

Actually, the Members of this House are especially aware of the importance of volunteers, because I am sure no one here among my colleagues would be sitting in his or her seat if we had not had our volunteers, those political volunteers who work without remuneration to get us elected. This is one aspect of the volunteer sector that every one of us has experienced during our election campaigns and one we will certainly be depending on in future campaigns. However, this is only one aspect of volunteer work.

Just think of our senior citizens. Consider the number of senior citizens who can stay at home thanks to these volunteers. Consider also how much it would cost the Government if there were no volunteers to look after our senior citizens at home, if the Government had to pay to send them to special homes for the aged. Certainly a lot of money. There are residents of foster homes who are visited and helped by volunteers. That is another extremely important dimension and we know just how much the people who reside in these homes appreciate the volunteers who spend some time with them or go out to do some shopping for them because they are either too handicapped or too old.

There are also our young people. You must be aware that if there were no volunteer committees of leisure in our municipalities today, our young people could not take part in any sport. There are also the sport, social and cultural aspects. Our parishes are kept alive thanks to the activities of volunteers. Without them, I can assure you that our churches and church councils would have problems.

In different communities, there is a fantastic group of volunteers called *Parents Secours* to look after abandoned and abused children and who look after them in their difficult situation. The *Parents Secours* volunteers look after these children.

Mr. Speaker, the blind, the physically and mentally handicapped could not survive in our society without the volunteers who are looking after them and taking care of them.

I should like to add that in our smaller municipalities, several aldermen are involved in volunteer action; if we consider the salary they are paid and the time they spend on the job, we can say that our mayors too are involved in some sort of volunteer work.

But there are a great many others . . . There are for instance the Canadian housewives, our wives, your wife maybe, Mr. Speaker, because she is not paid to look after the house and care for the children. If I were to go through all the parts a housewife plays in the home, I would spend the 20 minutes allotted to me doing so, and it is so important that this should be recognized.

Our cultural associations safeguard our cultural identity. And our economic activities, Mr. Speaker. As you may know, in my constituency there are also major activities. In Argen-teuil-Papineau for instance, there is an event, the race across

Voluntary Organizations

Lake Simon which draws millions of people every year. It is a tremendously important economic contribution to the Papi-neau area. Were it not for volunteers who look after that swimming event, there would be no swim across Lake Simon, it is as simple as that. Area businesses which depend on the tourist trade would be in a tough spot, because the crossing year after year draws an unbelievably large clientele.

Events such as Expo-Air in Mirabel, for instance which draws thousands of people each year, are managed by volunteers. It is unbelievable the volume of goodwill this creates. Our grocery stores, our small businesses, our restaurants are busy throughout that period, and volunteers are looking after that.

To name a third one, simply to point out there are various economic activities, I will mention that we have an annual agricultural fair in Lachute which is almost nationally famous and which I am very proud of. Volunteers manage that fair which draws millions and millions of people each year.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is of course no need to pay these great Canadian men and women. They do not want to be paid because theirs is volunteer work, done as volunteers because they want to contribute something to their communities. Gratitude is what they earn and this has given me the idea of establishing a National Office for Volunteer Work.

Once more, Mr. Speaker, voluntary work is such an important aspect of Canadian life because, in addition to providing an opportunity for personal development and community benefits and for achieving a degree of social justice, voluntary organizations, their permanent staff and all those who finance them produce about \$5 billion of economic activity in Canada, which represents 2 per cent of the Gross National Product. It is time for the Government to give more attention to this sector than it has until now, even though I am aware that our Government has provided greater incentives for voluntary work.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, the salary value corresponding to yearly voluntary work would amount to \$2 billion. The social and economic impact of voluntary work will tend to increase in the next few years because of the aging of the population, of economic upheavals and of a decrease in the role of the Government.

Canadians are now aware of the need to protect and maintain an acceptable standard of living for all their fellow citizens. To do so, we find it essential to establish a national policy for volunteer action and to develop a national strategy to promote, support, emphasize volunteer action and give it a greater value.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first objective of my motion today. In our opinion, such a policy should include the following components: Recognition of volunteer action as a major economic sector: