



Policy Internships and Fellowships Program  
Projet des Stages et bourses en élaboration de politiques

# Policy Internships and Fellowships

Bridging the  
Policy Dialogue  
Between Voluntary  
Organizations and the  
Federal Government

Voluntary Sector  
June 2004

Canada



**Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development**  
**Centre de recherche et de développement sur le secteur bénévole et communautaire**



**University  
of Victoria**

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This report and the final reports of interns and fellows are available at the following websites:

- [www.cvsrd.org](http://www.cvsrd.org)
- <http://publicadmin.uvic.ca/cpss/vsi/index.htm>

Print copies may be obtained by contacting:

- [admin@cvsrd.org](mailto:admin@cvsrd.org)

## FOREWORD

We are pleased to present this summary report on the second year of the Policy Internships and Fellowships (PIAF) Program, which fosters collaboration between the federal government and the voluntary sector through the interchange of policy interns and fellows.

PIAF was initiated by the Capacity Joint Table of the Voluntary Sector Initiative and launched as a pilot program in 2002–03. The program attracted interns and fellows, from the federal government and the voluntary sector, who spent up to a year on an interchange assignment in the other sector. Highlights of their experience and their insights were captured in a summary report entitled *Policy Internships and Fellowships—Bridging the Policy Dialogue Between Voluntary Organizations and the Federal Government*, published in June 2003.

Building on the success of the pilot program, the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development (CVSRD), in collaboration with the Centre for Public Sector Studies (CPSS) at the University of Victoria, proceeded with the 2003–04 PIAF exercise. The second year of the program turned out to be a much different experience compared to the inaugural year due to the challenges presented by significantly reduced funding from the federal government.

The public servants who participated in the PIAF program this year rose to the occasion, with invaluable support from their home departments and host organizations, staff of CVSRD and CPSS and other individuals. These interns and fellows produced high-calibre work that will continue to have an impact not only on the clients and populations targeted by the programs in which they served, but also on both sectors generally. Some conducted important exploratory research that could shed light on directions for future policy initiatives, while the policy-related work of others could have a range of impacts on the economic and social well-being of various communities.

We wish to salute the efforts and contribution of PIAF interns and fellows and to express our appreciation to supporters whose contribution enabled the PIAF program to move forward and experience its second successful year in a row: our founder, Human Resources Development Canada, the selection committee, staff and home and host organizations.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a report on a program initiated by the Capacity Joint Table of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI), namely the Policy Internships and Fellowships (PIAF) Program. PIAF was launched as a pilot program in 2002, with funding provided by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Health Canada, with the objectives of developing policy knowledge, experience and skills in both the voluntary sector and the federal government and enabling the voluntary sector to become a more viable partner in the development of public policy. Nine interns and fellows successfully completed their PIAF placements during the 2002–03 pilot program. Their experiences and learning are documented in a summary report entitled *Policy Internships and Fellowships—Bridging the Policy Dialogue Between Voluntary Organizations and the Federal Government*, published in June 2003.

The PIAF program is managed by the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development (CVSRD), a joint initiative of the University of Ottawa and Carleton University, in partnership with the Centre for Public Sector Studies (CPSS) of the University of Victoria.

CVSRD secured funding from one federal government department, HRDC, for a second year of the PIAF program, this time at a much-reduced level in comparison to the first year. More specifically, funds were not available to reimburse home organizations and departments for salaries and benefits. The reduced funding had an impact on the program, in terms of the source (supply) of policy interns and fellows, the (more limited) timeframes available for recruitment and training and the type and amount of expenditures that were covered.

Across the voluntary sector, organizations were (and still are) struggling to stay afloat, remain true to their mission, retain their staff and continue to provide programs and services to meet growing demands, in an era of cutbacks and lack of funding for administration and other overhead costs. At the same time, federal departments were buffeted not only by financial constraints and increasing transparency and accountability requirements, but also by government restructuring and changes in political leadership with the advent of a new Prime Minister in December 2003.

An intensive recruitment campaign for the 2003–04 PIAF exercise was launched in the spring of 2003. Although voluntary sector organizations showed considerable interest in the program and some offered to host a public servant on a PIAF assignment, none had the financial capacity to underwrite the cost of placement of one of their staff in the federal government. Following a rigorous selection process and arrangements for placements under the auspices of the Interchange Canada Program of the Public Service Commission of Canada, five interns and fellows from the federal government proceeded to their placements in the voluntary sector:

- **ROBERTA BUSTARD**, Manager of the Capacity Joint Table Secretariat at HRDC, was assigned, as a research fellow, to the Voluntary Sector Forum, with a view to developing a broad understanding of how liability is affecting the voluntary sector in Canada and formulating policy recommendations for responding to the issue.
- **CHRISTINE DOCKMAN**, Program Consultant in the Adult Health Unit of the Population and Public Health Branch, Health Canada, BC/Yukon Region, embarked on an internship as well as a fellowship with the BC Council for Families in order to identify new directions for public policy aimed at influencing work-life balance in a key environment in the lives (including health and development) of families—the workplace.
- **MARIE KATIA FRANÇOIS**, Program Officer in the Arts Policy Branch of Canadian Heritage, took up an internship with the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA), with a primary focus on policy issues related to cultural diversity.
- **SUSAN HOLLICK-KENYON**, Social Policy Consultant in HRDC's Community Initiatives and Policy Directorate in the BC/Yukon Region, was placed as an intern in the Social Planning and Research Council of BC, in order to facilitate the growth and mobilization of the Social Planning Network and provide support for community development education, with emphasis on coalitions and networks.

■ **LARRY PECKFORD**, Service Delivery Manager of the Rocky Harbour Human Resource Centre, HRDC, Newfoundland and Labrador Region, took up a research fellowship with the Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador, to determine the responsiveness, to the needs of the voluntary sector, of policies of federal departments in Newfoundland and Labrador and to identify opportunities to influence policy in relation to social and community development.

Participation in PIAF proved to be a valuable experience for interns and fellows. They appreciated the quality and accessibility of their host supervisors, their involvement in a range of activities within the organization, the chance to learn from exposure to the staff as well as the Board, and the flexibility on the part of the host management to revise assignment goals and activities as circumstances warranted. The achievements of interns and fellows, within the limited time available, were quite remarkable and covered a wide spectrum of issues from policy capacity of voluntary organizations and federal departments in Newfoundland and Labrador to gaps in work-life policies and employment standards in British Columbia (BC), diversity challenges in the arts community, liability issues and their impact on the sustainability of voluntary organizations and adequacy of income provisions for persons with disabilities in British Columbia. Interns and fellows added to their knowledge and skills in policy development, analysis, research and consultation and enhanced their appreciation of the role both sectors can play in collaborating on important socioeconomic public policy issues, in the larger context of the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*, the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* and the VSI.

Both home departments and host organizations benefited from the 2003–04 PIAF experience: some important research gaps were addressed; intra- or cross-sectoral initiatives were pursued; networks were expanded; resource material was produced; and light was shed on collaborative efforts needed to follow up on work initiated during the PIAF placements, to mention a few examples. Further progress on this work will depend on such factors as the extent and success of subsequent knowledge transfer efforts, collective actions to address gaps and issues identified and the capacity of both federal departments and voluntary sector organizations to engage

in dialogue and collaboration with respect to public policy development and implementation.

The final reports prepared by interns and fellows collectively offer valuable insights into the workings of the PIAF program itself and help convey a sense of supportive program components that contributed to a multi-dimensional learning experience, including the orientation session, opportunities to network with other PIAF participants through monthly teleconferences and other exchanges and the provision of research assistants when requested. Based on experiences in recruiting PIAF interns and fellows and matching them with host organizations, this summary report suggests ways in which future PIAF recruitment exercises can be targeted so as to optimize outcomes.

