Strengthening of Civil Society Participation
Executive Summary

This Report on Civil Society and Participation in Canada is one part of a 34-month, hemispheric-wide analysis of how well national governments in the Americas are carrying out their democratization promises, made at the 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City.

From the perspective of Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) and from independent research, this report shows how well the Canadian government is doing with regards to:
  a) Strengthening civil society;
  b) Using information and communications technologies to receive, integrate and incorporate civil society's proposals and contributions;
  c) Incorporating CSOs in the political, economic and social development of their countries and communities;
The report will also look at the strength of:
  d) Education for the values of democracy, human rights and diversity;
  e) Autonomous networks of civil society; and
  f) CSO's ability to access to public information.

The findings of this national study demonstrate the following:
  o Steps are being taken to strengthen civil society: funding opportunities exist; freedom of association is generally respected; and most CSOs have relations with the government. Steps need to be taken on reforming the legal structures surrounding advocacy rules for charities and registering visible minority groups as charities.
  o Government uses information and communications technologies to receive and integrate CSOs' proposals, but they do not necessarily incorporate proposals into policy or programs.
  o CSOs do participate in Canada's political, economic and social policy development to varying degrees through a range of working relationships with the state.
  o Democracy and human rights education is a required part of elementary and secondary school curricula, and CSOs often contribute to the design of these programs.
  o Some Canadian CSOs oppose globalization, yet very few reject dialogue with government and international bodies. They express their criticisms through many outlets. However, public awareness of these criticisms is not high.
  o The majority of Canadian CSOs seek access to public information, and for the most part, this activity has become easier in the last few years.

COMMITMENTS UNDER THE QUEBEC CITY PLAN OF ACTION: STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL AND HEMISPHERIC PROCESSES

In the Quebec City Plan of Action the 34 governments of the Americas recognized the importance of civil society's participation in the consolidation and heartiness of democracy, and as a vital element of the success of development policies. Signatories further affirmed that men and women have the right to participate, in conditions of equality and equity in decision-making processes affecting their lives and well-being, and acknowledged that the diversity of opinions, experiences and technical knowledge found within civil society constitutes an important and valuable resource for governments and democratic institutions.

Accordingly, the Plan establishes commitments for the strengthening of civil society's participation in national and hemispheric and national processes. To accomplish these goals, the 34 countries committed to the following strategies:

- The creation of public and private financing mechanisms to help strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to publicize their work and its results, as well as to promote social responsibility.

- The elaboration of strategies, at the national level and through the OAS, other multilateral organizations and multilateral development banks, to help increase the participation of CSOs in the inter-American system and in the political, economic and social development of their countries and communities, promoting representativeness and facilitating the participation of all sectors of society. These strategies are also aimed at increasing governments' institutional capacity to receive, integrate and incorporate civil society's proposals and contributions, especially through the use of information and communications technologies.

- The promotion of the participation of all minority groups in the creation of a stronger civil society.

- The development of educational programs, in cooperation with the relevant civil society organizations, academic experts and other appropriate sources, to educate the public in the areas of democracy and human rights. The use of books and educational materials reflecting the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the Americas within the primary and secondary school systems will also be promoted.

The purpose of this report is to review to which extent these commitments have been implemented in Canada, and to what degree civil society organizations play an active and productive role in the planning, development and implementation of policies that affect our citizens. For the purposes of this report, we define civil society as organizations that operate on a not-for-profit basis which play a variety of roles, including providing services and support to the public; aggregating and representing the interests of specific groups; performing research and investigation; or providing social and community activity and assistance. These organizations seek to improve the population's quality of life through various means, based on diverse philosophies.

The findings of this report were based on the results of twenty Canadian civil society organization's responses to a twenty-eight question survey, as well as on information provided by secondary research sources. The civil society organizations included in the study include small, medium and large provincial not-for profit organization, federal not–for-profit organizations and charities. These organizations were placed in the set categories of a) networks of promotion and development organizations, b) promotion and development organizations not in networks, and c) charitable organizations. Also, they were organized by thematic foci: a) economic development or technical assistance, b) social issues (poverty, gender, etc.), c) citizenship and participation, d) environmental and sustainable development issues, and e) ethnic or multicultural questions. Some CSOs qualified for more than one category.

Section one reviews the legal parameters that exist in Canada to strengthen the civil society organizations, as well as the creation of administrative and political mechanisms to promote participation of citizens, considering actual citizen participation in political, economic and social development decisions. Additionally it will examine the ability of civil society groups to access the information and communication channels required to make timely and useful contributions.

Section two focuses on the promotion of a culture which values democracy, human rights and diversity, reviewing the legal guarantees that exist to protect these rights; and current education program and strategies that aim to educate Canadians about democratic principles and inclusive values. The last part will look at the existence of autonomous networks of civil society, and whether diversity and tolerance exist in practice.

SECTION I: GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY

This section reviews the existing government support for strengthening civil society in Canada. Specifically, the section will examine the current legal frameworks, as well as the practical strategies in place to promote CSOs participation in the political, economic and social development in practice. Finally, the report will review the avenues and mechanisms that facilitate CSOs' ability to access to public information —a key ingredient in effective participation.

