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Chair: Mr. Robert Morrissey

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• (1655)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.)): I will call the meeting to order.

It is 4:54, 10 minutes past the last votes. I advise you that we have the resources to go to 6:54, a full two hours.

Welcome to meeting number 94—

I'm sorry. What happened?

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): I understand there is a problem with interpretation. I would ask that we not begin until that is resolved, Mr. Chair.

[English]

The Chair: I will suspend for a few moments while we correct the interpretation.

• (1655)

(Pause)

• (1740)

The Chair: Committee members, I call the meeting to order.

I apologize. It's a reminder. Please do not have your phones on vibrate near the earpiece when you're speaking, because it will, obviously, hurt the interpreters.

Again, welcome to meeting number 94 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on June 13, the committee is continuing its study on intergenerational volunteerism.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format. Witnesses are appearing virtually, online, as well as here in the room.

You have the option to speak in the official language of your choice. In the room, interpretation is available through your earpiece. If you are appearing virtually, click on the globe icon at the bottom of your screen and choose the language of your choice.

If there's an interruption in interpretation, please get my attention. We'll suspend while it's being corrected. I would like to again remind members to please keep their telephones and earpieces away from the mic to protect the hearing of our interpreters.

I remind all members to address their comments through the chair. Use the "raise hand" function if you're online. If you're in the room, raise your hand.

Before we go to witnesses, I wish to confirm with members a deadline to provide the clerk their list of witnesses for the study on Bill C-319, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act. Is there agreement that the deadline to submit witnesses be on Wednesday, December 13? We will resume the study in the new year.

Seeing no disagreement, we'll set that deadline.

One of our witnesses is in the room, and the other is appearing virtually. From Le Petit Peuple, we have Jeanne Campeau, executive director, by video conference. Welcome. From Volunteer Ottawa, we have Christine Trauttmansdorff, executive director—

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Chair, just before we begin with the witnesses, I wonder if I can bring up a very quick housekeeping item. May I?

This committee has requested documents that haven't been sent to it yet. I'm sure all committee members will agree that's not acceptable. We should follow up with that organization to get the documents.

Specifically, this was from the CMHC, going back to February, when documents were requested specifically on board meeting minutes. They wrote to the committee in April—I believe around April 17—and it was brought up again when the CEO was here recently, but we still haven't received the documents.

I'm just wondering if we can get consensus for the committee to write to CMHC to get the documents sent here that haven't been sent, by Monday at nine o'clock. They've had 10 months. That way, we can have the documents before we rise for this session.

I'm hoping we can have quick consensus on that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Gray.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): I agree with MP Gray, for sure, but I just want to be clear. I'm trying to think back to then. Did they say for sure that they would submit them, or that they would check? Was it cut and dry?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: If I may, Mr. Chair, they wrote to the committee on April 17, because there were other committee members who had requested other documents from CMHC, and they forwarded some of them. In that written correspondence to the committee on April 17, they said those documents would be coming, but we still haven't received them.

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): I don't doubt what our colleague has said, but just so we're on the same page, I wonder if we could have the blues brought up from the meeting when that commitment was made, or the wording, so we know exactly what CMHC committed to before agreeing to what Mrs. Gray has put forward. I think that's reasonable for us to take a look at.

The Chair: I don't have the blues with me, but if that's what you're requesting, we don't have consensus to proceed as Mrs. Gray outlined.

Mr. Fragiskatos.

• (1745)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: In the spirit of goodwill, this is a meeting that's going to be lengthy, so if Mrs. Gray is able to pull that up, she can raise it again. I'm not saying that we won't agree; I just want to see exactly what was committed to.

I leave it to the member who is raising the matter to take that up.

The Chair: Could we then—

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Chair, can I respond?

The clerk should be able to provide this, because they had written to the committee on April 17 saying that those documents were forthcoming, and we actually have written documentation from CMHC that would have come to the committee when they brought forth other documents. We actually have it in writing from them, and I'm sure the clerk can pull that up.

Perhaps, to move this along, we can agree that if that's what CMHC said in the written documentation, we therefore can move forward with that. Maybe we can agree to that without having a lengthy process here.

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Very quickly, could the clerk send that? He has it at his disposal, I understand.

The Chair: No, he doesn't have it at his disposal. We'll attempt to get the document.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I think we can deal with it in this meeting.

The Chair: Yes. We will deal with it in this meeting.

Mr. Coteau is next.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Why don't we agree to action whatever we agreed to? If we agreed to it, we agreed to it.

The Chair: I have Ms. Zarrillo.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If that's going, can we also get the information about CMHC contacts? What came back to me was contacts from Infrastructure Canada. What was asked for was contacts from CMHC.

Also, Mr. Chair, if you wouldn't mind clarifying, we have only about an hour, and I want to make sure that we get at least one round of discussion in equitably and fairly. If you could clarify how we're going to proceed today, that would be awesome.

The Chair: I want to advise the committee that we do have resources to go beyond seven o'clock.

If the committee wishes, we can proceed till 7:30.

Ms. Zarrillo.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Mr. Chair, I'm not going to have staff resources past 6:30, so to go all the way to seven o'clock is too much. Also, there are debates in the House tonight.