In their reports, interns and fellows made a number of observations concerning inter-sectoral collaboration, which are captured in this summary report. Some of their points address the larger context, including issues related to the sustainability and the regulatory environment (e.g., rules regarding charitable status), the future of the VSI (due to sunset in March 2005), the importance of federal departments in the social and economic life of individuals, especially in certain provinces, and the need for both sectors to become more representative of the changing Canadian demographics in their governance structures and in the composition of their workforce (and membership in the case of the voluntary sector). Other observations speak to the need to promote awareness of the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*, the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* and the VSI, take institutional and systemic measures to strategically manage the relationship between sectors, demonstrate commitment at the highest levels and implement accountability measures to monitor progress and take corrective action as indicated.

In conclusion, the summary report notes that future federal funding for subsequent PIAF exercises, the sustainability of voluntary sector organizations, renewal of the VSI and priority attention focused on inter-sectoral collaboration will go a long way toward the development and implementation of public policies that make an important difference in the lives of individuals and communities across Canada.



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## Background

Among the Joint Tables established by the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI)<sup>1</sup>, the Capacity Joint Table (CJT) sought to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges facing the voluntary sector and to develop ways of strengthening its ability to meet the demands placed on it by Canadian society. Its work focused on three areas: human resources; research and information sharing; and policy capacity<sup>2</sup>. This is a report on the second year of a program initiated by the Capacity Joint Table under the rubric of policy, namely the Policy Internships and Fellowships (PIAF) Program.

In June 2001, the Capacity Joint Table held a PIAF Roundtable Consultation to help lay the groundwork for the establishment of an exchange program, initially on a pilot basis. Roundtable participants agreed that the pilot program should:

- Be based on mutually sustainable models
- Have a positive and visible impact on both decision makers and stakeholders
- Focus on inclusivity and diversity in their broadest sense
- Encourage innovation
- Foster mutual respect for the goals, culture and strengths of the participating sectors
- Ensure the transfer, across sectors, of knowledge generated through the pilot program

Roundtable participants also identified four key areas of emphasis for the PIAF program:

- Impact on policy development
- Multi-sectoral policy development, from consultation to collaborative change
- Measurement of effectiveness of policy outcomes and impacts
- Strengthening knowledge transfer specific to policy development<sup>3</sup>

Following the Roundtable, a committee of representatives from the federal government and the voluntary sector designed the PIAF pilot program and presided over a process that culminated in the selection of the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development (CVSRD) as the managing organization.<sup>4</sup> CVSRD is a joint initiative of Carleton University and the University of Ottawa.<sup>5</sup> The University of Victoria's Centre for Public Sector Studies (CPSS) was identified as a partner.

In 2002, PIAF was launched as a VSI program, with \$1.1 million in funding provided by Health Canada and Human Resources Development Canada-HRDC<sup>6</sup> (initial funding for a one-year pilot). PIAF's objectives were to: develop policy knowledge, experience and skills in both the voluntary sector and the federal government; and enable the voluntary sector to become a more viable partner in the development of public policy.

In 2002–2003 three public servants and six practitioners from the voluntary sector successfully undertook placements and prepared reports in which they offered insights into their experience and their perspectives on the two sectors as partners in public policy development. A summary report on the PIAF pilot program, *Policy Internships and Fellowships—Bridging the Policy Dialogue Between Voluntary Organizations and the Federal Government*, was published in June 2003.

The summary report, which provides an overview of the first year of the program, notes that PIAF participation proved to be a rewarding and enriching experience for the first cadre of interns and fellows, with impacts that far exceeded the stated objectives of the program in many cases. They gained a greater appreciation of the public policy process and deepened their understanding of the value of the voluntary sector in the public policy domain. Their networks were significantly enhanced, both in their own and in their host sector. They also increased their knowledge and skills in the area of knowledge transfer, particularly as it relates to policy development.

<sup>1</sup> The Voluntary Sector Initiative is jointly led and managed by the federal government (responsibility of the Minister of Social Development since December 2003) and the voluntary sector (led by the Voluntary Sector Forum). The current mandate of the VSI is due to expire in 2005. Website reference: [www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/about/management.cfm](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/about/management.cfm)

<sup>2</sup> The mandate of the Capacity Joint Table ended in October 2002 and a smaller Advisory Committee was established in order to provide ongoing coordination and leadership to the CJT work until the end of the current VSI mandate in 2005. Website reference: <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/>

<sup>3</sup> *Report on the PIAF Roundtable Consultation*, Capacity Joint Table, Voluntary Sector Initiative. Website reference: <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/policy/piaf.cfm>

<sup>4</sup> Website reference: <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/policy/piaf.cfm>

<sup>5</sup> Website reference: <http://www.cvsrd.org>

<sup>6</sup> On December 12, 2003, the Prime Minister announced the splitting of HRDC into two departments: Social Development and Human Resources and Skills Development. Website reference: [www1.pm.gc.ca/eng/news.asp?id=2](http://www1.pm.gc.ca/eng/news.asp?id=2)

Participants achieved these gains (in part) by attending various conferences and symposia, assessing the context for their PIAF work (and in some cases undertaking a literature review), developing workshops and documenting their participation in their final report.

Further information on the 2002–2003 PIAF exercise, including the summary report, is available at the following websites:

- [www.cvsrd.org/eng/piaf/index.html](http://www.cvsrd.org/eng/piaf/index.html)  
This website also provides access to the nine individual PIAF reports.
- <http://publicadmin.uvic.ca/cps/vsi/index.htm>; and
- <http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/policy/piaf.cfm>

## Recruitment and Selection

With funding from HRDC, the 2003–2004 recruitment initiative, directed by CVSRD, invited applications from

a variety of work environments across Canada, for either: (a) *internships*, i.e., integrated operational placements, with a focus on public policy development where the intern is incorporated into an existing work team and assigned regular work tasks; or (b) *fellowships*, i.e., stand-alone policy research projects in specific policy areas

that are anchored to work teams but not part of the regular workflow. Application forms and details were posted on the CVSRD website and were also accessible through links to the websites of CPSS, the Voluntary Sector Secretariat of the VSI and Charity Village (see below).

CVSRD asked 14 local, provincial and territorial voluntary sector coalitions comprising the Canadian Federation of Voluntary Sector Networks to send a notice to their membership. In addition, a paid advertisement was placed on the Charity Village website and letters and notices were sent out to other voluntary sector contacts.

E-mails targeting key networks and contacts in the federal government, followed up as appropriate by

telephone calls, helped bring the recruitment campaign to the attention of public servants across Canada. Messages were sent to intermediaries who could help “spread the word” to their networks/stakeholders/clients, such as the Human Resources Council, heads of Human Resources, members of Federal Councils, the Policy Research Secretariat and policy-research contacts in selected departments, the Public Involvement Network, the network of Champions for the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*,<sup>7</sup> Interchange Canada coordinators, public service unions and others.

This intensive recruitment effort generated considerable interest among leaders and practitioners in the public and voluntary sector, who saw a real opportunity to build cross-sectoral understanding. CVSRD received and responded to approximately 170 enquiries during the recruitment campaign.

