

# Joint Accord Table

## Final Report

March 2003

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## **Executive Summary**

In June 2000, the federal government announced the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), a joint endeavor designed to better serve the needs of Canadians by strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector and enhancing its relationship with the Government of Canada. One of the key elements of the VSI was the development of a framework document or accord to set out principles that would guide the relationship between the voluntary and government sectors into the future.

Over its almost two-year lifespan (September 2000 to July 2002), the Accord project was guided by the Joint Accord Table (one of seven joint tables of the VSI), a collaborative working group comprised of an equal number of senior executives from the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. The Joint Accord Table (JAT) was assigned responsibility for two tasks:

- Developing an accord between the two sectors; and
- Developing implementation tools and mechanisms to give life to the accord.

In developing an accord, the JAT focused on engaging the broadest possible spectrum of Canadians and, in particular, ensuring the participation of the diverse and geographically disparate organizations that make up the voluntary sector. With the assistance of local voluntary sector organizations, consultations were conducted in communities across the country during the spring and fall of 2001.

The JAT also sought the input of business and labour representatives, and made special efforts to ensure the ongoing involvement of Aboriginal people and visible minorities, two groups that were under-represented in the initial consultation process.

Signed by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on December 5, 2001, [\*An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector\*](#) (the Accord) is a landmark agreement that launched the beginning of an enhanced relationship between the two sectors. The Accord identifies common values and principles to guide their working relationship and sets out the commitments of each sector — as well as shared commitments — to actions designed to build their relationship.

Once the Accord was completed, the JAT addressed the second phase of its mandate — to develop an implementation plan to give effect to the terms of the Accord. Based on reflections about the experiences of other countries, the needs identified by the voluntary sector and issues highlighted during the consultations, the JAT decided to focus its efforts in three areas:

1. Identifying structures and processes required to implement the Accord; and
2. Developing a code of good practice to guide the two sectors' funding relationship; and

3. Developing a code of good practice designed to enhance the voluntary sector's contribution to public policy.

To carry out this work, the JAT established three working groups, each co-chaired by a JAT voluntary sector member and a member representing the federal government.

More specifically, the JAT produced the following implementation tools/mechanisms:

- [Letter to the Clerk of the Privy Council](#). The letter sets out recommendations regarding the structures and processes that should be put in place to guide the joint work of the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector during the coming years, with specific respect to the Accord as well as to the broader VSI. The letter proposes individual structures and processes for each sector, as well as those for joint work.
- [Code of Good Practice on Funding](#). This is a tool for enhancing practices related to the funding aspect of the government–voluntary sector relationship. It identifies the rationale for a code on funding, the scope and application of this code and its underlying principles. As well, the code on funding identifies the practices that should be followed by the sectors — both individually and jointly — to enhance the funding relationship.
- [Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue](#). This tool sets out best practices to deepen the policy dialogue between the two sectors. In addition to describing the rationale for such a code, the principles underlying it and the various stages of the public policy process, this code identifies good practices for the Government of Canada and for the voluntary sector, as well as for both sectors together.

Reflecting on the experiences of the past two years, JAT members and staff indicated some areas where the process faltered. Workloads overwhelmed and cultures sometimes clashed. That being said, JAT members and staff were unanimous in their overall endorsement of the JAT process and its resulting products.

For many, the process demonstrated the potential for an enhanced relationship between the two sectors — one that is respectful, open and committed to ensuring the best possible quality of life for all Canadians.

As for the products themselves — the Accord and its implementation tools — they set out the fundamental tenets that will underpin the relationship and carry it forward into the future. A lasting legacy, they are also an important first step in building and deepening the relationship between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector.

## Context

The JAT of the VSI builds on a number of initiatives undertaken both jointly and separately by the voluntary sector and the federal government over the past several years. It also takes into account the recent experiences of other jurisdictions in formalizing the relationship between governments and the voluntary sector.

In 1999, the Voluntary Sector Roundtable (VSR) — comprised of 12 national umbrella organizations — released the results of an independent inquiry on issues of accountability and governance in the voluntary sector.

Entitled [\*Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada's Voluntary Sector\*](#), the report set out 41 recommendations designed to enhance the voluntary sector's ability to function effectively.

Responding to the report's recommendations and with oversight by a Reference Group of Ministers, federal government and voluntary sector leaders participated in three joint tables focusing on: building a new relationship; strengthening the capacity of the voluntary sector; and improving the regulatory framework in which the voluntary sector operates.

The first stage of this undertaking culminated in an August 1999 report entitled [\*Working Together: A Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative\*](#). One of the report's recommendations called for the development of "an official accord or agreement that articulates a shared vision and agreed-upon principles."

The concept of an accord or framework agreement is not unique to Canada. In England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, "compacts" have recently been developed between governments and voluntary sectors. The authority of these compacts, which provide a framework to guide the relationship between the two sectors is not legal, but comes from the involvement and endorsement of government and voluntary sector members through broad-based consultation.

In Canada, the federal government's commitment to an enhanced relationship with the voluntary sector was reflected in the October 1999 [\*Speech from the Throne\*](#), which underscored the need for an active partnership with the voluntary sector to build the best possible quality of life for Canadians. The following June, the federal government announced its [\*Partnering for the Benefit of Canadians: Government of Canada-\*](#)

### ***Extract from the Speech from the Throne, October 12, 1999***

"In 2001, Canadians will mark the International Year of Volunteers — a time to celebrate the achievements of Canada's everyday heroes.

"The Government recognizes the need to build partnerships with communities and to renew its relationship with the voluntary organizations that serve and sustain them.

"The Government will enter into a national accord with the voluntary sector, laying a new foundation for active partnership with voluntary organizations in the service of Canadians."

[\*Voluntary Sector Initiative\*](#), allocating \$94.6 million over five years to strengthen its relationship with the voluntary sector and to increase that sector's capacity in essential areas.

A major focus of the VSI was the development of a joint accord, or framework agreement that would provide visible and concrete recognition of the importance of the improved relationship, articulating the principles that would guide and shape the relationship in the years to come.

With this goal in mind, VSI funds were expended to support a joint table process for developing an accord, creating a strategy for consulting with stakeholders and an implementation plan to identify how to give effect to the provisions of the accord, and setting out a process for monitoring and reporting on its implementation.

## **Overview of the Joint Accord Table**

### **Purpose and mandate**

The JAT was convened in September 2000 as one of several joint tables of the Government of Canada's newly established VSI.

As set out in its terms of reference, the mandate of the JAT was to “develop a framework document and associated monitoring and reporting measures that would improve the way the federal government and the voluntary sector work together in the areas of policy development, program design and service delivery, for the benefit of Canadians.”

Based on the general guidelines for all VSI joint tables, the specific terms of reference for the JAT were developed by its members in their initial meetings.

Founded on a shared commitment to improve the quality of life of Canadians, an accord would enhance the relationship between the two sectors by setting out the values and principles that would guide their work. A collaborative initiative, this accord was to be prepared in consultation with representatives from government, as well as volunteers and voluntary organizations at the national, provincial, territorial and local levels. Moreover, it was to include input from the widest possible spectrum of organizations and services.

Also as part of its mandate, the JAT was to develop measures for implementing the framework/accord agreement, including institutional structures and processes needed for the ongoing management of the relationship between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector.

### **Membership**

Co-chaired by representatives of the two sectors, the JAT was composed of 14 members, including an equal number of representatives from the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. Senior executives at the assistant deputy minister level, selected to reflect a cross-section of departments and agencies, represented the federal government.

On the voluntary sector side, members were senior representatives from voluntary organizations, chosen by an Independent Selection Committee from more than 1,000 nominations. A list of the JAT members is provided below. During the life of the JAT, two government members and one voluntary sector member resigned their seats due to changes in responsibilities or relocation.