The Chair: We will deal with that at the appropriate time.

I want to begin.

We have a commitment, before the meeting adjourns, to revisit the question Mrs. Gray put before us. We'll attempt to get the information.

With that, I would ask for the opening statement from Ms. Campeau.

Ms. Campeau, you have five minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau (Executive Director, Le Petit Peuple): Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

I am speaking to you today as the executive director of Le Petit Peuple. We are a community organization dedicated to intergenerational volunteerism, an initiative that transforms age barriers and creates meaningful ties between young people and seniors in our society.

Intergenerational volunteerism, specifically through volunteer work, has many benefits, for young people and seniors alike. I would like to share some thoughts on the positive impact such intergenerational interaction can have in our community, in view of the tremendous isolation that seniors and young people have experienced in recent years and given the crucial importance of building a society that respects our seniors.

Le Petit Peuple received funding two years ago from the Quebec Age-Friendly program. The project was designed to create a lasting structure to encourage daily intergenerational activities in our organization. Those activities include community kitchens, film discussions, craft workshops and coffee hours. Although words cannot really do justice to the real benefits of this project, I would like to share one story we heard during the project.

Ms. Pottinger, a woman of 81 who has lived alone for many years, with heart problems and diabetes, is a prime example of our initiative's real impact. One day, she showed us her knitting work, saying that it was her favourite activity. We suggested that she come and give classes within our organization. So she taught more than twenty young people the art of knitting. Ms. Pottinger even said that Le Petit Peuple had saved her life in a way, because those classes gave her a reason to keep living.

Intergenerational volunteerism is emerging as an answer to the growing challenge of the aging population, and an innovative and necessary solution to address the social, economic and health-related implications of aging.

The aging population presents new challenges, particularly the growing need for care and support. Intergenerational volunteerism is a flexible and adaptable way to meet those emerging needs, and is also inclusive and community-based. Intergenerational interactions provide crucial emotional support. The ties formed through volunteerism provide a support network that can help seniors face the emotional challenges of aging, thereby improving their mental well-being.

I must also mention a fact that our organization has to deal with, namely, the limited access to long-term funding owing to the lack of awareness of intergenerational volunteerism and the inherent complexity of our target clientele, which is made up of two separate groups.

It is undeniable that intergenerational volunteerism has a low profile. This lack of awareness often results in challenges in obtaining long-term funding. The unique nature of our initiative, which includes two different target client groups—young people and seniors—can sometimes make it difficult to demonstrate its real impact on the community.

To further such intergenerational volunteerism initiatives, it would be helpful to consider specific funding mechanisms that recognize the uniqueness of these programs. Specific grants or financial support programs for intergenerational volunteerism organizations could help ensure the continuity and growth of these crucial initiatives.

By encouraging awareness of intergenerational volunteerism and facilitating access to long-term funding, the government can serve as a catalyst in promoting these meaningful ties between young people and seniors.

In conclusion, I invite you to consider these realities in your discussions about promoting intergenerational volunteerism. Innovative solutions must be explored in order to overcome the financial challenges and ensure that such initiatives can continue and flourish in order to strengthen the social fabric of society. Thank you for your attention.

• (1750)

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Campeau.

[English]

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff, please go ahead for five minutes.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff (Executive Director, Volunteer Ottawa): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

[Translation]

Thank you for highlighting the value and importance of volunteerism.

[English]

My name is Christine Trauttmansdorff, and I am the executive director of Volunteer Ottawa or Bénévoles Ottawa.

Volunteer Ottawa is a charitable organization that has been promoting, supporting and celebrating volunteering for over 65 years. Through a membership model, we help hundreds of local charities recruit volunteers and provide their staff with a wide range of training workshops and communication resources. We provide the local business sector with community engagement services, primarily through group volunteering.

Most of all, we talk to people. We talk to them about the benefits and rewards that come from sharing their time and talent with others. We host recruitment fairs and recognition events, and we send guest speakers out into the community. We're all about making Ottawa a happier, healthier and more inclusive place to live.

Volunteer Ottawa is one of about 150 volunteer centres working in communities throughout Canada. I'm sure that many of you have crossed paths with my amazing colleagues who are running volunteer centres that serve your ridings.

The committee has asked for recommendations on ways the federal government can promote and encourage intergenerational volunteerism between seniors and youth. We're currently running two projects: one supporting youth leadership and volunteering, and the other aimed at re-engaging older adult volunteers. Both projects embed intergenerational opportunities, for all the reasons described by the witnesses who appeared earlier this week.

My recommendations are going to focus on volunteering more generally, from the perspective of a local volunteer centre.

My first recommendation is for the development of a national action strategy on volunteering to unleash the full economic and social potential of Canada's volunteers.

Volunteer centres tend to focus on the positive social benefits of volunteering, but there are very real economic benefits as well. In 2018, the Conference Board estimated the contribution of Canada's volunteers at \$56 billion per year. That seems like a huge number, but when you consider that well over half of the charities in Canada have no paid staff and are entirely reliant on volunteers, it starts to sink in.

