

CHARITIES BETTER THAN GOVERNMENTS AT UNDERSTANDING AND MEETING NEEDS OF CANADIANS



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Toronto, ON – According to a new national research survey conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of the Edmonton based Muttart Foundation, a private charitable foundation that provides grants and assistance to worthwhile projects in Canada, eight-in-ten (79%) Canadians think that charities understand the needs of Canadians better than the government and 72% feel that charities do a better job than government of meeting the needs of Canadians.

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/ Muttart Foundation poll conducted from May 3, 2004 to July 20, 2004. This study is a follow-up to a similar research project undertaken by the Muttart Foundation in 2000. For both surveys, a representative randomly selected sample of 3863 adult Canadians were interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 1.6 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. Quotas were imposed to ensure that there was an adequate representation of each province and the results were then weighted according to household size and provincial distribution.

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When read a series of statements regarding charities and their influence in Canadian society, eight-in-ten (79%) Canadians think that charities understand the needs of Canadians better than the government, and 72% say that charities do a better job than government of meeting the needs of Canadians. Six-in-ten (57%) Canadians also think that charities should be expected to deliver programs and services that the government stops funding.

Canadians trust leaders of charities (80%) more than they trust many other professions. Only nurses (96%) and medical doctors (93%) are trusted more. Charity leaders rank higher than business (68%) and religious leaders (67%), government employees (66%), journalists and reporters (63%), lawyers (59%), union leaders (51%), provincial (33%) and federal (30%) politicians.

- In the 2000 study, three-in-ten (31%) Canadians trusted federal politicians “a lot” or “some”, while 30% trusted provincial politicians.

Canadians’ trust in charities varies greatly depending on the type of charity. Hospitals appear to be the most credible with Canadians, with 88% of respondents indicating that they trust hospitals “a lot” or “some”. This is followed by charities that focus on children and children’s activities (86%), charities that focus on health prevention and health research (86%), and charities that focus on education (79%). Three-quarters of Canadians trust charities that focus on the protection of animals (75%), charities that focus on protecting the environment (75%) and charities that focus on social services (75%). Churches (70%) and charities that focus on arts (61%) are perceived to be somewhat less trustworthy, and Canadians are least trusting of charities that focus on international development, with only 56% of respondents indicating that they trust this type of charity “a lot” or “some”.



There is a strong majority support among Canadians about changing the laws limiting advocacy by charities. Eight-in-ten (78%) respondents agree (strongly or somewhat) that laws should be changed to permit charities to advocate more freely for the causes in which they are involved, of which 38% strongly agree. Only 6% of Canadians strongly disagree, while 13% somewhat disagree.

Many charities hire professional fundraisers to raise money for their cause. As payment for this service, some professionals and firms get a percentage of the money they raise. Six-in-ten (60%) Canadians find this type of commission-based fundraising unacceptable for charities, including 28% who find it very unacceptable. Only four-in-ten (39%) respondents consider hiring commission-based fundraisers an acceptable (very or somewhat) way for charities to raise money, with only 5% strongly agreeing.

Among those who think that commission-based fundraising is acceptable, six-in-ten (57%) indicate that the maximum limit for commission should be set between 1-10%. One-in-ten (13%) say that 11-20% should be the maximum and 7% say that 21-30% should be the limit.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of Canadians say that individuals or organisations who are hired to make fundraising requests should be required to indicate that they are receiving a percentage of donations raised all of the time, 21% say that this information should be revealed only when asked, and 7% say that this does not have to be revealed at all.

More than eight-in-ten (84%) Canadians agree (strongly or somewhat) that charities should be able to earn money through any type of business activity they want as long as the proceeds go to their cause, with about half (49%) strongly agreeing with this point of view. Only 6% strongly disagree with this opinion and 10% somewhat disagree.



However, three-quarters (73%) also agree that when a charity runs a business, a significant worry is that money could be lost on the business instead of being used to help Canadians, with 26% strongly agreeing. Two-in-ten (17%) somewhat disagree while another 8% strongly disagree with this point of view.

When asked to indicate which point of view was closest to their own between 1) “If a charity makes some of its money from a business, they should have to pay taxes like any other business” or, 2) “Charities shouldn’t have to pay tax on earnings from a business, if it is used to support their cause”, almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents chose the latter option, while 28% feel charities should pay taxes like any other business.

When asked about different types of amateur and professional sports teams and whether they should be allowed to accept tax assisted donations in the same way charities do, three-quarters (74%) of respondents agree (strongly or somewhat) that children’s amateur sports teams like Little League teams should be allowed to do so, with 35% strongly agreeing with this view. Almost seven-in-ten (68%) respondents agree that elite amateur athletes like individual Olympians should be allowed to accept tax assisted donations, and 66% of respondents think that the same privilege should be extended to elite amateur sports teams like Olympic bobsledding teams. However, Canadians are split as to whether this should be extended to adult amateur sports teams like local adult soccer teams – about half (52%) agree with this view. One-quarter (24%) of respondents agree that professional sports teams like the NHL and CFL should be allowed to accept tax assisted donations.



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