Completed applications were screened for eligibility based on the following criteria:

- Have at least five years of experience
- Hold a Bachelor’s degree or have relevant work experience
- Are considered leaders in their field
- Can demonstrate how their participation would enhance public policy capacity in their respective sector

Eligible applications were sent to the Selection Committee, which consisted of the Senior Scholar and the Managing Director of CVSRD, the Senior Fellow at CPSS, a representative from Health Canada and a former PIAF (2002–03 pilot program) intern. In addition to geographic diversity and range of issues, the Selection Committee took into consideration the quality of the applications, as indicated by clarity and completeness, background and experience, definition of project and its alignment with program goals, and capacity to transfer knowledge as reflected in involvement with networks and coalitions.

This intake process resulted in the selection of five interns/fellows from the federal government: three from HRDC, one from Canadian Heritage, and one from Health Canada. The five host organizations were

<sup>7</sup> Website reference: [www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/accord.cfm/](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/accord.cfm/)

(respectively): Community Services Council of Newfoundland and Labrador (St. John's), Social Planning and Research Council of BC (Vancouver), Voluntary Sector Forum (Ottawa), Canadian Conference of the Arts (Ottawa), and the BC Council for Families (Vancouver). The interns and fellows who participated in the 2003-2004 PIAF exercise brought to their placements a wealth of experience in a number of public policy areas including population and public health, social policy development and implementation, arts policy and voluntary sector liaison.

The fact that all placements resulting from the 2003 recruitment exercise were from the federal government to the voluntary sector, in contrast to the mix of three federal government and six voluntary sector participants in the 2002-03 PIAF pilot program, can be explained in relation to funding. In 2002-03, the funding covered salaries of interns and fellows as well as other costs, but in 2003-04, a reduced level of funding precluded the underwriting of salaries and constrained expenditures related to training, travel and hiring of research assistants. CVSRD encouraged the possibility of prospective candidates from the voluntary sector finding assignments to replace public servants on unpaid leave (which would have allowed departments to participate as hosts without incurring any additional salary costs, and allowed home voluntary sector organizations to hire a temporary replacement), but unfortunately no such assignments materialized.

## Orientation and Training

Given that all interns and fellows were from the public sector, efforts were made to ensure that host voluntary organizations were included in, and benefited from, the formal and informal learning opportunities that were an integral part of the PIAF program experience.

In October 2003, interns and fellows attended sessions on the new financial environment of non-profit and voluntary organizations as part of the Fourth Annual National Forum of the Public Policy and Third Sector Initiative hosted by the School of Policy Studies, Queen's University. During their stay in Kingston, they also participated in an orientation session (over two half days and two evenings), along with a representative from their respective home department and host organization.

During the orientation, participants were presented with: an overview of the PIAF program; an introduction to the public policy process, the voluntary sector and the VSI; highlights of the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* and the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*<sup>8</sup>; and information related to community mapping/cultural diversity.

In February 2004, interns and fellows and some voluntary sector hosts (and one government manager) attended the five-day PIAF Institute at Dunsmuir Lodge, Victoria organized by CPSS. Topics included the policy-making process, funding and contract management, ethics in the public and voluntary sectors and performance management. This learning experience helped participants develop a greater mutual understanding between the two sectors.

## Internships and Fellowships

Placements were arranged under the auspices of the Interchange Canada Program of the Public Service Commission of Canada. Under the terms of this program, participants were sponsored by their home department, continued to be employed (and paid) by that department and were to return there after the assignment. Placements generally began in the fall of 2003 and ran to the end of March 2004; several were extended to April or May 2004. There was one exception: the duration of Roberta Bustard's assignment, initially planned to be eight months starting at the end of August 2003, was extended by another four months (until the end of August 2004).

Throughout the 2003-04 PIAF assignment period, CVSRD provided program support by arranging monthly teleconference learning exchanges, recruiting student research assistants (as needed) from a variety of disciplines to work with the interns and fellows and, upon request, facilitating the identification of a mentor for the intern or fellow. In view of funding restrictions, each participant was allocated a budget envelope which covered travelling and related expenses and/or a research assistant (in assignments requiring considerable travel, the hiring of a research assistant was precluded).

<sup>8</sup> Website reference: [www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/accord.cfm](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/relationship/accord.cfm)

Interns and fellows prepared final reports on their placement. They will be sharing their learning (the highlights of which are presented in the next section of this report) with colleagues in the public and voluntary sector and in the academic community, at the PIAF Showcase, to be presented during the third national symposium of the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Community of Inquiry, entitled *Facing Current Realities: New Knowledge in the Canadian Voluntary Sector*, to be held at Ryerson University on July 9–10, 2004.<sup>9</sup> It is anticipated that the knowledge transfer process will continue once participants return to their home departments, through internal dissemination mechanisms, through their involvement in networks and associations, and through ongoing cross-sectoral dialogue.

CVSRD is currently seeking funding for the next PIAF exercise.

<sup>9</sup> Website reference: [www.nvsn.org](http://www.nvsn.org)

## REFLECTIONS ON INTERNSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

### Overview of Internships and Fellowships

As indicated above, there were five PIAF interns and fellows in 2003–04, all from the federal government: three from HRDC, one from Health Canada and one from Canadian Heritage. Three participants were employees of regional offices or operations (two in a BC/Yukon regional office and one in a local Human Resource Centre that reported to the Newfoundland and Labrador regional office). Two employees were based in the Ottawa-Gatineau area, working at departmental headquarters (Canadian Heritage and HRDC).

The work of the interns and fellows in the respective host voluntary organizations covered a range of issues, including liability insurance and risk management, work-life policies and standards, policy capacity of federal governments and voluntary organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, cultural diversity considerations in addressing arts policy issues and income security for persons with disabilities, among others.

The federal public service was affected by a change in political leadership, which involved some government restructuring and a major Cabinet shuffle (as announced in December 2003). Three of the five PIAF participants were employed by HRDC at the time of their placement and the home department of the other two experienced a change of Minister. This climate of change may have made it more difficult for PIAF participants to reflect on how their assignment in the voluntary sector would impact their future work.

Ministerial responsibility for the voluntary sector shifted from the Minister of Canadian Heritage to the Minister of Social Development. Although the 2004 Speech from the Throne reaffirmed the government's commitment to the voluntary sector, the VSI is due to expire in March 2005 as will the mandate of the Voluntary Sector Forum, and no announcements have been made about any future support or developments with respect to this ground-breaking, wide-ranging initiative.

The most recent (March 23, 2004) federal Budget<sup>10</sup> contained an additional \$6 million for the voluntary sector but further details have not yet been announced. The Budget also contained good news for

the voluntary sector in the sense of more effective tax rules for registered charities.

Participants were asked to prepare a final report on their PIAF experience, including details on their own background and interests, their home department and host organization, the policy/environmental context, their placement and achievements. In addition, they were invited to reflect upon voluntary and public sector comparisons as well as offer their insights concerning the two sectors as partners in public policy. Collectively, their reports contain a wealth of information on public policy issues, capacity, development, research and analysis.

Highlights of individual PIAF experiences are presented below; more information is available in the reports of interns and fellows, which are being posted on CVSRD's website ([www.cvsrd.org](http://www.cvsrd.org)).

### Individual Experiences

**ROBERTA BUSTARD** was the Manager of the Capacity Joint Table Secretariat in the former HRDC at the time of her PIAF placement. In that capacity she had been in regular contact with staff of the Voluntary Sector Forum (and its earlier incarnation, the VSI Secretariat). Aware of Roberta's ongoing interest in the VSI and in gaining a greater understanding of the operational realities of voluntary sector organizations, Forum staff asked if she would consider a PIAF fellowship as a way of focusing on a key issue of vital importance, namely liability and risk management. As she was in the process of finishing her Masters of Public Administration, was looking for a new policy challenge, and was interested in gaining work experience in the voluntary sector, Roberta was receptive to this overture.