In a city the size of Ottawa, that's the equivalent of \$1.5 billion in revenue for community services and programs. We've lost a lot of that capacity in the past few years. To recapture it and increase it, we need to think about joining forces under the umbrella of a national strategy that will strengthen the infrastructure that supports volunteering.

Volunteer centres are a crucial part of that infrastructure. I'm a huge believer in the power of local: local knowledge, local relationships, local networks and community ecosystems. That's what volunteer centres bring to the table. What we don't have are data, research capacity, policy frameworks and shareable, scalable resources to support our work.

My second recommendation is a shameless pitch that the strategy find a way to create stable funding mechanisms for volunteer centres and for volunteer management capacity in charities and non-profits.

Volunteer centres are all small but mighty organizations, with a big reach and the ability to make a big difference. To give you an idea, Volunteer Ottawa serves a population of about one million people with four full-time staff and two part-time staff. We'll finish 2023 with about \$570,000 in revenue. We've generated approximately \$200,000 of that from membership fees, sales and fundraising, and the rest comes from project-based grants. In 2023, we accessed 12 grants from 11 different funders. We receive no core funding from any level of government.

Trevor Moss from the Central Okanagan Food Bank spoke about the time that grant writing takes away from delivering on mission and the uncertainty it means for operations and long-term planning. Virtually every volunteer centre would say the same thing, as would most of the local charities we work with here in Ottawa.

My final recommendation is to you as individual members of Parliament, and it comes with no price tag at all. You are all high-profile leaders in your communities with thousands of connections to older adults, young people, newcomers and so many other potential volunteers. You probably speak with staff from every single charity and non-profit in your riding at least a couple of times a year. Make volunteering part of what you talk about. Speak about your own volunteer work, encourage people to get involved, and recognize and thank the volunteers you meet at local events.

Promoting volunteerism is a ground game, not unlike political campaigning. As one of the earlier witnesses said, it all starts with personal relationships, with being invited to help, with being told your time and talent are needed and appreciated. You are all in an excellent position to deliver those messages. I encourage you to speak with your local volunteer centre about how you can use your voice, your website, your newsletters and your presence to promote and encourage volunteerism.

• (1755)

Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Trauttmansdorff.

[English]

We will begin, for six minutes, with Ms. Ferreri.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much to the witnesses who are here to talk about volunteerism.

I'm going to start, if I may, with Ms. Trauttmansdorff. Thank you for what you've brought to the table.

What we've heard in testimony so far on this is about the impact of the cost of living. That's in particular for seniors, because they are often the people we lean on the most to be the backbone of volunteerism. I know that in my community, as you said, local is everything.

This has been documented repeatedly in the news as well, which I referred to in another committee. What we've seen is that seniors are being forced back to work. They don't have that extra income and consequently that extra time. They're stepping up and helping with child care for their grandchildren. They're paying more in heat, hydro and groceries. Some of them don't even have the money for the fuel to drive. In my community, there is Community Care, an amazing volunteer organization that helps.

Have you seen the cost of living have a direct impact on being able to recruit and retain volunteers, especially seniors?

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: I think there's no one who doesn't recognize that the cost of living impacts all aspects of our lives.

A couple of ways in which we've really seen and felt that in the work we're doing are with respect to the related impact on the labour market. There has been lower unemployment than we've seen in a long time. That has made for a lot of challenges for charities and non-profits—including volunteer centres—to recruit people at the salaries we can afford to pay. That's difficult, especially in a labour market like the one here in Ottawa, in which we're competing with a lot of federal government employers and post-secondary institutions. That's one of the areas where we've certainly seen that.

The members we work with, the not-for-profits, are very conscious of some of the factors that impact seniors, especially, and their ability to volunteer. They're offering transportation subsidies, making sure that parking is available and making sure that someone has a meal when they come in to volunteer. Those are some of the things we're recognizing as part of the reality today.

• (1800)

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: For those subsidies, who's covering those costs? That seems to be a rabbit hole that digs us further into this cost-of-living crisis.

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: The costs of services and of providing that kind of environment to work in affect every aspect of our operations.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: That's certainly a true statement. When the economy doesn't work, then everything else starts to fall apart.

Perhaps I could turn my attention to Ms. Campeau.

Thank you for your testimony. I'm sorry I can't speak in French. I'm working on that. *Je suis désolée.*

I'm very interested in your testimony, because I think that if we can get more young people to recognize and get involved and be volunteers, then we will have a better society. I know, being a mom of teenagers myself...especially with a university student who is so stressed about money, making money to pay for housing, etc.

I'm curious whether you've seen that translate to the younger generation of the volunteers you work with. I know you said there are teenagers. I'm just wondering if the cost of living is impacting them as well.

[Translation]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: Essentially, it affects every member of the family.

Can you be more specific? Are you asking whether economic conditions are also impacting young people?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Yes, what I was asking in particular was whether that's affecting young people's decisions to volunteer. If they are distracted with trying to find a part-time job, then they just don't have that extra time, or is the cost of living impacting their decision to volunteer?

[Translation]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: Yes, it certainly has an impact. In the past few years, our organization has offered young people placements abroad. That requires a lot of time from the young people. As we know, young people are starting to work at a younger age.

