

# STEPPING TO THE FUTURE

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This Business Plan is being developed to highlight the opportunities presently faced by the Canadian Volkssport Federation (CVF) and to provide direction for the future viability of the Organization. At present, the CVF is at a crossroads. We must make changes to progress into the future. The primary challenges are fourfold: financial, volunteer availability, declining membership and name recognition.

In regards to finances, the majority of the CVF revenue comes from Club memberships, sanction fees for Year Round and Seasonal and Special Events and the sale of CVF supplies. While the number of Clubs and the number of events are decreasing, cost are increasing. CVF can no longer finance its activities without drastically cutting services and/or increasing fees to its members. Outside sources of funds must be pursued to ensure the survival and development of CVF.

CVF is a national and a volunteer organization. Volunteers are drawn from the 2000 members of 37 clubs across Canada. To handle just the day-to-day operations over 250 volunteers are required. Even at the local level, Clubs are declining because there is not the volunteer base to keep them operational. A significant amount of work is done by a few individuals who perform many tasks and who have carried a notable workload for many years. We must find ways to recruit and encourage new volunteers.

Our declining overall membership is the source of many of the challenges presently being encountered as the volunteer pool is shrinking and financial revenue is reduced. There are many initiatives by governments, communities, schools and health agencies to encourage walking as a means of relieving the increasing health problems faced in all parts of the country. More workers are retiring and wish to maintain their health. We must develop programs to advertise and inform others of the health and social benefits of CVF and attract new members.

CVF is a member of the International Federation of Popular Sports (IVV) which was formed in 1968. Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Austria are the founding members and German is the main language. As such, terms such as volksmarching have played important roles in the past within the Volkssporting community but are not well recognized within the general population. There must be programs to inform the public of what we do or we must change the jargon so we are more easily recognized as a walking, cycling, skating and skiing group.

In conclusion we must focus on growth in a Canadian context. We may use ideas from other countries but it must be in our context. This is our opportunity to face the present challenges and evolve into a healthier organization.

## CHAPTER II

### ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Legal/Corporate Name: Canadian Volkssport Federation/La Fédération Canadienne Volkssport

The legal name does not convey any useful information to Canadians. We need a catchy nick name that translates well in French that we can use to allow Canadians to identify who we are.

Domain Name: [www.walks.ca](http://www.walks.ca)

#### Names of Board and Executive

President	Benoit Pinsonneault
Chairman of the Board	Benoit Pinsonneault
Chief Executive Officer	Benoit Pinsonneault
Vice President	Richard Parr
Deputy Chief Executive Officer	Richard Parr
Alberta Director	Kathleen Parr
Atlantic Director	Roland Coombes
British Columbia Director	Beverley Cattrall
Ontario Director	Sue Osborn
Quebec Director	Lisette Boivin
Sask/Man/Terr Director	Laurie Ross
Past President	Graham Fawcett
Secretary	Kaye Farmer
Treasurer	David Rugar
Materials Manager	Jacques Fontaine
Historian	David Phillips
Insurance	David Phillips
Awards Coordinator	Lea Tocher
Editor Volkssport Canada	Kathie Lutton
European Representative	Hans-Dieter Fuhr
Parliamentarian	David Phillips
Web Manager	Graham Fawcett
Special Walks Program	Richard Parr
Executive Assistant	Donna Sullivan

#### Location

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K1P 5W7

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Telephone (613)234-7333

Place of Business Room 500 251 Bank Street  
Ottawa ON

The CVF?FCV is incorporated to do business in Canada.

## Services

The CVF/FCV promotes “fun, fitness and Friendship”. Mainly walks are offered to promote a healthy lifestyle where muscles are toned, stamina is maintained and stress reduced. Clubs are encouraged to include a social program. Although the program was traditionally based on a minimum walk of 10 km, we are now offering 5 km and a personal walking program to encourage people to start a walking program. There are also a limited number of cycling, swimming, skiing, skating and snowshoe events.

## Products

The main products that are sold are record books, special walking program registrations and pins and patches related to these programs. There are a limited number of clothing items for sale. To keep members informed of new developments the quarterly magazine, Volkssport Canada is produced quarterly. In conjunction with the IVV, milestone awards are offered to encourage participants to reach higher levels.

