



Charity Leaders Band Together to Maintain Public Trust

New donor assurance program announced

Toronto, October 18, 2007. Leading Canadian charities have come together to announce a new initiative designed to maintain public trust in their fundraising work.

At an event at the University of Toronto's Hart House close to 200 charity leaders gathered for a panel discussion called "The Charitable Sector and the Media: Accountability and Reporting." The event was co-hosted by the Canadian Journalism Foundation and Imagine Canada in response to negative media stories that threaten to erode public confidence in the charitable sector. "While public confidence in charities remains high – in fact, a recent study tells us that 79% of Canadians trust charities -- we recognize the need to be proactive in our efforts to keep relations strong with donors," says Don McCreesh, Chair of Imagine Canada, the umbrella organization that represents and supports many of the country's leading charities. "While there is an important role for regulators such as the Canada Revenue Agency, we believe that charities can do a great deal to self-regulate their activities by adopting standards of good practice. We need a balance between sound third party regulation and charities showcasing that they take these issues seriously themselves. Well-informed media are also key players in influencing the public about these issues."

Moderated by Toronto Life editor John Macfarlane, with United Way of Toronto CEO Frances Lankin, Imagine Canada Chair Don McCreesh, Toronto Community Foundation Chair Martin Connell and Toronto Star journalist Kevin Donovan, the panel presentation and ensuing discussion provided a forum for the release of Imagine Canada's newly revised Ethical Code. The Ethical Code is a donor assurance program that establishes standards for responsible fundraising practices and reporting to donors.

Several event attendees have signed on as flagship members of the new Ethical Code. Among them is Scott Haldane, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Toronto. "Our board of directors has committed to the principles of this new Code and we are building on existing internal mechanisms to ensure we operate in an open, transparent and responsive way to our donors."

The Ethical Code program, set to launch formally in January 2008 with a national recruitment campaign and a compliance process, complements the existing Code of Ethical Principles and Standards of Ethical Practice, operated by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, the professional association for individual fundraisers. Together, these two initiatives ensure that both the individuals driving the profession and the organizations behind them are working together to ensure the interests of the donor are top of mind.

Ethical Code Flagship Members

The following charities have committed to the principles of the Code and to working with Imagine Canada on further developing the Ethical Code Program:

- Canadian Cancer Society – Ontario Division
- Habitat for Humanity Canada
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario
- Plan Canada
- Salvation Army, Canada and Bermuda Territorial Headquarters
- St. Joseph's Healthcare Foundation - Hamilton
- The University of Western Ontario
- United Way of Greater Toronto

- World Vision Canada
- YMCA of Greater Toronto
- YWCA Canada

Collectively, these charities represent almost one billion dollars in annual fundraising revenue.

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