So we do see the impact on volunteer recruitment. That is why we have worked primarily through schools. In Quebec, a lot of schools require a certain number of hours of volunteer work, so that is helpful for us.

[English]

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Thank you.

How much time do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have one minute.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: In one minute, I guess I would ask this question.

We've seen an impact on young children. Again, I'm speaking from my own experience as a mom. I feel that kids are less social-

ized. They're less comfortable being social. I mean, they don't even pick up the phone. They don't do the old-school door knocking when you sold door to door—the Christmas fundraiser or whatever.

Do you find that this is translating...? Do you see that change in recruiting young people to do face-to-face volunteerism? Do you find them more drawn to stuff where they wouldn't have to have personal interaction, in recruiting them?

[Translation]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: Yes, that is definitely true. I like to mention seniors because young people often make social visits to seniors' residences. We have noticed that the young people are shy and uncomfortable during those visits.

Our organization really stresses the need to approach others, meet other people, but we can see that it is difficult. The isolation of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic is reflected in their relationships. It is much more difficult for them to forge ties with others without fear.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ferreri.

[English]

Mr. Van Bynen, you are next for six minutes.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses for their patience while we get through our technology challenges.

I'm interested in finding out what's working for your organizations.

I'll start with Volunteer Ottawa. I'd like you to speak a little more about how your organization recruits and what type of retaining programs you have.

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: Thank you very much. That's a welcome question.

I mentioned two of the projects we're working on right now: one to attract youth and the other to recruit seniors. In both cases, we're talking to people who can tell us what it is about volunteering that appeals to them and the barriers to their volunteering, to help us design a campaign that is going to speak to those things.

The other important thing—and that's for seniors and for youth and anyone else—is that the invitation to volunteer be extended by someone they can relate to. Our youth volunteer advocates project is giving youth the leadership, communication and presentation skills—interaction skills—to go out and speak with their peers in all corners of the community, talk to them about what volunteering is all about and share with them their ideas about opportunities.

The other side of that is talking to the organizations that use volunteers about how to make a volunteer experience valuable and attractive to today's volunteers, whether they are old people or young people. In some cases, they're adapting volunteering to be virtual, doing more things online or remotely.

The best thing to do is ask people what they need and what they expect—what kind of supports they're going to need, whether it's a bus ticket or some recognition—and then make sure that the volunteering adapts accordingly.

• (1805)

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Ms. Campeau, can I have your thoughts?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: I would say roughly the same thing as Ms. Trauttmansdorff.

Recruitment is always a challenge. For the most part, young people join our organization through their teachers. They come to do the volunteer hours required for their program. They stay on as volunteers because of the ties they forge, the activities they enjoy and the leadership offered.

I would say the same thing applies to volunteers in general. In some cases, offering a meal changes everything for volunteers. For seniors, we also offer transportation, because that is often a major issue for those participating in our activities. Further, each volunteer is unique and has their own needs and expectations. It is really individual. We have to sit down with them and be able to offer them something extra with us, something more than simply coming to volunteer.

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: We have two very specific and different groups, seniors and youth, and each has different things that would engage them. How do you cross that bridge between the two? Are there any trends you're seeing between the two significantly different groups that create the challenge in making that connection? How should we approach that?

I'll start with you, Christine.

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: A couple of examples might illustrate. There's a group here in Ottawa called the Ottawa Network for Education, which provides a lot of tutoring and support to students in school. Of course, a lot of seniors are doing that.

A lot of that is done virtually now, and it's done through a tablet or through a computer, so it crosses that digital divide. Sometimes the older people need a little bit of training or assistance in getting the hang of using Zoom or video meetings, but it works out really well. I think the solutions are there to be found and, very often, it's the people involved who can bring the solutions.

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: Ms. Campeau, what are your thoughts on that? How do you bridge the different perspectives of each of those groups?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: I would say we have to identify people's strengths and meet the needs of each group.

Ms. Trauttmansdorff just talked about the difficulties seniors can have with technology. That is one of their needs. We have noticed that our young people are very quick with screens and technology. That is their strength. By identifying such strengths, we can create activities that bring the two generations together. There is a need

that has to be met and people who have strengths that can help us meet it.

The same applies to community kitchens that include seniors, especially women who love to cook and want to teach young people how to cook. Young people do not always have those cooking skills. That is how we get young people interested. Above all, they must not be afraid to forge ties, but it must be said that a certain amount of training is needed.

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Van Bynen: I have one other quick question.

We heard, particularly from Christine, that there are some things you don't have. It started off with data, research, etc. What other kinds of support do volunteers need? Are there supports that are particularly important when it comes to intergenerational volunteering?

• (1810)

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: Data is a very important one, to understand the dynamics. I mentioned that the city of Ottawa has over a million people in it, and there's a lot of variety throughout the community. Older people are not a homogenous group. There are a lot of differences in terms of language, cultural background and ability to participate in activities. I think that data piece really becomes the basis.

We spend a lot of time thinking about inclusion and making volunteering not just accessible to people but truly inviting to people. I think that's another area where some of the deep research and policy thinking about equity, diversity and inclusion is. How to introduce that into the organizations that are hosting volunteers is something that small organizations can't do on their own.

