

MEASURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Application of the
Genuine Progress Index
to Nova Scotia

MODULE ONE

THE ECONOMIC VALUE
of
CIVIC & VOLUNTARY WORK
in NOVA SCOTIA

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Civic & Voluntary Work in NS:

Summary of Major Results

In 1997 Nova Scotians contributed an estimated 134 million hours of their time to civic and voluntary work, helping those in need, caring for their environment and contributing to society and local communities. Their work was worth nearly \$2 billion a year to the economy, the equivalent of 81,000 jobs and nearly 10% of GDP, but was not reported or measured in any of our economic accounts. This contribution averages out to \$2,500 a year for every adult Nova Scotian and \$3,400 for every volunteer in the province. If this voluntary contribution were withdrawn, either our standard of living would decline dramatically, or the work would have to be replaced for pay by government and the private sector.

The generosity of Nova Scotian volunteers was not limited to time. They paid out \$128 million in non-reimbursed out-of-pocket expenses to perform their voluntary work. Nova Scotians contributed another \$100 million in donations to registered charities. Volunteer organizations also contributed to the formal economy by providing valuable skills training to workers in areas such as organization and management, communications, fundraising, office and technical skills, and specialized knowledge of direct use to paid jobs.

On average, every adult Nova Scotian devoted 3 hours and 23 minutes a week to civic and voluntary work, the highest rate in the country and well above the Canadian average of 2 hours and 40 minutes a week. Most volunteers are women. One-third of adults in the province work for non-profit volunteer organizations, and three-quarters volunteer informally, visiting the sick, caring for the elderly, shopping and cooking for the disabled, providing unpaid child care for working mothers, and performing a variety of other social and civic services.

Excluding the out-of-pocket expenses and monetary donations already included in the GDP, the aggregate asset value of voluntary work hours in Nova Scotia for 1997 is estimated at **\$1,754 million**. This is the figure included in the

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provincial **Genuine Progress Index** and represents the amount that would have to be paid in the government and private sectors to replace existing voluntary work in the province.