1.1 Legal Frameworks

The right of free association, one of the pillars of an active and effective civil society, is generally respected in practice in Canada. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which

passed into law in 1982, codifies various civil liberties and protections in Canada. The right of free association is a fundamental freedom in the Charter.

Beyond the basic right of association, a legal framework defines and delineates the rights and duties of CSOs. There are two legal categories of CSOs in Canada: not-for-profit organizations and charities. Promotion and development organizations can be either type. Federally-registered not-for-profit organizations are regulated by Industry Canada and the Canadian Corporations Act. Provincially and territorially-registered non-profit organizations are regulated by provincial and territorial offices, such as the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services and New Brunswick Corporate Affairs, empowered by regional corporation or companies acts. Industry Canada's website details all the steps and fees to incorporate a not-for-profit organization. Charities are regulated by Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA). Likewise, the CCRA website contains information, procedures and policy guidance related to organizations with charitable status. Some large provincial charities are regulated by their own acts, such as the United Way of Winnipeg and the Vancouver Foundation.

All of the CSOs consulted for this study on civil society participation are registered as not-for-profit organizations or as charities. Both not-for-profit organizations and charities are recognized as public interest institutions. Their specific recognition of being a charity or not-for-profit is tied to their objectives and proposals.

Canadian civil society organizations identified two short-comings in the current legal framework. First of all, the regulations governing charities' ability to engage in advocacy are unclear as they are sourced in 1891 common law, section 149 of the Income Tax Act and CCRA's administration policy.[1] CCRA allows charities to devote 10 percent of their budgets to advocacy, but prohibit them from certain political activities. The types of permissible and prohibited political engagements are unclear. As a result, charities are hesitant to advocate the causes of their communities for fear of losing their status. They are frustrated that they can only provide band-aid solutions to problems when they identify what systemic changes are needed, but are silenced by the "advocacy chill." In September 2003, CCRA released guidelines for charities political activities.[2] One survey respondent said that these guidelines are not precise enough. The Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI)[3] refers to Britain and the United States' charity laws as examples of regulations that clearly state how charities can engage in advocacy.[4]

Secondly, many visible minority organizations have difficulty registering as charitable organizations because of the current legal structure. The VSI recognizes that some ethnic organizations have trouble meeting CCRA's strict requirements for charitable status.[5] In September 2003, CCRA released a policy statement, called "Registering Charities that Promote Racial Equality,"[6] which may make it easier for visible minority organizations to register for charitable status now that the guidelines are streamlined. At the present, insufficient empirical evidence exists on which to draw definitive conclusions.

An additional area for possible concern is the right of free association at anti-globalization protests. A few survey participants commented that this right was not upheld during recent public demonstrations; some well-known activists were detained before the protests, preventing them from participating. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and Amnesty International called for an investigation into police's actions toward protesters at the 2001 Summit of the Americas; meanwhile, independent observers, appointed by Quebec's minister of public

security to monitor police behavior, reported that police generally respected the right to demonstrate peacefully at the Quebec City Summit.[7]

Funding provisions

Beyond legal provisions that create and regulate organizations, there are also public financing instruments designed for CSOs. Different government departments at the federal and provincial levels provide a variety of grants to fund programs that are relevant to their departments. For example, Canadian Heritage funds CSOs' multiculturalism programs. Manitoba Hydro funds forest conservation programs of non-profit organizations.[8] The federal government provided $2.2 billion to CSOs in 1997-1998.[9] Federal funding of CSOs takes the forms of grants, contributions and fees for services. Many CSOs are not satisfied with the way funding is provided. Therefore, through the VSI, they are advocating a "strategic investment approach," which would extend the duration of funding agreements.[10]

Eighty-five percent of public funding to CSOs is contributed by provincial/territorial governments.[11] As well as individual departments' grants, provincial lotteries are a source of funding for registered CSOs. In 2001-2002, $27.3M in Saskatchewan Lotteries proceeds were allocated to more than 12,000 CSOs in that province.[12] Provincial governments in Ontario and Alberta distribute gaming profits through large public foundations.[13] Public funding provides over half of CSOs' annual revenue;[14] the remainder must be privately fundraised.

The ability of registered charities to give charitable contributions receipts encourages private sector financing of charities. In 2001, 5,521,800 tax-filers reported donations of $5.51 billion.[15] Some private businesses have grant programs for CSOs, such as the Labatt beer company that sponsors student employment at charities through its People in Action grants.[16] The private sector tends to give CSOs short-term or one-time funding. This pattern is problematic for CSOs as they require ongoing funding to run properly.[17]

However, number of problems exist with regards to public financing. CSOs must compete against other CSOs for government funding, which often results in the marginalization of smaller organizations. Significant time is allocated away from carrying out programs in order to apply for and report on funding. CSOs must construct their programs to fit financing programs' criteria. Finally, since the 1990s, CSOs have faced core-funding crunches due to governments' new emphasis on programs and project-oriented funding.[18]

Industry Canada is working with CSOs through the VSI to implement the *Strengthening Voluntary Sector Capacity through Technology* report recommendations, which may provide CSOs with information and communications technology training and media space.[19] Also, Canadian Heritage funds some community-based media. One best practice noted by a CSO is that the Manitoba government, unlike any other provincial government, provides long-term core funding to community economic development organizations.

