



## Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Provincial Policy to Support Employees Volunteering at Olympics A Start**

(Vancouver, February 18, 2008) – The Government of BC's plans to allow BC civil servants to be paid to volunteer at 2010 Olympics has received a lot of media and public attention since being announced along with the official launch of the volunteer recruitment campaign for the 25,000 volunteers needed for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

The plan would allow those civil servants who do get selected by the Vancouver Olympics Organizing Committee (VANOC) to volunteer to get extra vacation time to do so.

Much of the focus has been on whether such a policy, first implemented for the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, effectively constitutes the paying of volunteers.

The definition of volunteering is clear and does not include payment to individuals for volunteering their time and effort. Volunteer BC is strongly committed to that principle. 11.8 million Canadians volunteer (45% of the population 15 and older) and British Columbians lead the way, averaging 199 hours in a year.<sup>1</sup> All this energy and commitment is done without payment.

The announced government policy, however, relates more to employer policy on volunteering. Support from employers to volunteer is strong in Canada. Over half (57%) of volunteers with an employer reported they had received some form of non-monetary support from their employer to volunteer. 33% of employed volunteers have employers that allowed them to change or reduce their work schedule in order to volunteer.<sup>2</sup>

“We see the Government's policy as part of this trend,” said Justin Ho, President of Volunteer BC. “It definitely is a generous policy and much of the debate will be on that point. What it does do is provide an example for employers of choice to look to when contemplating their own employee volunteering programs.”

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<sup>1</sup> From the 2004 Canadian Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating

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Volunteer BC, along with our member volunteer centres across the province, has long been encouraging employers to provide opportunities and circumstances that allow for their employees to contribute back to their community through volunteering. The United Way Days of Caring campaign and Volunteer Canada's work on employer-supported volunteering are two such examples.

"We would like to see the Province extend this option beyond the Olympics," emphasized Ho, "to volunteering at any BC charities or non-profits, many of which struggle to find enough volunteers."

"Not all employers have the resources to provide a policy similar to what the Province is offering," added Ho, "and we are not saying that businesses should. We encourage employers all across BC to think creatively on how they can create an environment in their workplace where employees can contribute both at work and in the community."

### **About Volunteer BC**

Volunteer BC is the provincial association working to strengthen the roles and capacity of volunteers and the thousands of organizations that depend on them to do their essential work. Volunteer BC is membership-based, with community organizations and individuals from across the province as active members. Included in our membership are the more than 30 BC volunteer centres, who match volunteers to organizations and agencies in their communities who depend on volunteers as their human resources. Volunteer centres are key promoters and experts on volunteerism in their communities. Originating as the provincial association of volunteer centres over 25 years ago, Volunteer BC has always served as a collective voice on the trends, challenges and needs around volunteerism for the entire province.

### **For More Information**

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