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CHARITIES MAINTAIN HIGH TRUST LEVELS BUT WARNING SIGNS ARE ON THE HORIZON

Canadian charities continue to enjoy high levels of trust, but there are signs that Canadians expect more from them, according to a study released today.

Talking About Charities 2013 is the fifth edition of a public-opinion poll commissioned by The Muttart Foundation, a private foundation based in Edmonton. More than 3,800 Canadians participated in telephone interviews, leading to results that are considered accurate within 1.6%, 19 times out of 20. Field work was conducted by the Social Sciences Research Laboratories at the University of Saskatchewan and the data analyzed by Imagine Canada, the Toronto-based umbrella organization for charities.

Overall, almost four in five Canadians said that they have a lot or some trust in charities, numbers that are consistent over the previous four editions, released in 2000, 2004, 2006 and 2008.

The 79% trust figure far exceeds the trust levels given to the federal government (45%), provincial governments (44%) and local governments (57%), as well as media (53%) and major corporations (41%). Only small businesses received a higher trust level at 81%.

Some types of charities are trusted more than others, the study shows. Hospitals (86% trust level) and children's charities (82%) topped the list, while environmental charities (67%), arts organizations (60%), churches and other places of worship (59%) and international development organizations (50%) scored significantly below the overall level of trust in charities.

Of significance, according to Muttart Foundation executive director Bob Wyatt, is that there have been significant drops in the trust levels of some types of charities since the study was last conducted in 2008. International development agencies dropped nine percentage points from the previous study, while churches dropped seven points and environmental charities five points.

Other findings related to trust include:



Investing in Communities for 50 Years

Established in 1953 by Merrill D. Muttart and Gladys E. Muttart

- Trust in charities is highest amongst younger Canadians: 79% of those between 18 and 24 years of age and 77% of those between 25 and 34 years of age say they have some or a lot of trust in charities.
- Trust in charity leaders has decreased and softened. Only 17% of Canadians trust charity leaders a lot, a decrease of 10 percentage points since the 2000 study. In total, 71% of Canadians in 2013 say they have some or a lot of trust in charity leaders, compared to 77% in 2000 and 80% in 2004.
- Again, however, trust in all kinds of leaders, other than nurses, has decreased over the span of 13 years, and notably since the last survey was conducted in 2008. These decreases are particularly noticeable for religious leaders (down 14 percentage points to 63%), lawyers (down 10 percentage points to 62%), federal politicians (down eight percentage points to 33%) and provincial politicians (down nine percentage points to 36%).

The study also shows:

- Charities are considered important by 93% of the population and 88% of Canadians believe charities generally improve our quality of life.
- While about two-thirds of Canadians believe charities understand their needs better than government, and are better at meeting those needs, the percentage of Canadians holding those views has declined about seven percentage points over the last five years.
- The percentage of Canadians who believe that charities are generally honest about how they use donations is still high at 70%, but has decreased from the 84% who felt that way in 2000. Similarly, only about one-third of Canadians (34%) believe charities only ask for money when they really need it, compared to 47% of Canadians who felt that way in 2000.
- Canadians continue to give charities low ratings for the degree to which they report on how donations are used, the impact of programs and charities' fundraising costs.
- Canadians remain supportive of charities engaging in business activities. Almost nine in 10 (86%) think running a business is a good way for a charity to raise money it can't obtain from other sources, while eight in 10 (79%) think charities should be able to earn money through any type of business activity as long as the proceeds go to the cause. Almost two-thirds of Canadians (64%) say that charities should not be taxed on business earnings as long as those earnings are used to support the cause, although that number represents a decrease from 71% who felt that way in 2006.

Dr. Ruth Collins-Nakai, president of The Muttart Foundation, said:

“Our role in commissioning this report is to provide an objective picture of the landscape in which charities operate. There are parts of that picture that some will like; there are others that clearly indicate the need for action.

“As an organization that seeks to help increase the ability of charities to fulfil their mission, The Muttart Foundation hopes that the conversations and introspection demanded by this report works to the benefit of all charities, and those that count on them.”

The full copy of *Talking About Charities 2013*, along with provincial breakdowns and other data are available on The Muttart Foundation’s website at www.muttart.org, under the “publications” tab.

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