

May 13, 2002

Mr. Alexander Himelfarb
Clerk of the Privy Council
Room 332, 3rd floor
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A3

Dear Mr. Himelfarb:

First, may we offer our congratulations and best wishes as you assume your new responsibilities as Clerk of the Privy Council Office and Secretary to the Cabinet. We look forward to your continued leadership in the work we are doing together to build and strengthen the relationship between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector.

We were pleased that you were able to join us at the conclusion of our Accord Forum on March 20, 2002. You will remember that the Joint Accord Table was charged with developing the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*, signed last December, and with recommending ways to take it forward. In the *Accord*, both the voluntary sector and the Government committed to develop new structures, processes and mechanisms to underpin joint work in the future. And, since that joint work will only be effective if the right structures are in place in the Government and the voluntary sector, we have reflected on their design as well. The *Accord* also committed the two parties to develop processes for future collaboration, including a regular meeting between Ministers and sector representatives to discuss results.

We understand that, in Government, you are considering ministerial involvement and supporting structures for the future, and we thought it would be helpful for you to be aware of our thinking to date.

Our overarching objective is to create an environment to inspire change rather than demand it, to reinforce the values and principles of the *Accord* rather than require compliance and exact penalties. This is about improving a relationship, not prescribing behaviour.

We have been strongly influenced by the lessons we have learned while working together on the Voluntary Sector Initiative, particularly by our work at the co-chaired Joint Tables where there was equal representation from both parties, where

distinct perspectives were shared, and consensus on common solutions and strategies was achieved. As the *Accord* says, working together to identify common priorities or complementary objectives will help facilitate the co-operation and collaboration that will better serve and enhance the quality of life of Canadians.

We envisage structures and processes for the Government and the voluntary sector that are light, innovative and effective in leading change at every level, and in exerting influence across their respective spheres. Rather than recommending new institutions, we see the work we undertake jointly taking the form of an annual meeting of Ministers and representatives from the voluntary sector to review progress, set priorities for action in the upcoming year, and identify opportunities for future collaboration.

The design is as follows:

For the **Government**, we would suggest:

- a Minister with assigned responsibility for building and strengthening the relationship with the voluntary sector, and co-chairing the annual meeting of Ministers and representatives of the voluntary sector
- a group of Ministers to act as champions for the voluntary sector, including participating in the annual meeting with representatives of the voluntary sector
- all department and agency heads held accountable for advancing the relationship with the voluntary sector
- a dedicated ADM, supported by a secretariat, with responsibility for providing leadership across Government on the voluntary sector
- a group of ADMs, with regional representation as appropriate, to advise the designated ADM on the management of this horizontal file, and to act as champions in their departments and agencies
- a role for Federal Regional Councils in advancing the relationship with the voluntary sector in their region and contributing the local perspective; with each Council asked to define this role based on regional/local circumstances.

For the **Voluntary Sector** we are supportive of:

- a national structure, currently being developed by the Voluntary Sector Steering Group
- a role for voluntary sector organizations at the provincial/local levels, related in part to Federal Regional Councils.

For the **Joint Work**, we are proposing:

- a Joint Steering Group (JSG) consisting of members selected from the advisory group of ADMs, and members representing the voluntary sector, with the designated ADM as Government co-chair; regional representation from both sides as appropriate. The JSG would oversee the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the *Accord*; and the completion of remaining work under the Voluntary Sector Initiative
- the assignment of joint work to the Government or the voluntary sector or both, as appropriate

- an annual meeting of Ministers and representatives from the voluntary sector to review progress, set priorities for the upcoming year, and identify opportunities for future collaboration
- an annual report tabled in the Parliament of Canada to inform and engage Canadians and their elected representatives (this follows the model used in the United Kingdom).

Identifying a source of funds is essential for whatever processes and structures are selected to go forward in the Government, the voluntary sector and in the joint arena. All remaining funding under the Voluntary Sector Initiative has been fully allocated to programs and projects to the end of the Initiative in 2005. The original decision on resources for the Initiative provided funds for the Reference Group of Ministers, the Joint Tables, the Voluntary Sector Task Force and the Voluntary Sector Initiative Secretariat only to October/November of this year. While we know that funding is but one factor that will contribute to the sustained success of the *Accord*, it is clear that the structures and processes needed to move forward effectively will require sufficient funds.

A decision on both the proposed structures and the necessary funds is needed soon so that current and required upcoming work to implement the *Accord* can proceed smoothly and maintain momentum. Ideally, we would hope for a decision in the late spring of this year and a transition to the new structure through summer and early fall.

We believe this design builds on our success to date, is practical, and will advance and strengthen the relationship so that the Government and the voluntary sector can work effectively together over the long-term in the service of Canadians. We trust that this approach appears practical and effective to you too.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Toupin
Sector Co-Chair
Joint Accord Table

Bill McCloskey
Government Co-Chair
Joint Accord Table