

*Public Opinion Research  
on the Voluntary Sector*

**Final Report**

*Submitted to:*

**The Voluntary Task Force**

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# Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Familiarity with the Term “Voluntary Sector” .....	3
2001 – The International Year of Volunteers .....	3
Volunteerism and the Federal Government .....	3
Voluntary Sector Initiative – Awareness and Approval.....	4
<b>Detailed Findings</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Familiarity with the Term “Voluntary Sector” .....	5
2001 – The International Year of Volunteers .....	8
Volunteerism and the Federal Government.....	9
Voluntary Sector Initiative – Awareness and Approval .....	12
<b>APPENDIX I – TOPLINE QUESTIONNAIRE</b> .....	<b>15</b>

## INTRODUCTION

As part of its communications efforts, the Voluntary Task Force commissioned Ipsos-Reid to conduct a survey of Canadian public opinion on the voluntary sector and the efforts of the government to support volunteerism and civic participation in Canada. The specific goals of this project were to establish the following:

- the level of familiarity Canadians have with the term “voluntary sector”;
  - awareness of the UN declaration of the International Year of Volunteers 2001;
  - the level of importance Canadians place on the voluntary sector;
  - the level of support for ongoing government involvement; and
  - the level of awareness of and support for the Voluntary Sector Initiative.
- track benchmark results on these measures that were recorded in a study conducted in September 2001.

## METHODOLOGY

This report summarises the findings from an omnibus telephone survey of 1,000 adult Canadians. The omnibus survey was conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of the Voluntary Task Force between February 12 and 14, 2002. A sample of this size is said to have an associated margin of error of  $\pm 3.1\%$ , 19 times out of 20. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. The data have been statistically weighted to ensure that the age, gender and regional composition of the sample reflect that of the adult Canadian population according to 1996 Census data.

## KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

### Familiarity with the Term “Voluntary Sector”

First, respondents were asked to indicate their level of familiarity with the term “voluntary sector”. Currently, half (47%) of Canadians indicate that they are familiar with the term. This is an increase of 10 points over the benchmark set in September 2001 (37%).

One in five (19%, up from 13% in September) say they are very familiar with the term, while a further 28 percent (up 4 points since September) say they are somewhat familiar with it. However, the majority (53%, down from 63% in September) say they are not familiar with the term “voluntary sector”.

All respondents, regardless of their level of familiarity, were asked what organizations they thought of when they heard the term “voluntary sector”. One fifth (18%) were unable to think of any organizations that they would associate with this term. However, organizations that were listed by the balance are voluntary sector organizations. “Health care/hospital auxiliaries” (18%, +12 points) is the most frequently mentioned, followed by “the Red Cross” (14%, -18 points)”, the “Salvation Army” (11%, +1 point), the “Canadian Cancer Society” (9%, +4 points). The high response of the Red Cross (32%) in September 2001 might have been the result of post-September 11<sup>th</sup> publicity for that voluntary sector organization.

### 2001 – The International Year of Volunteers

Similar to September 2001 findings, more than four in ten (45%) Canadians say were aware that the United Nations had declared 2001 to be the International Year of Volunteers. However, the majority (55%) were unaware of this declaration.

### Volunteerism and the Federal Government

Canadians are nearly unanimous (96%) in the belief that volunteers and voluntary sector organizations contribute to a better quality of life for Canadians. Indeed, three quarters (72%) strongly agree, while 24% somewhat agree. These results mirror those of the September 2001.

Eight in ten (81%) Canadians believe the Government of Canada should be encouraging people to do volunteer work, with 45% strongly agreeing with this idea, and 36% somewhat agreeing with it. Eight in ten (80%) Canadians also believe that the Government of Canada should be doing more to help voluntary sector organizations recruit and retain volunteers: half (48%) strongly agree, and 32% somewhat agree.

## Voluntary Sector Initiative – Awareness and Approval

Respondents were asked whether or not they were aware of the Voluntary Sector Initiative. Most (95%) have not yet heard of this project while only a few (5%) have heard of it. These results are identical to those of the benchmark study conducted in September 2001.

