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**CULTURE AND VOLUNTEERING:  
CANADIAN PERSPECTIVES**

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## QUESTION 1 – DEFINITION

**Is there an accepted definition of volunteering in your country; both official and colloquial?**

There is no official definition of volunteering in Canada, but most definitions share similar language and limitations. Volunteer Canada, the national organization which brings together 86 volunteer centres in nine provinces as well as the federation of 109 volunteer centres in Quebec, has the following on its web-site:

Volunteering is the most fundamental act of citizenship and philanthropy in our society. It is offering time, energy and skills of one's own free will. Volunteer service is offered by choice - it is not mandated or coerced.

It contributes to the well-being of an individual or the community, and is usually coordinated by a nonprofit or public sector organization, and pays no salary or wages. Other forms of unpaid work include activities such as Community Service Orders and service placements required by schools. Although these offer support to the community, they have been ordered by an authority.

From this, one can determine that volunteering is seen as a person freely offering their time and skills to an organization.

Conceptually, there are two types of volunteering. The first is formal volunteering which is done through a voluntary group or organization. The second is informal volunteering where the person acts on his or her own to undertake unpaid work. This breakdown was used in the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP). The questions on the NSGVP asked Canadians about the way in which they support one another and their communities through their involvement in giving, volunteering and participating. The NSGVP was carried out by Statistics Canada in 1987 and again in 1997 and 2000, with the latter two cycles using the same survey instrument. (Unfortunately, the data from the 2000 survey is not yet available.) The Introduction to the Volunteering section of the Survey contains the following statement read by the interviewer:

“My first set of questions deal with unpaid volunteer activities done as part of a group or organization in the past 12 months, that is, since October, 1999.”

Further on in the survey, a second set of questions are asked about informal volunteering. The text is as follows:

“Now I have some questions about helping people on your own, not through an organization. Please think about any unpaid help you may have given to others in the past 12 months.”

Only the first type of volunteering – volunteering for an organization -- will be discussed in the balance of this paper.

## QUESTION 2 - RECOGNITION

**Is volunteering in culture an issue in your country? Does it have a place in policy papers? Is volunteering a subject of public debate in cultural circles or in the press? If yes, in what way?**

In June 2000, the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), a joint undertaking between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada was launched. The objectives of the VSI are to strengthen the voluntary sector's capacity to meet the challenges of the future, to enhance the relationship between the sector and the federal government, and to improve the federal regulatory environment in which sector organizations operate. The cultural sector, represented on the government side by the Department of Canadian Heritage, and on the voluntary side by the Canadian Conference of the Arts, is an active participant in the VSI.

When the VSI was established, a C\$28.5 million fund was created for projects to enhance the voluntary sector's involvement in federal government policy development and to strengthen the capacity of the sector to contribute to policy development. On August 8, 2001, the first round of 21 projects was announced. Two of the projects were directly related to volunteerism in the cultural sector:

- 1) *Giving a Voice to the Heritage Voluntary Sector* – a project to enhance collaboration between the Department of Canadian Heritage and the heritage voluntary sector;
- 2) *Northern Native Broadcast Access Program* – a project in collaboration with the 13 Aboriginal non-profit communications societies to develop an action plan that will address concerns and needs with regard to Aboriginal, cultural, heritage and language.<sup>1</sup>

It is widely recognized that volunteers play a crucial role in ensuring the health and vitality of the cultural sector, in particular the not-for-profit arts and heritage sector. In many arts service organizations, artist-run centres, professional, semi-professional and amateur arts groups, museums and heritage societies, volunteers are at once at the heart and the periphery of the action. The arts and heritage organizations that rely on volunteers contribute to the cultural life of our communities not only in what they do but also by encouraging increased appreciation and involvement in arts and heritage among the greater population. Small and mid-level amateur and semi-professional organizations provide alternative events and spaces that add to the diversity and richness of our cultural landscape. They also bring cultural events to communities that would not otherwise have access to them. Larger institutions that encourage volunteering are effectively inviting people to take an active role in experiencing arts and heritage and play an important role in arts education. Volunteers in arts and heritage are directly contributing to the growth of a participatory society in which the opportunity to experience and engage in the arts and cultural life of our communities is more accessible and attractive to a greater number of individuals.