## **Voluntary Sector Representatives**

**Lynne Toupin, Co-chair**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Canadian Co-operative Association

**Huguette Beauchamp<sup>1</sup>**  
Présidente  
Association québécoise de défense  
des droits des personnes retraitées  
et préretraitées

**Pierre-Marie Cotte**  
Vice President  
Philanthropic Development  
Centraide du Grand Montréal

**Colleen Ford**  
Executive Director  
Canadian Parks and Recreation  
Association

**Al Hatton**  
Executive Director  
The Coalition of National Voluntary  
Organizations

## **Government Representatives**

**Bill McCloskey, Co-chair**  
Assistant Commissioner  
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

**Guillaume Bissonnette<sup>2</sup>**  
General Director  
Finance Canada

**Réal Bouchard**  
Director  
Finance Canada

**Kristine Burr**  
Assistant Deputy Solicitor General  
Solicitor General of Canada

**Matthew King<sup>3</sup>**  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

**Wayne Helgason**  
Executive Director  
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

**Eva Kmiecic**  
Deputy Commissioner  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police

**Graham Stewart**  
Executive Director  
John Howard Society of Canada

**Martha Nixon**  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

**Elaine Teofilovici**  
Chief Executive Officer  
YWCA of Canada

**Jean-Guy Saint-Martin**  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Canada Economic Development

**Susan Scotti**  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Human Resources Development Canada

<sup>1</sup> Replaced by Pierre-Marie Cotte in January 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Replaced by Réal Bouchard in September 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Replaced by Eva Kmiecic in September 2001.

## **Operating principles**

In carrying out its mandate, the JAT was guided by the following general principles, which are excerpted from its [Terms of Reference](#).

### **1. Quorum**

Members have agreed that the quorum for meetings to proceed officially is at least four members from each group. Membership is not substitutable.

### **2. Confidentiality**

Members are expected to be open and candid in discussing items before the JAT. For this reason, it is important to maintain confidentiality by respecting the personal opinions or views expressed by individuals during meetings, and by agreeing not to disclose this information to others.

### **3. Public communication and media**

Regular communications about the JAT, its mandate and membership, together with regular progress updates should be part of the regular work of all joint tables. Records of meetings, progress updates and other communications tools (e.g., questions and answers) will be developed regularly to support and transparently communicate the work to the public.

### **4. Reaching agreement**

Members will seek to reach consensus wherever possible.

## **5. Official languages**

All members will be encouraged to participate in JAT deliberations in the official language of their choice. All products of the JAT will be produced in both languages (e.g., minutes, joint reports, and media lines). Simultaneous interpretation and bilingual materials will be provided, based on need and what is determined to be reasonable by the members.

## **6. Accessibility**

To ensure the active participation by any members who may have accessibility requirements, JAT meetings will be held in facilities that are barrier-free. Where required, technical aids, anthropometrical equipment, attendants and/or other specialized services will be provided to accommodate the needs of differently-abled JAT members.

## **7. Expert members and invited guests**

The JAT may, from time to time, require experts, academics or other voluntary sector representatives to attend meetings as presenters, advisers or observers because of their knowledge of the subject, of the sector or as part of another existing joint table or consultation mechanism. The Co-Chairs will agree to such invitations in advance.

## **Supporting groups**

The JAT was primarily served by two groups:

- The Voluntary Sector Task Force (the Task Force) from the Privy Council Office, which was mandated to provide secretariat services to the JAT; and
- The Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat (the Secretariat), which provided substantive and other input throughout the process. More specifically, these groups offered expertise and advice to the JAT and working group members, coordinated research and development of the Accord and implementation guides, carried out all administrative functions, and oversaw consultation and outreach initiatives — including preparation and distribution of communication and support materials.

The decision to establish the Secretariat (as a voluntary sector counterpart to the Task Force) with responsibility for supporting the Accord development process was taken in order to address the perception that the government was unduly leading the process. This perception was, in large part, a result of initial research activities undertaken by the Task Force in the months prior to the formal establishment of the JAT.

The team members (some of whom served for only part of the JAT's two-year lifespan) were:

### **Voluntary Sector Task Force**

Joanne Cousineau

Susan Fletcher

Mary Glen

Georges Grujic

Rebecca Hales  
Micheline Lavoie  
Peter Mathieson  
Nancy Wildgoose

### **Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat**

Susan Carter  
Michael Deraiche  
Gary Evans  
Kate Humpage

At her request, Susan Phillips, a faculty member at Carleton University's School of Public Administration, was an independent observer during the process.

### **Reporting relationships**

A number of other groups played a role in the JAT process, providing direction and overall guidance, serving in a coordinating role and/or providing links to the broader VSI. A brief overview of each of these groups is provided below.

#### **Voluntary Sector Steering Group (formerly *Senior Sector Steering Group*)**

This group included senior representatives of the voluntary sector (including the co-chairs of all joint tables) and, later on in the process, representatives of the Aboriginal Reference Group and the National Visible Minority Reference Group. The Voluntary Sector Steering Group provided political and strategic leadership to the sector and oversaw the work of the VSI.

#### **Reference Group of Ministers**

This Group, which consisted of nine members of Cabinet appointed by the Prime Minister, was chaired by the Honourable Lucienne Robillard, President of the Treasury Board. It provided government leadership of the broader VSI.

#### **Joint Coordinating Committee**

Comprised of an equal number of leaders from the government and the voluntary sector, this committee coordinated the many component initiatives, projects and joint tables under the VSI, particularly for joint initiatives to harmonize activities such as consultation, communication and research (including those that involve the voluntary and private sectors; federal, and provincial and territorial governments; and the public).

#### **Assistant Deputy Minister Executive Committee**

This Committee included assistant deputy ministers from the nine departments with a minister serving on the Reference Group of Ministers, as well as the government co-chair of the JAT. It provided strategic advice to ministers and federal government representatives on joint tables and sought input from the broader federal community on key issues.

## **The Process**

The (JAT was first convened in September 2000. Over the next two-year period, the JAT met a total of 24 times, either in person or via teleconference. One of the JAT's first major tasks during Phase I of its mandate (i.e., development of an accord) was to establish a work plan for drafting an accord and consulting extensively with a full range of stakeholder groups.

Once this work was completed in December 2001, the JAT addressed Phase II of its mandate: developing an implementation plan to give effect to the terms of the Accord.

From its inception, the JAT defined its own process, with members deciding among themselves how best to fulfill the JAT's mandate and what role would be played by the secretariats. Before beginning their work, government and voluntary sector members met several times, both together and as separate groups, to brainstorm about process issues.

For most of its work, the JAT elected to review and refine policy directions and draft text prepared by the two secretariats. The JAT relied on this process to develop the Accord as well as the implementation tools.

## **Milestone dates and activities**

Following are some of the milestone dates and events marking the JAT's progress during Phase I, development of the Accord, and Phase II, development of implementation tools and mechanisms (i.e., letter to the Clerk of the Privy Council on joint structures and processes; a Code of Good Practice on Funding; and a Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue).

### **Phase I: Development of the Accord**

June 8, 2000	VSI announced
October 10, 2000	JAT meets for the first time
January 2001	First draft of the Accord completed
May 2001	Draft Accord prepared for consultations
June 2001	First round of community consultation sessions
September 2001	Second round of community consultation sessions
December 5, 2001	Accord signed

### **Phase II: Development of Implementation Tools and Mechanisms**

January 2002	JAT sets priorities for implementing Accord
March 2002	Accord Forum held
May 2002	First draft of Codes prepared for consultations
May 2002	Letter (processes and structures) to Clerk of the Privy Council

June 2002	Voluntary sector conducts field tests on the Codes
June 2002	Government of Canada holds consultations on the Codes
July 2002	Final meeting of the JAT
October 8, 2002	Codes launched at All-tables Meeting

## **The Products**

The work of the JAT focused on the development of a framework document (i.e., the Accord), and related implementation measures to enhance the working relationship between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector.

The following section provides more specific information about the process and structures that were used to develop these products. Specifically, it summarizes the content of, and development process for, the following key products of the JAT:

- The Accord; and
- Implementation Tools/Mechanisms:
  - Letter to the Clerk of the Privy Council on Joint Structures and Processes;
  - Code of Good Practice on Funding; and
  - Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue.

## **The Accord**

Signed by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on December 5, 2001, An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector (Accord) is a landmark agreement that marks the beginning of an enhanced relationship between the two sectors.

### **The Accord in brief**

Designed to strengthen the ability of the voluntary sector and the federal government to better serve the needs of Canadians, the Accord identifies common values and principles to guide their working relationship.