Of those who have heard of the initiative, one in four mentioned they heard about it through “a newspaper article” (26%) or “the TV news” (26%). The other sources that were cited most frequently are “at work or from their employer” (18%), and “from a radio program” (11%).

In February 2002 more Canadians said it is a good idea to have a federal government project designed to strengthen its relationship with the voluntary sector and make the voluntary sector stronger. In fact, (87%, +3 points) say it is either a very good idea (39%, +4 points) or a somewhat good idea (48%, -1 point). Only 11% believe it is a bad idea.

## Detailed Findings

### Familiarity with the Term “Voluntary Sector”

First, respondents were asked to indicate their level of familiarity with the term “voluntary sector”. Currently, half (47%) of Canadians indicate that they are familiar with the term. This is an increase of 10 points over the benchmark set in September 2001 (37%). One in five (19%, up from 13% in September) say they are very familiar with the term, while a further 28 percent (up 4 points since September) say they are somewhat familiar with it. However, the majority (53%, down from 63% in September) say they are not familiar with the term “voluntary sector”.

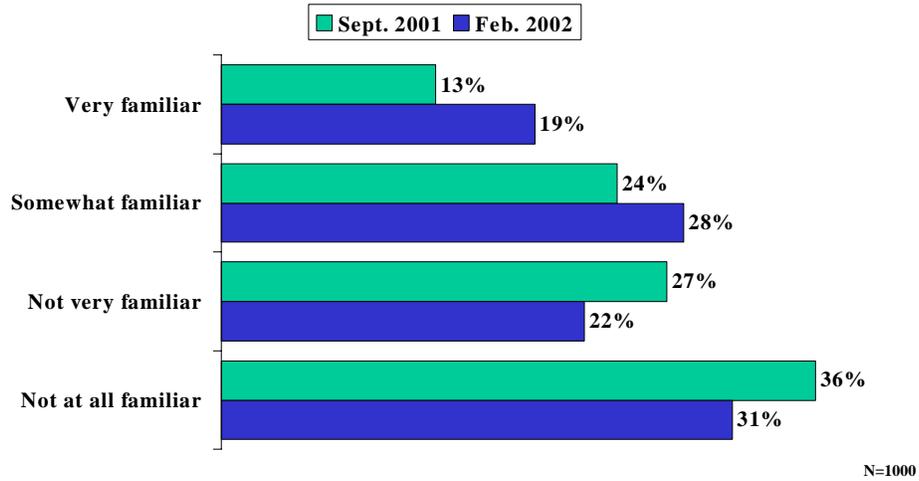
The highest levels of familiarity are found among Canadians aged 35 and older (53%) and those who are university educated (57%, +12 points). Residents of Quebec (67%, +8 points) are far more likely to say they are familiar with “*secteur bénévole*” or “*secteur bénévole et communautaire*”.

Canadians who are least familiar with the term “voluntary sector” are more likely to be between the ages of 18 and 34 (34%; +9 points), have a less than a high school education (34%) or live outside Quebec (40%; +9 points).

Familiarity with the term has increased across most of the demographic sectors compared to the benchmark levels.

# Familiarity with the Term “Voluntary Sector”

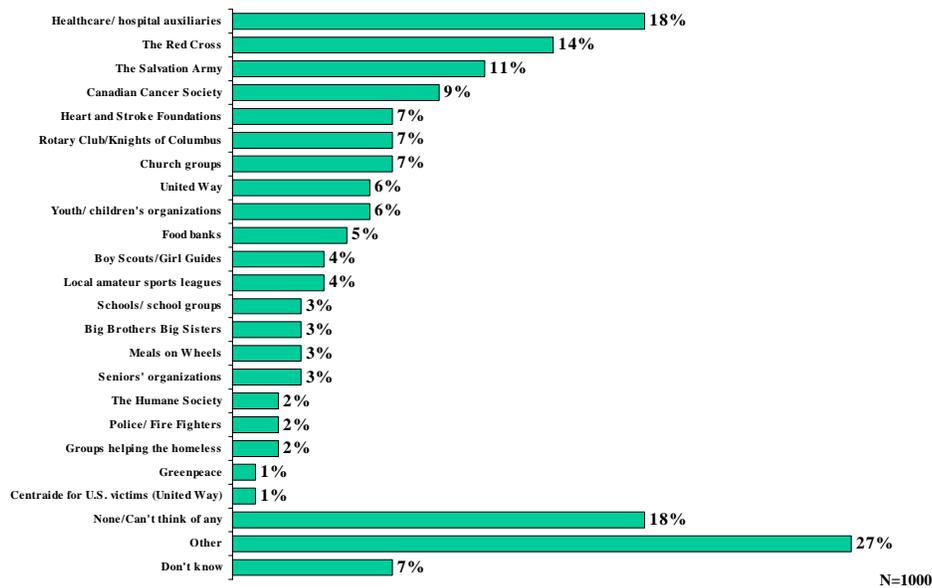
*How familiar are you with the term voluntary sector?*