There is a need for a program that an aging population can use to maintain good physical fitness as they age. To enjoy life people must be mobile and happy with themselves. Maintaining physical fitness reduces health care costs. Walking reduces the risk of most diseases by about 20%. Osteoporosis and diabetes can be kept in check by maintaining a physically active life style. The inactivity of baby boomers must be corrected and walking programs will help.

Besides the physical and fitness elements of the program, clubs are encouraged to promote social activities and encourage friendship. A number of articles on ways to do this have been provided to clubs but it is left to each club to develop this aspect of the program.

## Financial Status

The CVF/FCV is owned by the 37 member clubs who each have from 2 to 300 members. Each member club has one vote on the business of the Annual General Meeting.

Funding of the CVF/FCV is provided by the member clubs from the annual membership fees and the walk sanction fees. As the number of clubs decline the cost of funding the CVF/FCV is supported by fewer members. The fees remained the same for many years as the CVF/FCV had a sizable accumulated fund. This was used to cover the shortfall for the past number of years.

The CVF/FCV must attempt to obtain sponsorship from organizations doing business in Canada. It is available but must be pursued.

The Board of Directors has decided that the accumulated fund must be a minimum of 50% of the annual expenses of the CVF/FCV. Membership fees have been increased to balance the budget.

## Milestones Achieved to Date

The CVF/FCV was formed on 1 July 1987.

The trademark was registered in August of 2000.

The CVF/FCV does not have a plan or a set of milestones.

## CHAPTER III

### INDUSTRY ANALYSIS AND TRENDS

#### Size and Growth

The CVF/FCV is in the Service Sector and provides personal services in the form of various physical activities with a concentration on walking. The Service Sector has had continued steady growth to meet the requirements of the expanding population, a trend that is forecast for continued growth.

The CVF/FCV is part of the Physical Fitness Industry and is also appropriately in the Social Club Industry. With statistics showing that six out of ten Canadians being physically unfit, the CVF/FCV should concentrate on a process with the ability to attract many of these individuals to participate in the programs. With only 2000 members in 37 clubs out of a population of approximately 32,000,000, there is tremendous growth potential. In addition, most governments are supporting various exercise programs to get the general population to become more physically fit.

#### Maturity of Industry

The Physical and Social Industries are showing marked increases while the CVF/FCV is showing a decline in the number of members, clubs and events.

#### Vulnerability to Economic Factors

The CVF/FCV is somewhat immune to the effects of economic conditions as most requirements reflect normal living conditions. The rising price of gasoline may be a problem in the support of smaller clubs in isolated communities. The attractions of quality walks and the social atmosphere must be encouraged.

#### Seasonal factors

Even with severe winters, most clubs continue with various walking programs throughout the year. The CVF/FCV has instituted a Winter Exercise Program that runs from 15 October to 15 March to encourage walking in the winter months.

Many clubs benefit from the effects of tourism, in particular in areas where tourism is a large economic factor. Walks that are held in conjunction with regional fairs and festivals normally have greater participation and these should be encouraged. Seasonal walks should also include some social activities where possible. Clubs should have social committees to organize venues for seasonal walks and to encourage club social activities.

#### Technological Factors

The CVF/FCV uses computer technology in management and in communications. The treasurers, past and present along with the auditor appear to keep the financial system up-to-date and it is working well.

The communication side of the technology has been modernized and it is expected to be a good

functioning system. More communication between the CVF/FCV and its members is being done electronically and this can be expanded in the future to include such activities as the Annual General Meeting.

The website is maintained by a volunteer. There is more reliance on the information posted on the website with walk listings discontinued in Volkssport Canada. The website needs to be kept up-to-date and have more information posted for all to access.

If the website is to have expanded use, for example for accessing Special Walking Program registration, materials for sale and Volkssport Canada, it will require design changes.

The data base which is used in the sanctioning process and in keeping the website up-to-date is run on an Apple computer while a PC is used in the office. The data base was developed by one person and currently is used by one person. Although this works well now, there is the potential for problems in the future.

Technology is also used to process and record awards and appears to be working well.

