

The benefits of volunteering at AIC: a secret too well kept

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It is worth more than 65,000 condos in Vancouver, 118,000 homes in Halifax, and more than all of the investment-grade real estate that sells in Canada in a typical year. If it was an industry, it would contribute 2.6% to Canada's GDP. What is it you say? Well, it is volunteerism, and according to the Conference Board of Canada, it was worth \$55.9b in 2017.

Volunteerism drives organizations like the Appraisal Institute of Canada (AIC). This author estimates that we have over 150 volunteers driving our committees and governance at the national level and over 300 when provincial affiliates are included. Those who volunteer – volunteer a lot. Roughly one third of our volunteers serve in multiple roles and a quick look at our roster reveals that we have a contingent of volunteers who have been at it their entire careers. It is both humbling and inspiring to see my nearly

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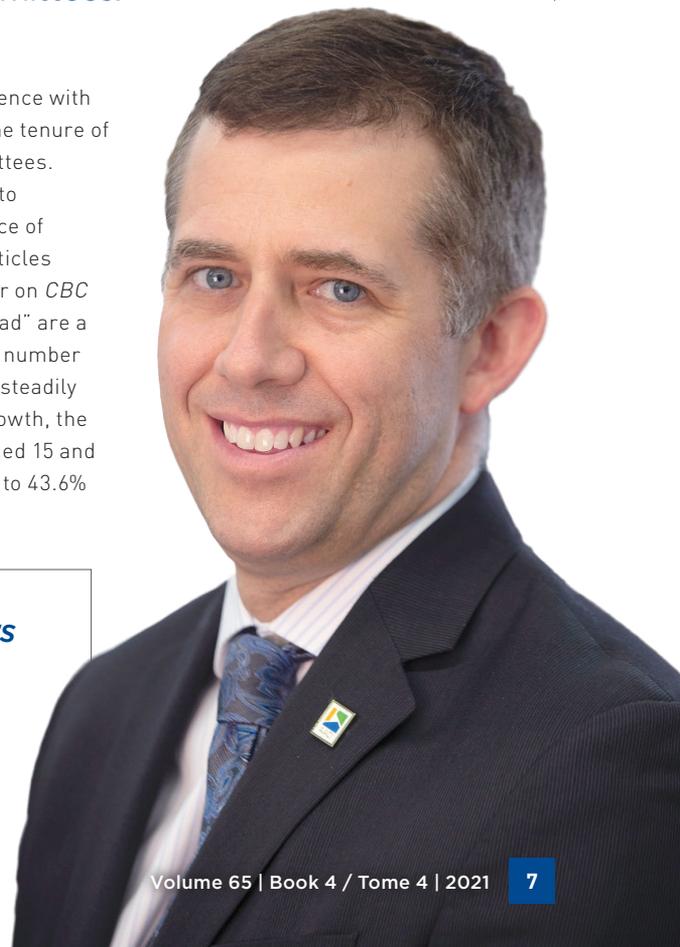
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On the surface, there is much to celebrate, but given the importance of volunteers in our organization, articles which often feature in the *Globe* or on *CBC* questioning if “volunteerism is dead” are a troubling read. Although the total number of volunteers in Canada has been steadily increasing with our population growth, the participation rate among those aged 15 and up has declined from 47% in 2010 to 43.6%

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in 2017. Although the number of hours committed per volunteer has held steady at 155 since 2010, that figure is lower than it was in 2004, when the Conference Board of Canada estimated the average number of hours per volunteer to be 168. For an association with a stable membership base, the combination of a drop in the participation rate and a decline in the number of hours volunteered would mean our volunteer capacity is 15% lower than it was a decade ago. Anecdotal evidence bears some of this out. We have seen a decline in the number of volunteers who put their names forward in line with

the decrease in the participation rate. For a volunteer-driven organization, these numbers present a troubling trend, but they also present opportunity.

The opportunity

The real story behind the numbers is one of **untapped potential**. Assuming that we have 300 volunteers, this means that roughly 6% of our Members are dedicating a portion of their time, pro bono, to the Institute. If the participation rate is 43%, then roughly 37% of our Members are donating their time to other worthy causes. Based on our current membership, there

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Choosing the AIC

In a study completed by Eleanor Brown, Professor of Economics at Pomona College, and James Ferris with the Center on *Philanthropy and Public Policy*, the authors concluded that, when individuals develop bonds and relationships in the community, they are more likely to engage in volunteering activities. Not surprisingly, in a separate study by TD Bank, 90% of volunteers said they chose to volunteer so they could make a positive contribution to their community. The key to success then is in building a greater sense of community amongst our Members and in helping them know that their passion, ideas, and experience can have a meaningful impact on the profession.



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What we can do

One of the key pillars in our strategic plan is building a vibrant and engaged membership. We all have a role to play in creating a community where contributions and perspectives from a diverse pool of volunteers are solicited, welcome, and help guide our strategy. As we come out of the pandemic, we must make it a priority to meet other Members in our regions and across the country. Let's strengthen our virtual connections by

being active on social media and sharing articles and stories that are of interest to our colleagues and other stakeholders. Let's engage with other Members and encourage them to put their passions and ideas to work. As appraisers, we can be, and are, thought leaders in the Canadian real estate industry.

While everyone's volunteer experience is different, I can say that I have found my own to be rewarding. I have served for 20 years on provincial and national

committees and governance. I have developed both professionally and personally from the knowledge I have gained and the relationships I have made with other volunteers with whom I have been fortunate to work. I am a better appraiser, leader and person for the experience.

Whether you are a seasoned appraiser, a new Candidate, or somewhere in between, it is time to tell your story: it is the one about the relationships you built during your service, the knowledge you gained from and imparted upon others, and the lifelong friends you made in the process. It is about the unique perspective or experience you gained outside the AIC that you can share with us all. It is time for you to share your valuable perspective.

If you have any questions on volunteering with the AIC or want to share experience, please write to us at info@aicanada.ca.



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