

What's Important?

Focus on Membership

by Rob Stewart

“What are you going to focus on as your priorities?”

That's the number one question people have asked me since my appointment as President and CEO of Scouts Canada.

Achieving Our Mission

Scouts Canada is part of a worldwide Movement committed to developing young people, and helping them achieve their full potential. We achieve our Mission through weekly programs. Scouting must continue to expand membership, to reach as many young people as possible and expose them to the great leadership experiences provided by our dedicated section Scouters.

When we talk about membership numbers, some people tell us we're only interested in the bottom line. There's truth to that statement. Our membership numbers help us determine how many young people we are reaching and whether or not we continue to be a relevant force in youth development in Canada.

What can we do? Let's make sure that no child is turned away. Every parent who contacts Scouting should be assured a spot for their child in our programs. Often this requires leader recruitment, and parents are the prime source for leaders, so the two (recruiting youth and recruiting leaders) go hand in hand.

If your meeting space can accommodate more kids, or if your leadership ratio is high, help us all achieve the Mission by making sure no one gets turned away.

If our membership continues to decline we will cease to be relevant in Canadian society. Canada cannot afford to lose the great programs Scouting offers.

What Else Is Important?

Scouting's success or failure rests with section Scouters who

deliver programs on a weekly basis. Regularly, we need to ask ourselves: "Is what I am doing helping section Scouters deliver their programs?" If the answer is "No," we should stop doing whatever it is.

The Movement's resources must reflect this commitment. For example, we developed the CD-ROM Program Builder to help both experienced Scouters and new leaders.



Outside adventure: Now that's Scouting!

The revised Training and Development Guidelines recognize that volunteers have limited time available. Scouting needs to make ever-better use of that time so they can learn how to become effective leaders.

Scouting's redesigned web site focuses on informing section Scouters of changes or new developments that affect their role.

All elements of our structure and organization should exist only to provide support for weekly programs; these must remain the center of our attention.

Managing Risk

Today's world is very different from what it was five years ago. We need to continuously monitor and audit our activities, policies and pro-

cedures to ensure Scouting is providing as safe an environment as possible for all members. Often this requires extra work by many people, but parents must be able to feel confident that their children will have an exciting, fun, learning experience without fear of harm or injury.

Be assured that all decisions related to this issue are made while recognizing the impact they have on program delivery. We will not make changes simply for the sake of change.

Youth Leadership

Scouting must continue to involve youth in all aspects of leadership. After all, we claim to create leaders. How do we reach this goal? We do it by providing them with opportunities to lead. This can be accomplished in every section in an appropriate manner. As well, we must continue to engage youth on committees and task forces where decisions are made about issues that affect them. Our current National Youth Committee is a wonderful example of young people committed to achieving Scouting's Mission.

Scholarship applicants each year are a living testimony to the great work of Scouting and the leaders we have. They highlight examples of Scouting success and relevance.

It all comes back to dedicating ourselves to supporting the section Scouter, and making sure every young person in Canada has the opportunity to join Scouting.

The future looks very bright, but here's the question I can't wait to face in several years time: "What do we do with all these kids?"

Let's Bring on the Adventure in every community in this country! \

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R'.