The CVF/FCV would do well to have a technological coordinator to ensure that all the CVF/FCV computer programs are interconnected. There is the office system, the financial system, the data base system, the website system and the Volkssport Canada system. Could this make the CVF/FCV more efficient?

### Regulatory Issues

For many years, the CVF/FCV has been attempting to register as a charitable organisation. It is believed this would make fund raising easier. The federal government is in the process of changing this legislation and has been for years. A recent ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada has clarified that CVF/FCV has little chance of qualifying as a charitable organization.

Other government regulations are not a problem at the present time and should not be in the future.

### Anticipated Changes and Trends in the Industry

There are no anticipated changes or trends in the industry. The Fitness industry may develop new gimmicks or fads, but this should not affect the CVF/FCV. However, the CVF/FCV should continually look for improvements on fitness and the social side.

## CHAPTER IV

### MARKETS

#### Demographics/Geographics

The average age of the present CVF/FCV membership ranges between 45 and 80 years although a significant portion of Canadians of all ages from 6 years and up participate in some form of exercise program. The income range can vary but probably ranges between \$35,000 and \$60,000 for most present members. Approximately 75% of the CVF/FCV membership is female and most are retired. About half are married but do not necessarily participate in volkssporting together. The average family size is 1 to 2 people. The ethnic group is generally from Caucasian with roots from Europe. The level of education is high school or above and the majority of members own their residence. As the CVF/FCV membership only comprises a minuscule percentage of the Canadian population (0.000067%), The potential for increased membership is considered good if convincing advertising is forth coming.

The majority of towns and cities could sustain a CVF/FCV walking club if interested sports-minded people at each locality could be convinced of the benefits of belonging to a volkssport walking group. The venues could be changed to satisfy the various climatic conditions for any particular area.

#### Lifestyle and Psychographics

For the majority of working people, it is difficult to find time other than weekends to participate in CVF/FCV activities, therefore most club members, present and potential, are retired. Most wish to be involved in some sort of social activities associated with the CVF/FCV programs. They enjoy organized walking tours and vacationing.

The average walker is of a responsible nature and a slightly conservative in their lifestyle. They are socially responsible and environmentally conscious.

Clubs that maintain an active schedule appear to be most successful in attracting new members and walkers to each event.

#### Size and Trends of Market

At the present time there are 37 clubs with a total of approximately 2000 members. Membership and number of clubs has been declining in the past few years.

One in seven Canadians is over 65 years of age. Canadians are living and staying active longer. As lifestyle changes with retirement or loss of a spouse, for example, Canadians are looking for activities that promote a healthy life style an social activities.

Given the above, the potential market base is considerable if the various CVF/FCV programs can be promoted to satisfy the needs of potential customers. Many potential members migrate to indoor facilities or other outdoor groups for their sports requirements.

## CHAPTER V

### THE COMPETITION

#### Competitive Position

Numerous organizations compete with the CVF/FCV to offer a program of fitness combined with a social atmosphere. The Walking Room, Senior groups, Newcomers groups and the YMCA/YWCA are probably the best organized but many others cater to the activities and social requirements of their clients. As well there are informal groups who walk to local facilities to socialize, perhaps over coffee, and walk home. Individuals also either meet with one or two friends or go with their spouse to walk their neighbourhood. Fitness clubs are found in most medium to large size communities. Sports clubs that focus on one particular activity, such as golf and curling, also offer varying degrees of physical and social activities. The costs associated with belonging to a CVF/FCV club are very small when compared to membership in competitive facilities offering indoor activity centres. Belonging to a CVF/FCV club offers the unique advantage to access walks throughout the world. Clubs within the CVF/FCV are insured for \$2,000,000 against liability.

#### Market Share Distribution

With only 2000 members across Canada, the CVF/FCV market share is very small.

