



ELECTION KIT 2011

March 2011

ELECTIONS MATTER

An election campaign provides all Canadians with an opportunity to focus on and to debate issues of collective interest and concern. While we are strictly non-partisan, Imagine Canada encourages candidates from all political parties to consider issues that matter to charities and nonprofits and the millions of Canadians who work with them as employees and volunteers. As candidates put forward their respective visions for the future of Canada, we ask them to speak out about how they will work with charities and nonprofits to meet the growing and changing needs of the people and communities we serve and engage at home and around the world.

We believe that the charitable and nonprofit sector is a cornerstone of Canadian civil society. An election provides us with an opportunity to help political candidates, the populations we serve and engage – and our own community – to better understand our sector’s contributions and what is required to maintain and enhance these contributions in the decade ahead. It gives us another venue in which to discuss the [drivers of change](#) which affect how the sector governs and finances its operations, attracts and retains paid staff and volunteers, and enhances and communicates its impact. It also enables staff and volunteers of charities and nonprofits who are knowledgeable and engaged in their communities to speak out about the social, economic, environmental and cultural opportunities and challenges that confront us as a nation.

The Members of Parliament whom we elect will be called upon to make decisions that affect our daily lives as individuals and as communities. It is important that they make these decisions informed by the best possible understanding of the communities we serve. Decisions that are poorly conceived or implemented inevitably cause hardship and distress – and it often falls to our sector to address these unfortunate outcomes. Conversely, decisions can enhance citizens’ well-being and quality of life when they build upon the local learning and innovations that charities and nonprofits are often at the forefront of implementing. Election campaign conversations that embrace the experience and insights of charities and nonprofits can lead to better outcomes.

This is why Imagine Canada has prepared the attached **Election Kit**. We hope it will foster debate and help Canadians make informed decisions about the future direction of our country and our sector’s contributions to it. Central to our Election Kit is a series of **briefing notes** that present a number of cross-cutting issues affecting the sector. These issues have been identified as national [priorities for action](#) as part of our [National Engagement Strategy](#). If charities and nonprofits are to continue making a real difference in the lives of Canadians and citizens around the world, these issues need to be addressed.

Imagine Canada is also asking each political party specific questions about our sector, and we will share the responses as broadly as possible. We encourage you to ask these and other locally relevant questions of candidates in your riding as well. The election kit includes a list of **DOs and DON’Ts** for charities to help organizations engage in the election process in a responsible manner, as well as **specific suggestions for actions** that organizations can take to maximize their engagement. In recognition of the importance of civic engagement, the Election Kit also provides a **“Get Out the Vote”**

document with suggestions and links for helping to ensure that all voters have their say on Election Day.

The Kit is a living document. Its messaging will be revised and refined as we receive feedback from charities and nonprofits across the country and as more information becomes available during the campaign. We will strive to distribute it and other tools, such as our new [Nonprofit Election Newswire](#), as widely as possible through our website, email alerts, and our existing social media outlets such as [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) (#CNPOelection #OSBLélection #cdnpoli #charity).

We also invite each of you, as employees, volunteers, supporters or beneficiaries of charities and nonprofits to bring to our attention media coverage, political announcements or other election developments of cross-cutting interest to the sector so that we can share them with colleagues and supporters across the country and around the world. Use our hash tags (#CNPOelection #OSBLélection #cdnpoli #charity) on [Twitter](#), respond to our [blog](#), and contact us by [email](#) or **telephone** (1-800-263-1178 ext. 351). Help us to help others stay informed and engaged!

Our voices matter. Make sure that yours and those of the people and communities who matter to you are heard during this election campaign.

