



for immediate release

Ontario's Volunteer Groups Demand Protection A Call for Provincial Action to Mark International Volunteer Day

(Barrie, ON, November 30, 2005): December 5th may be the United Nations' International Volunteer Day, but Ontario's celebration is overshadowed by an ongoing liability insurance crisis which impacts every community in the province, according to the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC). Soaring premiums for volunteer liability insurance prompted the OFSC to launch the province-wide **Protect Our Volunteers!** campaign last spring and to date, 26 other Not For Profit Organizations (NPOs), as well as many municipalities, have signed on. To mark December 5th, **Protect Our Volunteers!** is calling on the Government of Ontario to act immediately with new legislation to shield volunteers from unreasonable claims.

"Volunteer liability coverage affects every Ontario community and most residents too, because without it, volunteerism is threatened," said OFSC President Dennis Burns. "This is a motherhood issue that will not cost the Province anything to resolve, but could save NPOs millions of dollars that should be spent on programs to benefit the public, not diverted to pay unnecessarily high volunteer insurance costs."

Even more important, the new law would also provide Ontario's volunteers with peace of mind. From health support to charity work, from senior's services to organized events, clubs and teams for children, volunteers are crucial to society. From fundraising to fall fairs and from volunteer fire departments and school boards to Santa Claus Parades, volunteers donate an incalculable worth of free services each year to communities and their residents with that could cease without liability coverage or else would have to be paid for through higher taxes or new user fees.

Unlike some jurisdictions, Ontario has no law to shield volunteers from unreasonable liability claims. Similar to "Good Samaritan" legislation, the new volunteer law would protect volunteers who are serving in good faith, to the best of their ability, and with good intentions. Without such a law, the sky is the limit for the potential risk insurers forecast when trying to price coverage for NPO volunteers. That means no cap on cost either, so premiums remain volatile and coverages varied. And even when an NPO is able to obtain some form of liability insurance coverage for its volunteers, high costs can compromise the programs and services it delivers.

"Every volunteer gives generously and freely of his or her time and abilities for the greater good of society and the least we can do is make certain that each one is properly protected liability-wise," continued Burns. "By acting to protect our volunteers, we as a society are recognizing their value and contribution to Ontario – and encouraging them to continue their good work."

To mark International Volunteer Day on December 5th, Ontario residents are also being asked to support the **Protect Our Volunteers!** campaign, by clicking on www.protectourvolunteers.ca to send an email to the Premier. If you are a community volunteer or a beneficiary of volunteer services, ask your organization what it's doing to help **Protect Our Volunteers!** Ask you local municipal council and MPP too. With so much at stake throughout the volunteer sector, Ontario can't afford to let this one slide and neither can anyone who values our volunteers.

The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs is dedicated to providing strong leadership and support to member clubs and volunteers, to establishing and maintaining quality snowmobile trails which are used in a safe and environmentally responsible manner, and to furthering the enjoyment of organized snowmobiling.

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