All respondents, regardless of their level of familiarity, were asked what organizations they thought of when they heard the term “voluntary sector”. One fifth (18%) were unable to think of any organizations that they would associate with this term. However, organizations that were listed by the balance are voluntary sector organizations. “Health care/hospital auxiliaries” (18%, +12 points) is the most frequently mentioned, followed by “the Red Cross” (14%, -18 points)”, the “Salvation Army” (11%, +1 point), the “Canadian Cancer Society” (9%, +4 points). The high response of the Red Cross (32%) might have been the result of post-September 11<sup>th</sup> publicity for that voluntary sector organization. Many others were mentioned by 3% or fewer respondents. Please refer to the chart below.

## Organizations Listed as “Voluntary Sector”

*What organizations do you think of when you hear the term voluntary sector?*



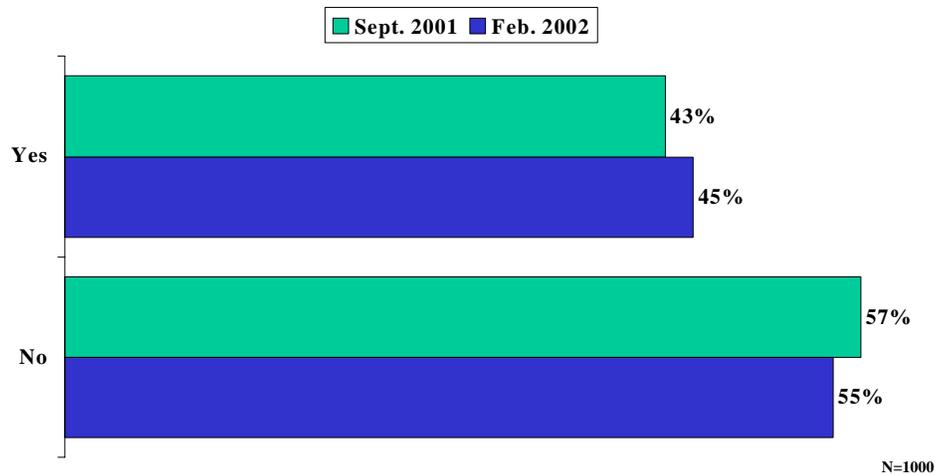
## 2001 – The International Year of Volunteers

Just over four in ten (45%) Canadians are aware that the United Nations had declared 2001 to be the International Year of Volunteers. However, the majority (55%) are unaware of this declaration. In September 2001, 43% said they had heard that the UN had declared 2001 to be the International Year of Volunteers, while 57% said they had not heard of this declaration.

The highest levels of awareness are among women (50%, +3 points), those 55 years of age and over (55%, +5 points), those who are university educated (52%, +4 points), and residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (54%, -2 points). Those who are least likely to be aware of the UN declaration are men (41%, +3 points), those aged 18 to 34 (38%, +3 points), those who have less than a high school education (27%), and residents of Quebec (35%).

### Aware that 2001 was the International Year of Volunteers

*Were you aware that the United Nations has declared 2001 to be the International Year of Volunteers?*



## Volunteerism and the Federal Government

This section is based on the findings of three attitudinal statements. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with each. Based on the findings outlined below, Canadians strongly believe that volunteers and the voluntary sector contribute to a better quality of life and that the government should do more to help voluntary sector organizations recruit and retain volunteers.