**“...the purpose of Roberta's fellowship was to research the nature and scope of the issue of liability...”**

The Voluntary Sector Forum is a transitional body which evolved from the voluntary sector management structure started under the VSI, and consists of 20 members from across the sector that reflect the knowledge, diversity, experience and common interests of the sector. The Forum was launched in October 2002 with a mission to

<sup>10</sup> Website reference: [www.fin.gc.ca/budget04/bp/bpc4de.htm#voluntary](http://www.fin.gc.ca/budget04/bp/bpc4de.htm#voluntary)

create an environment where voluntary sector organizations across Canada become stronger, work together, engage effectively with citizens, governments and the private sector, and are recognized and valued for their contribution to society.

Flowing from part of the Forum's mandate, namely to coordinate a sector response on national issues, the purpose of Roberta's fellowship was to research the nature and scope of the issue of liability (of organizations as well as their directors, officers, staff and volunteers) in an era when the viability of the voluntary sector is being challenged by skyrocketing insurance premiums, an increasing inability to obtain coverage, an increasingly litigious and risk averse environment and growing demands for elaborate risk management programs. The goal of Roberta's fellowship was to develop a broad understanding of how liability is affecting the voluntary sector in Canada and to formulate policy recommendations for responding to the issue.

Roberta's research involved a literature review in Canada and abroad, seven half-day regional consultation sessions across the country involving a cross-section of voluntary organizations and an on-line survey which participants (in the consultations) were asked to complete to help define the scope of the problem. The documentation of this work will address a

major research gap at the national level in Canada. While the full analysis of the findings is not yet available, some common concerns surfaced during the consultations: premium increases of up to 300% with no corresponding increase in claims; a lack of understanding by insurers of the services provided by the voluntary sector; and a lack of

recognition by funders of the increased administrative load (and expertise) associated with risk management and negotiation of coverage.

Building on the unexpected development of mobilization of session participants in two regions, and using the results of the research gathered in the first phase of the fellowship, the next steps are expected to include: the creation of a group of experts with membership from

the voluntary sector, insurance industry, legal profession and governments to provide direction and advice; establishment of links with other sectors with similar insurance concerns (e.g., small business); development of policy options; and researching of potential solutions. Achieving the Forum's vision of an environment in which the voluntary sector's programs and services are no longer restricted or determined by insurance considerations involves a multi-year and multi-dimensional process. Roberta's contribution of research, development and building bridges represents an important step in this progression.

Roberta will return to her home department, Social Development, with a greater understanding of the challenges, particularly those of a financial nature, faced by voluntary organizations.

**CHRISTINE DOCKMAN** has worked for the past 15 years as a Program Consultant in the area of health promotion; her home office is in the Population and Public Health Branch (PPHB) of Health Canada, BC/Yukon Region. The Department is committed to improving the well-being of Canadians through health promotion and illness prevention. As part of its "Promotion of Population Health" business line, it provides funding, through PPHB programs, to community-based non-profit organizations for the purpose of increasing the capacity of individuals and communities to maintain and improve their health. The PPHB BC team provides funding to increase community capacity and education in relation to the use of a population health approach that addresses the determinants of health, and seeks to reduce inequities in health status for at-risk populations.

Christine's interest in workplace health developed from her background as a health care professional in management and teaching, including her time as Director of Nursing in the Arctic. In 2001, she received a certificate from Centennial College for completing Health Canada's Workplace Health System Training Course, and in 2002, completed a *Corporate Workplace Health Environmental Scan* for BC/Yukon Regional Managers. In addition, in her capacity as Program Consultant, she supported and worked with two unique, multi-sectoral projects, Family Caregiving and the Workplace and Collaboration on Work-Life. The BC

**“Roberta will return to her home department, Social Development, with a greater understanding of the challenges...faced by voluntary organizations.”**

Council for Families (the Council) had advised the first project and sponsored the second. Christine's background, combined with her interest in policy development, led to an interest in a PIAF placement at the Council, which was reciprocated by its Executive Director.

The mission of the Council is to provide leadership for the healthy development of families. Throughout its 27 year history, the Council has consistently advocated that prevention, promotion and early support must become a valued and essential part of the continuum of supports and services to children, youth and families. The Council carries out its mandate through training, program coordination and provision of resources to support healthy family development, advocacy, research and policy development, public education, promotional activities, and collaboration at local, provincial, national and international levels.

For over ten years, the work of the BC Council for Families has included a strong focus on work/family/life issues. Its various publications (brochures on "family friendly" workplaces, bibliographies and a booklet, *Work and Family: Finding the Balance*<sup>11</sup>) have had extensive distribution across Canada. The Council continues to support research, dialogue and public education on these issues. It sponsored a series of workshops for various sectors and conducted research on BC employers and their workplace policies. As well, the organization was a member of the Advisory Committee that planned the BC Work-Life Summit held in November 2003, and one of its sponsors. The Summit brought together representatives of business, labour, academia, non-profit organizations, and municipal, provincial and federal governments.

Christine began her internship with a focus on work-life public policy and practice in BC workplaces, more specifically BC employment standards that support work-life issues. The plan was to build on the BC Work-Life Summit and on the Duxbury & Higgins report, *Where to Work in Canada? An Examination of Regional Differences in Work-Life Practices*, launched at this event. Their report indicated that BC did not compare favourably with the rest of Canada in terms of evidence of positive work-life practices. During the planning phase of Christine's internship, it became apparent that

a targeted survey of constituents would be useful in identifying possible gaps in BC work-life public policy, any improvements needed and actions to take to influence the recommended changes in public policy. At that point, her internship also became a fellowship. Her specific goals involved multi-sector collaboration on work-life public policy development in BC and strengthening knowledge transfer in this area.

Christine's research, discussed in the report, *A Study of BC Work-Life Public Policy (WLPP): Is it Time to Raise the Standards Bar?*, involved three major activities. With the help of a research

assistant, she conducted a survey on work-life public policy in BC, to identify gaps, policies needed, and strategies for raising standards; the respondents were primarily those who had registered for the above-noted summit, and other interested stakeholders. Among other improvements, respondents identified the need for work-life legislation to address greater access to leave to care for family members, as well as standards to support work-life balance that accommodate differences in the capacity of small businesses and organizations and of larger corporations.

Christine's second piece of work involved the facilitation of seven focus groups, with participants from non-profit organizations designed to: (a) provide information on topics such as work-life trends, indicators, practice and standards in BC and the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*; and (b) solicit opinion on the adequacy of current work-life public policies and legislation in BC, develop recommendations and explore the role and capacity of the non-profit sector in the development of work-life public policy.

According to the Duxbury/Higgins research noted above, Quebec was rated the best in work-life practice in Canada; therefore, the third part of the research was a comparative analysis of BC employment standards with Quebec's employment legislation supportive of work-life issues.

**“Christine’s interest in workplace health developed from her background as a health care professional...”**

<sup>11</sup> Website reference: [www.bccf.bc.ca/programs/collab\\_other.html](http://www.bccf.bc.ca/programs/collab_other.html)

The results of the WLPP study (which will be documented in a full report, *WLPP: Vision to Reality Initiative*) indicated that current work-life standards in BC do not meet the needs of workers and should be raised, not only to improve family and job satisfaction, but also to enhance community cohesiveness. It is possible that raising the standards will help to increase the province's socioeconomic competitiveness as the best place in Canada to work, live and raise a family. The study also clearly identified a role for the non-profit sector in work-life public policy development, but specified that in order for voluntary organizations to participate, the sustainability dilemmas challenging capacity issues must be redressed.