1.2 Strategies to promote CSO participation in the political, economic and social development in practice

There are no laws or regulations that mandate or promote CSOs participation in political, economic and social development plans and programs in Canada. However, the federal government and the Voluntary Sector Initiative arrived at *An Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* in December 2001. Through the Accord, the federal government recognizes the need to have a dialogue with CSOs for better public policy-making and program delivery.[20] A precedent has been set at all levels of government to consult with citizens on new public policy, and there are a few government-CSOs initiatives specifically directed at increasing CSO input in the public policy process. A variety of such practices are described below.

National
1. Many federal departments have public consultations for the design and reform of policies. For example, in February 2002, Health Canada with the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations and the Manitoba Voluntary Sector Initiative held a roundtable in Brandon, MB so that health sector CSOs could give their input on health policy.[21]
2. The Department of Finance keeps the public aware of its many consultations through a "Consultations" link on the main page of its website.[22]
3. The Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector Initiative have a *Sectoral Involvement in Departmental Policy Development* initiative, whereby CSOs undertake projects that create opportunities for and to build capacities of CSOs in the public policy process. From 2000 to 2002, the federal government has committed from CDN$11 to $15 million per year to this program.[23]
4. Health Canada's Policy Internships and Fellowships (PIAF) Pilot Program has employee exchanges between CSOs and government for the purpose of policy-relevant research. Ten 10-month exchanges took place in 2002, and another fifteen exchanges are about to begin in fall 2003.[24]

Provincial and Territorial (Regional)
1. Public consultation processes are not set in law, but they are the norm throughout Canada at the provincial and territorial level for a multitude of policy areas. For example, in Newfoundland and Labrador there are public consultations on economic renewal, electricity, literacy and health care.[25]
2. Saskatchewan Lotteries is managed by a committee made up of government and CSOs representatives. [26]
3. Policy Link N.B. is a partnership network of government, academia, voluntary sector, business, and citizens that meaningfully brings more than 20 CSOs into the public policy process.[27]

Municipal (Local)
1. The City of Guelph, Ontario recently completed an 18-month participatory city planning initiative called "Smart Guelph." Smart Guelph, involving 1,200 residents, set out the principles for future planning with detailed projects that will be implemented in 2003.[28]

When asked if there are specific government bodies/officials responsible for liaison with CSOs at various levels of the political system, most CSOs who participated in this study noted that they have relations with the federal government. Seventy-five percent of CSOs have federal government contacts that liaise with them. Thirteen out of 20, or 65% of CSOs replied that provincial government officials liaise with them. One-half of organizations (10 out of 20) interviewed are in contact with the municipal level of

government. The following chart shows the level of state liaison with CSOs by percentage, according to each category of CSOs.

Chart I: Level of CSO liaison with three levels of government
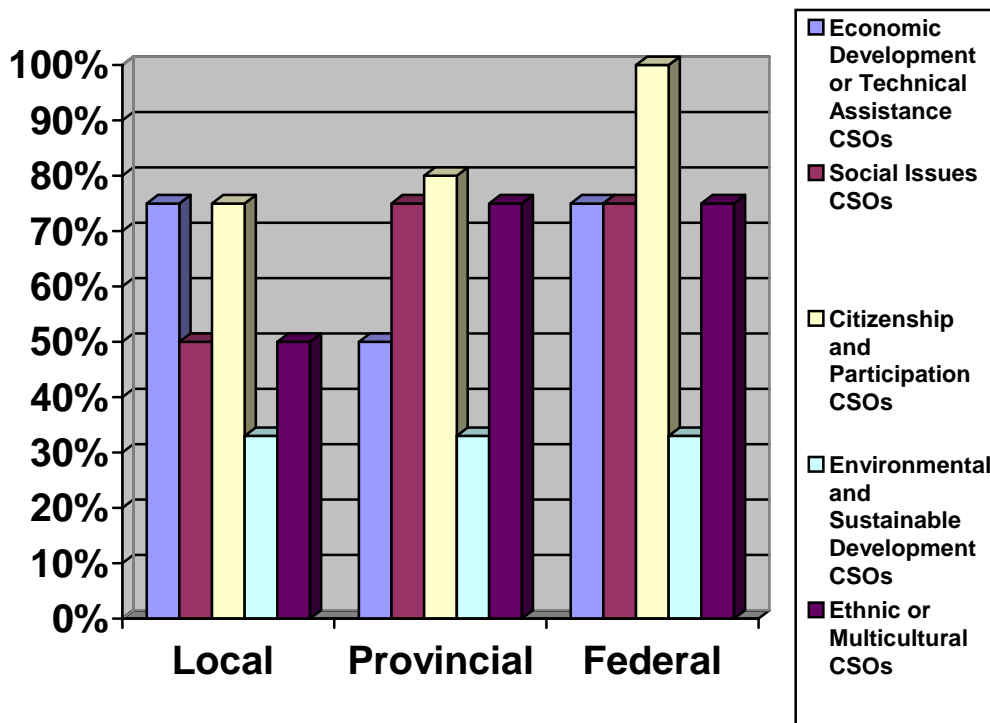
CSOs' comments were diverse **regarding what liaison mechanisms were employed to engage them and transfer information**. At all government levels, there are a number of departments that have mechanisms for consultations with CSOs, such as the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory & Advocacy Council. Some jurisdictions are "friendlier" to CSOs than others, though this may depend on the issue that a CSO promotes. For example, some municipalities have community economic development (CED) committees that are very receptive to CED CSOs' input. On the other hand, some provinces are very "chilly" towards CSOs advocating post secondary education issues, for example. Some organizations believe that the state is very rigid in its accountability mechanisms for CSOs, and it lacks understanding of the issues affecting the CSO community.

