



Planning for the Future

by Ian Mitchell and Julian Celms

Whether it is through a Sixers Council, a Court of Honour, the Venturer Executive or an entire Rover Crew, members of the organization are provided many opportunities to give their input. Through these mechanisms, we gather as much information as we can and then use it to set the direction for the specific section for the coming year. This way we ensure that we are providing activities that meet the needs and interests of our youth members.

We also follow this model with our adult members.

For the past number of months, adult members have been asked to provide input into the organization's Strategic Directions. Through *the Leader Magazine*, Scouts Canada's web site and Council Commissioner meetings, adult members have begun to set the direction for the organization for future years. These Strategic Directions were approved by the Board of Governors at the Annual General Meeting last November 2005 and are included in this magazine under the title "Creating the Environment for Growth." It can also be found on Scouts Canada's web site, www.scouts.ca, For Leaders: <http://www.scouts.ca/inside.asp?cmPageID=74>.

Program Application

A number of years ago the National Program Services Committee, in consultation with Commissioners and section leaders, established Program Standards for Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Venturers. These Standards would ensure that the goals for each section were met for each and every youth member. They allowed us a

Standard that we could share with parents to show what each youth member could expect to receive during their time in the Scouting section while forming the basis for a leader to develop and evaluate his section program. See *October 2005 Leader Magazine* or Scouts Canada's web site: <http://www.scouts.ca/inside.asp?cmPageID=131>.

The Strategic Directions and Program Standards will guide leaders in developing programs that will meet the needs of youth and the expectations of Scouts Canada. Staying relevant to youth; increasing retention; strengthening our profile; involving youth; they are all important and, believe it or not are a part of the role that our program Scouters fulfill by delivering fun, challenging programs each night.

But we cannot stop there. The Strategic Directions will take us well beyond the nightly programs that are delivered to Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Venturers and Rovers.

We wanted to address some questions we feel that leaders likely will ask about how the Strategic Plan affects them. There really is two parts to this answer. The first part is a broad concept of how this will likely affect you.

The second we can only answer at the end of the next step of this planning process. Action plans are still being developed to support the Strategic Directions at the time of this magazine's printing.

Q: How will this impact me?

The broad themes outlined in the Strategic Directions, such as becoming more culturally diverse, broadening volunteers' support and remaining relevant to Canadian society may have an impact on the way you run your weekly program, how you recruit and retain members and interact with the community you Scout in.

The Strategic Directions approved by the Board of Governors provide us all with a direction to move forward. Over the next number of months, committees, volunteers, leaders and Councils across the country will be looking at the Directions and creating action plans. At the time we are writing this, it is too early to pinpoint specific tasks the action plans will contain.

From a program point of view, we will provide you with the National Program Services Committee's action plans as they relate to section programming in a future edition of the *Leader Magazine*. How might you adapt programming or work in the community to reflect them?

The success of these Directions and the impact on all of us in achieving our Mission will require effort from all Scouts Canada's volunteers and staff. At this point, some of the Directions might seem very broad and intangible in relation to how you conduct your weekly meetings. However, do not underestimate the role you have on achieving/supporting them. If everyone works together, we will all contribute to the success of this plan.

Q: What role do I have in regard to this plan?

In the short term, keep on your current track – ensuring your program meets the stated goals through the application of the Program Standards Scouts Canada has set out.

Take a look at your section's Program Standards – you will quickly see how they are close to elements of the Strategic Directions. Here are some obvious examples:

Strategic Direction #1 – Remaining Relevant to Canadian Society – Ensure that programs remain affordable, relevant and attractive to increasing numbers of adults and youth.

Retaining members and seeking opportunities for your section to grow, links to the Membership/Retention/Growth section of the Program Standards. The energy and enthusiasm that you portray is contagious. As leaders in your community, you have the ability to shape the size of your group and how the program meets the needs of your youth. This is an example of how your efforts make a difference to Scouting in Canada.