Among her other responsibilities aimed at advancing and promoting work-life policies and practices, Christine: (a) reviewed the Council's personnel policies in terms of work-life issues and documented her observations in *BCCF: Modelling Work-Life Policy and Practice in a Non-Profit Organization*;

(b) supported and is completing the development of a *Vital Signs Assessment of BC Work-Life Public Policy Chart*, which could be useful in dialogue with potential influencers and regulators; (c) participated in post-summit multi-sector action groups and is working with others on developing a social marketing campaign; and (d) is preparing a discussion paper (that outlines a case for raising the standards bar) to MLAs and MPs, provincial ministries relevant to work-life issues, national and provincial non-profit organizations, labour and possibly the media.

Christine plans to bridge her experience to her home department by: making a joint presentation on the WLPP Initiative, with the Council's Executive Director, to the PPHB staff; adding, to the Resource Centres WLPP resources and tools developed; seeking branch support to facilitate more public policy development work related to issues for at-risk populations through existing community funding programs; and encouraging the branch to become an active partner in order to increase the effectiveness of the VSI in BC.

**MARIE KATIA FRANÇOIS** has three years of experience at Canadian Heritage, initially as a Project Officer and more recently as a Program Officer in the Arts Policy Branch of Canadian Heritage. The Branch supports the department's mandate of working toward creating a cohesive and creative Canada through established national policies and programs that train, develop and sustain the professional non-profit arts sector and promote Canadians' access to, and participation in, diverse cultural activities in their communities. Among other responsibilities, the Branch manages the following programs: Arts Presentation Canada, Canadian Arts and Heritage Sustainability Program, National Arts Training Contribution Program, Cultural Spaces Canada and Cultural Capital Canada.

In her previous experience as a volunteer, a committee member and a chairperson with college, university and community advocacy groups, and in her more recent capacity as co-chair of the Committee for Equal Access and Participation of Canadian Heritage and Parks Canada, Marie Katia (known as Katia) developed a strong interest in policy making and a desire to learn more about this multi-layered process. A PIAF placement represented an opportunity to pursue this interest in the context of career development. Aware that the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) was receptive to the possibility of hosting an intern through a PIAF placement, Katia initiated contact and was successful in establishing common ground with the CCA.

The CCA is one of the oldest and largest arts advocacy groups in Canada. A non-profit organization and registered charity, it was founded in 1945 by 16 national cultural organizations. Over the years, the CCA has become a national forum for the arts and cultural community in Canada, dedicated to the growth and vitality of the arts and cultural industries. Within its vision of a creative, dynamic and civil society to which artists can contribute freely and fully, the CCA serves as a catalyst and a leader in the field. The organization protects the professional interests of the arts community through such activities as lobbying governments, monitoring political and legislative developments and promoting greater public awareness of the arts. Freedom of expression, copyright, taxation, funding, censorship, status of the artist, new technologies and global markets are among the CCA's priority issues. In 2000, the CCA

**“...the work of the BC Council for Families has included a strong focus on work/family/life issues.”**



founded the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD), a non-governmental organization (NGO) with a leadership formed of arts activists from 14 countries and a wide global membership. The INCD lobbies for an international treaty to provide nations with a legal framework for the protection of artistic expression and diverse cultures and languages, which are under intense pressure caused by the globalized economy.

Katia's internship was designed to involve her in several aspects of the CCA's policy work, with a concentration on cultural diversity, in accordance with her interests. Her objectives were to follow and assess policy developments on a number of fronts, including issues with financial implications for artists and arts organizations, progress achieved by the INCD and the results and outputs emanating from the Canadian Heritage Minister's Conference on Cultural Diversity. Katia prepared, for the CCA's Board of Governors, an analysis of the recommendations and a strategic plan for action arising from this Conference on Cultural Diversity. In her analysis, Katia identified gaps such as a lack of policy alternatives for achieving financial stability of diverse groups and the need to understand links between diversity and the sustainability of the cultural sector as a whole. This analysis stimulated a brainstorming session within the CCA, which culminated in a mini-research project aimed in part at assessing the financial status of arts organizations in relation to criteria for achieving charitable status under the *Income Tax Act*.

This research project, which involved interviews with 54 arts organizations, explored the scope and financial status of these organizations, their awareness of the National Arts Service Designation and their motivation for seeking, and success in obtaining, charitable status. While the limited time available (two weeks) precluded a thorough examination of the challenges and issues encountered by these arts organizations in meeting the basic criteria for obtaining charitable status, indications were that a lack of resources, difficulties in gathering annual audited financial statements and limited access to legal expertise were among the contributing factors.

With respect to the INCD file, Katia was the designated Canadian coordinator for a regional meeting in India, aimed at introducing this international network to a

potential Indian membership and exploring ways to study how sustainable development can co-exist with diverse cultural traditions. In December 2003, Katia attended the Mumbai meeting with the CCA's national Director and Board member, Judith Marcuse.

On her return to her home department, Katia was assigned to work on a new program aimed at assisting Canadian festivals, artistic series and seasonal programming. Through her PIAF experience, she gained a greater appreciation of the circumstances and needs of diverse arts groups across Canada, developed her policy-related skills (such as issue identification and analysis, assessment of possible solutions, and processes of consultation, implementation and evaluation) and expanded her knowledge of networks, both national and international, across the arts community. Her PIAF experience has given her a broader perspective on the arts and culture sub-sector as well as on the voluntary sector generally, which will inform both her future professional work and her voluntary activities in non-profit NGOs.

**“Through her PIAF experience, she gained a greater appreciation of the circumstances and needs of diverse arts groups across Canada...”**

**SUSAN HOLLICK-KENYON** was a Social Policy Consultant in the Community Initiatives and Policy Directorate, BC/Yukon Region, HRDC (now HRSD) prior to her internship with the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC). PIAF was viewed within her Social Policy Unit as providing a major learning opportunity for government and an excellent career development prospect for staff; in fact, one of Susan's colleagues, Janice Nelson, had participated as an intern in the 2002–03 PIAF pilot program. Given the similarity of the work and the complementarity of the roles of the Social Policy Unit and SPARC BC's Research and Program Department, a PIAF placement was considered a very suitable match by all parties concerned. The match was enhanced by Susan's public service experience in such areas as intergovernmental relations, social policy and social change-focused community development, homelessness research, labour market negotiations and the VSI. Her previous NGO work experience in community legal information and her background in volunteerism were other assets Susan brought to her internship.

**“For Susan, the PIAF experience has proven invaluable in refining her understanding...of the importance of the voluntary and public sector relationship in policy development.”**

SPARC BC was founded in 1966 as a non-profit organization to provide a voluntary sector voice on social policy and planning issues in BC. Its mission is to work

with communities in building a just and healthy society for all. To achieve its mission, the Council conducts social policy research and education and promotes community development and community accessible environments. Its Research and Program Department, to which Susan was assigned as Researcher, conducts in-house research that promotes income security, with a focus on adequate social assistance, affordable housing and adequate distribution of income and services. Issues related to persons with disabilities (e.g., living with disabilities on income assistance) and community development, including community social planning, are also areas of focus.

Susan’s initial work objectives addressed coalition and network building, specifically with the Community Social Planning Network of BC (CSPN BC), and community development education. She provided support to the Steering Committee of CSPN BC, which was established in 2001. With Susan’s staff support, the Committee succeeded not only in establishing its first annual operating plan and a framework for future planning, but also in drawing up and signing a memorandum of understanding with SPARC BC clarifying the values and principles underlying the Network and the roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee and SPARC BC as its administrator.

