Réseau de l’action bénévole du Québec (RABQ)

Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector

Summary of appearance by the RABQ

Presentation by RABQ

- 26 members consisting of Quebec groups, associations and agencies involved in most areas of volunteer activity.
- Mission:
  o coordinate the efforts of members and other stakeholders in the volunteer sector;
  o promote, value and recognize volunteering;
  o support the development of volunteering.
- The RABQ is the Quebec government’s primary stakeholder in the volunteer sector and is a partner in implementing the 2016-2022 government strategy on volunteerism, L’action bénévole: un geste libre et engagé.

A Look at Volunteering in Quebec

- 38% of Quebecers volunteer with an organization (SOM 2017)
- 75% of Quebecers devote time to an individual or a cause without being involved in an organization (SOM 2017)
- 37% of volunteers are active in the culture and recreation sector (Léger 2018).

Note that 53% of Quebecers think that volunteers are involved mainly in the social services sector (SOM 2018), yet this is true for only 28% of volunteers (Léger 2018).

LAWS OR REGULATIONS THAT AFFECT THE SECTOR

Receiving charitable organization status

- Status as a charitable organization enables agencies to seek charitable donations and issue tax receipts.
- Many private donors require an organization to have charitable status before they will support it.

Issues

- There is a six-month wait before an application for charitable status starts going through the approval process.
- Most of the organizations that shared their concerns on this subject were told to redo part of their application or even change their organization’s objectives to be more specific. They were told to act on these recommendations within 60 days or restart the application process.
- The current rules prevent many organizations from being approved, because their activities are political.
To our knowledge, a few organizations including the RABQ have had to change the wording of their mission to increase their chance of being approved as a charitable organization. Although the process seems simple, it places the following demands on an organization:

- staff and volunteer board members must act quickly and invest time in making the proposed amendments to by-laws;
- the organization incurs various costs (legal fees, amendments to letters patent, organizing an special meeting of members);
- it must change its mission to comply with government requirements, which affects its independence and democratic life.

Charitable organizations are concerned about large private businesses becoming not-for-profits, as in the case of *La Presse*. Two RABQ members operate in the communications sector and are worried about this change in status. There is an ongoing concern that, through well-organized lobbying, this powerful Quebec media organization may succeed in having the rules for granting charitable status relaxed. This would not be good news, as “real” community media outlets, like private companies that become not-for-profits, would be able to approach donors as charitable agencies, regardless of their actual financial resources.

**Recommendations**

- Review the application process to reduce the wait time, for example, by creating a special procedure for organizations that are already recognized and funded by their provincial government as an agency that contributes to social development and improves quality of life.
- Avoid making recommendations to change an organization’s application or objectives, or establish a more realistic deadline if these changes are truly necessary.
- Examine cases where relaxing the rules enables new, well-funded not-for-profit organizations to be considered alongside agencies that are well established in their community and region.
- Review the criteria for charitable status so that political activities are seen as ways of achieving overall charitable objectives, as Ontario Court Justice Ed Morgan ruled on July 17, 2018, in the case of Canada Without Poverty.

**Criminal Record Check for Volunteers**

Conducting a criminal record check of volunteers is one of the 10 screening steps recommended by Volunteer Canada. When required for volunteer work, this procedure it enables organizations to perform due diligence.

**Issues**

- The Quebec provincial police force, Sûreté du Québec, maintains a presence throughout the province and serves most of the population.
- In December 2015, following a restructuring, the Sûreté du Québec decided to stop doing criminal record checks for civil purposes. As a result, agencies can no longer use local Sûreté du Québec stations for criminal record checks of volunteers. They must pay private companies to do the checks.
- However, the Sûreté du Québec still conducts checks of volunteers who work with vulnerable persons – known as “restriction checks” – because only a police force can do this type of check.
- Agencies that serve vulnerable people – and have confirmed that the people receiving volunteer services are indeed vulnerable – can continue to have free access to criminal record checks and restriction checks.
- Since this type of check involves significant infringement of a potential volunteer’s privacy, organizations must ensure that the nature of the volunteer work demands a record check and a restrictions check.
- Lastly, to meet the requirements of some government programs, organizations must conduct a criminal record check of their volunteers. Since the Sûreté du Québec serves a significant portion of the population and it no longer conducts record checks for civil purposes, these organizations must pay private companies to do the checks. As a result, some of the funds that would have been used to serve the public must be used for criminal record checks.