It also sets out the commitments of each sector, as well as shared commitments, to actions and practices designed to build their relationship.

The Accord recognizes the need for implementation measures to ensure that its provisions are carried forward successfully. In this regard, it calls for the establishment of appropriate organizational structures,

### ***A firm foundation***

The Accord identifies the following common values and principles to shape future practices.

#### *Values:*

- Democracy
- Active citizenship
- Equality
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Social justice

#### *Principles:*

- Independence
- Interdependence
- Dialogue
- Co-operation and collaboration
- Accountability to Canadians

processes and tools for implementing the Accord and monitoring and reporting on progress.

More specifically, the Accord identifies the following as fundamental to advancing the relationship:

- Appropriate organizational structures in the federal government and the voluntary sector to give effect to the Accord;
- Processes for monitoring and reporting on the Accord, resolving disputes, agreeing on next steps and discussing opportunities for collaboration;
- Codes or standards of good practice to guide the relationship in such areas as policy dialogue and funding;
- Regular meetings between ministers and sector representatives to discuss progress; and
- Activities designed to increase awareness about the Accord within the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector, and among Canadians.

### **How the Accord was developed**

The Accord is the culmination of extensive research, as well as discussion and consultation with representatives from various issue areas, and diverse sectors and geographic regions.

In all, almost 1,900 people in 29 cities and towns across the country took part in formal consultations during the development of the Accord. Canadians also had the opportunity to participate in the consultation process electronically, via the website established as part of the VSI.

### Research

From the outset, the JAT members focused on producing a strong draft document, reflecting the its best efforts to reach consensus on key issues, before submitting it to the consultative process. As a first step in developing the format and content of the draft Accord, JAT members considered a range of background and support materials to inform their discussion and decision-making.

In-house research was made available to members regarding the experiences of other jurisdictions in Canada and abroad. As part of this learning initiative, government and voluntary sector representatives from England and Scotland traveled to Canada to meet with JAT members and discuss recent experiences in developing a joint framework/accord.

In addition to this in-house research, independent researchers were contracted to provide the JAT with the following input:

- A further analysis of experiences in other jurisdictions (e.g., Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland);

- A summary assessment of the relative merits of various consultation document options (e.g., workbook, facilitated guide, text);
- An analysis of the relative merits of various consultation models (e.g., face-to-face meetings, a traveling “road show”, electronic input, facilitated sessions, self-directed workbooks, town hall/open meetings). Assessments considered such aspects as timing, coverage, participation, cost, as well as communications and public relations issues;
- An assessment of the implications of a framework agreement for the Government of Canada, including a review of experiences in other jurisdictions;
- An analysis of the implications of an accord for Canada’s voluntary sector, based on an assessment of similar arrangements in other jurisdictions (e.g., the impact on: the sector’s autonomy; its relationship with other levels of government; sector capacity to participate in policy development); and
- An overview of endorsement and ratification issues for the voluntary sector.

Of particular concern to JAT members during the Accord’s initial drafting stage was the need to ensure an appropriate description of the links between advocacy and funding relationships, and an acceptable definition of the federal government’s commitments with respect to funding. JAT members negotiated extensively over a six-week period before coming to an agreement over the specific wording to be used with respect to these issues.

#### Government of Canada consultations

A range of consultation/review initiatives were undertaken to ensure that the Accord met requirements within the federal government, including those set out in existing guidelines, policies and regulations.

For example, members of the ADM Executive Committee were charged with gathering input on the Accord within their respective departments to determine whether its concepts and principles aligned with departmental mandate and direction.

As well, the Accord was distributed to all deputy ministers within the federal government to determine if there were areas of potential conflict. Presentations on the Accord process and content were also made to this group of senior bureaucrats at their regular breakfast sessions.

At the ministerial level, the Accord was reviewed by the Reference Group of Ministers, which was established for the VSI, and presented to Cabinet for review and discussion before its final signing.

#### Focus group sessions

The JAT, through the Secretariat, solicited extensive input from the voluntary sector. For instance, in three focus group sessions held in February and March 2001, approximately 25 sector representatives provided feedback on fundamental aspects of the draft Accord’s content and presentation, as well as suggestions on how best to engage their members in the consultation process.

Although participants were generally supportive of the principles and commitments outlined in the draft Accord, they identified a number of concerns, including the need to use plain language, give appropriate consideration to local issues and provide additional information on implementation plans and priorities.

Participants also stressed that the draft Accord should be clearly presented as a “work in progress” rather than a “nearly final” product.

### Community consultations

A major step in the Accord development process was extensive consultations with members of the voluntary sector and other interested stakeholders. During the spring and fall of 2001, the JAT conducted a series of cross-Canada consultations designed to:

- Obtain input on the content of the Accord;
- Stimulate discussion about the impacts and benefits of an Accord at the local level; and
- Highlight possible next steps in implementing the Accord.

Charged with consulting the voluntary sector, the Secretariat relied on its extensive knowledge of the sector’s membership and issues to develop an effective strategy for consulting on the Accord. Unlike the process for federal government consultation, the Secretariat’s strategy was not constrained by rules or a hierarchical accountability structure.

An overriding concern for the Secretariat was the need to hear from the broadest possible range of viewpoints within the voluntary sector. With this goal in mind, two rounds of consultation were conducted — the initial session (June 2001) focused on obtaining input from groups in and around ten major centres across the country, while the second session (September 2001) expanded the dialogue to include smaller centres, with a particular focus on communities in Canada’s territories.

In the fall session, a concerted outreach effort targeted groups not well represented in the June consultations, including northern communities, visible minorities, Acadian organizations in Atlantic Canada, and Aboriginals.

In all, more than 2,000 Canadians participated in the community consultation process. The majority of participants in both the June and September consultations were representatives of the voluntary sector.

In the first round of consultations, participation was predominantly from groups such as social service organizations, faith groups, community groups, health organizations, volunteer centres, sports and recreation

#### ***Building a network***

A follow-up meeting with host organizations was held November 21–22, 2001 in Ottawa. The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the consultations, share the final draft of the Accord and discuss the organizations’ continuing involvement in the Accord process.

groups, plus groups promoting issues related to literacy, seniors and women.

There was also representation (although limited) from such groups as arts and culture organizations, environmental groups, Aboriginal groups, youth groups, rural organizations, organizations representing differently-abled persons and anti-poverty groups.

Most of the remaining participants (i.e., approximately 20%) were from the federal government, although provincial, territorial and municipal governments were also represented.

A key element of the consultation strategy was the involvement of local “host organizations” in each consultation venue. Working closely with a voluntary sector consulting group hired to oversee the process, the host organizations recruited participants, selected and prepared the consultation site and prepared a summary report on the consultation.

At many of the daylong sessions, two JAT members, one each representing the federal government and the voluntary sector, provided participants with an overview of the VSI, as well as the objectives and process for developing a Joint Accord. Wherever possible, a locally based member of the broader VSI attended to respond to questions and comments specific to their community.

A professional facilitator guided the consultation process, which consisted of reviewing the draft Accord (provided in a workbook format) and leading participants through a series of general questions designed to elicit their views on elements of the draft Accord.

Based on lessons learned from the first round of community consultations, organizers modified the approach for the fall consultation sessions to allow for greater interaction and input from participants. For example, participants were invited to discuss local issues and assess how the Accord might assist in addressing these issues. As well, participants were encouraged to spend time in small group discussions focusing on some of the core components of the Accord.

Overall, participants expressed general satisfaction with the content of the Accord, although they offered various suggestions for how it might be improved, for example by including additional value statements and clarifying accountabilities. Participants also urged that the voluntary sector’s ability to perform its advocacy role (i.e., to raise issues that affect the well-being of Canadians) should not be affected by funding considerations.

Another key concern was the need for specific measures to ensure that the Accord is implemented effectively. Other comments focused on issues such as the importance of:

- Presenting the Accord in plain language;
- Clarifying the role played by other levels of government;
- Ensuring local endorsement and involving grass-roots organizations; and

- Recognizing the importance of advocacy and funding issues.

#### Consultations with labour, business and national Aboriginal groups

On September 27 and 28, 2001, the Voluntary Sector Task Force hosted separate meetings with leaders from seven organizations representing Canada's business community and eight representatives from the labour community.