Susan was also involved in the development of a training session on social planning for communities in Greater Vancouver. In the time available during her internship, Susan carried out the research needed to compile material for presentations on social planning, identified resource persons for facilitated sessions and developed a geographically and socially diverse invitation list (one of the objectives of the session was to foster the creation of new social planning interpersonal connections).

Susan’s initial objectives were broadened to include policy research. In this context, she joined a research team responsible for testing a method of comparing living costs unique to persons with disabilities against benefits available through BC’s income assistance provisions (Living with Disabilities on Income Assistance project). During her tenure, the team worked on the development of a reliable and defensible research plan that addressed, among other things, meaningful participation on the part of persons with disabilities, effective partnerships with other non-profit organizations and appropriate qualitative research methodologies.

For Susan, the PIAF experience has proven invaluable in refining her understanding and appreciation of the importance of the voluntary and public sector relationship in policy development. Her skills development—in such areas as research design, and negotiation leading to written agreement concerning roles and responsibilities of collaborating organizations—will serve her in good stead on her return to the Social Policy Unit, as will her understanding of issues facing persons with disabilities (esp. in relation to income security) and her knowledge of community social planning as it operates “on the ground”. Contacts developed or enhanced during her internship with SPARC BC will also enrich her work in her home department.

**LARRY PECKFORD** was the Service Delivery Manager of the Rocky Harbour Human Resource Centre, HRDC, Newfoundland and Labrador Region at the time of his placement as a Policy Fellow with the Community Services Council (CSC) of Newfoundland and Labrador. Larry has more than 20 years of experience as a service delivery manager in Human Resource Centres of Canada located in various parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. Human Resource Centres became part of Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) when HRDC was split into two departments. HRSD is responsible for providing all Canadians with the tools they need to thrive and prosper in the workplace and community. The Department supports human capital development and labour market development and is dedicated to establishing a culture of lifelong learning for Canadians. The Rocky Harbour Human Resource Centre of Canada provides telephone services in relation to employment and income security as well as programs and services in

the areas of career planning/counselling, financial benefits, youth employment and job searches, labour market information and social insurance number applications.

When, with the support of the Executive Head of HRDC in the province of Newfoundland, public servants were solicited for their interest in a PIAF placement, Larry saw the program as an opportunity to focus on policy development after years of frontline program delivery. With extensive experience as a volunteer at the community level, he was interested in exploring connections between public policy and the needs of communities. His interests and background were considered very compatible with the goals of the CSC, which had identified its desire to host a PIAF fellow in 2003–04.

The CSC is an independent voluntary organization dedicated to promoting the social and economic well-being of the province. For more than 25 years it has been a leading social planning and research organization in Newfoundland and Labrador and is well positioned to help shape public policy. It advances the interests of the voluntary sector by conducting leading-edge research, pioneering innovative programs and services and promoting collaboration and bridge building both within the sector and with governments at all levels. For example, the CSC published the first comprehensive directory of community services across the province and through enVision.ca provides a virtual resource centre for organizations across the province.

The goals of Larry's fellowship were to: examine how federal departments in the province contribute to departmental policy development; consider appropriate linkages with federal departments in order to enhance awareness of the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*; and strengthen regional capacity (federal departments and the voluntary sector) to engage in policy dialogue and development.

As a first step, to gain a sense of how a local community-based organization is working with federal departments to advance its goal of improving social and economic conditions in the region, Larry conducted a review of two initiatives undertaken by the Community Education Network (CEN) in southwestern Newfoundland: the operation of 14 Family Resource

Centres (funded by Health Canada to support the health, social and developmental needs of young children); and Understanding the Early Years (applied research on factors that affect child development and well-being, funded by HRDC). He found that, through partnering with a strong and grounded community organization (such as CEN), new and emerging federal government initiatives, which develop from policy interests, could be tested in the community and evolve into programs or community-based activities.

In the next phase of the fellowship, Larry assessed the policy capacity of selected federal government departments in the province; the CSC had requested this study, from a perspective, shared by both the voluntary and private sector in Newfoundland, that the federal government should have more capacity to make policy decisions based on information gathered and analyzed in the province. The Federal Council of Newfoundland and Labrador was also interested in examining the issue of federal policy capacity and was therefore supportive of the project. Among the factors that impact policy capacity, the study identified having regional status (with a regional director reporting to a senior official in Ottawa) as significant, in that it usually entails more resources for corporate functions (possibly including policy analysis and development work), more authority and capacity to make decisions on larger-scale issues, and a principal provincial focus. Such capacity enables a ready response to circumstances that are particular to the province and contributes to a potential to engage in meaningful dialogue with the voluntary sector concerning local/regional needs.

The third phase of the fellowship involved interviews with a mix of rural and urban voluntary, community-based organizations with a range of interests, including health, social services, recreation and the arts. The questions were designed to determine the depth and kind of relationship these organizations had with a federal department and what this meant in terms of their ability to achieve their objectives. It was found that federal or provincial funding was essential for their operation, and that they depend to a lesser or greater degree on federal or federal-provincial agreements for programming. These

**“...Larry saw the program as an opportunity to focus on policy development after years of frontline program delivery.”**

programs were primarily nationally designed and not necessarily influenced by regional circumstances, although departments did their best to be flexible and maintained a respectful relationship with the community. Most organizations interviewed were not aware of the *Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* or the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*, and many felt that their day-to-day pressures would limit the degree to which they could reflect on larger issues and contribute to policy discussion.

As a result of Larry's research, the voluntary sector in Newfoundland and Labrador, through the leadership of the CSC, will be more aware of local as opposed to national influences on policy development and opportunities for policy input. In addition, the research should prove useful in informing the policy efforts of the Federal Council and in stimulating dialogue between the two sectors in Newfoundland and Labrador.

### Benefits of the PIAF Experience: Interns and Fellows

All five PIAF participants had extensive experience as volunteers in non-profit organizations, and looked favourably upon the opportunity to broaden their exposure through a work assignment. Those with government experience in program delivery were interested in developing their skills, knowledge and contacts in relation to public policy development, research, analysis and input. The PIAF experience proved effective in providing this opportunity. Those with a background in program delivery also expanded their perspective on the relationship between policy making and program delivery, and all were able, through their experience, to “put a human face” on the impact of federal government policies and programs.

Examining the benefits of PIAF through a career or personal development lens, it is interesting to note that a placement enabled the pursuit of professional interests that had developed at some point during the participant’s career but were not necessarily given full rein in the exercise of his or her responsibilities in the home department.

Host organizations took care to address the interest, on the part of interns and fellows, to be involved in a variety of files and as a result develop an appreciation of the (scope of the) mandate and activities of the organization. Coming from a more hierarchical and structured environment, at least in the sense of a larger and more layered organization, interns and fellows enjoyed the breadth of their exposure. Part of their experience involved attending Board meetings, which gave them a different perspective on the nature of policy direction and implementation in another democratic context (in the federal government, policy direction also comes from elected officials, but is filtered to the working level through many more layers).

Although one PIAF participant was well versed in the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*, the VSI and the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue* prior to her assignment, the others capitalized on the chance to learn more about the “bigger picture” governing the relationship between the two sectors; certainly all developed a better understanding and appreciation of the voluntary sector

as a whole through a combination of their placement experience and their participation in the orientation session, in the National Forum of the Public Policy and Third Sector Initiative and in the PIAF Institute.

In some cases, participants also expanded on their knowledge of the federal government itself, e.g., how it obtains input from voluntary sector organizations and formulates policy, and the impact of policy capacity at the regional level. They also expanded their contacts with other federal departments in their region.