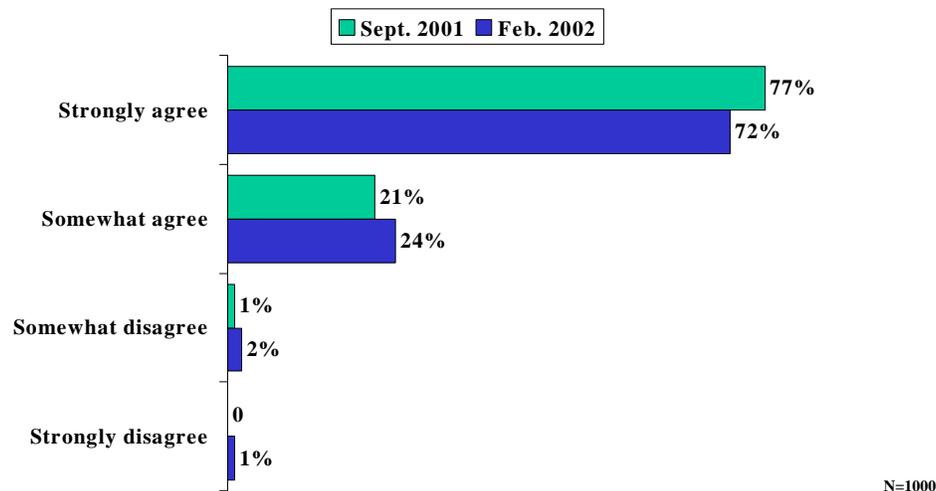
Canadians are nearly unanimous (96%) in the belief that volunteers and voluntary sector organizations contribute to a better quality of life for Canadians. Indeed, three quarters (72%) strongly agree, while 24% somewhat agree. These results mirror those of September 2001.

While still representing the vast majority, Canadians with less than a high school education (89%) are slightly less likely than others to agree with this statement.

### Contribution to a Better Quality of Life

*Now I would like to read you a list of statements. For each one, I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree.*

**- Volunteers and voluntary sector organizations contribute to a better quality of life for Canadians -**



Eight in ten (81%) Canadians also believe the Government of Canada should be encouraging people to do volunteer work, with 45% strongly agreeing with this idea, and 36% somewhat agreeing with it. Only 19% disagree with the federal government encouraging people to volunteer.

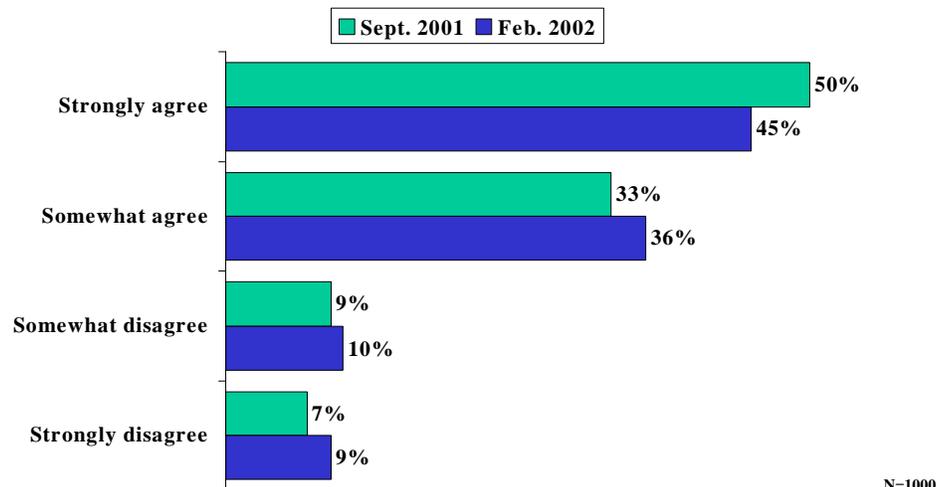
The highest levels of strong agreement are found among residents of Atlantic Canada (62%).