In addition to informing these groups about the goals and activities of the VSI — and of the Accord in particular — the meetings were designed to obtain input on the Accord as well as options for establishing a continuing dialogue with members of both communities.

Representatives from eight national Aboriginal political organizations were invited to take part in a government-sponsored briefing session on September 6, 2001. The organizations were provided with background information about the VSI and a copy of the draft Accord, and offered assistance in preparing analysis reports on the Accord.

Input from the four organizations that submitted assessment reports acknowledged the importance of recognizing volunteers and engaging the federal government as a partner within Canada's voluntary sector.

Among the major concerns expressed were: the need for the Accord to be flexible enough to reflect Aboriginal realities; the importance of the implementation process; and the need for the Accord to use language compatible with Aboriginal interpretation. For a summary of the organizations' input, see [National Aboriginal Organizations Summary Report](#).

#### Aboriginal and Visible Minority Reference Groups

Two reference groups were established to ensure that the views and priorities of Canada's Aboriginal voluntary sector and visible minority groups were reflected in the VSI, including the work of the JAT.

This step was taken when it became clear that additional outreach efforts were necessary to ensure the participation and input of these particular groups.

Although the members of the Aboriginal Reference Group ultimately decided that the process did not allow adequate time for full consultation among themselves and with their communities, they provided input into the Accord's development.

A National Visible Minority Reference Group also participated in the JAT process. In addition, community consultation sessions were

#### ***Acknowledging Canada's Aboriginal Community***

“Aboriginal people have a special place in Canadian society, and the content of this framework agreement needs to be interpreted or applied differently to reflect their point of view.”

-- *Excerpt from the Introduction to the Accord*

conducted with visible minority groups in five cities in eastern Canada in the fall of 2001: Montreal, Toronto, metropolitan Halifax, London and Ottawa; and in four cities in western Canada: Vancouver, Saskatoon, Calgary and Winnipeg.

Among the themes emerging from these sessions were the importance of highlighting values such as inclusion and diversity in the Accord; the need to reach out on an ongoing basis to all organizations, particularly small groups; and the importance of involving visible minority representatives early on in the process.

Both the Aboriginal and Visible Minority Reference Groups participated on each of the JAT's three working groups on implementation.

#### The VSI website

To help ensure the broadest input possible, the VSI website was expanded to include a section for the Accord project. The site offered an electronic version of the consultation package, including a draft Accord and a consultation workbook.

Site visitors were invited to submit their comments and suggestions about the Accord, and to raise any questions regarding process or content. A total of 65 submissions were received via the website.

#### **Promotion and distribution activities**

Through the Secretariat and the Task Force, the JAT undertook a range of awareness-raising activities over the course of the project. Almost 10,000 copies of the English draft Accord and 1,250 copies of the French draft Accord were distributed prior to and during the consultations.

As part of the promotional effort, copies of the draft Accord were distributed at relevant events and meetings, such as the Volunteer Forum in Vancouver, the CIVICUS Conference in Vancouver, and the annual general meetings of the Ontario March of Dimes, YWCA and Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations.

The December 5, 2001 launch of the Accord by the Prime Minister and representatives of the voluntary sector was a significant event that was attended by Ministers and senior bureaucrats, as well as members of the media. Voluntary sector representatives were originally resistant to the notion of a high-profile media event to celebrate the signing of the Accord, particularly because of potential confusion due to the planned simultaneous launch of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative. However, the signing ceremony was generally acknowledged as a success.

Because of the voluntary sector's "flat" organizational structure, the issue of who would sign the Accord on behalf of the sector was the subject of some discussion. It was ultimately agreed that a letter supporting the Accord would be signed by Marlene Deboisbriand, Chair of the Voluntary Sector Steering Group, as well as by the Honourable Lucienne Robillard, Chair of the Reference Group of Ministers.

Following the signing, 21,000 copies of the Accord and 3,500 Accord posters were distributed to signing invitees, participants in the consultation process, *Update* subscribers, and in response to bulk orders. The Accord was also featured in editions of *Maclean's* and *L'Actualité*.

The Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador conducted a mass distribution of the final Accord to every Newfoundland organization listed on its database. Copies of the final Accord also went to Members of Parliament, Senators, senior federal government executives (including members of the ADM Executive Committee and ADM Advisory Committee) and contacts in jurisdictions outside Canada.

In addition to the Accord, interim reports on the JAT's progress appeared regularly in issues of *Update*, the quarterly newsletter covering the VSI. Reports by local host organizations participating in the consultations were posted on the website, as were summary reports of the consultation sessions. Minutes of the JAT meetings were also available from the website.

## **Implementation tools and mechanisms**

Following the signing of the Accord in December 2001, the JAT turned its attention to more clearly articulating how the Accord was to be implemented. In establishing its overall direction and workplan, the JAT considered a number of key factors, including the overall requirements of the voluntary sector and the need to effectively represent the priorities of particular groups (e.g., Aboriginal people and visible minorities).

Once the Accord was completed, the JAT addressed the second phase of its mandate – to develop an implementation plan to give effect to the terms of the Accord. Based on reflections about experiences of other countries, the needs identified by the voluntary sector and issues highlighted during the consultations, the JAT decided to focus its efforts in three areas:

- Identifying structures and processes required to support the Accord;
- Developing a Code of good practice to guide the two sectors' funding relationship; and
- Developing a Code of good practice designed to enhance the voluntary sector's contribution to public policy.

To carry out this work, the JAT established three working groups, each one co-chaired by a voluntary sector JAT member and a member from the federal government. Each of the working groups was given the task of developing preliminary products to bring forward to the full JAT membership for review and approval.

### **Letter on joint structures and processes**

One of two areas in which the JAT agreed to focus its implementation efforts was the development of options and recommendations for joint structures and processes needed to support the Accord. Following is an overview of the key elements of this work, which

was guided by the Working Group on Joint Structures and Processes, a sub-group of the JAT.

### The Working Group on Joint Structures and Processes

The [Working Group on Joint Structures and Processes](#) (the Working Group) was given a mandate to identify and assess joint structures, mechanisms and processes required to:

- Monitor the Accord;
- Report to Canadians on the status of the relationship and the results that have been achieved (specifically, progress against the commitments outlined in the Accord);
- Resolve disputes; and
- Agree on next steps and discuss the strategic opportunities for future collaboration.

Accountable to the JAT, the Working Group reported on its progress at each JAT meeting.

### Members

A list of Working Group members and expert resources and support personnel is provided in Appendix A.

### The letter in brief

Sent to the Clerk of the Privy Council on May 13, 2002, the letter sets out the JAT's recommendations on structures and processes that should be put in place to guide the joint work of the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector during the coming years. The letter also includes the JAT's proposals on structures and processes for each sector, as well as those for joint work.

### ***Recommendations for the Government of Canada:***

- A minister with assigned responsibility for building the relationship, who would co-chair an annual meeting of ministers and voluntary sector representatives;
- A group of ministers to act as champions for the voluntary sector initiative;
- A dedicated assistant deputy minister, supported by a secretariat, to provide leadership across the federal government;
- A group of assistant deputy ministers to provide advice and act as departmental champions; and
- A role for Federal Regional Councils in advancing the relationship in the regions.

### ***Recommendations for the voluntary sector:***

- A national structure, developed under the guidance of the Voluntary Sector Steering Group; and

- A role for voluntary sector organizations at the provincial and local levels, related in part to Federal Regional Councils.

***Recommendations for the joint work:***

- A Joint Steering Group to oversee implementation, monitoring and reporting of the Accord, and completion of remaining work under the VSI;
- An annual meeting of ministers and representatives from the voluntary sector to review progress, set priorities and identify opportunities for future collaboration; and
- An annual report to Parliament to inform and engage Canadians and their elected representatives.

How the letter was developed

In developing and refining options for joint structures and processes, Working Group members and staff considered information and opinions from a variety of sources, including relevant Canadian and international research, as well as input from representatives from a range of organizations in the public and voluntary sectors. An overview of these inputs is provided below.