#### Barriers to Entry

Unless several members in any particular community are willing to participate on a regular basis in potential club activities, it is difficult to start and maintain a CVF/FCV operation. To a new volkssporter, our activities can appear complicated, for example, the walker can stamp a distance book when doing a walk for the second time but not the event book. We often use words that they do not understand, for example, YRE. Special walking programs sponsored by the region and CVF/FCV may add to the complexity for new walkers and make the job of stamping after the walk more time consuming for volunteers and for those standing in line waiting for a stamp. Many people wish to participate fully in an activity when they join but if they are encouraged to collect stamps for an award program to earn a patch or pin which they do not want and are made to feel that it is a requirement to do so, they may drop out rather than continue participation. Although we have many 5 km routes, the majority of volkssporters complete 10 km routes which may seem daunting to a new walker. With the volkssporting encouragement to “walk your own pace” the new walker may not be able to keep up and feel they are holding back other walkers who walk with them because they are new members. Although the cost for volkssporting is low compared to many other group activities, some walkers are amazed that one would pay to walk. Most members do not understand to rules for handicapped walkers or the Personal Walking Program. This must be advertised.

## CHAPTER VI

### STRATEGIC POSITION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

The CVF/FCV provides health-oriented sports programs to those wishing to be involved in a non-competitive undertaking that emphasizes fitness, fun and friendship. The CVF/FCV appeals to many who want to be involved in outdoor activities that promote a healthy life-style. The main advantage is that anyone of reasonable walking ability can participate without having to pay hefty joining and monthly fees and without having to wear specialized clothing except for good-quality footwear.

The CVF/FCV must provide good quality walking trails with diversity to give present and future members a pleasant experience with which to look forward. Most clubs already offer walking areas in their particular neighbourhood.

Unless an area has people who are interested in participating in local CVF/FCV activities, the CVF/FCV should concentrate their efforts on improving the situation where there is interest while at the same time trying various methods to promote new memberships and clubs in areas that offer promise. This may involve offering walks of various lengths in conjunction with local sports and health clubs that are already established in the target area i.e. Curves, YMCA/YWCA, etc.

The CVF/FCV must also make understanding objectives and operations more easily grasped for new members. In particular the requirements of various different types of walks and activities must be understood by those wishing to assume positions of responsibility.

The CVF/FCV has a competitive advantage in the fact that any reasonable-sized locality could have an active and successful operation. A small community could support a CVF/FCV club but may not have sufficient numbers to allow a commercial sports club operation. The main problem is how to use existing channels to forward information on the benefits of participating in a CVF/FCV activity and the minimum costs and facilities required.

## CHAPTER X

### MARKETING PLAN AND SALES STRATEGY

The CVF/FCV should have a distinct advantage on many organizations offering a similar walking or exercise program. Membership in CVF/FCV clubs is inexpensive and no specialized apparel is required except comfortable walking footwear. To those members living in areas where there are walking clubs and/or CVF/FCV walks, participation is easy as most walks can be done at one's own pace and time, essentially meeting customer needs.

The CVF/FCV emphasizes fun, fitness and friendship as its goals. This message does not seem to resonate with the general public and potential customers. Membership is declining, present members are getting older, new members are not being recruited in any significant numbers and many are reluctant to pay a pittance for walking, but will spend hundreds to belong to an indoor organization. Although the CVF/FCV has clubs and/or walks in all provinces and territories, they are only in limited areas and not available to many members without significant travel costs.

## CHAPTER XI

### OPERATIONS

The basic operations of any business is particularly important for internal planning and is where one puts into practice the needs of the organization. The operation of the CVF/FCV is from a central office complimented by regional and or provincial associations. The organization does not own any office space but rents the required accommodation and facilities as needed. This has proven acceptable but can result in upheavals when a change in office accommodation becomes necessary due to the sale of the property, unacceptable increases in rent or termination of lease. The maintenance of an office is becoming increasingly costly as the number of clubs and events decrease.

The storage of documents and historical items can also be disrupted. Although the CVF/FCV distance and event books are maintained at an accommodating location, the future storage and maintenance of supplies and management could readily change and long term viability should be considered now.

The maintenance of walking book records has been maintained on a volunteer basis and to date this has been very successful. The future maintenance of these records could be in jeopardy if no volunteers come forward when the present incumbent wishes to be relieved of this task.

The present Inventory Control has proven successful and should be retained but modernized to keep current with new technologies. Frequently there are shortages of materials for possible new members at walk events or material is not available at individual walk boxes.

