

Volunteer Organizations

Most volunteers work many hours with no financial recognition and often without other kinds of recognition. This is one thing about which we should talk in committee. It is important that volunteers who are so dedicated and give so much of themselves also have some form of recognition. If they do not receive some form of honorarium to cover their costs, as the Hon. Member is suggesting, then at least they should have something on paper. One of the things I had proposed before was that homemakers giving of their expertise and developing a great deal of skill in community services should be able to put that on a résumé when they go looking for jobs. Often women have not had paid job experience. It would be very valuable to have some proof of their unpaid experience. I asked the former Liberal Minister of Employment and Immigration if this could not be one of the things that Canada employment offices would do.

It is also important that there be some form of honorarium for certain kinds of volunteers and certainly for low-income people who have just as much skill and perhaps far more motivation for helping out in their communities but simply cannot afford to do so unless there is some way that their costs including bus fare and babysitting are covered.

Before I move on, I would like to mention one thing. If I understood the Hon. Member correctly, she mentioned that the typical volunteer is married and has an income of probably over \$20,000 per year. I would like to mention a very interesting volunteer experience with which I was connected for many years. It was a very productive service in British Columbia composed of a group of welfare mothers who started up a program called the Vancouver Opportunities Program, a program which subsequently expanded throughout the province. These welfare mothers decided that if they were ever going to get out of the welfare trap, they needed to get experience and training and there were many services with which they wanted to help out.

These women developed a program which allowed them to put in a certain number of hours per week on a volunteer basis, not taking a paid job away from anyone, in schools, self-help programs, day care centres, libraries and a vast number of different agencies and services. At one time, thousands of them were involved in the program. One of the important incentives was the fact that they received an extra \$100 on their welfare payments which helped cover costs and gave them a little extra boost. That money was very much needed as well.

I knew many of the people involved in this program, most of whom were women, although later on, men were included. Many of these women went on into paraprofessional jobs. They took training and some are working in the administration of public housing or as paraprofessionals in welfare agencies. Some have gone on into the regular job market. This is the kind of program at which it would be interesting to look in committee.

We also want to recognize the very important contribution made by the many, many volunteer organizations across this country. In my riding of Vancouver East, I am very proud of the fact that there exists probably more citizens' organizations

that in any other community in Canada. Yet this riding is largely composed of low-income communities with many different ethnic groups. We have many ethnic organizations in which people give of their time. There are Chinese, Italian, Indo-Canadian, Portuguese, Korean and Japanese, just to name a few. We have many native people who come from rural areas who help each other in forming their own organizations and reaching, as a network, to help native people so they will not be trapped in some of the problems of the street which are so common.

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We have area planning groups which are assisted by municipal groups which have developed community plans in five areas of my riding. They have spent hours and hours of heavy work, with a great deal of technical expertise, in developing plans and actions which would improve their communities. I am also very proud of a group which I helped to organize called the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Group, which completely changed the type of urban renewal programs which we have. Some 15 to 20 years ago when it was established it helped to redevelop the Chinese community of downtown Vancouver. There are block representatives and all kinds of meetings in two languages involving a lot of resource people. They put hours into this. The same is true of the Downtown Eastside Residents Association which represents an area of Vancouver which people said was a slum with which nothing could be done. Those people have organized. It is simply remarkable to see the type of things they have done to improve services, to build new housing and to make the area into a real community. Those are just some examples. I know that Hon. Members will have many more.

There are volunteers who work in community centres, neighbourhood houses and sports programs. I want to say that I am concerned that we look very carefully at what volunteers should not be doing. It is important that volunteers not replace essential public services, for example. It is important that they not be seen to be replacing paid workers and professional workers who are essential to carry out legislated services. It is easy, and I know it has happened in British Columbia, for Governments under restraint, and because they think it would be economical, to completely disregard the essential public function of services which are the right of Canadians and which must remain under legislative jurisdictions. This is not to say that volunteers cannot often help as part of a team with professionals, even in these services.

We are also opposed to privatization. I hope it is not being suggested that some of these essential services be turned over to the private sector in the thought that it would cut costs by putting in volunteers, cutting salaries and undermining unions and workers who have worked hard to get their salaries up to a decent rate of pay. Recently, we had a real tragedy in Vancouver, where a transition house which was formerly operated by the Department of Human Resources was turned over to the private sector. The YWCA tried to maintain it for a while and they just could not do it. They were not given enough money. It is now back into no woman's land. It is without staff and, at