

Community participation bolsters strength in the face of uncertainty: Volunteer Canada

Volunteerism highlights the power of an individual to make a difference, but collectively, it can bring strength to a country facing change and uncertainty.

By **BROCK WEIR**

So says Volunteer Canada, a national body providing leadership and expertise on volunteerism, for more than 45 years, ahead of National Volunteer week, which begins this Sunday, April 27.

With the 2025 National Volunteer Week theme centred on "Volunteers Make Waves," the organization says the week is "a time to thank, recognize, and honour all the ways volunteers make waves from coast to coast to coast."

"Canada has long prided itself as a country of people who volunteer, serve and participate, building on the waves of each generation. However, the tide is shifting and trends in volunteerism and participation have been declining, especially post-pandemic," says Volunteer Canada. "With service usage at an all-time high, more than half (57 per cent) of Canadian charities are unable to meet current levels of demand, according to the Canada Helps Giving Report 2024. In its current state, the charitable sector can't support the weight of our current and future crises.

"At the same time, only 20 per cent of Canadians report a very strong sense of community belonging. Yet, those with close friends are more likely to contribute in pro-social ways, including volunteering and advocating for causes they care about. As well, they are more likely to express trust in leadership " across government, media, business, and especially the non-profit sector. In this regenerative cycle, individuals benefit from volunteering with improved well-being and a stronger sense of connection and belonging. Their actions ripple out to broader community benefits, like increased community integration, social cohesion, and enhanced resilience."

As an organization, Volunteer Canada is working on finding new ways to "revitalize" community participation and remove barriers to getting involved.

"Volunteers, much like water, constantly change everything they touch. Their individual and collective actions have the power to create and sustain the positive changes they want to see in our country," said Dr. Megan Conway, Volunteer Canada President and CEO. "During National Volunteer Week, we celebrate this powerful force that creates movements and builds momentum. Together, Volunteers Make Waves!"

On Thursday, May 1, Volunteer Canada will host a virtual nation-wide event to discuss the value of volunteerism in Canada, featuring Anishinaabe Indigenous rights advocate and Chief Water Commissioner for the Anishinabek Nation Autumn Peltier in conversation with Dr. Conway. The event will feature a question and answer session with participants as well.

"Together we create ripples of change. As individuals unite, we're riding a wave of hope and optimism," said Volunteer Canada Board Chair Lisa Mort-Putland. "Powerful wave or quiet ripple, this National Volunteer Week, we thank and celebrate our volunteers and their collective impact."

During National Volunteer Week 2025, Volunteer Centres, volunteer-supported organizations, and businesses across the country will celebrate the many ways Volunteers Make Waves from coast to coast to coast. The waves of change they collectively create amplify the interconnection of our relationships, actions and lives.

Everyone is invited to participate in the May 1 event, join the Cross-Canada Wave, and contribute to the Volunteers Make Soundwaves playlist at www.volunteer.ca/national-volunteer-week.