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# Newfoundland & Labrador Regional Forum *Proceedings Report*

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# HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector

The HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector (HR Council) works with organizations, educators, labour and government to identify and address issues related to paid employment in the voluntary and non-profit sector.

Our priorities are to:

- Build and share knowledge
- Promote good HR practices
- Foster training and learning opportunities
- Provide leadership on HR issues
- Engage voluntary and non-profit organizations in our work

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The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a stylized Canadian flag above the letter 'a'.

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## Acknowledgements

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As co-chairs, we had the honour of presiding over the day. We were supported in our efforts by facilitator Dal Brodhead. We would also like to extend our thanks to Ross Reid, Deputy Minister for the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat, and to HR Council Research Manager Bonnie Shiell, for their presentations.

We would also like to thank Marie White, co-chair, St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness; Bruce Pearce, community development, St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness; and Sheldon Pollett, executive director, Choices for Youth, for their assistance in reviewing a draft of the final report from the HR Council's comprehensive labour force study. We also thank Andrew Safer, assisted by Penelope Hutchison, for preparing this report.

Above all, we want to thank the participants who attended the forum and provided critical input into human resource issues impacting the sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

*David Murphy*

Co-chair  
Coordinator  
St. John's Housing & Homelessness Network

*Joanne Linzey*

Co-chair  
Project Manager  
HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector



HR Council  
for the  
Voluntary & Non-profit Sector

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# Proceedings Report

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## HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector *Newfoundland & Labrador Regional Forum*

More than 30 individuals representing a wide-range of leaders from Newfoundland and Labrador's non-profit sector and provincial government gathered in St. John's for a day of discussion and action planning.

### Foreword

On May 4, 2009, the HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector (HR Council) and the St. John's Housing and Homelessness Network (SJHHN) hosted a provincial forum to examine labour force issues and opportunities in the non-profit sector. The Newfoundland & Labrador (NL) forum was one of five gatherings occurring across the country throughout the spring of 2009 including Moncton, New Brunswick; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Edmonton, Alberta; and Vancouver, British Columbia. Each forum generated its own proceedings report. These reports, along with a synthesis report summarizing all the forums, are available on the HR Council's website.

More than 30 individuals representing a wide-range of leaders from Newfoundland and Labrador's non-profit sector and provincial government gathered in St. John's for a day of discussion and action planning (See *Appendices 1 and 2 for the day's agenda and list of participants*). The purpose of the day was to:

- Gain an understanding of national labour force issues and trends and forthcoming HR Council recommendations to the sector
- Collectively explore strategies to address key workforce issues facing the non profit sector in Newfoundland and Labrador
- Develop an action plan for sector leaders to advance the work over the next three years

This report summarizes the discussions which arose during the forum sessions.

## Welcome

Dave Murphy, coordinator, St. John's Housing and Homelessness Network, welcomed participants to the provincial forum on labour force issues. He introduced Joanne Linzey, project manager, HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector, Dal Brodhead, the day's facilitator, Bonnie Shiell, research manager for the HR Council, and Andrew Safer, forum note-taker.

The HR Council provincial forums are part of a national project designed to raise awareness about labour force issues in the non-profit sector and to examine the issues specific to each province. The project's goal is to find ways to work together to address the various human resource challenges faced by all non-profit organizations. Each of the five provincial forums have been tailored to build on the work taking place within each province.

In addition to the provincial forums, the HR Council is leading two other national labour force projects. One is the documentation of the process leading to Alberta's creation of the Alberta Non-Profit/Voluntary Sector Initiative. The second is the creation of a guide designed to help the non-profit sector develop their own workforce strategies. Both are in the process of being completed and will be available on the HR Council's website.

## The context

Joanne Linzey described the HR Council as the newest council formed from the Voluntary Sector Initiative funded by the federal government. The HR Council has gathered the first hard data about employees in this sector. Although the recession has put increased demands on this sector, when the economy emerges from recession it will be important for organizations to be prepared with the right staff with the rights skills at the right time.