Financial control should be a source of regular information and feedback. Safety is an on going concern and should be included in all considerations of walk events and special functions.

As the CVF/FCV works basically on a volunteer basis, it is difficult to develop contingency planning. Often it is difficult to get members to take on responsible leadership positions in the organization. How does the club function in the event of key personnel not being available?

## CHAPTER XIV

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The CVF/FCV must be committed to making a positive perception in all its activities. As a country wide organization, our members are very visible, especially during group walks and major activities. The primary goals of the CVF/FCV must be adhering to all laws and developing creative ways to contribute to their community and enhancing visibility. The CVF/FCV does not have the monetary resources but does have the manpower to effect various initiatives in community involvement.

During walking outings, members should always attempt to obey all laws. Often during large outings, groups walk two or more abreast on sidewalks and do not give equal concern for other users. Often, people cross major roads and streets in a dangerous fashion or by jay walking. Walkers must ensure that personal property is not violated by staying clear of walking on lawns or other possessions.

All clubs should participate in community activities that complement their particular venues or take responsibility for some local initiative that helps the general public as well as providing good publicity for volkssporting. Many clubs support local charities by having a special walk to benefit the community or take responsibility for some other particular area such as adopting a section of highway to do periodic clean-ups, recycling etc. Such endeavours should only be taken on according to the capability and the size of the club.

## CHAPTER XV

### DEVELOPMENT AND MILESTONES

The CVF/FCV long term goal must be to increase membership in the organization and our presence in all areas in Canada. The present membership has been dwindling for several years to the point that some provinces will not have any clubs or members in the volkssporting arena. What can be done to entice more people to join and participate in our organization?

During the formative years of the CVF/FCV, many members came from individuals who had been in Europe in some capacity and had participated in volkssports in the European theatre. Unfortunately, with the withdrawal of most of the Canadian military personnel from Europe, the CVF/FCV no longer has this ready available group of military and support personnel to draw upon with the consequence of less people becoming members of CVF/FCV. However, the IVV has recently expanded to some new countries where there is substantial membership in IVV activities. At the same time membership and number of walkers continue to decline in countries where IVV membership has been long established.

How do we take the CVF/FCV from it's present situation to achieving our long term goals? Our foothold in the potential market must be developed to better inform other possible members. We must improve our walking programs to entice new members to want to join and participate. We should offer more incentives such as programs already permitted but not pursued such as skiing, skating, swimming, snow-shoeing, etc. We must better use all our resources in our marketing efforts.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Conclusions

It is concluded that in order to move forward, the CVF/FCV must have directors responsible for the various aspects of the program. At present the president takes on all responsibilities and he is very busy and does not accomplish everything. By involving the directors each director could be responsible for an aspect of the program. The director could appoint a small committee to assist and the director would report on progress at each Board of Directors Meeting and in the directors Annual Report.

The Business Plan must be updated and voted on at each Annual General Meeting. It does not work if the only time the plan is reviewed is when there is a crisis, it is too late.

There is a financial problem looming and it needs resolution. It would appear that any suggestion to increase membership fees is being met reluctantly and results dwindling membership.

More volunteers are required to keep clubs, associations and the CVF/FCV operating. Many volunteers have been supporting their clubs for many years. They need a break. If the present executive in some clubs retire, the clubs would probably cease to exist. Volunteering should be a fun time. Many hands make for easy work. The meetings should be party time not hard time.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that starting in 2010 each director be assigned a task to be responsible for such as sponsorships, Business Plan, membership, marketing and publicity, volunteers, long term planning and special walking programs.

It is also recommended that:

1. The CVF/FCV associations and clubs should have a membership group to coordinate new members and new clubs. Interested potential members or groups must be pursued and mentored. Any interest should be followed up vigorously.
2. Although we have fun, fitness and friendship as our goal, we must emphasize how walking with volkssporting is different from other walking groups. We must emphasize the potential benefits of belonging to the CVF/FCV while traveling to other places in our region, across Canada and around the world.
3. Encourage a diversification of events to include more cycling, swimming, skiing, snowshoeing and skating events.
4. Encourage clubs to participate in local charity events that involve activities under the CVF/FCV umbrella.