The importance of volunteering is recognized by various institutions. For example, the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts, jointly awarded by the Canada Council for the Arts and the Governor General of Canada includes a prize for distinguished contributions to the visual and media arts through voluntarism, philanthropy, board governance or community outreach activities. Likewise, the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards include the Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts. Other

<sup>1</sup> "Government of Canada and voluntary sector team up", *Canada NewsWire* at <http://www.newswire.ca/releases/August2001/08/c8064.html>

awards for outstanding contributions in voluntarism in the arts exist at local and provincial levels, as well as in specific disciplines and institutions.

The 1997 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) found that the number of volunteer events<sup>2</sup> in Arts and Culture Organizations has increased by 95% since 1987, demonstrating the third highest increase after Environmental and Wildlife and Multi-domain organizations. While this increase could be due to many factors, including the broadening of mandates, changes in the number of organizations and changing demographics, it is likely that the main reason for this increase is cuts to public support of the not-for-profit arts and heritage community. According to a 1999 report by the Canadian Conference of the Arts, 62% of arts service organizations dealt with major institutional change (due in many cases to decreases in public funding) by increasing the workload of volunteers and Board members. In some cases, work that was once performed by paid employees was taken over by volunteers.<sup>3</sup>

According to the NSGVP, despite the overall rise in volunteering among the population between 1987 and 1997 (an increase of 40% in the total number of volunteers, an increase of 9% in volunteer hours) a small number of volunteers still perform the bulk of volunteer work. Just one third of volunteers account for 81% of total volunteer hours contributed, which means that it is a small core of dedicated individuals who keep many organizations afloat. At the same time as they reported an increase in use of volunteers, many arts and heritage organizations also reported a lack of resources for training in administration, budgeting and marketing. As a result, volunteers often work in areas they may not be adequately trained for, leading very quickly to volunteer “burn-out”.

A survey by The Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton (Ottawa, 1996) determined that although many cultural groups are dependent upon volunteers, they have trouble recruiting and retaining the volunteers they need. Particular challenges facing arts and heritage organizations include:

- lack of necessary resources to recruit and retain volunteers;
- inability to develop and implement a volunteer program due to lack of staff, funding and other resources;
- inability to afford a volunteer coordinator to administer the volunteer program;
- difficulty in finding volunteers who can respond to the particular needs of arts and heritage organizations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A “volunteer event” represents an involvement with an organization. It does not account for the number of activities performed, frequency, timing or duration of volunteering.

<sup>3</sup> Jocelyne Harvey, *A Portrait of Canadian Arts Service Organizations* (Ottawa, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Jane Horner, *Volunteers in Arts and Heritage Report*, (Ottawa, 1996).

### QUESTION 3 - VOLUME

Please assess the amount of volunteering in the cultural field in your country.

Respondents to the NSGVP were asked to provide information on the organizations for which they volunteered and to which they made donations. These people were first asked to provide the name of the organization and, if this name did not show up on a common pick-list of organizations, they were asked to provide information on what this organization did. This information was used to group the responses into 12 broad categories using the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations developed by the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project.

The *Culture and Recreation* Category includes the three sub-groups of:

- S culture and arts;
- S sports; and
- S other recreation and social clubs.

The culture and arts sub-group includes media and communications; visual arts; architecture; ceramic art; performing art; historical, literary and humanistic societies; museums; and zoos and aquariums.

The National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 1997, found that 7% of Canadians aged 15 and over participate in “Cultural, educational or hobby related” organizations as members and/or participants. This category came in fifth after work-related, sports and recreation, religious affiliated and community/school affiliated groups. The 452,000 culture volunteers represent 6% of all volunteers in Canada.<sup>5</sup> The total of 52,900,000 hours volunteered in cultural organizations in 1997 was the equivalent of 27,550 full-time employees.<sup>6</sup>

Both the performing arts and heritage sectors paid workforces are supported by large volunteer contingents. However, as the data in Table 1 below indicate, the heritage sector in Canada appears to be more heavily reliant upon volunteers than the performing arts sector.