**Recommendations**

- The provincial or federal government should provide agencies that rely on volunteers with free criminal record check services.
- If this is not possible, a general volunteer fund should be created to reimburse some of the cost of conducting criminal record checks of volunteers.

**Lobbying bill**

The Quebec government recently began the process to amend the *Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Act* so that it includes all not-for-profit organizations. This amendment would have had significant repercussions for these organizations and was fortunately abandoned at the end of the last parliamentary session.

**Issues:**

- It is possible to lose sight of the purpose of a not-for-profit agency’s activities, which serve the collective interest rather than a specific economic interest.
- The administrative process for reporting lobbying activities is burdensome for organizations that often rely solely on volunteers.
- Volunteer board members are being grouped with official lobbyists and seen as having the same duties and responsibilities. It is interesting to note that, in a case involving the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee, federal Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger found that the *Lobbying Act* applies only to people who are paid to communicate with federal public servants.

**Recommendations**

- Special attention should be given to any efforts to amend lobbying legislation or regulations, for example, by ensuring community agencies, charitable organizations, groups, federations and not-for-profit coalitions serving community and volunteer agencies and the public are not subject to the same lobbying legislation and regulations as private businesses, individuals or other not-for-profit organizations.
Survey findings (if needed for Question Period)

According to the 2,287 volunteers who were surveyed, the top three reasons to volunteer are:

- for enjoyment or because of interest in a specific cause
- a desire to socialize, chat and feel a sense of belonging
- a desire to carry out a social initiative or a civic cause

Impacts of volunteering

Many people mentioned the benefits of volunteering on their mental and physical health.

In 2018, we surveyed more than 3,000 people, including 2,287 volunteers, to determine how volunteering affects family members. We found the following:

- 47% of volunteers have a spouse who does volunteer work, compared with 9% of non-volunteers;
- 47% of volunteers had parents who were involved in volunteering, compared with 30% of non-volunteers;
- 54% of volunteers with children said their children volunteer as well, compared with 23% of non-volunteers with children.

We also examined the survey findings to see whether volunteering could be a springboard to employment:

- 66% of respondents said that volunteering helped them expand their skills. This figure was 88% among young people under 35 and 77% among volunteers born outside Canada;
- 29% of volunteers believe that their activities put them in contact with potential employers, and 20% found a job with the organization where they volunteered;
- 55% of people under 35 were put in contact with potential employers, and 38% found a job through volunteering;
- 48% of the volunteers who were born outside Canada were in contact with potential employers, and 37% found a job with the organization where they had volunteered.
WHO ARE VOLUNTEERS?

TABLE 1 — QUEBEC ORGANIZATION VOLUNTEERS VERSUS INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS

(According to data gathered by SOM for the RABQ in July 2017)

TABLE 2 — DISTRIBUTION OF VOLUNTEER RESPONDENTS

TABLE 3 — GENDER OF VOLUNTEERS
### TABLE 4 — AGE OF VOLUNTEERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 5 — LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF VOLUNTEERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary / Secondary</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Volunteering at a Glance is a summary of the Cahier de recherche — Portraits régionaux des bénévoles et du bénévolat (Research Compendium on Regional Portraits of Volunteers and Volunteering) (2018).
WHY VOLUNTEER?
TABLE 6 — INCENTIVES TO BECOME INVOLVED

For pleasure or out of interest in a particular activity or cause
To socialize, exchange and develop a feeling of belonging to a group with which you share a common interest
To carry out a social project or support a humanitarian cause that is dear to you
Out of duty or obligation based on your personal or family activities
To help / render service / give back

Since respondents could select several responses, total data exceeds 100%.

WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?
TABLE 7 — SECTOR OF ACTIVITIES IN WHICH VOLUNTEERS ARE INVOLVED

Culture & recreation
Social services
Health
Education and research
Religion
Environment, development and housing
Business and professional associations, unions, defence of political rights and interests

Since respondents could select several responses, total data exceeds 100%.
TABLE 8 — NATURE OF VOLUNTEER TASKS

Since respondents could select several responses, total data exceeds 100%.

- Lending escort or health care support: 27%
- Organizing events: 12%
- Fundraising: 9%
- Giving advice: 9%
- Participating as a member in a proceeding in an advisory capacity: 24%
- Performing administrative and office tasks: 21%
- Participating in the collection or distribution of miscellaneous goods such as food: 23%
- Mentoring, instruction or training: 22%
- Acting as arbitrator or coach in an activity: 17%
- Performing tasks related to environmental protection: 12%
- Door-to-door: 7%
- Other: 8%

TABLE 9 — KEY WAYS OF VOLUNTEERING

- Alone: 46%
- With friends: 25%
- As a family: 10%
- With co-workers: 9%
- As a couple: 8%
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**Table 10 — Monthly Average Volunteer Hours**

- Less than an hour per month: 2%
- 1 - 10 hours per month: 18%
- 11 - 20 hours per month: 6%
- 21 - 30 hours per month: 11%
- 31 - 40 hours per month: 12%
- 41 hours or more per month: 5%
- I don't know: 5%

**Table 11 — Average Duration of Volunteer Involvement**

- 1 - 5 years: 18%
- 6 - 10 years: 12%
- 11 - 15 years: 8%
- 16 - 20 years: 11%
- More than 21 years: 2%
- I don't know: 30%
WHY CONTINUE TO VOLUNTEER?

TABLE 12 — MOTIVATION FOR MAINTAINING COMMITMENT

Since respondents could select several responses, total data exceeds 100%.

THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

TABLE 13 — DONATIONS IN THE PAST YEAR

Non-volunteers  0%  20%  40%  60%  80%  100%
Volunteers
Table 14 — Relative Volunteers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Member</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Non-volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15 — Volunteering and the Acquisition of Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Has Volunteering Helped Develop Your Skills?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born outside of Canada</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16 — Volunteering and Personal Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Non-volunteers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All                            18-34  Born outside of Canada
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**TABLE 17 — VOLUNTEERING AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>18-34</th>
<th>Born outside of Canada</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volunteering allowed you to find a job in an organization where you were a volunteer?</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DETERRENTS TO VOLUNTEERING**

**TABLE 18 — REASONS FOR NOT BECOMING A VOLUNTEER**

- I don’t know how to participate: 6%
- I’m not interested in doing it: 11%
- I have health problems or physical disabilities: 12%
- I prefer to donate money: 13%
- I have not been asked to do it: 14%
- Lack of opportunity: 15%
- I can’t make a long-term commitment: 17%
- Lack of time: 51%
- No association meets my needs: 4%
- I think I lack the required qualifications: 6%
- I’ve already done my share in the past / I’m making room for other volunteers: 2%
- I’ve had a bad experience: 2%
- I am a natural helper / I give my time to family: 1%
- Other: 1%
- I don’t know: 5%

Since respondents could select several responses, total data exceeds 100%.
HOW CAN VOLUNTEERING BE ENCOURAGED?

TABLE 19 — WAYS OF ENCOURAGING VOLUNTEERING

- Internet: 44%
- Brochure: 11%
- Announcements in community newspapers: 10%
- Community television broadcasts: 13%
- Information booths: 10%
- Word of mouth / Face-to-face: 10%
- Television (in general): 2%
- Other: 8%
- I don’t know: 2%