Research

The primary focus of the Working Group’s initial activities was the identification of options for possible joint structures and processes to implement and monitor the Accord. In doing so, the Working Group considered both international best practices and research undertaken in Canada. Research considered and conducted by the Working Group included:

Comparative analysis from other jurisdictions (addressing such issues as options for handling dispute resolution, and monitoring activities/function);

An “assumptions” paper outlining the Group’s understanding of the scope and direction of its work;

- A summary of implementation issues raised during the Accord consultations; and
- A working paper describing the tasks of a “joint space” created and maintained by the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector, as well as the essential

***About the Accord Forum***

Held in Gatineau, Quebec, on March 19 and 20, 2002, the Accord Forum was convened by the Public Policy Forum, an Ottawa-based “think tank” specializing in bringing together diverse groups.

The purpose of the Forum was to explore and build on the interim work of the Working Groups of the JAT and to move it forward towards concrete products designed to implement the Accord.

Almost 90 participants, including representatives of the voluntary sector, government, academia and industry, took part in workshops focusing on the Accord and its implementation.

Participants also heard from six international presenters with experience in developing “compacts” between their governments and the voluntary sector.

Key government executives, including then Clerk of the Privy Council Mel Cappe and his successor, Alex Himelfarb, attended the Forum’s final plenary session, as did representatives of the Voluntary Sector Steering Group.

characteristics of an effective approach. This paper also set out a series of five optional models of structure/process, ranging from highly structured to predominantly process-based, and including one option in which federal departments would remain responsible for their own interactions with the voluntary sector.

### The Accord Forum

One input to the process was a day and a half long policy conference in which selected experts in the area of governance considered the Working Group's initial thinking regarding options for joint structures and processes.

Among the issues participants identified as requiring clarification were:

- How the sectors should organize themselves to ensure inclusiveness and legitimacy;
- The overall scope of the joint structure or process (i.e., did it encompass the work of the entire VSI or only the Accord?);
- The possibility of developing both long-term and short-term structures and processes; and
- The importance of distinguishing between the governance structures that are used to create and guide the joint space and the management processes that ensure its functionality.

Based on its observations on the [Accord Forum](#) process and outcomes, the Public Policy Forum suggested that the JAT prepare a letter of recommendation outlining the contributions to be made by each sector to the joint space, and setting out a timeframe for implementation.

At a minimum, the letter was to outline the five key roles to be played by the joint space (i.e., dispute resolution, monitoring, implementation of the funding and policy codes, joint reporting to Parliament and horizontal responsibilities across Government). The policy recommendations outlined in the letter became *de facto* recommendations of the JAT.

### **Code of Good Practice on Funding**

Another area in which the JAT focused its efforts during the implementation phase was the development of a code outlining good practices for each sector with respect to funding. This section of the report describes the key elements of this work, which was guided by the JAT's Working Group on Funding.

#### ***Anticipated outcomes***

Improved funding policies and practices are designed to achieve the following positive outcomes:

- Enhanced ability for each sector to carry out its mandate;
- Greater transparency, consistency and understanding between sectors;
- Clear and balanced accountability in the funding process;
- Good funding policies and practices that are applied widely; and
- Strengthened sustainable capacity of voluntary sector organizations.

### The Working Group on Funding

A sub-group of the JAT, the Working Group on Funding was mandated to:

- Direct the drafting of a guide (code) for federal government departments and agencies and voluntary sector organizations to improve their funding relationship, consistent with the commitments of the Accord document; and
- Recommend how the code could be promoted, applied and monitored in both the Government of Canada and voluntary sector organizations.

The code makes recommendations to improve direct funding practices and is not intended to address the issue of appropriate funding amounts between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. Accountable to the JAT, the Working Group reported on its progress at each JAT meeting.

### Members

A list of Working Group members and expert resources and support personnel is provided in Appendix A. Both the Aboriginal and Visible Minority Reference Groups participated in the Working Group.

### The Funding Code in brief

A formal reflection of both sectors' commitment to an enhanced funding relationship, the *Code of Good Practice on Funding* is intended to guide interactions between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector on funding policies and practices.

More specifically, the *Code of Good Practice on Funding* identifies the rationale for a code on funding, the scope and application of such a code and its underlying principles.

As well, the Code identifies the actions that should be taken by the sectors — both individually and jointly — to enhance funding practices. For example, the Code calls on the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector to undertake practices aimed at promoting:

- Recognition of the voluntary sector's value;
- Sustainable capacity in the voluntary sector;
- Collaboration and co-operation;
- Innovation;
- Diversity and equitable access;
- Accountability;
- Transparency and consistency; and
- Efficiency and effectiveness.

Moreover, the Code sets out a number of practices that the sectors agree to undertake jointly to improve their funding relationship:

- Take into account the varying circumstances in different regions;
- Ensure accurate and sufficient information is available;

- Develop evaluation tools for measuring longer-term outcomes of funding at the departmental and agency program level;
- Establish collaborative processes;
- Exchange information and build awareness to improve mutual understanding;
- Outline agreed-upon results/outcomes for financial programs/activities; and
- Communicate shared results and successes jointly.

#### How the Funding Code was developed

The Working Group met four times between February and April 2002. Meetings were conducted in person or by conference call. As part of their work, members considered research, the experiences from jurisdictions outside Canada, and input from a range of stakeholders.

#### Research

The results from a federal funding study served as the basis for the Group's work. An initiative of the Treasury Board Secretariat, the study had been undertaken as part of the VSI to promote good practice, consistency and transparency in the federal government's funding relationship with the voluntary sector. While the study focused only on Government of Canada funding practices, it had already received strong support in the voluntary sector and, therefore, provided a key starting point for the Working Group's efforts.

Members of the Working Group also considered other research inputs:

- A comparative analysis of other jurisdictions;
- Funding codes of other jurisdictions (England, Scotland, Ireland);
- Implementation issues identified as part of the Accord consultations; and
- The work of the voluntary sector's Financing Working Group.

#### Accord Forum

One of the inputs to the development of the draft Code was a policy conference, the Accord Forum held March 19 and 20, 2002 in Quebec. Participants made a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening and clarifying the draft Code, including the need to set out practical objectives and concrete accountability mechanisms, as well as clear commitments from both the federal government and the voluntary sector. Moreover, participants suggested that the Code identify what both parties could reasonably expect as a result of implementing the Funding Code.

Other recommendations from the Accord Forum focused on such issues as: ensuring readability; developing best practices; and addressing dispute mechanisms and methods for dealing with non-compliance. Participants, especially those from the voluntary sector, also urged that the Code address funding issues such as multi-year funding arrangements with the voluntary sector.

### Internal review

Before being submitted for broad-based consultation, the draft Code underwent an intensive review by the JAT. As well, senior representatives in the voluntary sector (Voluntary Sector Steering Group) and the federal government (ADM Executive Committee) reviewed the Code, and subsequently the JAT considered their comments and suggestions, incorporating them into the draft Code as appropriate.

### Input from the sectors and the public

In the Spring of 2002, the JAT convened a series of consultations on the draft *Code of Good Practice on Funding*. In addition to providing input on the overall feasibility and relevance of the draft Code, the consultations highlighted issues that were not adequately addressed or that required enhancement or change. Separate consultations were conducted with representatives of the federal government and the voluntary sector.

### ***Voluntary Sector field tests***

On the voluntary sector side, sessions were conducted in six communities across the country (Belleville, Edmonton, Moncton, Montreal, Vancouver and Yellowknife). Participants, including those representing diverse groups and agencies, as well as some federal government representatives, took part in a half-day workshop focusing on problems and challenges experienced in the funding relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector.

Participants raised a number of issues regarding the draft Code, including the need to:

Provide greater recognition of the significant and extensive range of contributions of the voluntary sector to communities and civil society;

- Strengthen and clarify the Code with respect to sustainable capacity; and
- Articulate the components for successful evaluation.

### ***Federal government consultations***

On the government side, a total of 44 representatives took part in three groups focusing on the draft *Code of Good Practice on Funding*. Participants agreed that the Code set out a comprehensive set of principles for guiding the funding activities of the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector.

In fact, many participants indicated that various practices set out in the Code were already in place in their departments and agencies. Participants went on to identify several key activities that needed to be addressed before the Code was finalized, including:

- Ensure that appropriate structures, processes, resources and practices were established to move the Code forward and put the principles into action;
- Provide a clear definition of the Code's scope; and
- Provide more information about the need or context for the Code's development at the front of the document.