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<sup>5</sup> Ontario Arts Council, “Arts and Culture Volunteers in Ontario”, *Artfacts*, Vol 5., No. 1, March 1999, p.1. (ISSN 1197-1555.)

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, *Canadian Culture in Perspective: A Statistical Overview – 2000 Edition*, (Ottawa, December 2000), p. 46. (Catalogue 87-211-XPB.)

**Table 1 – Volunteers and Paid Workers, Performing Arts and Heritage Institutions  
Canada – Selected Years**

<u>Performing Arts Organizations</u>	<b>Number of Volunteers</b>	<b>Total Paid Workers</b>	<b>Volunteers as % of Total Staff</b>
1991-1992	29,454	31,155	48.5
1992-1993	31,212	32,916	48.5
1993-1994	26,541	36,814	41.9
1994-1995	29,919	37,348	44.4
1996-1997	28,768	35,755	44.6
1998-1999	27,408	37,096	42.5
<b><u>Heritage Institutions</u></b>			
1991-1992	45,325	23,969	65.4
1992-1993	49,945	24,229	67.3
1993-1994	55,128	24,125	69.6
1995-1996	52,035	23,235	69.1
1997-1998	46,403	23,510	66.4

**SOURCE:** Statistics Canada, *Performing Arts Survey* and *Survey of Heritage Institutions*

Statistics Canada has also looked at areas of the cultural sector where volunteers are active, and while some of the data should be treated with caution due to statistical variation, estimates of the volunteer rates in various types of cultural organizations are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 – Volunteers Age 15 and Up by Type of Cultural Organization  
Canada – 1997**

<u>Type of Cultural Organization</u>	<b>Volunteer Rate (% of population)</b>	<b>Number of Volunteers 15+*</b>
Media and Communications	0.3	70,828
Performing Arts	0.5	129,907
Historical Societies and Museums**	0.4	105,698
Visual Arts**	0.2	52,970
Zoos, Aquariums, Multidisciplinary	0.5	109,160
<b>TOTAL – Cultural organizations</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>451,643</b>
<b>TOTAL – All organizations</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>7,471,512</b>

**SOURCE:** Statistics Canada, *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 1997*

\* The number of people volunteering includes people who volunteered in more than one cultural organization. Therefore, totals do not equal the sum of volunteers.

\*\* Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 25% - use figures with caution.

## QUESTION 4 - REGULATION

**Please identify pieces of legislation which have relevance to volunteering. Are there incentives or legislation which, perhaps unintentionally, hampers volunteering? Do you know of a pending item of legislation with regard to volunteering? Are there special contracts for volunteers (insurance), regulations for reimbursement of travel costs, etc.? Are volunteer organizations provided with fiscal benefits to support their work?**

There are few pieces of legislation which specifically affect volunteering. Most legislation is silent on the subject and, therefore, does not act as a disincentive. There are some examples of legislation which create a type of “mandatory volunteering” or “compulsory service” for certain types of people. Similarly, there are some liability concerns which may deter people from engaging in some types of volunteer activity. Both these examples are explained below.

### Compulsory Service

Several pieces of legislation at the provincial level require secondary schools students to undertake unpaid work for a voluntary organization in order to gain a credit toward their diploma or which require such unpaid work as a condition of their graduation. In a similar fashion, some provincial jurisdictions offer people found guilty of minor criminal offences the choice of undertaking unpaid “community service” in lieu of serving time in an institution.

Some provincial jurisdictions have created work for welfare, or “workfare” regimes where, in order to collect their welfare benefits, recipients must undertake some form of work. These people can undertake such work with voluntary organizations in order to fulfil their commitment. This type of “compulsory service” was considered a significant enough factor to be a separate question on the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating.