Strategic Direction #2 – Broadening Volunteer Support – Develop new approaches to attract and retain adult volunteers.

Taking and providing Woodbadge Basic and Advanced through 'courses' or hands-on learning approaches are one step to achieving this. Your efforts in helping to coach and mentor other leaders will directly impact another volunteer's Scouting experience. Hands-on learning from an experienced leader, allows the learner to connect and gain from your attitude and experience.

Strategic Direction #3 – Strengthening Scouting's External Profile – Build a positive image of Scouting through communications, partnership and community and corporate involvement.

This means continuing to work with your section/group to provide community service, and working with your partner/sponsor informing the community about the awesome activities that go on in your weekly meetings. Celebrate your community service both internally and externally through articles in your community newspaper and/or the *Leader Magazine*. Remember, you ARE Scouting in your community.

Strategic Direction #4 – Involving Youth – As a continuing integral part of Scouts Canada's Mission, Principles, Practices and Method, optimize youth engage-

ment in policy determination, management, promotion and program design and delivery at all levels as appropriate to their age and experience.

Wow — a powerful statement- working to the core of what we do! The Youth Input section of the Program Standards relates to this. Our programs provide great opportunities for youth involvement. White tail Beavers play a role in helping brown and blue tails during crafts and activities. Sixers, Seconds, Kims, Keeos, Patrol Leaders, Assistant Patrol Leaders, Sixer Councils, and Courts of Honour are leadership roles for children and youth between the ages of 5 and 14. These roles ensure that youth are consulted and involved in the development and delivery of the program! In the company and crew structure Venturers and Rovers develop and direct their own program.

Strategic Direction #5 - Enhancing Internal Communications– Ensure an effective two-way flow of dialogue and information in support of internal operations.

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Remember, you
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Why keep great ideas to yourself? Use one of the best tools we have for communicating — *the Leader Magazine!* Tell us about fun program ideas, great ways you implemented something new, or hints and tips you find valuable (the rest of your fellow leaders may find it useful too). How you communicate within your group and with parents affects internal communications. Newsletters, parent meetings, Sixer's Council and Courts of Honour — all lead to enhancing communication.

Strategic Direction# 6 - Becoming More Culturally Diverse – Encourage and welcome Canadians of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in and deliver programs.

Canada is a changing mosaic. Does your group reflect the cultural and religious diversity in your neighborhood and community? Who in your community do you have to approach to make your group more inclusive? Your Commissioner or Field Executive/Community Development Worker may offer some valuable advice and assistance. Be mindful of cultural differences — whether they may be diet, faith or times when conducting activities. Not everyone understands what we do — take the initiative to reach out and welcome them.

Strategic Direction #7 - Scouting – Canada's 21st Century Youth Organization – Structures,

systems and management organizationally accountable to members, sensitive to changing needs of society, and capable of quick response.

Ideas and fads can come and go quickly! At the program level you can react and be relevant through your weekly evening themes, using specialty badges, and gauging youth interest by soliciting their ideas in programming. Don't forget — new challenges and ideas can be channeled through your Council Commissioner for the National Program Services Committee. A flexible approach can influence the success of your group. The nature of your community might make a four or five month long Wolf Cub Pack the best fit where you live. Our SCOUTS-about and Extreme Adventure programs are a great tool in supporting specific community needs (find more information about these on our web site).

If you are unclear about the value of the Strategic Directions, this metaphor may help. Pretend that all of the adults in Scouts Canada are on one large sailing ship. We are all working hard at each of our roles, to help the ship sail (move forward). However, without a unifying plan, some of us might be out of sync by hoisting the sail too early or not turning the rudder at the right time. The Strategic Directions help us co-ordinate our efforts to maximize all of our energy and potential, allowing us to sail the ship farther, faster and have fun along the way — as one unified team. Let's get on board, set the sails and enjoy the ride! X
— Between them, Julian Celms and Ian Mitchell help to steer the programs for all sections at the National Office.

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Photo: Scouts Canada Archives