There are a lot of things related to police checks, reference checks and the screening process for volunteering that are really sort of system-wide and need developed platforms established that can make that whole process easier, to make the whole onboarding process for a volunteer less threatening for many people who maybe haven't been through something like that before. It would also be smoother, more efficient and of lower cost for the volunteering organizations.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Van Bynen.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for six minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Many thanks to the two witnesses for being with us today.

I want to acknowledge Ms. Campeau in particular. Thank you, Ms. Campeau, for accepting our invitation to appear before the committee.

I can tell my colleagues that Le Petit Peuple, which is in my riding, has a fairly unique mission.

Our committee's study is specifically about intergenerational volunteerism, not volunteer work in general. Le Petit Peuple is a good example of an organization focused on the objective of intergenerational volunteerism.

Ms. Campeau, you have already given us a few answers and ideas to explore in order to promote intergenerational volunteerism.

Can you think of any other tools? You talked about long-term funding and what is happening in Quebec, and rightly so. I gather that poses a particular challenge for an organization focusing on intergenerational work. It has an impact on the type of application, which seems to be more problematic.

Can you elaborate on that?

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: Thank you for your question, Ms. Chabot.

We are a very small organization and we do our best to keep going with what we have, but there are complications.

Since we have two very different client groups, we do not always meet a number of the criteria for grants, which are either for young people or for seniors. We have received funding under the New Horizons for Seniors Program and the Quebec Age-Friendly Program. Unfortunately, those contributions are for a limited time.

For a small organization, the greatest challenge is obtaining long-term funding. In my opinion, there should be programs specifically for intergenerational volunteerism, given its complexity. I think it is a fascinating solution, for both young people and seniors in our society.

Ms. Louise Chabot: In practical terms, if there were programs specifically for intergenerational issues, that would answer the question as to which program could provide a grant. Organizations that focus on young people do not always have the same mission as those that focus on seniors. The New Horizons for Seniors Program has very specific criteria, but they do not necessarily match those for young people. Your suggestion is a good idea.

Is it difficult to submit a program application? Would you recommend any technical or administrative changes?

• (1815)

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: It is actually very difficult.

For my part, I have been involved with Le Petit Peuple for about ten years, but have been its director for just a year. This year, I submitted at least ten grant applications. It is difficult and each application is unique.

Further, they have to be done again and again. New ideas for projects have to be presented even though we already have our project. We already have activities. We have a formula that works. We would simply like it to continue. In addition to being time-consuming, applications are labour-intensive. Given all the time we spend completing applications, we are unfortunately left with less time to help the community.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I have one last question.

We are starting our study, but one witness has already said there is a crisis in volunteerism. I thought that was a bit of an overstatement, but perhaps it is true. There is indeed a housing crisis, a public finance crisis and an economic crisis.

Ms. Campeau, would you say that the commitment to volunteer work has declined, among young people and seniors alike? The pandemic complicated matters, but I would like you to think further back. Is it easy to find volunteers?

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: There is definitely a huge drop in engagement among young people, families and seniors. I think it's mostly related to the economic situation.

As I said earlier, we have young people of all ages, but especially young people between the ages of 13 and 17. For a few years now, these young people have been working as soon as they turn 15. They go to school and they work, so they don't have the time to volunteer.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Campeau.

[English]

Ms. Zarrillo, you have six minutes, please.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

This study is about intergenerational volunteerism, so I am interested when I hear these unique aspects that differentiate between intergenerational volunteering and volunteering in general.

I'm going to ask both witnesses. Maybe I can start with Ms. Trauttmansdorff and then go on to Madame Campeau.

With regard to infrastructure needed and value to the volunteers, how does intergenerational volunteering differ from what you would consider regular volunteering?

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: It's an interesting question, and it's one that I reflected on even in preparing for this, because I don't think about intergenerational volunteering as being something very distinct. There are many collisions and meetings that happen around volunteering, and they all need to be carefully curated and attended to in order to make sure that people have what they need in order to come together successfully.

In terms of volunteer management itself, I'm not in the business of volunteer management. We recruit volunteers and then put them at the disposal of the organizations we serve. The profession of volunteer management would be where those intergenerational challenges and opportunities.... The examples we heard from Madame Campeau today are really inspiring.

Developing those programs and thinking about what is going to make them work and what is appropriate to the specific context is very much the work of the organizations where volunteers are working. Volunteer management is a very specialized, unique kind of human resources management, except you're working to fill 40 hours of work. You probably have a couple of hundred people who are coming in to do a couple of hours every second week rather than a full shift. They're not getting a paycheque, so you have to think very carefully about what their motivations are, what kinds of rewards and recognition they want and what's going to keep them coming back.

Training is always a big thing, and that's something that I think is very specific to intergenerational volunteering around the use of technology and around communications.

One of the challenges we're trying to address is the need for more diversity around board tables in charities and non-profits. That includes youth, the experience that older people bring to a board table, and many other dimensions of diversity in order to make sure that, right at the top of the organization in terms of direction setting, strategy and priorities, those boards are really equipped to set the direction for the organizations in an appropriate way during a time when everything is changing.