In the words of PIAF interns and fellows themselves:

“Although I am not as advanced in my research as I had anticipated, I believe I am developing a rich network of people and information on this issue that will lead to well-informed recommendations and policy options. I am grateful for the additional time to move further ahead on the project and hope that when my role is complete there will be a solid body of work and next steps upon which to move ahead.”

**ROBERTA BUSTARD**

“Much has been accomplished around the goal of multi-sector collaboration on work-life public policy development, but there is so much left to do to strengthen knowledge transfer, that I plan to continue as a volunteer in collaboration activities in the community... I truly thank CVRSD, Health Canada and BC Council for Families for supporting my involvement in this placement. It has been memorable and inspiring to work with my non-profit colleagues and the Centre’s staff as well as with PIAF alumni and partners.”

**CHRISTINE DOCKMAN**

“I was grateful as the youngest person to be part of the wonderful team of PIAF interns and fellows. The CCA made a special effort to include me in its day-to-day activities. I was invited to attend regular staff meetings and periodic Board meetings and to participate in consultation teleconferences and meetings with stakeholders, as well as in policy-driven conferences.”

**KATIA FRANÇOIS**

“The PIAF program has proven invaluable in refining my understanding of...important aspects of the voluntary sector-public sector relationship in policy development. The contacts, skills and knowledge I developed while working at SPARC BC will enrich my work upon my return to the federal government. Most of all, the PIAF experience has reconfirmed my view of the importance of the voluntary sector to federal policy development.”

**SUSAN HOLLICK-KENYON**

“My placement with the Community Services Council was a great experience. I spent several weeks working at its office in St. John’s and working amongst its staff who carry out various activities and programs in support of the voluntary sector. They are an incredibly dedicated group of people who like many in the sector work hard without the benefits generally available to workers in the public and private sector.”

**LARRY PECKFORD**

## **Benefits of the PIAF Experience: Host and Home Organizations**

Host organizations, like federal departments, benefit from the exchange of knowledge and the development of mutual trust and understanding that occur during a PIAF assignment. Hosting an intern or fellow means exposing this individual (and indirectly through subsequent knowledge transfer, colleagues in his or her home department) to a range of organizational functions and issues. With this knowledge comes a better appreciation of the importance of the host organization to its clients and to the larger society, of its resourcing needs and of the value of its advocacy, communication and public education efforts.

Given the financial pressures facing voluntary organizations, it is not difficult to appreciate the net benefit (after taking into consideration resources utilized in on-site orientation and mentoring), to voluntary organizations, that accrues from having access to the services of a motivated, experienced and well-qualified public servant with compatible interests. A PIAF fellowship enabled organizations to conduct the research/analysis needed in order to shed light on

appropriate steps they could take in future to influence government policy development. During the 2003–04 PIAF exercise, important progress was made in filling certain knowledge gaps, e.g., in relation to liability and risk management issues, barriers to meeting charitable status requirements facing arts organizations, gaps in BC policies or standards to support work-life balance and policy capacity of both federal departments and voluntary organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Benefits to host organizations are expected to (continue to) be felt after PIAF assignments are completed and interns and fellows return to the public service, through mechanisms such as coalition building, multi-sector dialogue and action, and social marketing campaigns; research and development of policy options; and the production and dissemination of resources such as discussion papers, fact sheets, media releases and other briefing and communications material for various audiences.

While it is too early to assess the impact of a PIAF placement on home departments following the return of the participant on completion of the assignment, it appears that certain benefits accrued during the assignment period, e.g., concrete information on: how public policy can be disconnected from community needs; policy capacity among federal departments in one province; and views held by voluntary organizations concerning their relationship with government.

Further progress on PIAF work and its impacts will depend on such factors as the extent and success of subsequent knowledge transfer efforts, collective actions to address gaps and issues identified, and the capacity of both federal departments and voluntary sector organizations to engage in dialogue and collaboration with respect to public policy development and implementation.

## **PIAF Program Components**

This section addresses the role PIAF program components may have played in contributing to the above-noted benefits derived from the second year of the PIAF experience, as well as lessons that may be learned from this 2003–04 exercise.

First, it is worth noting that the success of the 2002–03 PIAF pilot program, as documented in the report, *Policy Internships and Fellowships—Bridging the Policy Dialogue Between Voluntary Organizations and the Federal Government*, which was widely distributed and accessible through CVSRD's and other websites, was a contributing factor in bringing forward potential candidates for the 2003–04 exercise. HRDC was involved as a host or home department in three of the nine PIAF assignments in the first year, and continued its participation in the second round by sponsoring three out of the five participants. The Social Policy Unit in the Community Initiatives and Policy Directorate, located in the BC/Yukon Region of HRDC (now HRSO), contributed a PIAF participant in each year of the program.

As previously suggested, funding for this year's PIAF program covered such costs as recruitment, orientation, training, travel and the hiring of research assistants, but not the salary of PIAF participants. This skewed the distribution of interns and fellows in the direction of federal government departments (which, unlike voluntary sector organizations, had a large enough budget and staff complement to allow them to spare one employee on full salary for up to a year). Funding restrictions (and delays) not only precluded the participation of voluntary organizations as home organizations, but also resulted in: a late start to the program; on average, shorter placements than in 2002–03; a deferral in the scheduling of the PIAF Institute until early February 2004—which effectively disrupted the flow of the PIAF work already (or well) in progress; and a reduction in financial support available for policy-research conferences, on-the-job travel and/or the services of a research assistant.

How matches between prospective participants and host organizations were achieved could help point the way to effective recruitment strategies in future PIAF exercises. As indicated above, the PIAF recruitment campaign was promoted to voluntary sector organizations as well as to federal departments across the country through intermediaries who could help spread the word, and this method generated a large number of inquiries. CVSRD staff were very helpful in suggesting possible matches. In two cases, individuals interested in a PIAF placement initiated contact with a voluntary organization whose interests and orientation they considered compatible; in

the remaining three cases, a particular voluntary organization had made known its interest in hosting a PIAF assignment by approaching CVSRD, a particular government department or a prospective candidate directly. Based on the 2003–04 experience, continuing with a similar promotional exercise advertising the next recruitment would seem appropriate.

This approach could be supplemented by targeted recruitment focused on previous home and host organizations that contributed to the program in the past, and on active supporters (in both the public and voluntary sectors) of the VSI and the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*. In addition, in the event that future funding remains at approximately the 2003–04 level, CVSRD might wish to consider a two-step recruitment process that facilitates matches: first, canvassing voluntary sector organizations as to their interest in hosting a federal government employee, followed by sending promotional material, to intermediaries in the federal government, that includes specific information on placement opportunities available in identified voluntary organizations.

Judging from the references, in the final reports of PIAF participants, to the *Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector*, the VSI and the *Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue*, it would appear that the orientation session held in October 2003 succeeded in impressing upon interns and fellows (especially those without much prior exposure) the importance of the larger context for dialogue and partnership between the voluntary sector and the federal government, in relation to public policy development. Similarly, the orientation proved effective in bringing participants up to date on financial pressures facing voluntary organizations, and their consequences. Both of these orientation subjects figured prominently in the analysis, and in some cases in the focus of the work, of interns and fellows as reflected in their final reports.

Among supportive placement conditions cited by participants were the following: the quality (and accessibility) of supervision and mentorship; the opportunity to participate in a range of host activities, including attending Board meetings, flexibility in adjusting the goals, duration and/or work activities of the placement as needed; and the interest, in

collaboration and partnership, on the part of other local or regional organizations. Among conditions that may have detracted from productivity, lack of access to administrative support (due to small staff complements) and to consultants (e.g., facilitators for focus groups) meant that interns and fellows had to carry out most of the tasks themselves, which slowed them down in terms of making progress directly related to policy or research.