The HR Council's three-part Labour Force Study is a comprehensive look at paid employment in the sector leading to the first-ever national labour force strategy. The first report of the study diagnoses the labour force issues and challenges facing the non-profit sector ([www.hrcouncil.ca/about/HRC\\_Labour\\_Force\\_Study\\_R1.pdf](http://www.hrcouncil.ca/about/HRC_Labour_Force_Study_R1.pdf)). The second

report features findings from national surveys of non-profit employers and employees ([www.hrvc-rhsbc.ca/about/documents/LFS\\_R2\\_web\\_001.pdf](http://www.hrvc-rhsbc.ca/about/documents/LFS_R2_web_001.pdf)). The third report, consisting of recommendations on what needs to be done collectively to address the labour force issues, will be released in June 2009. Stakeholders will provide input on key challenges, including an aging workforce, leadership issues, cultural diversity, the impact of technology, and the effects of what is the tightest labour market in decades.

### The national non-profit sector

There are nearly 69,000 non-profit organizations employing 1.2 million paid staff in Canada. This represents seven percent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP), more than the forestry sector. "It's a huge economic part of our country, usually unrecognized," observed Linzey.

#### Non-profit employee profile

75% are women

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71% have post-secondary education

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1 in 8 have chronic health problems

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71% are full-time

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25% have more than one paid job

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21% are unionized

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25% have no benefits

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A high percentage of employees (89%) are very satisfied or satisfied however some aspects of their work are less satisfying – pay and benefits; compensation for overtime, retirement savings options, opportunities for training and advancement and feedback and recognition.

Key challenges facing the non-profit sector include:

- Demographics
- Diversity (new Canadians)
- Demands on the sector
- Recruitment and retention
- Skill and knowledge needs
- Leadership
- Culture

## National context Q & A

*Q: What percentage of management positions are held by women?*

*A: It's noticeably lower than those held by men but statistics aren't currently available.*

*Q: Realizing there's work to be done in the area of cultural diversity, what's the best way to proceed with this?*

*A: Organizations tend to think they are doing a good job with this but the numbers say they are not, replied Linzey. There has been a slight increase in the number of new Canadians coming to Atlantic Canada. In Nova Scotia, First Nations and black populations have not been integrated into the mainstream of the sector.*

*Q: When it comes to filling positions, are organizations reluctant to implement new human resource strategies?*

*A: Yes but collaborations are starting, said Linzey. As an example, ten small organizations each contribute \$5,000 and together they hire a person to provide human resource services. Most don't know how to fire someone and they don't know the labour standards. She said the sector is good at motivating the people we have and connecting with communities.*

## Regional issue identification

With the national context set, participants began the work of identifying what they believed to be the key labour force issues for Newfoundland and Labrador's non-profit sector.

## 1. Recruitment and retention

- Non-profits compete with the public and private sector for employees
- Career laddering in sector which subsumes experienced people into government jobs.
- Higher demands and challenges presented by clients with complex needs
- Champions are needed

## 2. Funding

- Many organizations don't have paid staff but need them
- Wages are too low in the non-profit sector
- Uncertainty regarding funding renewal leads to lack of stability and job security

## 3. Training

- Need time off (who pays for it?) and qualified trainers
- There is a lack of training and professional development
- Managers and project coordinators need broad skill sets
- Clients with complex needs (e.g. in housing and homelessness) require people with higher skill sets which requires specific training
- Training is important but it's costly; finding affordable training is a challenge
- There is a need to learn how to use new social networking technologies (e.g. blogs, Twitter, etc.)
- Often information technology professionals are not the best communicators/teachers

## 4. Benefits

- Lack of benefits and job security
- Lack of pensions and retirement savings
- After hearing the statistics regarding benefits (nationally) "we are shocked that so many have benefits"
- Reliance on project funds negates benefits
- Generally part-timers don't receive benefits and this becomes a retention issue

## 5. Rural issues

- Lack of capacity and partners in rural areas
- Rural Newfoundland and Labrador has a unique set of recruitment issues
- Rural areas are harder hit
- Organizations are challenged to secure money for a staff presence outside St. John's
- In remote areas it's difficult to attract people with required skill sets (e.g. attracting staff to new addictions centre in Grand Falls/Windsor)

## 6. Collaboration

- There is a need to connect with other non-profits
- Lack of collaboration on human resources (e.g. sharing resources)
- More collaboration is needed

## 7. Human resource strategies

- Lack of human resource planning and strategies.
- Lack of human resource policies and manuals.

## 8. Diversity

- Lack of capacity equates to lack of diversity

## Regional issues Q & A

*Q: Are there regional breakdowns regarding benefits?*

*A:* This information is not currently available but in general, smaller organizations tend to have fewer benefits. Drug plans and health coverage is more widely available than retirement savings or pension benefits. Nationally, 30% of non-profit organizations have pension plans and 17% provide RRSP contributions. At the provincial level, there is insufficient information available. "There's a huge void there," Joanne Linzey said, pointing out the need to identify partners to engage in research and to secure funding to support this effort.