I also think that, for youth participation on boards, where we think of that as being something more for older people, a particular challenge is making sure that youth are really welcome at those tables, that they get the support and the mentorship they need and that their voices are really heard.

• (1820)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you so much.

Madame Campeau, I wonder if you could share some of the differentiation factors in infrastructure and value to volunteers. I know you raised one, which was the funding mechanism. Could you share if there are others?

[Translation]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: In terms of infrastructure, we need adapted buildings, which are equipped, for example, with ramps for people with reduced mobility.

One of our challenges is the availability of time slots for these two groups to meet. Those people do not have the same schedules. Young people are in school during the day, but older people usually show up during the day. Those two distinct realities require highly qualified personnel. Even in terms of the organization of activities, those are two categories of people who have very different objectives and needs when it comes to volunteering. So we have to align those two realities.

I've been with Le Petit People for a long time. We are talking about intergenerational practices, but, for me, that is still volunteering. However, it is difficult to compare it to other forms of volunteering, such as traditional volunteering.

Ms. Trauttmansdorff was talking about board tables. We work on youth board tables and seniors board tables. I think it would be really relevant to have a board table that could bring the two groups together to look at our distinct realities.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: That's great. Thank you very much.

Just on that, talking about tables, Madame Campeau, you talked about community kitchens. You talked about food. I think there was mention of transportation. These are two topics that have come up in the past, which are the bus passes or the transportation piece and this idea of sharing food together.

I wonder, Madame Campeau, if you can talk about how the federal government could maybe assist in those factors that are enticing people to come together and that are needed to bring people together.

[Translation]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: I want to make sure I understand your question. Could you repeat it?

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Yes. I guess on a federal level, it's thinking about how we can help to entice intergenerational volunteerism to expand not just volunteerism in Canada but the value to the volunteers. I think we're trying to build connection, relationships and community sometimes.

There are two factors that seem to come back. There's this need for transportation, such as bus passes or access to bus passes. The other one that comes back is around food. You mentioned community kitchens, but you also mentioned sharing food preparation skills. I'm wondering if there is a place here for the federal government to assist, through those two channels of food and transportation, to make intergenerational volunteering a success. It's a big question.

The Chair: Please give a short answer, Ms. Campeau.

• (1825)

[Translation]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: It depends on the grants we obtain. For example, for transportation, we were able to buy a van, but the number of seats is limited.

Furthermore, I don't think I have as strong a volunteer base as the other witness, but I would say that, because of the housing crisis and the fact that food banks can't meet the demand, people sometimes have trouble feeding themselves and are less likely to volunteer. They will start with trying to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. So it all depends on our funding, mainly because our services are free. All the services we provide to seniors are free.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Campeau and Ms. Zarrillo.

[English]

Mr. Aitchison, you have five minutes.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wanted to focus on something Ms. Trauttmansdorff said.

You referenced something that a previous witness from Kelowna mentioned around the food bank. I've heard it many times as well. It's not just in the volunteer sector but also in all kinds of sectors. There are painfully long applications for funding programs. We talk a lot about the CMHC around here, as an example.

I was looking at your organization's annual report. There are a number of different organizations listed there—Employment Ontario, Ottawa Community Foundation, United Way, Canada summer jobs, Ontario Trillium Foundation and the City of Ottawa. I'm assuming that there is a long, painful application process for each of those. Even with some of the corporate sponsors, there's probably an application process as well.

This is one of those areas where I recognize that government does play a role in assisting community organizations. It's not a bad thing, but I am still a Conservative. I'm always looking for ways to do things better, more efficiently and more effectively. We can do more with less, for example.

I note that you worked in this place at one time, so you understand a little bit how it works. Do you have any thoughts on what you might do differently? How could you structure a system where there were fewer applications or trusted organizations or whatever it might be? Can you give us some thoughts on that?

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: Yes. Thank you very much for that question. It's a really important and fundamental question.

I think the charitable and non-profit sectors in Canada should be seen and perceived as partners to government. We're helping to deliver services and programs to fill gaps and to respond to local needs. Only someone who's really based in that community has the networks to bring together the resources in that community to address a need that a government, especially the federal government, could never tackle.

“Trust” is a really important word. I think the big issue is multi-year funding. Every grant I have, except for one, is for one year or less. Your timing horizon or planning horizon is always short-term. There's no such thing as a permanent job. Every year starts with zero in the budget. You have to build it up over the course of the year. That uncertainty just takes a toll.

The time on the grants is brutal. Madame Campeau made reference to filling out the form. There's no relation between the amount of money involved and the amount of time involved. If anything, they're in inverse order to each other.

The other thing is the difference between the time you hear about the possibility of having that money and start planning what you could do with it, the time you put in the application, the time you hear back that you've been successful, and the time when the money actually lands and you're able to start. That can be a year in time. That's not a planning horizon that a really small organization like mine can work on. It doesn't bring out the best in any of the organizations that those funding sources support.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: I wonder if you could elaborate a bit on some of the work your organization does. I'm not familiar with Volunteer Ottawa. I'm from a smaller community. We certainly had programs, periodically, that would help train volunteers. Often-

times, the local chamber of commerce would initiate something like that, for example. They did a one-off type of program.