PIAF program support—in the form of regular teleconferences that enabled participants to share and learn from their experiences, resource material, suggested contacts, assistance in finding a mentor upon request, provision of research assistants (as appropriate) and guidance in preparing final reports, among other things—also contributed to positive experiences and productive placements.

The PIAF requirement that interns and fellows prepare a report on their placement was helpful in crystallizing their thinking about such things as the larger environmental context, their reflections on their work accomplishments and experience generally and their insights into how the public and voluntary sectors can work together on public policy issues. In addition to documenting these personal reflections, the reports contain a wealth of information about the respective home and host organizations, particular socioeconomic policy issues, existing and (equally important) new research that helps define the scope of these issues and the capacity of government and voluntary sector organizations to address public policy issues. While some of the highlights of the individual reports are captured in this summary paper, they cannot do justice to the richness, breadth and depth of the information and insights contained in the full reports.

This summary document will be published, distributed and posted on CVSRD's website (which will have links to the CPSS website and possibly others). Similarly, individual PIAF reports will be posted on the CVSRD and CPSS websites. But this is only a start in terms of the knowledge transfer process. Interns and fellows will be presenting the highlights of their work at a PIAF showcase, which is being organized in conjunction with the aforementioned national symposium of the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Community of Inquiry to be held in July 2004 (which is being held immediately preceding

the biennial conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research). This opportunity to interact with staff of voluntary organizations, faculty and students of universities and colleges and (other) public servants from all three levels of government should help promote future dialogue on the policy issues and processes highlighted in the presentations.

It is anticipated that the knowledge transfer process will continue, to varying extents, once participants return to their home departments, through internal dissemination mechanisms, through their involvement in networks and associations, and through ongoing cross-sectoral interchange. However, circumstances such as the establishment/organization of the new departments of Social Development and Human Resources and Skills Development, the uncertain future of the VSI, financial pressures on governments at all levels, and a federal election in the near future may combine to impede or slow the process of knowledge transfer and dissemination as well as any public consultation and policy development that might have (otherwise) ensued as a result of the concerted efforts of PIAF participants, their host organizations and partners.



## Enhancing Inter-Sectoral Collaboration

In their final reports, participants in both the PIAF pilot program and the 2003–04 PIAF exercise were asked to reflect on the voluntary and public sector as partners in public policy. The report on the 2002–03 pilot program, *Policy Internships and Fellowships—Bridging the Policy Dialogue Between Voluntary Organizations and the Federal Government*, presented a wide-ranging compilation of the views of participants, which remain relevant to the circumstances described by the current cadre of PIAF participants and need not be repeated as such.

From the 2003–04 individual PIAF reports emerged a number of points worth emphasizing:

- Sustainability is perhaps the number one issue facing voluntary sector organizations. Unless this issue is addressed, the capacity of the voluntary sector to engage with government in public policy development, which is already eroding, will be seriously undermined. Liability concerns are linked to sustainability and similarly need to be targeted.
- A second major obstacle to voluntary sector participation in public policy development is the legislated (through the *Income Tax Act*) restriction on the advocacy activities of charitable organizations. These advocacy rules prevent the full participation of charities in public policy debates, thereby diminishing the community voice and the identification and analysis of pressing socioeconomic issues experienced “on the ground” and constraining the potential of charities as partners in policy development.
- In order to continue to have a framework for dialogue and collaboration that will enable full implementation of the Accord and the Codes on Policy Dialogue and Funding, the federal government should renew the VSI (its current mandate is scheduled to sunset in March 2005).
- Federal departments are continually challenged by government restructuring initiatives, mobility of public servants and other forms of institutional change, just as the voluntary sector has to cope with organizational consequences of lack of stable funding; in such circumstances, their capacity to engage in dialogue and collaborative partnerships is diminished.
- The federal government should have a greater capacity to make policy decisions that affect citizens in a given region/province based on information gathered and analyzed in that locale. Federal Councils have the potential to act as a point of contact for dialogue with the voluntary sector in a given region/province.
- Those who conduct consultations and/or policy research should, in their interactions with stakeholders, situate such exercises in the broader context of the VSI, the Accord and the Code; this applies to both sectors.
- Both sectors need to become more representative of the changing Canadian demographics in their governance structures and in the composition of their workforce (and membership in the case of the voluntary sector). Similarly, both should find ways to engage in dialogue on matters of concern to diverse groups, particularly those that are hard to reach or on the margins of society.
- Both institutional and systemic measures are needed to strategically manage the relationship between the two sectors and to truly implement the Accord and the Code.
- In order to develop and sustain a commitment, across government, to work openly and collaboratively with the voluntary sector, ongoing direction from the Prime Minister, Ministers and deputy heads is needed. In addition, accountability requirements should be elaborated, disseminated and implemented so that the political leadership will have the information it needs in order to oversee progress.

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**“...the second year of the PIAF program was successful in bringing benefits to all parties concerned—the interns/fellows, host organizations and home departments.”**

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## CONCLUSIONS

In its first year, the PIAF program showed considerable promise as an innovative approach to developing policy knowledge, experience and skills in both the voluntary sector and the federal government and to enabling the voluntary sector to become a more viable partner in the development of public policy. Despite PIAF funding limitations and financial barriers to the participation of voluntary sector employees as interns and fellows in 2003–04, the second year of the PIAF program was successful in bringing benefits to all parties concerned—the interns/fellows, host organizations and home departments.

Interns and fellows developed and/or expanded their knowledge, skills and contacts related to public policy, not only in the voluntary sector context, but also at the more general level, gaining insights into how policies and related processes can be improved through dialogue and interchange between sectors.

Closer links were forged between the two sectors in particular regions, a better understanding of the similarities and differences between the two sectors was developed and more light was shed on the actual and optimal relationship between the two sectors, with respect to policy analysis, input, development and implementation.

Continuing impact of the PIAF initiative will be enhanced in part through follow-up, on the part of host organizations, to the work initiated by PIAF interns and fellows; among other things, collaborative partnerships and cross-sector dialogue will help contribute to continuing progress.

PIAF influence on public policy will also be linked to knowledge transfer activities undertaken by PIAF participants on their return to their home departments and to the receptivity of those organizations to apply, to their policy and program endeavours, what has been learned from individual experiences.

Finally, future federal funding for subsequent PIAF exercises, the sustainability of voluntary sector organizations, renewal of the VSI and priority attention focused on inter-sectoral collaboration will go a long way toward the development and implementation of public policies that make an important difference in the lives of individuals and communities across Canada.

The Policy Internships and Fellowships (PIAF) Program is one of the initiatives funded by the Government of Canada through the Capacity Joint Table of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI).

The Capacity Joint Table, one of seven joint tables created to undertake the work of the VSI, undertook projects in key areas of capacity building for voluntary organizations.

- Research and Information Sharing
- Skills Development and Recruitment (human resources)
- Policy Capacity

These projects have resulted in a multitude of resources that are available to non-profit and voluntary organizations, governments, educational institutions, volunteers and voluntary sector researchers.

For more information about these projects, the joint tables and the VSI, please check the VSI website at [www.vsi-isbc.ca](http://www.vsi-isbc.ca).

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*Policy Internships and Fellowships Program*  
*Projet des Stages et bourses en élaboration de politiques*

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**Bridging the Policy Dialogue  
Between Voluntary  
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