### Director’s Liability

The issue of director’s liability is of concern to a large number of voluntary groups. Directors’ liabilities come from various sources including wages, taxes, pensions, fraud, negligence, conflict of interest or criminal behaviour. Uncertainty around the fiduciary responsibility and standard of care that directors need to exercise in the undertaking of their duties has caused some people to refrain from assuming these positions.

This issue is under active review and consideration by an Experts Group on Non-profit Law and Directors’ Liability led by Industry Canada, the federal department responsible for the Canada Corporations Act (which provides groups the ability to incorporate at the federal level). The group’s mandate is:

- S to promote collaboration between Industry Canada and the nonprofit sector on corporate governance and directors’ liability; and
- S to provide expert advice to Industry Canada on issues related to options for reforming the *Canada Corporations Act* - Part II and for addressing directors’ liability.

The Experts Group is composed of 10 individuals from across Canada who are well connected with the nonprofit sector.

## **Federal Income Tax Act**

The *Income Tax Act* allows groups that meet certain conditions to register as charities. Charities have the right to issue tax receipts for donations from individuals, corporations or foundations. In this respect, this type of volunteer organization is provided fiscal benefits to support their work. There are no similar fiscal benefits with respect to the donation of volunteer time.

It should be noted that there is a special designation under the *Income Tax Act* for National Arts Service Organizations (NASOs). Added to the *Act* in 1991, this provision was designed to assist arts service organizations in raising funds from the private sector. To qualify, an organization must:

- 1) have as its exclusive purpose and function the promotion of the arts on a nation-wide basis; and
- 2) have been designated by the Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) as meeting Department's conditions for registration.

The activities of an NASO are confined to one or more of the following:

- a) promoting one or more art forms;
- b) conducting research into one or more art forms;
- c) sponsoring art exhibitions or performances;
- d) representing interests of the arts community or a sector thereof (but not of individuals) before legal or governing bodies;
- e) Conducting workshops, seminars, training programs and similar development programs relating to the arts for members of the organization where such activity results in members including the value of the program in income under paragraph 56(1)(aa) of the *Income Tax Act*;
- f) educating the public about the sector represented by the organization;
- g) organizing and sponsoring conventions, conferences, competitions and special events relating to the sector represented by the organization;
- h) conducting arts studies and surveys of interest to members of the organization relating to the sector represented by the organization;
- i) acting as an information centre by maintaining resource libraries and data bases relating to the sector represented by the organization;
- j) disseminating information relating to the sector represented by the organization; and
- k) paying amounts to which paragraph 56(1)(n) of the *Income Tax Act* applies in respect of the recipient and which relates to the sector represented by the organization.

If accepted for designation by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the application is then forwarded to the Charities Division of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) for registration. According to regulation 8700 of the *Income Tax Act*, an organization must fulfill the conditions outlined in Appendix 1.

Once designated by DCH and registered by CCRA, NASOs are generally subject to the same regulations as charities under the *Income Tax Act* with such modifications as the circumstances require, and have the same right to issue tax receipts to donors.

## QUESTION 5 - SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Who are the volunteers in culture? What is their dominant motivation? Please discuss for each type of volunteering listed below:

- S board member for cultural organization
- S giver of expertise/advice
- S skilled artistic work
- S other work (e.g. organizational help)

Table 3 outlines the profile of the cultural volunteer in Canada. In general, the likelihood of volunteering was highest for those 35 to 54 years of age, but those over 55 years of age put in more volunteer hours. Women volunteered more often than men and contributed more hours. Rates of volunteering were also higher among those with higher incomes and educational levels, but individuals in these categories also tended to volunteer fewer hours to cultural organizations than those with lower incomes and education levels.