I'm assuming your organization.... I'm looking through it here. There are members. Is there a membership fee for being a member? You generate revenue that way, as well, I take it.

• (1830)

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: That's right.

When we talk about members, most of the time we're talking about our organizational members. There are, more or less, 1,400 charities in Ottawa. About 300 of them access our services directly. Many more use them indirectly, as well. They pay a membership fee to have access to our recruitment platform, our matching platform, our education programming and all of the events we hold. Individuals can be members, as well.

A lot of the training we're providing.... Earlier, I mentioned the staffing and recruitment challenges in the entire not-for-profit sector, not just in volunteer centres—

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. There is no interpretation.

The Chair: It seems to have been resolved.

Please continue, Ms. Trauttmansdorff.

[*English*]

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: That training for non-profit staff is a big part of what we do. Obviously, training people who are very new in their careers and new to working in charities or volunteer management is a big part of what we're doing.

We go more broadly than that. We're offering training in governance—how decision-making processes work in not-for-profit organizations. Strategic planning is something that is very important, as well as communications, how to use Canva, etc. There are a lot of different angles.

There are not a lot of sources for inexpensive training workshops that are very focused on what's happening in Ottawa and the not-for-profit sector. It's a peer learning and networking opportunity, in addition to training. All of our facilitators are volunteers themselves, which is an enormous boost to our ability to deliver.

The Chair: Mr. Fragiskatos, go ahead for five minutes.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before I ask questions of our witness, I'll go to Mrs. Gray's point.

It's no problem. I am just looking at the minutes that have been found. Thank you to the clerk and staff for finding that. Thank you, Vanessa, for finding that.

I'm looking at what was committed. The question was to provide the minutes of CMHC board meetings from 2016 through to 2022. I don't have any information on this, but I believe it's taking such a long time, probably, because there are a lot of documents, and a lot of translation has to happen. That's just a guess. I suppose we'll find out. We should see these documents. It was a commitment made. We're in favour of that.

To our witness, thank you very much for being here today.

The question I have picks up on a comment you made, I think, in relation to one of the questions asked by Mr. Van Bynen.

This committee heard, just a few days ago, about how cumbersome it can be in this country when individuals wish to volunteer but are sent for multiple police checks. You might want to volunteer, let's say, by coaching hockey. Then, you might want to volunteer for another organization—the food bank, or whatever it might be. Another police check has to be taken up. You can see how cumbersome this could prove to be. I think it stands as an impediment to volunteering in a very genuine sense.

The example given by that witness was Australia, where you get a police check once and it applies to every organization you wish to volunteer with. It would be seen as valid. That's what I'm trying to say.

Are you aware of that system in Australia? We didn't have enough time to explore it in detail in that meeting. I wonder if you could offer comments on that.

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: Actually, I heard about it when I listened to the testimony from Monday, but I'm not familiar with it myself.

I can confirm that it is a real barrier or choke point for the volunteers and for the organizations. There are a number of different dimensions to that. It's a risk management process for the organizations in terms of making sure that the people they are engaging as volunteers can interact with the vulnerable people they work with. Sometimes it tends to get overused and that can slow down the process as well.

The idea of having a common platform and a single sort of blue ribbon or blue chip pass card is very attractive. There is a good case for a national strategy, or even just at a provincial level, because none of us individually could undertake that kind of initiative to put that infrastructure in place.

There are other barriers to police record checks, particularly for newcomers who don't have police records in Canada. I think we have to think carefully about where we need them, why we need them and what kinds of checks are appropriate in order for that not to become a barrier to people—not only becoming volunteers, but engaging in society and building relationships in their community more quickly.

• (1835)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

You've shared a number of very important things with us today.

This is one thing I always like to ask witnesses, because they bring so many valuable ideas to the table. What are one or two key points that you would want our committee to really keep in mind? Of all the things you've said, what would be, in your view, the most important for our committee to really consider in terms of providing recommendations to government on this issue?

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: I know this is kind of the witnesses' most popular answer, but it's funding.

We are partners in making society work. We weave the social fabric. That's not just volunteer centres; it's all the charities and non-profits that work in your communities.

The mechanisms that are in place right now are just crippling in terms of us doing our best work and having the biggest impact. They even prevent us, in many cases, from collaborating with one another effectively. Grant mechanisms are usually set up for one applicant, one funder, one project or one organization. I work very closely with my colleagues and other volunteer centres in Ontario. We have all kinds of good ideas for things that we could do together, to develop one tool kit and then deploy it locally. We see the same needs, but there aren't mechanisms in place for us to do that easily and to put our best effort forward collectively.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fragiskatos.

Before we move on, I just want to advise the committee that it's my intention to adjourn at 6:54, which is two hours after we began.

I decided to advise the next two witnesses that we will not get to them. We will have to reschedule because it would be unfair, given the timeline, and members have to leave.

With that, we will go to Madame Chabot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Chabot, you have the floor for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

With all due respect to my colleague, I would like to point out that, in terms of volunteering, we have systems in Quebec for criminal background checks. I would say that, in the various communities where volunteers operate, it is more positive than negative. I think that question does indeed concern our respective areas of jurisdiction. Although that is not what my colleague did, I think it is important not to trivialize this issue.