Working relationships with government are unique to each organization. Except for Citizenship and Participation CSOs, who have a lot of working relationships with government due to the nature of their work, no patterns exist within the categories of

CSOs. Relationships with particular levels of government are contingent on the scope of a CSOs' work (whether it be local, regional or national). Some organizations, both small and large, have no or a minimal relationship with the state due to lack of resources to invest in such relationship, or the scope of its work is independent of government. Below are detailed descriptions of working relationships for each type of CSO.

Table 1. Liaison mechanism used by CSO when participating with levels of government (percentage)

	National	Regional	Local	None
Committees	65	55	35	20
Working groups	65	50	35	20
Networks	60	45	35	25
Alliances	50	35	30	20
Other types: Consultations Joint Tables Training Unspecified	 30 10 5 5	 25 5 5	 15 5 5	

Source: Complied using project survey responses

Economic Development/Technical Assistance CSOs: Four organizations that fit this category were interviewed. One is an umbrella organization, whose members have all types of working relationships, but only at the regional and local levels. Another organization is only active at the national level and only has working relationships with the national government. Another has some working relationships at all levels, and the fourth has no working relationships with government at all. Another type of relationship present is consultations.

Social Issues CSOs: Four CSOs were surveyed that work on social issues. One large, well-known CSO has developed all of the working relationships mentioned here with government at all levels, possibly because of its size and influence. The others have varied working relationship with the state; sometimes they are engaged with the state in a one-time or occasional working relationship.

Citizenship & Participation CSOs: Five citizenship & participation CSOs were surveyed. Because of the nature of their work, they all have working relationships with the government. Their work is mostly national in scope: all sit on committees with the federal government, and the majority has all the listed working relationships with the federal government. Only one has working relationships with municipal governments, and two have no relationship with provincial governments. The other types of working relationships (at the national and regional levels) are joint tables and consultations.

Environmental & Sustainable Development CSOs: Three environmental & sustainable development CSOs were interviewed for this study. One has almost all types of working relationships at all levels of government because it is a very large organization. Another has very limited working relationships because it works with government through a larger umbrella organization, while the third has a varied working relationship with the three state jurisdictions, including an informal consultative relationship.

<u>Ethnic or Multicultural CSOs:</u> Four ethnic/multicultural CSOs participated in this study. Two larger organizations have diverse working relationships with all levels of government, while a smaller one has difficulty accessing government and has little beyond a donor-recipient funding relationship with the state. The fourth only has relations with the national government because of the national scope of its work.

CSO participation in budget or investment decisions

When asked to what extent they participate in budget or investment decisions, participant responses demonstrate that many CSOs participate in councils with limited rights, and the majority of surveyed CSOs usually or sometimes participate in government budget consultations. However, a number of organizations, including one that regularly participates in consultations, expressed cynicism toward the actual impact their opinions and demands have on financial policy; the government may listen to their concerns, but their proposals are not implemented. One CSOs, based in western Canada, believes that the federal government welcomes CSOs input more often than provinces and municipalities do. A couple of respondents had participated in the Voluntary Sector Initiative's financing committee to which six CSOs and six government officials belonged. Also, an organization's financial resources appear to be a factor in the degree to which it can participate in budget matters; some CSOs are only active at the provincial level due to their budget limitations. The absence of a "no" or "never" column in this question may have increased the "rarely" results beyond their actual proportion.

Table 2. CSO participation in budget or investment decisions (percentage)

	National			Regional and/or Local		
	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
CSOs propose political, economic and social development plans and programs	25	30	35	10	35	30
CSOs organize and participate in consultation processes	20	55	15	10	40	30
Information is made available to the CSOs	20	30	40	10	25	45
Authorities consult the opinions of CSOs	15	45	30	5	30	45
CSOs participate in councils administering policies, programs or projects *as invited guests*	-	45	45	-	35	50
CSOs participate in councils administering policies, programs or project *with limited rights*	5	25	60	5	10	65
CSOs participate in councils administering policies, programs or projects *with full rights*	-	10	70	-	-	70
CSOs monitor the implementation of the budget or public investments	35	35	20	20	25	30

1.3 CSOs' ability to access to public information

If they are to be active and effective in their contributions to their community as well as to policy-makers, CSOs need to be well informed and have access to complete and timely information, including information on budgets as well as on government policies and programs. Sixty percent of CSOs say that it is currently easier to access public information than it was three years ago because of good public websites, external pressure to be more accountable and transparent, presence of public information officers, and stronger personal relationship with government officials. Twenty percent say that it more difficult now compared to three years ago mostly because of the procedures and costs associated with the Freedom of Information and Protection Act. Fifteen percent do not know if there is a change, usually because they have been in their present job for less than three years. In terms of access to specific types of information, CSOs had the following comments.

