out arrangements to accommodate employees whose time is billable or who are compensated on the basis of time spent will present a major challenge in the years ahead.

A related challenge lies in the field of developing policies for employee-volunteers who are covered by collective agreements. Often, the hourly compensation issue affects this area as well. Some employers and bargaining units have worked out comprehensive memorandums of agreement on ways of dealing with the difficulties posed by organizations offering selective support for non-work activities by unionized employees. Selective support is not an

issue for union-management relations only. A respondent from a food producer wrote:

... our Company generally encourages and supports employees to engage in voluntary activities outside of the office; however, some control must be exercised to ration the amount of time any number of employees spend on these activities.... We are pleased our employees find time to do it, and are quite willing to give them some personal time off to take part, but obviously we cannot have all employees involved at the same time.

For many organizations, developing guidelines that will be fair and still ensure that the work gets done remains a paramount challenge.

The other side of this coin presents issues of concern also. Just as voluntary activity must not erode the ability of an organization to accomplish its mission, a desire to be a "good corporate citizen" must not intrude on an employee's privacy. For many employers and employees, volunteerism is an intensely private endeavour. In the view of these individuals, even the strategic interest of the organization must give way before the personal interest of the volunteer. Involvement by the organization in employee volunteerism, because it is such a private undertaking, is a worrying concept for these individuals and companies.

In some cases, the job-related issues are complicated by jurisdictional concerns. A union may be concerned that volunteers are doing jobs that are sometimes done by members of other unions. Similarly, an employer may be concerned that work being performed by non-profit agencies using volunteers is sometimes contracted out to profit-making businesses.

Finally, no discussion of the extension of the organization into community life at the end of the 1980's would be complete without a mention of liability issues. None of the respondents raised this issue but, especially with respect to the use of organization facilities, this is a topic that all employers are taking increasingly seriously.

Developing ways of addressing this concern while maintaining access to the facilities is a challenge that will face everyone involved with the independent sector.

## Opportunities

In addition to the challenges posed by this topic, some important opportunities for addressing social issues facing the employer are suggested in the course of any research on volunteerism. Three in particular emerge from consideration of employee volunteerism.

The place of the "retirer" in society, especially with reference to his or her previous employer, is emerging as one of the most important subjects of debate in Canada today. Despite the fact that relatively few respondents to this survey placed special emphasis on volunteer work with the ageing, many organizations include a role for retired employees in their voluntary activity programs. Some go further and develop voluntary programs that rely on their retired employees.<sup>1</sup> Still others include a component on voluntary opportunities in their retirement preparation programs.

A second opportunity is suggested by questions concerning the role of government. Respondents to the Conference Board survey did not dwell on the role of the volunteer in a time of government restraint. However, it is a topic that arises quickly in any conversation with executives on the volunteer sector. Almost all commentators remark on the way in which community needs that were once met by individual action have been taken over by government. In remarking on the situation of those to whom he refers as the "respectable poor", one writer, working in the United Kingdom, put it this way:

As we stand together in line at the post office, while they cash their pension cheques, some tiny portion of my income is transferred into their pockets through the numberless capillaries of the state. The mediated quality of our relationship seems necessary to both of us. They are dependent on the state, not upon me, and

we are both glad of it. Yet I am also aware of how this mediation walls us off from each other. We are responsible for each other, but we are not responsible to each other.<sup>2</sup>

Today, the mediation of the relationship is in question. As one of Canada's senior bankers puts it:

We've come to believe voluntary giving and volunteer time can, and will, cover any needs in our society that our tax dollars and government programs do not fill. We are sadly mistaken. The reality is firmly wedged between a rock and a hard place.<sup>3</sup>

A sudden return to Martin's "golden age of philanthropy" with the individual role predominant and the role of government minimal is unlikely in the immediate future. Yet, needs are outstripping the ability of governments to meet them and, while the needs may not all be met at this time, the possibilities of volunteerism for meeting these needs are truly great. As one commentator recently argued: "Volunteerism brings...a spirit of self-reliance, innovativeness and stewardship. These qualities, exercised by involved citizens, help give a free economy its vitality and a democratic community its cohesion."<sup>4</sup>

Finally, evidence from the survey indicates a trend toward the emulation of a U.S. development that many consider very positive. The evidence that employers are interested in the "clearing house" role to help facilitate employee volunteerism suggests that there may be an opportunity to attempt the construction in Canada of a system of Corporate Volunteer Councils similar to those operating in the United States. These organizations bring community employers together to help promote voluntary activity and match needs with resources. Some interest in this concept has been expressed in earlier studies.<sup>5</sup> As discussed earlier, a similar concept, the "Young in Art" program of the Council of Business and the Arts in Canada, has been very successful in this country.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers, An Essay on Privacy, Solidarity, and the Politics of Being Human* (Markham, Ont.: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>*The Globe and Mail*, April 22, 1986, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Mel S. Moyer, ed., *Managing Voluntary Organizations* (Toronto: York University, 1983), Preface.

<sup>5</sup>*Corporate Involvement in Volunteerism in the Metro Toronto Area*, The Board of Trade of Metropolitan Toronto, 1984.

<sup>1</sup>Neil Gallaiford, "Giving Has Its Own Rewards", *Human Resources Management in Canada* (December 1985), p. 5455.

The results of this research lead to several general conclusions. Employee volunteerism is already an important force in Canadian society. Canadian employers have responded positively to this development and are continuing to develop practices and policies to facilitate this new social force. In developing these new practices, several issues of employee volunteerism have emerged that will be resolved in the next few years. Gradually, employers and employees will adapt volunteering practices to meet the needs of various types of employing organizations. One adaptation with very positive implications for the development of Canadian society is a growing relationship between employers, employee-volunteers, and voluntary agencies.

The last word belongs to the Vice-President,

Personnel, of a major Canadian employer who has embraced this development most enthusiastically.

We are committed to doing our share in the community ('paying rent for the space we occupy in society') and our employees know we are serious about it. I sense that many of them start out in voluntary activities wanting to 'conform' and wind up enjoying it. Ultimately, the positive reinforcement our employees receive from helping others makes them feel better about themselves, and their total contribution to the organization improves geometrically. Clearly, 'volunteerism' is key to any positive employee relations program.



# Recent Research Publications



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\*A publication that elaborates on this research and provides additional data is now available.

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