

## Voluntary Sector Book Review

*By Wayne Stewart*

**Murray, Vic, ed., Management of Nonprofit and Charitable Organizations in Canada, (Markham: LexisNexis Canada Inc., 2006)**

Vic Murray is one of the pioneer educators in non profit management in Canada, serving from 1983 to 1995 as Director of the Voluntary Sector Management program at York University. Although now retired, Vic remains an active researcher on management issues affecting the sector. Not surprisingly, his most recent book has much to offer those involved in the sector at both board and staff levels and at various stages of sector experience. Indeed, the book represents the most comprehensive treatment of the issue that this reviewer has seen to date.

Vic has recruited a diverse group of authors from across Canada, including two from Calgary (**Andrea McManus**, CCVO Board Chair and President of the Development Group; and **Keith Seel**, Director, Mount Royal College Institute of Nonprofit Studies), who collectively bring a theoretical and a practical perspective to the issue. The book as a whole offers solid advice on how to approach the range of issues faced by practicing managers and volunteer board members from role clarity to resource development, from legal issues and liability to relations with government and community and from financial management to the application of technology.

While the introductory chapters provide general information of particular value to those new to sector governance and management, information in the later chapters will be of perhaps more interest to those of longer tenure. Keith Seel, in a chapter on Executive Leadership, points to the importance of “the interplay between the ED and the board” as critical to the success of an organization and provides detail on the roles of each. Andrea McManus, in a thorough discussion on Resource Development, offers advice and prescriptions on everything from fund raising principles to event and fund development planning and management.

For this reviewer, the information in chapters on Government and Community Relations by Kathy Brock of Queen’s University and on Performance Assessment by Susan Phillips and her co-author from Carleton University are of significant interest at this point in my work. Ms Brock alerts us to the impact of reliance on government for funding which most often comes with control requirements that may cause issues with organizational mission and management. Ms Phillips, whose advice is always sound, provides a series of alternatives for evaluation of a function where ‘hard data’ is not always available.

All told, the book is a valuable resource for practitioners in the non profit sector in both board and staff roles. As just one contribution to organizational effectiveness, it provides solid advice when dealing with funders. If we can somehow get our funders to read and respond to comments in the book such as “strict reporting requirements can increase bureaucracy within agencies”(179) and “reporting and recording and supporting donors are time consuming... (requiring) qualified administrative support,” (258) we might be in position to afford the staffing required for effective long term organizational management.

Wayne Stewart, January 8, 2007