Budget information
Sixty percent of surveyed CSOs seek budget information, of which 58% find it easy to access and 42% find it difficult. For some Canadian CSOs, it is easy to access budget information because the budget is published and accessible on the Internet, they are notified by electronic list servers, or they have contacts in the department. The others find it difficult if the department is not transparent; the information received is complex and segmented or outdated, or not all information is released.

Policies or Programs
Eighty-five percent of CSOs need policy and program information, of which 53 percent say it is easy to access, 18 percent say access is somewhat easy, 12 percent say it is difficult, and 12 percent say that it depends. Those who find it easy say that needed information is on-line, it's a phone call away to department contacts, or they hear about policies through public statements by the department. The CSOs that have a somewhat easy time accessing information say they can find information on-line, but the published information is often vague. Some CSOs say the process is difficult because departments' information systems are not efficiently organized, causing them to "jump through hoops" to access policy and program details. For other CSOs, this information is sometimes easy and sometimes difficult; it depends whether department staff is known and accessible, and if the program is successful (and, therefore boast-worthy) or struggling.

User rights
Twenty percent of CSOs seek public information on user rights. Of this twenty percent, one-quarter find that access is easy because the information is publicly available. Another twenty-five percent believe this information is somewhat easy to get because it is on-line. Half of those who seek this information say it is difficult because the information is confidential in nature.

Program/Activity Outcomes
Eighty percent of surveyed CSOs seek public information about program/activity outcomes. Of these organizations, thirty-one percent find it easy as outcomes are published in annual reports and on public websites in a timely fashion, as well as in the media sometimes. Thirteen percent say that this information is somewhat easily accessible because the information they can access is vague. Twenty-five percent say it depends on which program they are trying to access, whether their organization was

involved in the program/activity, or whether the outcome was successful or critical of the government. Thirty-one percent say this information is difficult to access because the information is not accessible at all, real results are edited for public consumption, information systems are not well organized or timely, reports are not publicized, and long term program evaluations are not done.

Other
Sixty percent of CSOs reported that they seek other types of information. These include overseas security information (easy to access), socio-economic, citizenship and electoral statistics (difficult), appointments and contracts (difficult), energy issues (easy), funding programs (easy), legal cases (easy), professional inventories (difficult), and land grants and deeds (difficult).

Sources of information

In Canada a large majority of municipal, provincial and federal government departments maintain websites to share information with the public. The vast majority of Canadian CSOs find the government's website information to be relevant, and generally up-to-date and timely. Most CSOs say that theirs and citizens' comments are hardly, if ever, included on government websites. In the experience of half of the interviewed CSOs, websites are a medium for two-way communication with authorities, while the opposite is true for the other half. More often than not CSOs' questions are answered on public websites.

Table 3. Type and Quality of Information Available to CSOs on Government Websites (Percentage)

Type of Information Provided	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No response given
Information is relevant	45	50	-	-	5
Information is up-to-date?	40	40	15	-	5
Information is timely	25	55	15	-	5
Comments from citizens and CSO are included	-	20	50	15	15
Two-way communication with authorities is possible	15	35	30	15	5
Answers to questions are provided	20	55	10	5	10

When CSOs were asked what other mechanisms existed and were used by government to provide information to citizens, the results were distinctively varied. Some of the rarely, never and no responses can be attributed to the fact that some surveyed CSOs do not have strong ties with government because of the independent nature of their work. The "no response given" column was added because some respondents sincerely do not know if certain mechanisms exist or not. A striking majority of CSOs note that government web pages usually or sometimes exist, and half of interviewees say that the government sometimes has seminars or question and answer sessions.

Table 4. Additional Mechanisms to Provide Information (Percentage)

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No response

					given
Meetings with authorities	35	40	25	5	
Public Information and "customer service" office	25	40	25	-	10
Telephone information lines	45	15	20	10	10
Web pages	60	30	5	5	
Seminars or question and answer sessions	10	50	35	5	

Finally, it is interesting to review with what government departments the CSOs surveyed had contact and required information from. Annex 1 lists all of the government departments from which the surveyed Canadian CSOs seek information, and the corresponding cells show the percentage of surveyed CSOs that consult each department and a break-down of their ratings. Respondents shared their impressions of access to public information, which are the following: It is easy to access the information that departments want to publicize; it is very difficult to access confidential information; and a strong relationship with a department and its personnel makes the process to obtain information much easier than without contacts.

SECTION II: PROMOTION OF A CULTURE WHICH VALUES DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIVERSITY

Citizen participation supports the development of a more democratic culture, while civil society is simultaneously strengthened by the diversity and equality ideally found in a democracy. To be the most effective, civil society must be comprised of and speak on behalf of a diverse set of interests. This section reviews the legal guarantees of minority representation in decision-making bodies, and the education programs that are available in Canada to promote the values of democracy, human rights and diversity. The actual reality of diversity in practice is examined by a review of the existence and activity of autonomous networks of civil society

2.1 Legal Guarantees of Minority Representation in Decision-Making Bodies.

There is no unanimity among CSOs as to whether or not laws and regulations exist guaranteeing the representation of minority groups or those subject to discrimination in bodies making political, social or economic decisions (Affirmative action, quota systems). Out of eighteen responses (as two organizations chose not to answer this question), 44 percent of CSOs believe that there are laws and regulations guaranteeing minority representation in political decision-making bodies, while 56 percent disagree. Thirty-three percent of CSOs say that Canadian laws and regulations ensure minority representation in both social and economic decision-making bodies, while 67 percent say there is no such guarantee.

