



*For immediate release*

## **December 5: International Volunteer Day Katimavik and “green” volunteering**

**Montreal, December 4, 2006** – International Volunteer Day, celebrated each year on December 5, is officially recognized by the UN, and is a great opportunity to highlight the efforts of those who work hard so that our world and communities can reach their full potential. It is in this context that “green” volunteering has an increasing impact on people’s growing concerns regarding the environment and well-being of their communities. Katimavik, Canada’s leading national youth service program, is a prime example of this concept. Indeed, currently over 900 young people between the ages of 17 and 21 participate in this program, in which 22% of all community projects are related to the environment.

### **Youth: a strong volunteering force**

Volunteering is still a relevant topic, especially with young people, who compose nearly 17% of all volunteers (compared to people over 65, who represent 15%, and often embody the typical image of a volunteer)<sup>1</sup>. Youth who participate in Katimavik help out 87 communities across Canada. In Quebec alone, over 200 community partners in various environmental fields, such as public awareness, recycling, reusing, and restoration benefit from this assistance. This is confirmed by Marilyn Allard, director of the “Société de développement de la rivière Saint-Charles”, a non-profit community partner organization in the Quebec City region: “We are a small team of three permanent employees. Katimavik participants really help us out in with many projects. Thanks to their help, we can really take them to the next level.”

### **Volunteering and environmental awareness through direct action**

« Green » volunteering helps concerned citizens, who are often already aware of environmental issues, to increase their volunteering options and gauge their effects directly. This increased awareness also affects young program participants: “Last May, explains Marilyn Allard, the three Katimavik groups of the Quebec City region helped us clean up the shores of the Saint-Charles River. They then sorted the collected trash to avoid simply sending everything to the dump. I believe that this kind of behaviour increases awareness within all volunteers, since they see the direct results of their efforts and realize their impact on environmental issues.”

### **Volunteering and all those little things that make a big difference**

Any volunteer will tell you the same thing: dedicating some of our time to others helps us realize just how much relatively minor actions can have far-reaching results. **International Volunteer Day gives us the opportunity to remind ourselves and others that volunteering is not only vital for our society’s development, but also fosters responsible citizenship, especially in youth, along with the knowledge that every contribution makes a difference, whether it be in an organizational or community context, or to achieve a greener world for everyone.**

### **The Katimavik program**

Katimavik offers youth between the ages of 17 and 21 an exciting nine-month journey of self-discovery in three different regions of Canada. The program is based on the concept of service learning, which integrates both personal and professional development through volunteer work and group life. At the end of the program, each participant will have contributed an average of 900 hours of volunteer work – 35 hours a week – for non profit organizations.

During the 2006-2007 program year, 957 participants are volunteering for over 700 community partner organizations in 87 communities across Canada.

Participants benefit from a learning program that focuses on five components: developing leadership skills, official languages proficiency, protecting the environment, cultural discovery and a healthy lifestyle. Since 1977, more than

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/pdf/CSGVP\\_Highlights\\_2004\\_en.pdf](http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca/pdf/CSGVP_Highlights_2004_en.pdf), p.34

27,000 young Canadians have participated in the Katimavik program, developing their sense of civic responsibility and gaining self-confidence. Katimavik's goal is to form responsible citizens who will contribute significantly to Canadian society.

**DOING. LEARNING. BUILDING A NATION... ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME.**

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