## Toward a national labour force strategy

The HR Council has been engaged in a study of the labour force in Canada's voluntary and non-profit sector for the past two years. The Study's findings were presented to participants at the onset of the provincial forum. The third report contains five recommendations to the non-profit sector drawn from work done across the country. The recommendations are the result of significant consultation.

### Recommendation 1

A deliberate, purposeful focus on doing a better job of HR management.

### Recommendation 2

Intentional efforts to continue building an inclusive workforce.

### Recommendation 3

A research and development strategy that produces empirical evidence that is useful and used by the sector.

### Recommendation 4

Broadly-based coordinated efforts to promote the value of work in the sector.

### Recommendation 5

Organizations and funders commit to supporting competitive compensation, good working conditions and effective HR management.

## What are the implications?

After reviewing the national recommendations, participants were asked how the recommendations resonated for them, what the implications may be for their work, and what priority issue are missing from the list.



Some participants felt it is important to take the initiative to recognize employees more. Others suggested there is a need for more funding to support human resource policies and procedures and strategic planning. Many agreed a top priority is the need for skilled people, through training and professional development, with working conditions and human resource practices coming in as subsequent priorities.

One participant said recommendation #1 requires fine-tuning and should consider urban versus rural and small versus large communities. Recommendations #1 and #5 were felt to be linked as funding is required to support the development of better human resource practices. Conversely, insufficient funding (#5) directly impacts the ability to modernize human resource practices (#1).

The issue was raised that recommendation #2 may be moot as there isn't enough money to hire what talent is available. Concern was also raised around recommendation #3 with the issue being who pays for the creation of a research and development strategy. Smaller organizations often lack the expertise and need to collaborate on this issue. One participant noted relating to recommendations #3 and #5 that evaluation equates to accountability which informs whether the funding is being well spent.

Some felt the prioritization of the recommendations needs revision. One individual suggested recommendation #4 should be moved up to the #2 spot recognizing that the sector in and of itself is important. Another said recommendation #5 is paramount as all the other recommendations are dependent on its success. Regarding funding (#5), there needs to be a way to show that the organization has delivered the services they said they would.

## Opportunities for collaboration

With the national non-profit sector labour force context set, participants moved to explore current collaborative initiatives underway in the province and to identify potential new collaborations.

## Current partnerships in Newfoundland and Labrador

Participants were asked to identify examples of collaboration currently underway in Newfoundland and Labrador. The following list highlights those initiatives:

- St. John's Housing and Homelessness Network has 130 people in its organization including Eastern Health, HRLE, training institutions and Service Canada with a common client base.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Lung Association offers health and disability benefits because the Canadian Lung Association provided them with a plan.
- As part of their mandate, the Community Services Council has adopted collaborative approaches.
- The Stephenville Community Education Network includes an alternative school, clinic, and family resource centre which have co-located.
- The Clusters project is a collaborative between the Rural Secretariat and the Community Service Council on the Bonavista Peninsula.
- Memorial University of Newfoundland assists the St. John's Native Friendship Centre by working with youth groups on staffing and human resource issues, enabling young graduates to gain exposure to cross-cultural issues.
- Regarding advocacy, the Lung Association joined other organizations in the health sector with common issues and presented their views collectively to the Minister. This was positively received as it presented a common view and obviated the need for multiple meetings.

Participants cited other partnerships currently underway not specific to this province:

- The Association of Fundraising Professionals is assessing the compensation and benefits needs of the sector by engaging with all chapters across the country.

- An emerging coalition of 61 communities across Canada committed to end homelessness are considering common issues (staffing, recruitment, etc.).
- A youth homelessness group in Toronto is embedding learning within their community through a staff exchange with Broadway Youth Services.
- The US Interagency Council on Homelessness includes 18 government departments and agencies.
- The Alberta Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector Council may become a provincial secretariat.
- The Public Service Commission has done a lot of work training managers in all departments and have a good package on frontline leadership they can share.
- The British Columbia government has committed \$5 million over three years to develop a strategy for labour force training in the non-profit sector.

## The Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat

Ross Reid, Deputy Minister for the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat, gave a presentation about the role of the Voluntary and Non-Profit Secretariat for Newfoundland and Labrador. He said the Secretariat is working to bring together the resources necessary to fulfill its mandate, adding that the focus is on enhancing the relationship between government departments and the community-based sector. Addressing the capacity issue is also a priority, noting in October the Secretariat held a capacity summit comprised on community organizations and government.