Overall, residents of Alberta (89%), Atlantic Canada (88%), British Columbia (86%), and Canadians between 18 and 34 (85%, versus 75% of those 55 and older) are more likely to agree with this view.

## Gov't Should Encourage People to Volunteer

*Now I would like to read you a list of statements. For each one, I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree.*

**- The Government of Canada should be encouraging people to do volunteer work -**

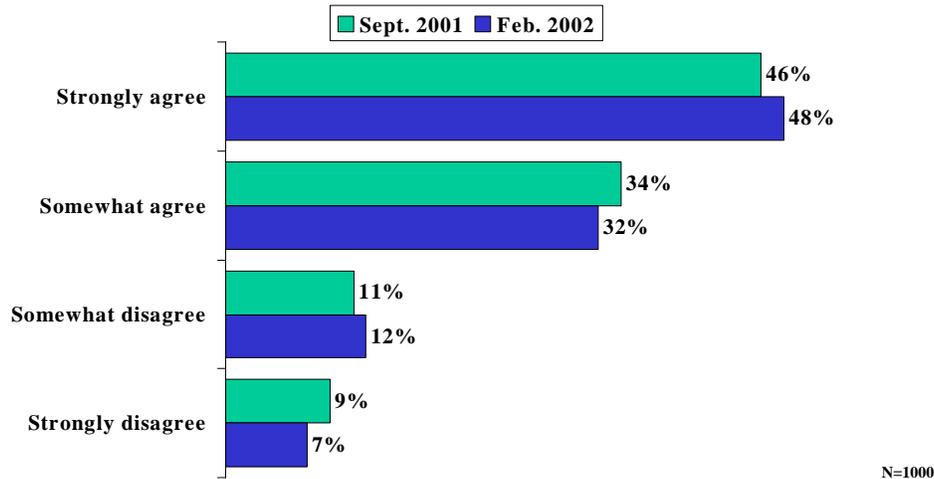


Eight in ten (80%) Canadians also believe that the Government of Canada should be doing more to help voluntary sector organizations recruit and retain volunteers: half (48%) strongly agree, and 32% somewhat agree. Those who disagree include 12% who somewhat disagree, and 7% who strongly disagree.

## Gov't Should Help with Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers

*Now I would like to read you a list of statements. For each one, I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree.*

**- The Government of Canada should be doing more to help voluntary sector organizations recruit and retain volunteers -**



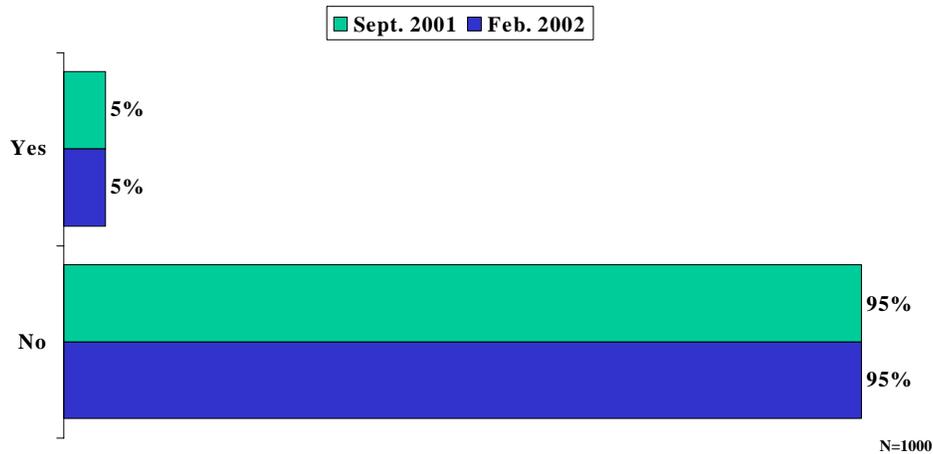
The highest levels of strong agreement are found among residents of Atlantic Canada (59%) and Quebec (58%), and Canadians between 35 and 54 years of age (51%). Those least likely to strongly agree that the government should be doing more to help are residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (34%).