Those who attest that such laws and regulations exist point to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, human rights commissions, and human rights and employment equity policies. One respondent referred to the internal practices of political parties, while another stated that visible minorities are consulted and do participate. On the other hand, the majority of CSOs do not think there are such laws and regulations. They say that, although the Federal Government must abide by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Charter does not ensure representation. Likewise, federal employment equity laws and provincial policies are not guarantees.

Current laws and regulations that defend against discrimination by race, ethnic group, religion or gender.

Ninety-five percent of surveyed CSOs concur that Canada's laws and regulations generally defend against discrimination by race, ethnic group, religion or gender. Five percent of those surveyed responded negatively. The vast majority of those who believe that Canada's laws defend against discrimination referred to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Canadian Human Rights Act, Human Rights Commissions, federal multiculturalism policy, and provincial laws, such as the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

A few respondents qualified their answers, stating that these regulations serve an important purpose, but they may not always be diligently enforced or promoted. One of these respondents did not believe these legislations were enforced at all, while another said that the Charter is "only as good as the people who carry it out in the justice and law enforcement systems." Finally, another organization argued that the government has not acted to reverse public suspicions of the Muslim and Arab communities in the last two years, and has even contributed to this atmosphere.

Programs to Support of Minority Groups or those Subject to Discrimination

Apart from the legal frameworks, seventy-five percent of CSOs believe that there is **special access to social programs** for minority or discriminated groups. Examples given included social programs for disabled people in certain jurisdictions, and some federal and provincial funding for aboriginal initiatives. Twenty percent of respondents do not believe that minority and discriminated groups receive special access to social programs, while five percent do not know.

Eighty percent of respondents claim there is **support for cultural expressions** given to minority or discriminated groups, such as funding from Canadian Heritage's multiculturalism branch. Fifteen percent of respondents think that minority and discriminated groups do not receive **support for cultural expressions**, while five percent do not know.

Eighty-five percent of participating CSOs say that there is **support for associative expressions** of minority and discriminated groups, while five percent said that there is not, and 10 percent do not know one way or another.

Eighty-five percent of CSOs assert that other languages do get recognition in Canada. Examples of this include minority language schools, and the publishing of health booklets in minority languages. On the other hand, 10 percent say that there is no recognition of other languages, and five percent of respondents do not know if there is or not.

Table 5. Perceived availability of programs to support minority groups (Percentage)

Program	YES	NO	Don't know
Special access to social programs	75	20	5
Support for cultural expressions	80	15	5
Support for associative expressions	85	5	10
Recognition of other languages	85	10	5

2.2 Education for the Values of Democracy, Human Rights and Diversity

In Canada there are official government bodies that are responsible for developing democracy and human rights education programs. Education falls within the provincial/territorial jurisdiction in Canada's federal governance system. The Ministry of Education of each province/territory is responsible for writing its own democracy and human rights curricula that are used in elementary and secondary schools.

Other provincial departments provide support to the Ministry of Education for the development of these educational programs. For example, Manitoba's Multiculturalism Secretariat developed a Citizenship Kit with human rights and civics education materials that all schools in Manitoba have.[29] The Ontario Human Rights Commission created a Teaching Human Rights in Ontario guide with the Ontario Ministry of Education.[30] Nova Scotia's Ministry of Education and Human Rights Commission have formed a Joint Human Rights and Education Committee, mandated to integrate human rights into curriculum development.[31]

In the federal government, the departments of Canadian Heritage, Justice and the Canadian Human Rights Commission conduct public education programs that promote democracy and human rights.[32] Also, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has a mandate of promoting citizenship values. One example of this work is *Citzine*, a web magazine for Canadian youth to think about and discuss citizenship.[33]

Citizenship education, which includes democracy and human rights topics, is also mandatory in Canada's **elementary and secondary school** social science curricula.[34] For example, in Ontario, a secondary school civics course is required for high school graduation.[35] "Exercising democracy" is a broad theme in New Brunswick's social studies curriculum.[36] Other education systems, such as pre-school and post-secondary, do not have mandatory democracy and human rights education curricula. However, many students at the post-secondary level can choose to study these topics. Several Canadian universities offer human rights degree programs, including St. Thomas University, Carleton University, Acadia University and University of Regina.[37]

Three-quarters of participating CSOs affirm that in the democracy and human rights programs taught in Canada's elementary and secondary school systems the materials used do reflect the country's ethnicity, cultures and religious diversity. One example is Newfoundland and Labrador's Grade Nine Social Studies textbook, "My Place in the World." However, many of respondents claim that the amount of culturally diverse material taught and used is uneven, minimal or superficial. Also, it may vary by jurisdiction, the ethnic composition of a classroom, and individual teachers. The majority of respondents think that educational materials, representative Canada's multicultural diversity, are used in other systems of education and in public dissemination.