Reid noted that there are some “tremendous educational institutions in the province,” citing the College of the North Atlantic which has 17 campuses in 16 communities. “Their leaders tend to be leaders in the communities,” he said, adding they provide work terms at no cost. He also cited the Centre for Lifelong Learning at Memorial University for its Co-op program. In the private sector, Reid noted that one of the world’s largest computer-assisted training companies is located on Prescott Street.

Ivan Emke, a sociology/anthropology professor at Memorial University, is noted for his use of community-based radio around the world in post-conflict situations to bring communities together. In Newfoundland, he set up a mobile radio station in Cornerbrook during the East Coast Music Awards and broadcast it for a week on the FM band.

Reid also raised the Labour Market Development Agreement as a wonderful tool that is beginning to address partnership issues, working out of IAS (Industrial Adjustment Services). This work is ongoing.

## Exploring collaboration opportunities

Participants broke into small groups and were asked to identify opportunities for future collaboration on human resource issues within the non-profit sector. The following opportunities were highlighted:

- Organize a network of human resource professionals from across the sector and bring them together in a forum.
- Make effective use of technology (e.g. listserves, blogs).
- In housing and employment, the complexity of issues clients are facing has increased but capacity has not. Many organizations don’t have human resource people on staff and there is a need for government to collaborate on this issue.
- Enhancing diversity in the workplace presents more barriers that need to be addressed.
- More organizations should use the library as a venue for training. (There should also be more books in the library on human resource issues.)
- A community-based collaboration on human resource issues using a shared leadership model and jointly owned resources is what’s needed for this sector.
- Organizations in small communities could collaborate by sharing administrative staff, office equipment, space and services.

The Secretariat is hoping to build connectors with the Labour Market Development Division and build partnerships within government. Reid described the Rural Secretariat as underutilized yet, however because the Secretariat has relationships in the various regions of the province and knowledge of the people and the communities it is a natural partner.

Reid's office is reviewing the grants process with an eye to creating consistency between departments regarding the application process, criteria, scope of work agreement, accountability, and evaluation. "More and more ministers are saying why, and does it work?" he said, adding that the relationship is about contracting the people/organizations that are best qualified to provide a service. "It's not about giving you money."

He said project funding has to become more sustainable than one-year funding, and added that more coordination is required on the part of government so that applicants don't have to deal with several departments to get a project funded.

## Partnership roles

The last part of the day focused on a brainstorming session where participants recommended potential partnership roles for the provincial government and other groups (such as labour) to assist in addressing the non-profit sector's human resource issues. The following suggestions were offered:

- The provincial government could consult with an advisory council made up of representatives from the voluntary sector regarding human resources that are needed, funding requirements, etc.
- Referring to Industrial Adjustment Service (IAS) Research Sub-Committee's work and on respectful workplaces and labour laws, the provincial government could partner with unions to draw on their expertise.
- Service-oriented organizations, such as those focusing on employment, could partner together. For example, 12 to 15 groups with an employment/career focus in the context of homelessness partnered in Gander and Burin

ten years ago. The Voluntary & Non-Profit Secretariat is interested in bringing the same group together and joining community capacity to focus on specific geographical areas (such as Corner Brook).

- The focus for partnering needs to be on what cannot be achieved individually, such as setting standards for shelters.
- If organizations applying for funding knew what each other is doing, they could work together on coordinated projects.
- There are six community advisory boards connected to the Rural Secretariat that could advise on homelessness and other labour force issues.

Joanne Linzey said there is a large body of knowledge out there on what makes collaboration work, referring to time management, resources, shared vision, building relationships, dealing with conflict and power, and who gets credit for initiatives. "There are huge learnings in this room," she added. She underscored the position of building on what's already out there by citing an initiative in Brazil dedicated to reducing the infant mortality rate across the country. They used the existing diocese structure to make connections at the community level, and were successful in reducing the rate to that of North America.

## Next steps

In closing the forum, Joanne Linzey noted the next steps to address the challenges and opportunities facing the non-profit sector in Newfoundland and Labrador and across Canada will be to:

- Take an inventory within your own organization of resources, strengths, and current partnerships and identify where you're placed, what you've got, and where you should be going.
- Ensure revamped funding includes an increased amount for training and professional development.
- Go beyond bricks and mortar to serve areas

outside St. John's by using technology (e.g. bringing laptops to fish plants to conduct training). Talk to the stakeholders and see what matters to them.