## Voluntary Sector Initiative – Awareness and Approval

Respondents were asked whether or not they were aware of the Voluntary Sector Initiative. Most (95%) have not yet heard of this project while only a few (5%) have heard of it. These results are identical to those of the benchmark study conducted in September 2001. Awareness remains low across the demographics.

### Aware of the Voluntary Sector Initiative

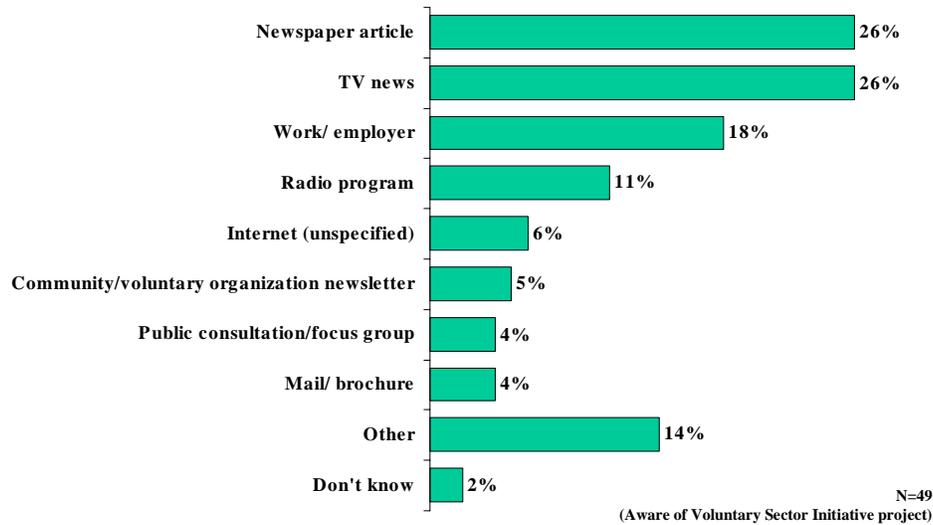
*The Government of Canada is working on a project called the Voluntary Sector Initiative. The project is designed to strengthen its relationship with the voluntary sector and make the voluntary sector stronger. Were you aware of this project?*



Of those who have heard of the initiative, one in four said they had heard of it through “a newspaper article” (26%) or “the TV news” (26%). The other sources that were cited most frequently are “at work or from their employer” (18%) and “from a radio program” (11%).

## Sources of Information on the Voluntary Sector Initiative

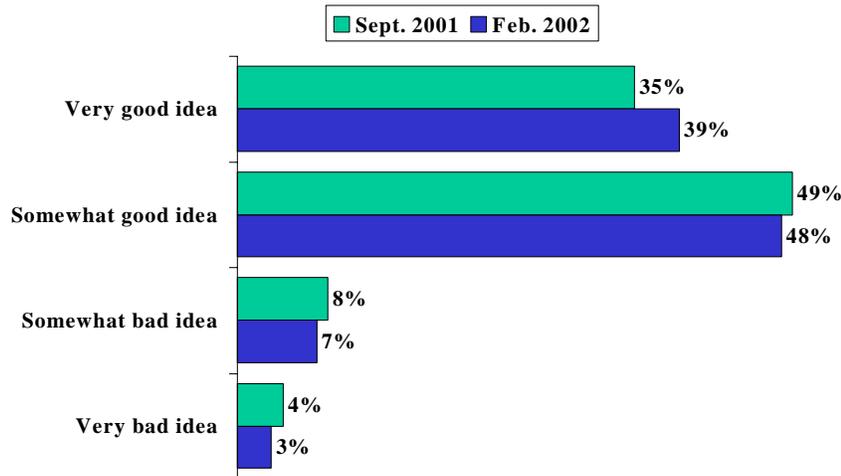
*How did you hear about the Voluntary Sector Initiative?*



In February 2002 more Canadians said it is a good idea to have a federal government project designed to strengthen its relationship with the voluntary sector and make the voluntary sector stronger. In fact, (87%, +3 points) say it is either a very good idea (39%, +4 points) or a somewhat good idea (48%, -1 point). Only 11% believe it is a bad idea.