**Table 3 – Cultural Volunteer Rate and Total Hours Volunteered  
Canada- Population Aged 15 and Over, 1997**

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Volunteer Rate</u> %	<u>Average Total</u> <u>Hours Volunteered</u>
<u>Age</u>		
15-34	1.7	94
35-54	2.2	108
55 and over	1.7	167
<u>Education</u>		
High school or less	1.3	119
Some postsecondary*	2.4	125
Postsecondary degree*	1.9	124
University degree*	3.8	104
<u>Sex</u>		
Males	1.7	107
Females	2.1	125
<u>Household Income</u>		
Less than C\$40,000	1.5	137
C\$40,000 to C\$69,999	2.2	107
C\$70,000 and over	2.3	102
<b>TOTAL – Canada</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>117</b>

**SOURCE:** Statistics Canada, *National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, 1997*

\* Coefficient of variation between 16.6% and 25% - use figures with caution.

The 1997 NSGVP found that Canadians living in smaller centres were more likely to volunteer time to cultural organizations than those living in larger urban centres. The cultural volunteer rate in smaller rural areas was 2.6%, almost twice the 1.4% rate in urban centres with populations of 500,000 or more. People living in urban communities of 100,000 or less volunteered an average of 155 hours in cultural organizations, compared to only 114 hours by residents of rural areas and 98 hours by residents of large urban centres of 500,000 or more. It is unclear from the data whether this pattern reflects differences in supply (opportunities to volunteer) or demand (need for volunteers) within communities. The lower rate of cultural volunteerism in large centres can probably not be explained by either and may be a reflection of increased competition by other non-profit organizations for scarce volunteer resources.

Small and medium-sized arts and heritage organizations are often staffed almost entirely by volunteers. Larger institutions and professional arts organizations usually have groups of “friends” or supporters who contribute time as well as money to fundraising drives, in addition to the volunteers who sit on boards and act as key decision-makers.

While volunteers in arts and heritage perform just about every type of activity imaginable, the most common types of volunteer activity in arts and heritage tend to be jobs that are high in responsibility and require advanced communication and organizational skills.

<b>Table 4 – Types of Cultural Volunteers Canada - 1997</b>	
<b>Most common types of volunteer activity</b>	<b>% of volunteers who performed this kind of activity</b>
<b>Organizing or supervising events</b>	64%
<b>Sitting as a board or committee member</b>	53%
<b>Office, administrative, executive or consultative work</b>	43%
<b>Fundraising, canvassing or campaigning</b>	42%
<b>Providing information, including educating, influencing or lobbying</b>	35%
<b>Teaching or coaching</b>	23%
<b>Maintaining, repairing or building facilities</b>	21%
<b>Volunteer driving</b>	21%
<b>Collecting, serving or delivering food</b>	20%

**SOURCE:** *ArtFacts*, Ontario Arts Council, Vol.5, no.1, March 1999

A comparison of arts and heritage volunteer activity with the average for all volunteers shows that arts and heritage volunteers are *more likely* than other volunteers to do the following activities: organize events, sit as board members, do office work, provide information and work on facilities. They are *equally likely* as volunteers in other areas to perform fundraising and volunteer driving activities. A higher percentage of arts and heritage volunteers have university degrees than volunteers in other areas (26% in arts and heritage, 20% all volunteers), although, interestingly enough, fewer of them (45% in arts and heritage, 48% all volunteers) have incomes of \$50,000 or more. This anomaly in the usual correlation of high levels of education with higher income could be due to the fact that the difference between male and female volunteers is slightly higher in arts and heritage than in other areas (57% female in arts and heritage, 54% female in all volunteers), with women tending to have lower incomes than men. Another explanation may lie in the increased possibility that arts and heritage volunteers are artists themselves (who tend on average to have lower incomes).

The 1997 NSGVP did not provide specific breakdowns of motivations for cultural volunteerism, but it did indicate the reasons why Canadians volunteered in general. The primary reason for volunteering, cited by 96% of respondents, was because of a belief in the cause supported by the organization. The next most popular reason, cited by 78%, was to use their skills and experience. Over two-thirds of volunteers participated because they had been personally affected by the cause that the organization supported. Over half (54%) volunteered to explore their own strengths.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Hall et al., *Caring Canadians, Involved Canadians: Highlights from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*, (Ottawa, August 1998), p. 37.

