

Federal Government Budget Brief

D.L. Bumstead

August 4, 2016

Investing in Volunteering; Investing back in Canada & Canadians

In the book *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in an Age of Entitlement* the authors argue that the number of narcissists is increasing (30). One indicator of narcissism apparently is that an individual doesn't find caring about others all that important (27). Can we build community back? Or are we stuck where we are – avoiding our neighbours because we want to keep to ourselves and scanning our phones instead of inviting strangers into conversation in the elevator? Insulation and isolation.

What do we want our community, our Canada to be and become? This of course was the seminal question behind *Bowling for Columbine*, and the answers aren't crystal clear but one way we can care for others and converge upon narcissism is volunteering. The following definition of volunteering derives from [Energize](#): a blog created in the U.S. for global volunteers and leaders of volunteers.

Volunteer, noun – from the perspective of the doer: Someone who gives time, effort and talent to a need or cause without profiting monetarily.

Volunteer, noun – from the perspective of the recipient of service: Someone who contributes time, effort and talent to meet a need or further a mission, without going on the payroll.

But is the volunteer machine broken? In 2010 a [report](#) written by Volunteer Canada noted some increasing gaps in volunteer services desired by prospective volunteers and the ability of organizations to meet these needs. Simultaneously a drop in the size of the Canadian population volunteering (3% drop from 2010 to 2013) was noted via Statistics Canada's [Data on Giving, Volunteering and Participating in Canada](#). This data is only accrued every three years – the next collection occurring in 2016. At that point we'll be able to say more about the slide.

Who cares about gaps or drops in volunteers? Well, the non-profit or charity sector in Canada is a [\\$50 billion industry](#). Many non-profits count on volunteers to fulfill their mission. [TD Economist](#) puts the economic value of volunteering in Canada at \$50 billion in 2012. Yet does Canada have a volunteer strategy or do the provinces have a strategy? No, at least not that I have found.

Canada's volunteer collective need resources, inspiration, revitalization – a strategy. The last time we attempted this was I believe in 2000-5 with the Volunteer Sector Initiative, and the outcome was somewhat murky. But we learned from this – we need clear identifiable (SMART) goals and we need less turnover in government staff at the table (Employment and Social Development Canada).

One clear identifiable goal could be a vision for integrating pro-bono volunteering and service learning further across the country. The U.S. [Taproot Foundation](#) is an excellent model for pro-bono volunteer work.

Australia also came up with a 10 year National Volunteer strategy.

Who is to benefit from such investment, well the community, the less fortunate, volunteers and non - profits can benefit from investment in this area. Non-profits have already taken a beating with the relentless CRA auditing (clearer advocacy rules are required). Re-investment would be a positive reinforcer of work well done.

What is at risk... well who needs volunteers – soccer teams, Olympic games, homeless shelters, churches, synagogues, disaster relief, environmental clean- ups. It's time to return to Canada's foundation and build strength by supporting volunteers. I urge the government to investigate further investment into organizations similar to Taproot and consider investing in volunteers across Canada.

Works Cited

Alexander, Craig and Sonya Gulati. An Economist's Case for Volunteering. TD Economics Opinion.

Volunteer Canada. 23 Apr. 2012. Web. 4 Aug. 2016.

<<https://volunteer.ca/content/td-economics-economists-case-volunteering>>.

Ellis, Susan. "How We Define "Volunteer" for Energize...and What Is Not Volunteering to Us"

Energize, Inc. Found in the Energize online library at <http://www.energizeinc.com/a-z>. 3

Aug. 2016. Web. 4 Aug. 2016.

Employment and Social Development Canada. "Voluntary Sector Initiative Impact Evaluation: Lessons

Learned from the Voluntary Sector Initiative (2000-2005) - August 2009." *Employment and*

Social Development Canada. 2009. Web. 4 Aug. 2016.

<http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/publications/evaluations/social_development/2009/august.html>

Stats Canada. "Data on Giving, Volunteering and Participating in Canada." *Volunteer Canada*, 2013.

Web. 4 Aug. 2016. <https://volunteer.ca/gvp>.

Twenge, Jean M, and W. Keith Campbell. *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement*.

2010. New York: Atria Books. Print.

Volunteer Canada in partnership with Manulife Financial, Carleton University Centre for Voluntary Sector Research. "Bridging the Gap: Enriching the Volunteer Experience to Build a Better Future for Our Communities." *Volunteer Canada*. 2010? Web. 4 Aug. 2016.

<https://volunteer.ca/btg>.