

how does one define the voluntary organizations connected with churches?

My assistant sent over a list containing 40 other groups which do not fit in with the groups I have already mentioned. Again, those groups provide jobs, affordable housing, scholarships for students who cannot afford to go on to higher education and other services.

● (1700)

Before entering politics I had the good fortune to be a farmer in Saskatchewan, the good fortune to run a family business in Ontario, and the good fortune to work on the assembly line in the Goodyear Tire Factory. Of all my jobs the most rewarding was bringing heritage languages under the Toronto Board of Education, together with the Province of Ontario. I had the good fortune to be supervising principal of 12 different heritage language programs, including Punjabi, Urdu Gujarati, Hindi, Greek, Ukrainian, Polish, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, the languages of the Baltic States, Greek, and Portuguese. None of these heritage languages would have been brought into the regular school system if it were not for the co-operation of the various volunteer associations, and the various ethno-cultural groups which helped the Toronto Board of Education and the Province of Ontario in the organization. Rather than children learning these languages in cold basements somewhere, they were taught in a classroom setting. What a rich resource we have in Canada in the 75 different heritage languages that are spoken here.

This House has debated how to increase productivity, and that competition for world trade is becoming greater, Mr. Speaker. What an excellent resource Canada has in people who speak 75 different languages, thanks to the help of all these voluntary organizations. How can we ever reimburse them? What would we have to pay these organizations if they charged the going rate? The country could not afford the programs if it were not for the voluntary sector. Those organizations do not want compensation, they are happy to do this and feel that they are better Canadians because they have made a contribution to the growth of the country.

We have heard various proposals about how Canadians who make contributions to those organizations might be reimbursed and how the Government could assist those organizations. But there has been no mention of a proposal that has been made to me in the 20 years that I have been working with ethno-cultural groups, Mr. Speaker. Those groups do not want a hand-out from the Government, they want to pay their own way, but they would welcome something like long-term low interest loans so they could build their ethno-cultural centres and not be in debt up to their ears with all their energies going into raising money rather than into programs for young people and senior citizens. This is where we as legislators could be of assistance to a lot of service clubs such as the Parkdale Lions Club, Rotary clubs, and Kiwanis clubs.

Ethno-cultural organizations are national, not local, with national networks and duly held conventions where executives are elected and are responsible to the electorate. What would

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be wrong with giving a loan for 20, 30 or 40 years at 5 per cent interest so that the organizations could provide programs to senior citizens in the cultural centres, could provide heritage language classes, and space for people to practise their heritage cultures? Where do the various Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in our country meet? Some meet in schools, but the Ukrainian Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have their own cultural centres. They have their own camps, built with their own money. Where do the Polish Boy Scouts and Polish Girl Guides meet? They have camps at Barrys Bay, as the Hon. Member for Renfrew knows very well. He is very proud of the work the Polish Canadians are doing in his area. They take children out of the hot cities in the summer and give them a fresh air experience, teaching them leadership and self-confidence and how to preserve their language and heritage. In that way they preserve their identity and become better Canadians.

I would recommend that the task force look into the possibility of giving low interest or interest free loans, if we can afford it, to these organizations. That would not be a hand-out; they would be paying their own way.

I should like to close by tossing out four guidelines that the task force might keep in mind and that we as legislators might keep in mind to help the voluntary sector. I think we have all made a great contribution today. If we could offer some guidelines that the task force could follow that would be helpful.

First, the incentive should be an effective one. It does not make sense if the cost of the incentive exceeds the additional amount of "giving" that results from it.

Second, any tax incentive should provide equitable treatment to taxpayers; this is the essential basis for any tax system.

Third, the cost to the Treasury Board should not be unreasonable. I think we all admit that we are running a very high deficit. We should not increase it but should try to bring it down. The task force should keep in mind that the cost to the Treasury Board should not be unreasonable.

Fourth, administrative and compliance costs should be reasonable.

With those four guidelines and with our discussion of what constitutes voluntary organizations and non-profit organizations highlighting the contribution that all these local and national voluntary organizations have made to the growth of Canada, this Chamber may finally include the voluntary sector when it speaks about co-operation.

Mr. Bosley: Mr. Speaker, I have just a couple of quick questions for the Hon. Member. The first requires only a short answer. Am I correct in believing that he advocates that the joint House and Senate Committee should have the capacity to look at his proposals with regard to low-interest long-term loans and fiscal incentives? Is it his view that the task force should have that right?

Mr. Flis: Mr. Speaker, I think they should explore that and consult with the various organizations to get their input. I