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## Training in Canada's Non-profit Organizations

Ottawa, March 12, 2003 – Canada's non-profit sector is under pressure.

Non-profits today deliver services once delivered by governments. Demands on their resources have increased while their funding base has been squeezed by public sector retrenchment. And there is some evidence that the volunteers they count on are not as numerous as they once were.

In this context, it is critical that workers in the non-profit sector receive the training and develop the skills they need to cope with this changing environment and added responsibilities.

Just how well is the non-profit sector doing at training its workforce?

A pioneering study from CPRN is the first step in answering that question. *Skills and Training in the Non-profit Sector*, by researchers Kathryn McMullen and Grant Schellenberg, is the third in a series of reports on Canada's non-profit sector. Earlier reports have explored the dimensions of the sector and its working conditions. The research draws on data from Statistics Canada's *Workplace and Employee Survey* and applies to the situation of *paid* employees in the sector.

Canada's non-profit sector employs almost 900,000 workers. That's about the same as the paid workforce in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick combined, or that of the country's construction, mining and oil and gas industries. The wages and salaries of non-profits amount to about \$22 billion a year.

The sector's 58,000 employers are involved in activities that range from culture and recreation, through health, education and social services, to residential construction, manufacturing, retail trade, professional services and finance.

"Human resources – human ingenuity and skills – are the key to success in the modern economy," says McMullen. "This is especially true for the human-resource-intensive non-profit sector. Employee skills and training are a central concern."

More than half the employees in the non-profit sector say the overall skill requirements of their jobs, as well as their technological complexity, have increased. It's not surprising, then, that non-profit employers (70%) regard increasing employee skills as a priority.

The authors find that the non-profit sector compares well with the for-profit sector where training is concerned:

- Non-profit employers show a higher commitment to training in terms of both classroom instruction and financial support.
- There is a higher rate of participation in training than in the for-profit sector by employees with a wide range of characteristics and educational qualifications.
- The incidence of training is higher for women, for workers aged 35-44, and for those over 45 than in the for-profit sector.
- The incidence of training in non-profit organizations is especially higher among women in managerial and professional positions.

“These are all good signs,” McMullen says. “Opportunities for training and skill development are linked to job satisfaction, confidence on the job, higher productivity, morale and commitment. They are essential to attracting and keeping skilled workers.”

McMullen and Schellenberg point out, however, that information on the incidence of training is only part of the story. They call for more research to provide a more complete picture of the non-profit training regime – research to determine the quality and relevance of the training now offered, for example, or to determine whether employees have the opportunity and support they need to put what they learn to use.

Finally, they call for more detail on the specialized skill needs of different sub-sectors among non-profit organizations and the appropriate training responses.

“As is true of other sectors of the economy,” McMullen adds, “non-profit organizations need to continue to invest in training and skill development as part of their business strategies if they are to be efficient, cost-effective workplaces of choice.”

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CPRN is a national not-for-profit research institute whose mission is to create knowledge and lead public debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians, in order to help build a more just, prosperous and caring society.

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