



Alderman Joe Connelly Ward 6

“Volunteerism – The Power of One”

My office at City Hall is a good vantage point to feel the passion Calgarians have every day for their community. Some of you contact my office for assistance to unravel a problem and my staff and I welcome the opportunity to assist. However the vast majority of people are those with an idea, who genuinely care about their community and want to make a difference. Often these callers move their idea to the next level and get involved in some way – and become part of the solution. Most often this is with the support of their community association.

An interesting report recently crossed my desk – *The 2007 Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating* – released last summer by Statistics Canada. It is the 4th iteration since their first survey in 1997 and perhaps the most comprehensive assessment of giving, volunteering and participating ever undertaken in Canada. Of note are some interesting statistics that provide a portrait of activities that define the Canadian social fabric and allow us to better understand the factors that influence Canadians to contribute to their communities.

QUICK FACTS - CANADA

- Almost 12.5 million Canadians (46% of the population aged 15 and over) volunteered;
- Canadians volunteered 2.1 billion hours, the equivalent of 1.1million full-time jobs;
- Reasons for volunteering included making a contribution to community, using skills and experiences, and having been personally affected by the cause the organization supports. Other reasons included were to explore strengths, to network with or meet people, or because friends volunteered;
- Barriers that prevent Canadians from volunteering more included lack of time and unable to make a long term commitment to volunteering, not knowing how to become involved, and the financial costs associated with volunteering.

How does Calgary compare to the national averages? Based on the same report, Volunteer Calgary provides the following about volunteerism among Calgarians:

QUICK FACTS - CALGARY

- 50% of Calgarians volunteer with over 5,000 non-profit organizations;
- 58 million hours have been contributed by 421,000 volunteers;
- 94% of volunteers are driven by a desire to make a contribution to the community; 61% feel a connection to the organization that they volunteer with;
- Benefits Calgarians reported they acquire from volunteering: 68% said they acquired interpersonal skills; 45% acquired organizational skills; 38% acquired fundraising skills; 33% acquired increased general knowledge; 28% acquired technical or office skills; and 15% acquired some other skill.

The numbers ARE impressive and speak to the many of you who are involved in your Community Associations today. There's always room for improvement, always room for one more person to get involved and for that one more hand to lighten the load for those already involved. So, please get involved to ensure we build the types of communities our children will be proud of!

The full report can be found on line at www.givingandvolunteering.ca/reports/2007. Also visit Volunteer Calgary at www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this or any other civic matter at joe.connelly@calgary.ca, or 268-2430. Alternatively, you can contact 3-1-1. I look forward to your on-going feedback.