## QUESTION 6 – EXAMPLES IN PRACTICE

Please indicate by reference to any research carried out in your country how effective volunteerism is and/or what its impacts have been. If possible, illustrate your remarks with examples of cultural organizations/projects where volunteerism has had an impact and/or was integral to the project's implementation.

The 1997 National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating found that 7,500,000 Canadians volunteered their time and lent their skills to voluntary organizations. At that time, this figure represented the equivalent of 578,000 full-time jobs (assuming 40 hours per week for 48 weeks). The value of this work, using the wage rate for welfare and community services occupations, was estimated at C\$14,357,000,000.

Estimating the non-monetary impacts of cultural voluntarism on Canadian society is a much more difficult and subjective task. However, the recent Canadian *Our Millennium* project initiated by the Community Foundations of Canada to mark the new century is illustrative of the intrinsic value that Canadians put on culture as a means of strengthening and celebrating community.

The *Our Millennium* project was an invitation to Canadians to make lasting "gifts" to their communities in one of 11 theme areas: youth and children, arts and culture, environment, heritage, connections, recreation, learning, safety and crime prevention, care and support, global citizenship and "other". More than 6,500 group projects or activities, involving 4.6 million participants, were registered. Table 5 indicates the percentage of projects registered in each category.

**Table 5 – *Our Millennium* Project  
Percentage of Projects in Each Category  
Canada - 2000**

<u>Category</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Environment	16.4
Heritage	16.3
Children and Youth	13.3
Care and Support	11.5
Arts and Culture	10.8
Connections	9.2
Recreation	6.3
Learning	5.5
Safety and Crime Prevention	4.8
Global Citizenship	4.1
Other	1.8

**SOURCE:** The Caledon Institute of Public Policy, *Social Capital and the "Our Millennium" National Project*, (Ottawa, April 2001), p. 6.

The first observation that can be made about these findings is that over 27% of the projects were in the domains of heritage and arts and culture. The second observation is less obvious, but perhaps even more significant. According to the Caledon Institute, which analyzed the social capital that was created by the *Our Millennium* project:

If there is a single theme that stands out as noteworthy, it is the fact that a disproportionately large number of projects employed various forms of arts and culture – not just those listed in the arts and culture formal category.

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This is an important finding in that it speaks to the methods that Canadians feel are effective ways to reach people. Arts and culture are viewed as the purview of the elite or of privileged citizens who can afford to engage in these activities. However, the *Our Millennium* projects showed just how very important were the arts and cultural activities in working with youth, seniors, members of visible minority groups – with virtually all Canadians.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, it was impossible to assess the effectiveness or the impact of the projects registered in the *Our Millennium* project. Clearly, however, cultural voluntarism plays a more significant role in strengthening the fabric of Canadian society than is generally recognized.

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<sup>8</sup> Sherri Torjman and Eric Leviten, *Social Capital and the “Our Millennium” National Project*, (Ottawa, April 2001), p. 28.

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## Appendix 1 – Regulations Pertaining to National Arts Service Organizations

According to regulation 8700 of the *Income Tax Act*, an organization must fulfill the following conditions in order to be designated and confirmed as a National Arts Service Organization (NASO).

- i) be exempt from tax under paragraph 149(1)(1), Part 1 of the *Income Tax Act* (i.e., be a not-for-profit organization)
- ii) represent in an official language of Canada the community of artists from one or more sectors of activity in the arts community
- iii) no part of the income of which may be payable to or otherwise available for the personal benefit of any proprietor, member, shareholder, trustee or counselor of the organization, except where the payment is for services rendered or is an amount to which paragraph 56 (1)(n) applies in respect of the recipient (see I))
- iv) all of the resources of which are devoted to the activities and objects described in its application for designation under paragraph 149.1 (6.4)
- v) more than 50 percent of the directors, officers or other officials of which deal with each other at arm's length; and
- vi) no more than 50 percent of the property of which at any time has been contributed or otherwise paid into the organization by one person or by members of a group of persons who do not deal with each other at arm's length.

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