CSO Collaboration in Development of Educational Programs

Finally, Canadian CSOs do work with government and academic experts to develop democracy and human rights educational programs. The following list provides a number of such collaborations.

1. The Democracy Education Network (DEN) worked with the Ontario government to develop high school curriculum materials, and currently, DEN has workshops for students on democracy skills. [38]
2. *Groupe de recherce en éducation dans un perspective mondiale*, a New Brunswick research centre, created a *Guide to Human Rights Education*, used by elementary and secondary teachers in Atlantic Canada.[39]
3. The Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation worked with Prince Edward Island's Department of Education to develop three human rights education activity guides for social studies programs in elementary and secondary levels.[40]
4. The Canadian Human Rights Commission (CHRC) in the Prairies Region developed a brochure with CSOs, called "Understanding your Human Rights," for recent immigrants.[41]
5. Manitoba Association of Rights and Liberties hosted an "Internet and Hate" seminar with CHRC for high school students about hate propaganda on the Internet.[42]
6. Amnesty International's Canada Chapter has a Human Rights Education Project that is used by teachers in the classroom.[43]
7. Quebec's Minstère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration's Programme de soutien à la participation civique, which promotes rights and contributes to civic education, was carried out with 162 CSOs.[44]
8. International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, an independent organization created by Parliament in 1988, works with many CSOs, such as Network on International Human Rights, United Nations Association of Canada, B'nai B'rith Canada and Ligue des droits et libertés, to create and strengthen democracy and human rights education programs.[45]
9. Citizenship and Immigration Canada with the Rotary Club of Ottawa and the National 4-H Council have an Adventure in Citizenship program and National 4-H Citizenship Seminar for youth across the country that builds knowledge on democracy.[46]

2.3 Diversity in Practice: Autonomous Networks of Civil Society

In Canada civil society organizations do participate in national, regional or hemispheric anti-globalization networks or movements (such as the Hemispheric Social Alliance). Ninety-five percent of respondents agreed that their Canadian CSOs are active in these networks.

The main criticisms that these movements/networks have about the policies of governments or official international bodies/forums focus on the process of inter-governmental decision-making, notably the lack of dialogue with the public, as well as the economic focus and minimizing the negative impacts of globalization. **In their estimation**, due process is lacking. The force of law resides above the nation-state within these processes; while their legal effects are felt domestically, proposals are not debated in Parliament. They erode democratic equality through the loss of Canada's control over its social policies. Canadian civil society organizations commented that a democratic deficit exists in official international bodies/forums. They lack transparency and accountability. These structures are hierarchical and exclusionary, allowing power to rest among the few. Private interests have the ear of decision-makers while there is no mechanism to include CSOs criticisms and suggestions. The policies that the Canadian

government endorses do not reflect broad Canadian opinion, nor does the government seek diverse civil society opinions.

Many CSOs, interviewed for this study are concerned about the impact of globalization policies on Canada and the world. They criticized the Canadian government and international bodies for promoting unfair trade policies that prioritize profit at the expense of poor people in Canada and globally, human rights and the natural environment. The emphasis of globalization policies is economic priorities without enough focus on human rights, social justice or democratic reform. Therefore, the rich-poor gap in Canada and the world is expanding.

Despite some CSOs criticism of Canadian government and international bodies, CSOs in Canada still believe in the value and utility of working with the government and see *dialogue with government/international bodies as a strategy for strengthening civil society*. Although answers were varied, not one CSO believes the proportion of CSOs that reject dialogue with government to be high. Thirty-five percent estimated the proportion to be very low, between zero and one percent of CSOs. Twenty-five percent believe that the number of CSOs that reject dialogue is low, or between five and 10 percent of CSOs. Ten percent of respondents rate the proportion to be 15 percent, while another five percent put the proportion at 25 percent of CSOs. Twenty-five percent of respondents did not know or did not answer this question.

However, these movements and networks are vocal about their opinions and use a great variety of methods to publicize their activities and criticisms of state policies, including the internet (web pages, list serves), their networks and/or memberships, coalition-building, public demonstrations, dramatic displays (dressing-up at public demonstrations), publications (newsletters, zines, press releases, leaflets), public speaking events, meetings, research, awareness campaigns, popular education, civil disobedience, petitions, government lobbying, letter-writing to politicians, news conferences, working with media, and alterative summits/fora.

In terms of public awareness and acceptance of these criticisms, when asked half of respondents say that the level of public awareness and acceptance of the above criticisms is low. Fifteen percent rate the level as medium, or fair, and another fifteen percent perceive public awareness and acceptance to be high. Twenty percent do not know the level of public awareness and acceptance of these criticisms.

CONCLUSIONS

Canadian civil society organizations, dedicated to economic development, social issues, civic participation, the environment, and ethno-cultural issues, have spoken about their experiences in public policy development and their impressions of the government's efforts and limitations in encouraging and enabling civic participation.

The Canadian government is taking an initiative in the strengthening of civil society. Public and private funding opportunities exist for registered CSOs, and freedom of association is generally respected. The legal framework for CSOs is adequate, yet vague advocacy rules for charities and registration difficulties of visible minority organizations are calls for concern and reform. Most CSOs have established contacts within the political system, although no uniform liaison mechanism is in place across the country.