## Approval of the Voluntary Sector Initiative

What do you think of this idea?



N=1000

Although they comprise a small proportion (10%) of the Canadian population, those who think the Voluntary Sector Initiative is a bad idea are more likely to be 55 years of age or older (at 16%, compared to 6% of those aged 18 to 34), or residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (16%) or Ontario (15%).

## APPENDIX I – TOPLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

### 1a. How familiar are you with the term voluntary sector?

	TOTAL
BASE (Weighted) : All Respondents	1000
BASE (Unweighted): All Respondents	1000
Very familiar	19%
Somewhat familiar	28%
Not very familiar	22%
Not at all familiar	31%
Don't know	-
<b>TOPBOX &amp; LOWBOX SUMMARY</b>	
Familiar (Top2Box)	47%
Not familiar (Low2Box)	53%

**1b. What organizations do you think of when you hear the term voluntary sector?**

TOTAL MENTIONS	TOTAL
BASE (Weighted) : All Respondents	1000
BASE (Unweighted): All Respondents	1000
Healthcare/ hospital auxiliaries	18%
The Red Cross	14%
The Salvation Army	11%
Canadian Cancer Society	9%
Heart and Stroke Foundations	7%
Rotary Club/Knights of Columbus	7%
Church groups	7%
United Way	6%
Youth/Children's organizations	6%
Food Banks	5%
Boy Scouts/Girl Guides	4%
Local amateur sports leagues	4%
School/school groups	3%
Big Brothers/Big Sisters	3%
Senior's organizations	3%
Groups helping the homeless	3%
Police/ fire fighters	2%
The Humane Society	2%
Centraide (for U.S. victims)	1%
Greenpeace	1%
Council of Canadians	-
The John Howard/Elizabeth Fry Society	-
Military/ army reserves	-
Other	27%
None/Can't think of any	18%
Don't know	7%

**2. Were you aware that the United Nations has declared 2001 to be the International Year of Volunteers?**

	TOTAL
BASE (Weighted) : All Respondents	1000
BASE (Unweighted): All Respondents	1000
Yes	45%
No	55%
Don't know	-

**3. Now I would like to read you a list of statements. For each one, I would like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree.**

BASE (Weighted) : All Respondents 1000 BASE (Unweighted): All Respondents 1000	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	TOPBOX & LOWBOX SUMMARY	
						Agree (Top2Box)	Disagree (Low2Box)
Volunteers and voluntary sector organizations contribute to a better quality of life for Canadians	72%	24%	2%	1%	-	96%	3%
The Government of Canada should be encouraging people to do volunteer work	45%	36%	10%	9%	-	80%	19%
The Government of Canada should be doing more to help voluntary sector organizations recruit and retain volunteers	48%	32%	12%	7%	1%	80%	19%

**4. The Government of Canada is working on a project called the Voluntary Sector Initiative. The project is designed to strengthen its relationship with the voluntary sector and make the voluntary sector stronger. Were you aware of this project?**

	TOTAL
BASE (Weighted) : All Respondents	1000
BASE (Unweighted): All Respondents	1000
Yes	5%
No	95%

**4b. How did you hear about the Voluntary Sector Initiative?**

	TOTAL
Base: Aware of <b>Voluntary Sector Initiative</b>	
Unweighted Base	49
Weighted Base	50
Newspaper article	26%
TV news	26%
Work/ employer	18%
Radio program	11%
Internet (unspecified)	6%
Community/voluntary organization newsletter	5%
Public consultation/focus group	4%
Mail/ brochure	4%
Other	14%
Don't know	2%

**5. What do you think of this idea?**

	TOTAL
BASE (Weighted) : All Respondents	1000
BASE (Unweighted): All Respondents	1000
Very good idea	39%
Somewhat good idea	48%
Somewhat bad idea	7%
Very bad idea	3%
Don't know	2%
<b>TOPBOX &amp; LOWBOX SUMMARY</b>	
Good idea (Top2Box)	87%
Bad idea (Low2Box)	11%