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New council to strengthen relationship between government and nonprofit/voluntary sector

Edmonton... A council consisting of non profit/voluntary sector leaders and the Alberta government will develop a framework to guide and strengthen the relationship between the Government of Alberta and the province's non profit/voluntary sector.

The goal of the Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative is to encourage collaboration to ensure sustainability of the sector and help address current and future challenges including funding, human resources, insurance, and screening.

"Alberta's nonprofit/voluntary sector does a great deal to improve the quality of life for all Albertans," said Denis Ducharme, Minister of Community Development. "By working together we can address issues that reduce the ability of the sector to fulfill its vital role in communities across the province."

The members of the Alberta Nonprofit/Voluntary Sector Initiative Leaders Council are:

- o Karen Lynch, Executive Director of Volunteer Alberta;
- o Val Mayes, Executive Director of the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations;
- o Liz O'Neill, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters Society of Edmonton and Area;
- o Keith Seel, Director of the Institute for Nonprofit Studies at Mount Royal College;
- o Mario Siciliano, President and CEO of Volunteer Calgary;
- o Katherine van Kooy, President and CEO of the Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations; and
- o Martha Parker, former Executive Director of Volunteer Calgary and present community volunteer who will co-chair the council with Glen Werner from Alberta Community Development.

Key government ministries involved in the nonprofit/voluntary sector will also have representation on the Leaders Council. They include Community Development, Justice and Attorney General, Seniors and Community Supports, Children's Services, and Government Services. The framework is expected to be submitted to the Minister of Community Development in January 2007.

"This sector, with over 19,000 organizations employing 176,000 people in Alberta, has incredible impact on our communities," said Martha Parker, Co-Chair of the Leaders Council. "Through this initiative, the sector and the Alberta government will proactively work to build a long term collaborative relationship to strengthen the sector and improve the lives of all Albertans."

According to the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, over 1.2 million Albertans volunteer-each dedicating an average of 175 hours a year. The annual economic impact of Alberta's nonprofit/voluntary sector is estimated at \$9.6 billion.

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