Information and communications technologies are in place to receive CSOs' proposals. The majority of respondents attest to a wide variety of mechanisms that exist most of the time, especially good quality websites. However, many CSOs are skeptical of whether the government actually incorporates their contributions in public policies.

CSOs do participate in Canada's political, economic and social policy development. While there are no laws to ensure CSOs involvement in the public policy process, most levels of government have some degree of partnership with CSOs in policy development through diverse working relationships. Likewise, there are no laws to guarantee minority groups' participation in the public policy process. But, there are policies that support these groups and laws to protect vulnerable groups from discrimination.

There are government bodies that develop democracy and human rights educational programs, often with the collaboration of CSOs. Democracy and human rights are social studies themes taught throughout Canada, using materials that reflect Canada's diversity.

Some Canadian CSOs oppose globalization, or aspects of it. These CSOs use a wide variety of methods to publicize their messages, yet public awareness and acceptance of their criticisms are generally not high.

The majority of CSOs seek budget, policy/program, and program outcome information from many federal and provincial departments. Though the facility to access information varies by department and type of information, most CSOs perceive that it is easier to access information now than three years ago.

Overall, this report demonstrates that the Canadian government values the voluntary sector, as it has made efforts to include CSOs in the public policy process and in democracy and human rights education, as well as supporting CSOs through public funding. Improvements are needed in a) the legal framework for CSOs, b) access to information in some policy areas and some departments, and c) addressing the cynicism felt by some CSOs toward the government's invitation to participation in public consultations.

Annex I. Access to, and Rating of the Information provided by Government Departments according to the CSOs surveyed.

Federal Departments	Rating of the facility to obtain the information from each department
Agriculture and Agri-food Canada	Ten percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from AAFC. Rating: good (10%)
Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency	Ten percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from CCRA. Rating: Very good (10%)
Canadian Heritage	Twenty-five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from Canadian Heritage. Ratings: Good (15%); Fair (5%); Poor (5%)
Canadian International Development Agency	Fifteen percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from CIDA. Ratings: Good (10%); Poor (5%)
Canadian Mortgage and Housing Association	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from CMHA. Rating: Fair (5%)
Citizenship and Immigration Canada	Twenty percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from CIC. Ratings: Fair (10%); Poor (10%) It was noted that they have a good website.
Environment Canada	Fifteen percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from Environment Canada. Ratings: Fair (5%); Good (10%)
Department of Finance	Ten percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from the Finance department. Rating: Good (10%)
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade	Twenty percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from DFAIT. Ratings: Very good (5%); Good (5%); Fair (5%); Poor (5%) Regarding one CSO's experience, it was noted that DFAIT has poor response time for providing information.
Human Resources Development Canada	Twenty-five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from HRDC. Ratings: Good (5%); Fair (15%); Poor (5%) One respondent noted that HRDC personnel have a willingness to help provide sought information.
Health Canada	Twenty-five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from Health Canada. Ratings: Very good (5%); Fair (10%); Good (5%); Poor (5%) One respondent noted that Health Canada has a good website and in-person service. Another said that it is especially difficult to access information on pharmaceutical companies, pharmaceutical regulations and labeling.
Canadian Human Rights Commission	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from CHRC. Rating: Good (5%)
Indian and Northern Affairs	Ten percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from Indian and Northern Affairs. Rating: Poor (5%); Fair (5%)
Industry Canada	Twenty-five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from Industry Canada. Ratings: Good (10%); Fair (5%); Poor (5%); Very poor (5%)

	One respondent noted that Industry Canada personnel are not willing to help him/her find requested information, the response time is poor.
Department of Justice	Twenty percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from the Department of Justice. Ratings: Good (5%); Fair (10%); Poor (5%)
Department of National Defense	Ten percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from DND. Rating: Fair (10%)
Natural Resources Canada	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from Natural Resources Canada. Rating: Good (5%)
Parks Canada	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from Parks Canada. Rating: Good (5%)
Privy Council Office	Ten percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from the PCO. Ratings: Fair (5%); Poor (5%)
Treasury Board	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from Treasury Board. Rating: Poor (5%)

Provincial & Municipal Departments	Rating of the facility to obtain the information from each department
All provinces environment departments	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Good (5%)
All provincial health departments	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Good (5%)
Alberta Sustainable Resources Department	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Good (5%)
British Columbia – Attorney General	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Poor (5%)
British Columbia – Economic/Regional Development	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Poor (5%)
City of Calgary	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Good (5%)
Manitoba – Economic/Regional Development	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Good (5%)
Nova Scotia – Justice Department	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Poor (5%)
Nova Scotia – Health Department	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Fair (5%)
Nova Scotia – Community Services	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Poor (5%)

Nunavut – Economic/Regional Development	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Good (5%)
Ontario – Economic/Regional Development	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Poor (5%)
Quebec – Economic/Regional Development	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Good (5%)
Saskatchewan – Culture, Youth and Recreation	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Good (5%)
Saskatchewan – Justice Department	Five percent of interviewed CSOs seek information from this department. Rating: Poor (5%)

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