### ***VSI website and mailings***

People from all sectors, including members of the public, were invited to submit their comments on the draft Code through the VSI website, which posted results of research and consultation, and a draft version of the Code. Two thousand copies of the draft Code were sent to voluntary sector organizations that had participated in the consultations on the draft Accord, so they could comment on it.

Following all consultations, the JAT approved what it believed to be a final version of the Code at its last formal meeting on July 4, 2002. However, further changes were made to the Code in consultations with JAT members in order to tighten the focus on accountability and on sustainability within the voluntary sector.

### **Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue**

A tool for deepening the dialogue between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector at the various stages of the public policy process, the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* addresses the Accord's commitment to provide mechanisms for putting its principles into action. The following section describes the major elements of the policy Code, as well as key inputs to its development.

#### The Working Group on Policy

A sub-group of the JAT, the Working Group on Policy was convened with a mandate to:

- Direct the drafting of a Code outlining good practices to help guide interactions between government departments and agencies, as well as voluntary sector organizations on policy dialogue; and
- Recommend how the policy Code could be promoted, applied and monitored in both the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector.

#### Members

A list of Working Group members, as well as expert resources and support staff, is included in Appendix A. Both the Aboriginal and Visible Minority Reference Groups participated in this Working Group.

#### The Policy Code in brief

The *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* is a practical demonstration of how the statements and commitments set out in the Accord can be applied in the area of policy dialogue. It is based on shared principles and values drawn primarily from the Accord, as well as previous work on citizen engagement carried out under the guidance of the Privy Council Office and voluntary sector research on the subject.

The Code sets out best practices for both government departments and agencies, and voluntary sector organizations to deepen their policy dialogue, including what, how, with whom and when to engage.

More specifically, the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* identifies:

- The rationale for a Code on policy dialogue;
- The principles underlying the Code;
- The various stages of the public policy process;
- Good practices for the Government of Canada; and
- Good practices for the voluntary sector.

The good practices set out by the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* for both sectors includes:

- Engage in an open, inclusive and ongoing dialogue through all phases of the public policy process;
- Identify and allocate resources and time to policy activities;
- Ensure appropriate and significant representation from across the voluntary sector;
- Develop and strengthen knowledge and policy capacity;
- Be aware of the policy implications of their experiences and activities, and inform one another of important conclusions; and
- Ensure that assessment takes into account the differing regional impacts of policies.

#### How the policy code was developed

In developing and refining the policy Code, Working Group members and staff considered a variety of inputs, including relevant Canadian and international research, as well as consultations with representatives from a range of organizations in the public, voluntary and private sectors. The Group met five times between February and April 2002.

#### **Research**

The draft *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* was based on several key research inputs, including a draft policy statement and guidelines on connecting with and engaging Canadians, which was prepared under the auspices of the Privy Council Office.

Focusing specifically on citizen engagement, this research explored practices and policies designed to enhance public participation in the policy process. The JAT built on this base, consulting with knowledgeable representatives in a number of government departments.

#### ***Anticipated outcomes***

The Code is designed to improve public policies by achieving the following positive outcomes:

- Increased co-operation between the two sectors;
- Increased opportunity for dialogue throughout the public policy process;
- Systematic review by the federal government of major policy and program proposals using a voluntary sector “lens” or analytical framework;
- Development and use of mechanisms to engage in dialogue about the issues and concerns of the diverse voluntary sector, including harder-to-reach groups;
- Information that is more readily available and accessible; and
- Better understanding of one another’s broad policy objectives and the role that each can play in furthering these objectives.

Other important inputs to the draft policy Code were:

- A comparative analysis of experiences in other jurisdictions;
- Policy codes in other jurisdictions (e.g., England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland); and
- Implementation issues raised during the Accord consultations.

### ***Accord Forum***

One of the inputs to the development of the draft code was a policy conference, the Accord Forum held March 19 and 20, 2002 in Quebec. Among the key issues raised by participants at the Accord Forum was the need for the voluntary sector to be involved at the beginning of the policy process.

They expressed the view that effective early engagement requires that the voluntary sector have equal access to the information used to inform policy discussions in the federal government. Among other issues raised at the Forum was the need for:

- Clear, user-friendly language in the policy Code;
- A well-articulated set of benchmarks for success (including a process for automatic review every 18–24 months);
- A focus on the impact of implementation on members of the public;
- A practical implementation plan at the sub-national level; and
- A clearly articulated definition of “advocacy”.

### ***Internal review***

Before being submitted for broad-based consultation, the draft policy Code underwent an intensive review by the JAT. As well, senior representatives in the voluntary sector (Voluntary Sector Steering Group) and the federal government (ADM Executive Committee) reviewed the Code; the JAT incorporated their comments and suggestions into the draft Code as appropriate.

### ***Input from the sectors and the public***

In the spring of 2002, the JAT convened a series of consultations on the draft Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue. In addition to providing input on the overall feasibility and relevance of the draft code, the consultations highlighted issues that were not adequately addressed or that required enhancement or change. Separate consultations were conducted with representatives of the federal government and the voluntary sector.

### ***Voluntary sector field tests***

On the voluntary sector side, sessions were held in six communities across the country (Belleville, Edmonton, Moncton, Montreal, Vancouver and Yellowknife). Representatives from a broad range of groups and agencies took part in a half-day workshop focusing on major problems and challenges experienced in the working relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector.

Voluntary sector representatives were generally supportive of the policy Code. At the same time, they raised a number of concerns, including the need for:

- Adequate resources, including time, expertise, commitment and people – to enhance the capacity of voluntary sector groups to participate in policy work;
- Enhanced mutual understanding and appreciation of the realities, structures and constraints experienced by the two sectors; and
- Conscious efforts and specific mechanisms to engage “hard-to-reach” groups, including small, rural, marginal or isolated voluntary sector organizations.

### ***Government consultations***

A total of 63 Government of Canada representatives took part in five groups focusing on the draft code on policy development — including three consultation sessions and two focus groups.

In general, these consultations provided support for the fundamental components of the policy Code. Most participants agreed that the Code set out a sound and comprehensive set of principles for guiding the collaborative policy activities of the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. However, participants also identified several challenges that should be addressed:

- Ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to establishing structures, processes, resources and practices in Government departments designed to put the Code’s principles in place;
- Providing a context for responsibilities already in place in the Government of Canada (i.e., framework, agenda, policies); and
- Defining the scope of the Code, including a clear articulation of when, how and to what degree the voluntary sector will be involved in the policy process.

### ***VSI website and mailings***

People from all sectors, including members of the public, were invited to submit their comments on the draft Code through the VSI website, which posted minutes of Working Group meetings, results of research and consultation, and a draft version of the policy Code.

Approximately 2,000 copies of the draft policy Code were sent for comment to voluntary sector organizations that had participated in the consultations on the draft Accord. Following all consultations, the JAT approved what it believed to be a final version of the Code at its last formal meeting on July 4, 2002.

However, further changes were made to the Code in consultation with JAT members in order to better reflect the policy dynamic between the government and the voluntary sector.

## **Lessons Learned**

Over its two-year lifespan, the JAT provided many opportunities for reflection and learning. Without exception, JAT members and support staff endorsed the joint process and the products that resulted from it.

Both voluntary sector and federal government representatives believe that the Accord and the tools for implementing it are an essential starting point for an enhanced relationship between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. Moreover, they are a legacy in which both sectors can take pride.

With respect to process, there is a consensus that the JAT provided a unique and positive forum for representatives of the two sectors to demonstrate their commitment, work collaboratively and address difficult issues openly and respectfully.

For many, the JAT experience was “transformative,” providing an enhanced appreciation of the challenges faced by the other sector and highlighting the potential for, and value of, a stronger relationship between the two sectors at all levels. For many JAT members as well, the personal and professional relationships that were forged as a result of the process will endure well into the future.

That being said, an important part of a project such as the JAT is to reflect on what could have been done differently to better support the process and enhance its products. The following is a synopsis of observations and suggestions offered by JAT members and staff as they considered “lessons learned” from their experiences over the past two years.