Ms. Campeau, there are two programs at the federal level: Canada service corps, which promotes civic engagement among young people and provides volunteering opportunities, as well as new horizons for seniors, which you mentioned and which is more aimed at seniors.

I would like to know, in the wake of what you said and considering that there are two clienteles, whether it would be easier to promote projects if those programs had an intergenerational component.

What is your opinion on that?

• (1840)

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: Yes, it certainly would. Actually, I'm not familiar with the first program you mentioned.

Ms. Louise Chabot: I'm sorry, Ms. Campeau. I'm talking about Canada service corps.

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: For a few years now, we have been using the Canada summer jobs program, which enables us to hire young people throughout the summer.

I do think we are missing a category related to intergenerational volunteerism. We need to target that, since all of our programs and services, all of our activities, are based on that. Even the home care services we provide to seniors are provided free of charge by young people. The visits we make to the residential and long-term care centres are also made by young people. The intergenerational aspect is at the heart of our organization and all our activities.

Above all, we need recurrent, long-term funding to avoid having to think and create new projects every year.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Thank you.

In terms of recruitment efforts, what do you think is the major asset we should focus on to promote volunteering? What is the winning formula that facilitates that?

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: It's a challenge. Every year, we ask ourselves that question. We also attend training sessions dedicated to recruiting volunteers. Having said that, youth and seniors are two very different groups, and we won't recruit them in the same way.

Over the years, we have established a lot of partnerships with high schools, and that greatly facilitates recruitment. Teachers are aware of our organization, and they are aware of the opportunities we offer young people.

It is more difficult when it comes to seniors. In fact, it is often the people who have used the services we provide who then become active volunteers. That has worked the best so far.

There are also people who hear about us by word of mouth or in newsletters. It is the multiplicity of recruitment techniques that makes us succeed.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Chabot.

[English]

We have Ms. Zarrillo to conclude.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you.

For our witnesses, I'll say that we're working on a study right now. After all the testimony, our analysts will put together a report for us. I think one of the things that will need to be clarified at the outset is the definition of intergenerational volunteering. I think most of us are thinking of it as youth and seniors together.

I wonder if each of the witnesses—maybe we can start with Ms. Campeau this time—could let us know their definition or how they would like to see the definition of intergenerational volunteering laid out in this report. If it is related to youth and seniors, what are those two age groups?

[Translation]

Ms. Jeanne Campeau: We don't have age-related restrictions. Our organization even welcomes toddlers and families. We consider people 65 years of age or older to be seniors, but we never check. Anyone who considers himself or herself to be a senior can join us.

My definition of what constitutes intergenerational volunteerism is bringing together two different age groups that can benefit from each other. For me, it's about meeting needs that youth and seniors share by having those two groups interact.

That's a good question. Intergenerational volunteerism has a broad scope, but it is much more complex than putting a 14-year-old in a room with an 80-year-old and telling them to figure it out. A relationship of trust must be developed. Once that is done, it is so relevant because seniors are an asset in our society. They tend to be forgotten and discarded.

Young people also have a lot to say and a lot to contribute to society. When those two groups are combined, a sharing of knowledge takes place. Seniors are often surprised. They often tell us that they think we have an active and dedicated youth. Reference is often made to the harm that young people do, but young people do good. They want to get involved in society and make a difference.

So it's a matter of working together and bringing something to each other. That would be my definition.

• (1845)

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Thank you.

Ms. Trauttmansdorff, can you answer the same question?

Ms. Christine Trauttmansdorff: It's a difficult question to answer, but I've had a bit more time than Madame Campeau to think about it.

I think it comes down to breaking down silos. It's community building. We all live, at various stages of our lives.... We're going to school or living a career life, or we're older and in a long-term care home or seniors' residence. I don't think those silos are natural. I don't think it's the way we live naturally, as human beings. A lot more natural interaction should happen.

Intergenerational volunteering finds ways to break down those silos. It brings people together to work together to accomplish something as simple and as complicated as building community.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Zarrillo.

That will conclude the first witness panel.

We are not proceeding to the second group of witnesses. They have already been advised and will be rescheduled in the new year, along with some other rescheduling we had to do.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I thought we were going until 6:50 p.m.

The Chair: We can. It's a few more minutes.

I want to thank the witnesses, Madame Campeau and Ms. Trauttmansdorff. Thank you for your testimony before the committee.

We will reschedule the others in the new year.

At this time, I have two minor things before we adjourn.

The ministers will be appearing on Monday. We're finalizing that for next week's meeting.

I want to, again, clarify the request for CMHC—

Mrs. Tracy Gray: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Can I ask for clarification? Which ministers are you referring to?

The Chair: I'm still finalizing among Minister Boissonnault, Minister Khera, Minister Sudds and Minister Fraser. When we have the final confirmations, I will send a notice to the committee members.

Mrs. Gray, with regard to the request you had for the clerk on CMHC, are we clear on that?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Yes, I believe so.

The Chair: Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: With that, committee members, thank you very much.

The meeting is adjourned.

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