- The College of the North Atlantic can bring courses (such as Adult Basic Education) into very rural communities where transportation is a barrier for people to access courses on campus. There are excellent opportunities for community-based organizations to partner with the college.

Linzey asked participants: "How do you change the culture, support learning and questioning, and see from another's perspective fundamentally different ways of doing things?" She suggested participants find out why more people aren't taking advantage of the training currently offered at the universities and colleges. Stakeholders across the country have said this is what is needed to examine the kind of leadership required in the future. "The old hierarchical leadership doesn't make much sense," she added. What is needed is to convene, create safe spaces, and share actions. The challenge is to ensure we have the leadership and people in

the back offices, on the front lines, and on boards to make sure we have a vibrant sector.

In developing HR training capacity, Linzey pointed out that it's important to think broadly to serve the whole non-profit sector. Another key point is to think of ways to share services. In addition, there is physical capital, such as schools, which can be utilized to serve as a gathering point. Forum Co-Chair Dave Murphy ended the day by thanking participants and Deputy Minister Ross Reid for their involvement in the session. He also thanked the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's HR Council for the Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector for financial support enabling participants residing outside St. John's to attend. Finally, he thanked the St. John's Housing and Homelessness Network and the Coordinating Committee for their work in organizing the conference.

The proceedings report was circulated to all attendees of the Forum. A synthesis report highlighting all five provincial HR Council forums is available to participants on the HR Council's website at [www.hrcouncil.ca](http://www.hrcouncil.ca).

# Appendix 1

## Newfoundland & Labrador Regional Forum Agenda

### Voluntary & Non-profit Sector Workforce Strategy

# A Provincial Forum

## Outcomes

Participants will gain an understanding of national labour force issues and trends affecting the non-profit sector.

Participants will identify key labour force issues facing the sector in Newfoundland and Labrador and will explore strategies for collective action.

## Agenda

- 9 a.m. Introductions & Forum overview
- 9:15 a.m. The context - setting the stage
  - a. National trends
  - b. Regional issues:
- 10:15 a.m. **Coffee & health break**
- 10:30 a.m. Discussion of national recommendations through a local lens
- 11:15 a.m. Opportunities for collaboration within and across the sector
- 12 p.m. **Lunch**
- 12:30 p.m. Exploring/leveraging strengths
  - a. How can the provincial government participate?
  - b. How can the HR Council support the work?
- 1:15 p.m. Bringing it all together
- 1:45 p.m. Wrap up and evaluation
- 2 p.m. **Adjournment**

HR Council for the  
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# Appendix 2

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## *Forum Participants*

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Arnold Bennett     | Religious Social Action Coalition                           |
| Pamela Bennett     | Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador                          |
| Ken Carter         | Government of Newfoundland and Labrador - Rural Secretariat |
| Ann Marie Connors  | Cara House  |
| Jackie Collins     | Dover & Area Community Family Coalition                     |
| Stephen Gaetz      | Canadian Homelessness Research Network                      |
| David Hogan        | Independent Living Resource Centre                          |
| Colin Holloway     | Government of Newfoundland and Labrador - Rural Secretariat |
| Nicole Kielly      | St. John's Status of Women Council                          |
| Joanne Linzey      | HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector            |
| Shaun MacLean      | Labrador Friendship Centre                                  |
| Sheliagh Malone    | Outreach Communities  |
| Janet Meaney       | Wiseman Centre  |
| David Murphy       | St. John's Housing & Homelessness Network                   |
| Janet O'Donnell    | Libra House   |
| Stan Oliver        | Labrador Friendship Centre                                  |
| Tara Pearce        | Association of Fundraising Professionals                    |
| Bruce Pearce       | Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness                |
| David Penner       | Saint John's Native Friendship Centre                       |
| Bui Petersen       | St. John's Housing & Homelessness Network                   |
| Sheldon Pollett    | Choices for Youth   |
| Marsha Power-Slade | Hope Haven  |
| Ross Reid          | Government of Newfoundland and Labrador                     |
| Darlene Scott      | Community Services Council of Newfoundland & Labrador       |
| Bonnie Shiell      | HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-profit Sector            |
| Paul Thomey        | NL Lung Association   |
| Gail Thornhill     | Stella Burry Community Services                             |
| Michelle Walters   | NL Public Libraries   |
| Marie White        | Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness                |
| Michelle Yetman    | Government of Newfoundland and Labrador - Rural Secretariat |

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