### **Culture**

*Cultural differences between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector affect many aspects of their working relationship.*

Often characterized as bureaucratic and hierarchical, the federal government’s work culture focuses strongly on ensuring accountability through deadlines and deliverables. This work culture can be at odds with that of the voluntary sector, which has a predominantly “flat” structure and diverse membership. These “cultural” differences were evident at both the JAT and staff levels at various stages of the process, including initial efforts to establish common goals and objectives.

*There are significant trust issues between the two sectors.*

Members and staff both commented about the lack of trust between the sectors, a circumstance that was largely attributed to perceptions of a power imbalance. Building trust under such circumstances is a challenge that requires both sectors to become knowledgeable about the constraints on one another’s structures and mechanisms, while modeling their ongoing commitment to working together in new ways.

With this in mind, it was suggested that the Government of Canada, in particular, should give careful consideration to actions that may be interpreted as attempts to control a

“joint” process. Such actions serve to undermine the Government’s credibility and contribute to an atmosphere of mistrust.

*JAT members need sufficient time and opportunity to build rapport and develop a common understanding of relevant issues.*

Due to their different backgrounds and degree of previous involvement in related issues, members brought varying approaches and levels of knowledge to the JAT. These differences need to be acknowledged and time set aside to develop a common understanding of issues, as well as language or terminology.

Moreover, opportunities should be provided for members to interact and develop personal rapport through informal venues before they begin addressing the project mandate.

*Strong interpersonal skills and a commitment to building consensus are prerequisites for staff and working group members.*

Given the cultural “gap” between the two sectors and the need to reach consensus on potentially contentious issues, participants at both the working group and staff levels need to bring strong interpersonal and negotiating skills to the task, as well as flexibility, a desire to understand other viewpoints, and a willingness to compromise in order to achieve the larger goals of the project. In the future, consideration might be given to incorporating some type of training in these skills.

## **Mandate**

*The project mandate should be clear, yet provide flexibility for evolving circumstances.*

The mandate and terms of reference for this initiative did not provide adequate direction in terms of objectives, lines of authority and responsibilities. Clarity in this regard is necessary to promote effectiveness and efficiency, and to avoid potential misunderstandings about “where the buck stops.” This includes clear communication of, and respect for, federal government accountabilities and checks and balances.

At the same time, the mandate needs to incorporate sufficient flexibility to allow members to adapt the process, timelines and products as the work unfolds. Both parties also need to develop a solid understanding of their own agenda and desired outcomes before coming to the JAT; otherwise, process and products are likely to lack direction and a clear focus.

## **Timing**

*The project timeframe needs to allow sufficient time to fully achieve the mandate.*

Many JAT members and staff indicated that the timelines for developing the implementation tools (i.e., the Codes) did not allow adequate time for review and contemplation. In fact, some members and staff commented that the products would have benefited from additional time allocated in the work plan.

Several suggestions were offered including, for example, re-allocating the time assigned to develop the Accord and the implementation tools, or limiting the number of products

developed. It was also noted that the delays in getting the joint tables “up and running” resulted in a compressed timeframe at the end of the process.

## **Leadership**

*Strong, effective leadership at a senior level is key to the overall success of this type of initiative.*

Many JAT members and staff commented on the excellent leadership exercised by the Co-Chairs, who provided direction and support throughout the process, and demonstrated their extraordinary personal and professional commitment to the task.

As well, there was a general perception that the seniority of JAT members and support staff — both within the federal government and the voluntary sector — enhanced the JAT’s credibility.

## **Support**

*Sustained, visible support at the highest levels is essential throughout the process.*

There was a general perception among JAT members and staff that enthusiasm and high-level support for the project waned considerably following the signing of the Accord. Without visible championing at both the deputy minister and ministerial levels, support for and commitment to an initiative such as this is difficult to sustain over the longer term, particularly in the face of the federal government’s many competing priorities.

Clear expressions of support are particularly important during transition periods. Without such support, perceptions of the project as “off the Government’s radar screen” are likely to filter down to operating levels as well as out to other sectors.

## **Workload**

*Before they sign on, members should be given a clear indication about the workload and the level of commitment that will be required.*

It was widely acknowledged that the workload for JAT members was overwhelming, particularly given their seniority and level of responsibility. This was especially evident immediately following the events of September 11, 2001 when several JAT members from the federal government were faced with additional responsibilities within their departments.

Moreover, the process and timelines for the project regularly resulted in members having to review and absorb a substantial amount of documentation within a very short time. As the timelines did not allow for most documents to be translated, the review process was especially difficult for members whose first language is French.

Every effort should be made at the outset of a process such as this to provide participants with a clear understanding about the level of commitment that will be required.

## **Staff support**

*Having dedicated staff support, plus highly skilled and well-qualified staff members contributed significantly to the success of the JAT project.*

Members of the JAT were enthusiastic in their praise for the level of expertise, knowledge and commitment demonstrated by support staff. They commented on the substantial contribution made by the Secretariat and Task Force to the success of the process and the products, and acknowledged the benefits of a dedicated support team.

*Supporting separate secretariats facilitated the process for obtaining input from both sectors but also contributed to inefficiencies, duplication of services and tension.*

Both members and staff acknowledged the benefits and difficulties of working with a two-secretariat structure.

On the one hand, the process helped to ensure that both sectors were able to input effectively into the process. However, at the staff level, the extra step of consultation and approval strained timelines that were already challenging and often resulted in members having limited time to review documents.

JAT members commented on the unnecessarily high number of staff present at meetings and on the tendency for staff to steer the overall direction of the joint table and working groups. Some members suggested that a joint support team might have better served the project.

Although challenging in its own right, such an arrangement would possibly have helped to promote cohesiveness by building a common understanding of the support team's mission and role, avoiding duplication of duties, and contributing to a more efficient and smoothly functioning process overall.

*It is important to manage expert and consulting support so that it does not overtake or overwhelm the process.*

Expert and consulting support to the JAT provided a wealth of information and, in some circumstances, advanced the process immeasurably by summarizing the issues and/or relevant work completed to date. In specific cases, however, consultants had a tendency to lead the process or to overwhelm JAT members with information.

Although it is clearly difficult to achieve an appropriate balance in what is perceived as too little or too much input, to be useful — and digestible within such a tight timeframe — information to members should be limited to high-level synopses of key issues. Moreover, some members and staff urged that future processes focus members' input on broad, substantive issues, rather than using their skills for “wordsmithing” tasks.

## **Resources**

*The initiative benefited significantly as a result of being adequately financed.*

Several members and staff commented on the positive aspects of having sufficient resources available to carry out the JAT's mandate effectively. Among other benefits,

the resources allocated to the JAT provided for highly skilled staff support, consulting expertise and a broad-based and inclusive consultation methodology.

## **Consultation**

*Opportunities for broader consultation help to keep the working group process on track and grounded.*

Several members of the JAT underscored the importance of building opportunities for broad-based review into key stages of the working group process, as it helped to offset the tendency towards tunnel vision that can occur when small groups work together intensively.

This type of reality check is particularly necessary when the group builds on existing work rather than starting from “conceptual scratch” in defining key issues (as was the case for the Working Groups developing the Codes of Good Practice).

*The community consultation process was a powerful tool in building the voluntary sector’s “sense of itself.”*

The consultation process was effective in promoting cohesion and a “sector identity” among participating voluntary organizations, and demonstrated the power of collaboration as a tool for achieving common goals.

Moreover, the decision to involve local host organizations as the focal point for consultations was not only empowering for the organizations themselves, it also helped to build a strong support network for the initiative.

More opportunities were needed for dialogue between the sectors at the working level. While the JAT process provided a forum for sector representatives to work collaboratively on the issues, consultations with working-level staff were typically conducted separately. The suggestion was made that a joint process at the working level would have offered valuable networking opportunities, as well as a forum for consensus building between the sectors.

## **Awareness building**

*The initiative and its products could have been more effectively promoted.*

Several federal government members commented on the missed opportunities for building awareness and support for the initiative and its goals — particularly within federal government departments. These include endorsement by senior executives of the corporate contribution made by JAT members and ongoing promotion of the initiative and its products — and their relevance to working-level staff — in the federal government’s internal press.

## **Links to the VSI**

*The links between the Accord process and other aspects of the VSI were weak.*

Several members commented on the sense of isolation as the JAT conducted its work without information about progress in the broader VSI or cross-over/links with other joint

tables. As a result, members did not have a good sense of how the JAT's work fit into the larger Initiative.

## **Moving Forward**

*The ultimate success of the JAT project depends on the strength of follow-up activities.* JAT members and staff were virtually unanimous in stressing the need for immediate action on joint structures and implementation issues to help maintain momentum, build trust, and establish as a priority the ongoing relationship between the federal government and the voluntary sector.

While the Accord and the Codes of Good Practice provide an excellent starting point, most agree that the ultimate success of the initiative depends on how quickly and effectively the tools for changing behaviour are put in place. Moreover, regardless of the specific shape they take, these mechanisms must be supported by sustained and high-level commitment by both sectors, including a commitment of resources.

## **The Accord**

Over the coming months, staff will be focusing their attention on initiatives designed to broaden awareness of the Accord within the federal government and the voluntary sector. As set out in Phase II of the distribution plan, mailings will be targeted to, among others, federal regional councils, think tanks, as well as program policy and financial officers.

Other follow-up measures — identified in the Accord and discussed by the JAT — include activities designed to evaluate progress on the Accord in both sectors. An “evergreen” document, the Accord will be amended as needed to reflect findings concerning areas that require change or enhancement.

## **The Codes of Good Practice**

A number of activities have been identified as essential in promulgating both the policy and funding Codes. These include:

- A communications plan, which is currently being implemented, outlining timing and processes for promoting and distributing the Codes across the federal government and the voluntary sector;
- Training initiatives to assist government and voluntary sector representatives in understanding and using the Codes within their workplace;
- A process for assessing progress within the sectors on practices outlined in the Codes; and
- Ongoing review and amendment of the Codes, as needed to reflect the experiences of the sectors.

## **Joint structures and processes**

The JAT has also identified several key activities necessary to support the establishment of joint structures and processes. These include:

- The establishment of a leadership model and governance structure that will speak on behalf of the voluntary sector and serve as a focal point to support activities carried out in the voluntary sector–government joint space;
- The establishment of a government-specific governance structure with a mandate to support the work of a voluntary sector–government joint space; and
- The establishment of a joint steering committee to set out parameters for reviewing and reporting on progress, including meetings between sector and government representatives to promote collaboration, set priorities and identify opportunities for future collaboration.

## **Relevant Documents List**

*An Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*  
[http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/pdf/the\\_accord\\_doc.pdf](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/pdf/the_accord_doc.pdf)

*Letter to the Clerk of the Privy Council*  
[http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/pdf/letter\\_to\\_privy.pdf](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/pdf/letter_to_privy.pdf)

*Code of Good Practice on Funding*  
[http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/funding/pdf/codes\\_funding.pdf](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/funding/pdf/codes_funding.pdf)

*Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*  
[http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/policy/pdf/codes\\_policy.pdf](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/policy/pdf/codes_policy.pdf)

*Building on Strength: Improving Governance and Accountability in Canada's Voluntary Sector*  
<http://www.vsr-trsb.net/pagvs/Book.pdf>

*Working Together: A Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative*  
<http://www.vsr-trsb.net/publications/pco-e.pdf>

*Speech from the Throne – October 1999*  
[http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&page=informationresources&sub=sftddt&doc=sftddt1999\\_e.htm](http://www.pco-bcp.gc.ca/default.asp?Language=E&page=informationresources&sub=sftddt&doc=sftddt1999_e.htm)

*Partnering for the Benefit of Canadians: Government of Canada–Voluntary Sector Initiative*  
[http://www.vsr-trsb.net/publications/pub-june09\\_e.html](http://www.vsr-trsb.net/publications/pub-june09_e.html)

*Joint Accord Table – Terms of Reference*  
[http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/accord\\_table\\_terms.cfm](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/accord_table_terms.cfm)

*Consultation Reports – Codes of Good Practice*  
➤ *Accord Forum* (executive summary)  
[http://www.ppforum.ca/ow/ow\\_e\\_03\\_19\\_2002.pdf](http://www.ppforum.ca/ow/ow_e_03_19_2002.pdf)

## **Appendix A – Members of Working Groups**

### **Working Group on Funding**

#### **Voluntary Sector Representatives**

**Colleen Ford, Co-Chair**

Executive Director  
Canadian Parks and Recreation Association

**Pierre-Marie Cotte**

Vice President  
Philanthropic Development  
Centraide du Grand Montréal

#### **Government Representatives**

**Susan Scotti, Co-Chair**

Assistant Deputy Minister  
Human Resources Development Canada

**Réal Bouchard**

Director  
Finance Canada

**Jean-Guy Saint-Martin**

Assistant Deputy Minister  
Canada Economic Development  
Corporation

### **Expert Resources**

The Working Group was supported by a number of experts, who provided a range of research and writing services during the development of the funding Code. These expert resources were:

- Barbara Humenny
- Marcel Lauzière
- Ron Rivard
- John Walker
- Sylvan Williams

### **Other Advisors**

Three consultants conducted research and offered strategic input and editing services to the process:

- Kate Humpage
- Deborah Pike
- Jim Young (edited the final funding Code)

### Support Staff

In addition, support staff from the Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat and the Voluntary Sector Task Force provided advice and guidance, as well as a range of administrative, research and logistical support services to the Working Group.

### **Working Group on Policy Dialogue**

#### **Voluntary Sector Representatives**

**Elaine Teofilovici, Co-chair**

Chief Executive Officer  
YWCA Canada

**Wayne Helgason**

Executive Director  
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

**Lynne Toupin**

Chief Executive Officer  
Canadian Co-operative Association

#### **Government Representatives**

**Kristine Burr, Co-Chair**

Assistant Deputy Solicitor General  
Solicitor General Canada

**Eva Kmiecic**

Deputy Commissioner  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police

### Expert Resources

Working Group members were supported by the knowledge and experience of several experts who served as resource persons in the development of the policy Code.

- Debbie Cook
- Esperanza Moreno
- Wilma Findlay (Visible Minority Reference Group)
- Damon Johnson (Aboriginal Reference Group)

### Other Advisors

Three consultants conducted research and offered strategic input and editing services to the process:

- Julia Bentley
- Kate Humpage
- Jim Young (edited the final policy Code)

### Support Staff

In addition, support staff from the Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat and the Voluntary Sector Task Force provided advice and guidance, as well as a range of administrative, research and logistical support services to the Working Group.

## **Working Group on Joint Structures and Processes**

### **Voluntary Sector Representatives**

**Al Hatton, Co-chair**  
Executive Director  
The Coalition of National Voluntary  
Organizations

**Graham Stewart**  
Executive Director  
John Howard Society of Canada

### **Government Representatives**

**Jean-Guy Saint-Martin, Co-chair**  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Canada Economic Development

**Bill McCloskey**  
Assistant Commissioner  
Canada Customs and Revenue Agency

**Martha Nixon**  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

### Expert Resources

The Working Group was supported by a number of experts, who served as resource persons:

- Anu Bose
- David Elder
- Khadija Haffajee
- George Munroe
- Susan Phillips (observer to the JAT work)

### Other Advisors

Two outside consultants conducted research and provided strategic input at various stages during the process:

- Ruth Hubbard
- Kate Humpage

### Support Staff

In addition, support staff from the Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat and the Voluntary Sector Task Force provided advice and guidance, as well as a range of administrative, research and logistical support services to the Working Group.

## **Appendix B - Accord Consultation Locations**

- Alberta
  - Edmonton
  - Lethbridge
- British Columbia
  - Vancouver
  - Victoria
- Manitoba
  - Winnipeg
- New Brunswick
  - Moncton
- Newfoundland
  - St. John's
- Northwest Territories
  - Yellowknife
- Nova Scotia
  - Halifax
- Nunavut
  - Iqaluit
- Ontario
  - Belleville
  - Ottawa
  - Toronto
  - Thunder Bay
  - Windsor
- Prince Edward Island
  - Charlottetown
  - Mont-Carmel
- Quebec
  - Granby
  - Montreal
  - Sept-Iles
- Saskatchewan
  - Regina
- Yukon
  - Whitehorse