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CANADA'S CHARITABLE AND NONPROFIT SECTOR

- We are the weavers of the social fabric of this country and major contributors to economic prosperity.
- We are more than 161,000 organizations strong, of which more than 85,000 are registered charities. We include, among others, symphonies, theatres, museums, and cultural organizations; sports and recreational organizations; environmental groups; universities, colleges, hospitals and health services; religious congregations; international co-operation organizations; and social service providers helping Canadians to enhance the quality of their lives.
- We employ more than 2 million people and mobilize more than 12 million volunteers in rural, northern and urban communities at home and abroad. In 2008, we generated \$106.4 billion in economic activity, a contribution of 7.1 percent to Canada's GDP.
- Our influence on people's engagement and well-being is far-reaching, from family, community and social service supports to self-expression and fulfillment through sports and recreation, arts and culture as well as educational, environmental, philanthropic and religious pursuits.
- While advancing a great diversity of interests and activities, we share a core belief in the importance of having places and spaces in which to discover and hone one's talents and voice and/or of being of service to others by engaging collectively for the greater good.
- We are the partner of choice for the alternate delivery of programs and services initiated by governments at all levels, be they federal, provincial or territorial or municipal. For the federal government alone, we delivered programs worth more than \$3 billion in countless communities across Canada and internationally in 2009.
- Canada's success as a country today is in no small part thanks to the significant economic, social, cultural, educational and environmental contributions of Canada's charitable and nonprofit organizations.
- Individual Canadians collectively invested more than \$8.6 billion of their after-tax dollars to support our work in 2007. We also have strong links to business both domestically and internationally. Through our boards, volunteers and earned income activities, we serve as integrators of cross-sector collaboration involving businesses, governments and communities.
- We are at the heart of vibrant, resilient and welcoming communities. We are Canada's charities and nonprofits.

ENABLING PHILANTHROPY FOR ALL CANADIANS

The issue

Canada needs to act now to renew its charitable donor base. This means encouraging donations from Canadians who have never given before and helping those who do give to give more.

- **There are signs that Canada's charitable donor base is eroding.** The proportion of Canadian tax filers claiming charitable donations declined from 30 percent in 1990 to 23 percent in 2009.ⁱ Total charitable donations are also in decline – from \$8.2 billion in 2008 to \$7.8 billion in 2009.ⁱⁱ While this drop is largely attributed to the economic downturn and philanthropy is likely to rebound in the short-term, it is predicted to decline in real dollar terms over the next two decades due to demographic factors.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Research shows that more than half of donors would increase their charitable giving if there were better tax incentives to do so.**^{iv}

What you can do

Encourage political parties and the federal government to support the introduction of the Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving, a 10 percentage point increase in the federal charitable tax credit on giving that exceeds a donor's previous highest giving level. For eligible donation amounts up to \$200, this would result in a 25 percent federal credit. For eligible amounts over \$200, the federal credit would be 39 percent.

The proposed new credit is:

- **A highly cost-effective way to encourage greater philanthropy**, leveraging \$10 in new giving for every \$1 of direct incremental federal investment. Under the proposed credit, a \$200 million year-over-year increase in charitable giving by Canadians would have a direct incremental cost of \$20 million for the federal government.
- **Aimed primarily at working families and middle-income Canadians.** Once an individual reaches \$10,000 in annual donations, no enhanced credit would be offered. The credit would only apply to the first \$10,000 of an individual's eligible donations for a given year. The credit for any giving over this amount reverts to 29 percent.
- **Guaranteed to yield a real and measurable increase in charitable giving for every dollar invested**, as the credit is only activated when Canadians give more than they did previously.

How this will benefit Canadians

The Stretch Tax Credit will help working families and middle-income Canadians to give more to their charities of choice, since it targets average-income Canadians who donate cash and therefore are less likely to benefit from previous tax measures aimed at encouraging large gifts of assets. As there is no floor on the stretch tax credit, even those who can only afford to make smaller donations will benefit.

Canadians will become more aware of the value of their giving, particularly those who have never given before. Providing Canadians with more information about their personal giving trends and the value of the tax credit, and showing them their Charitable Tax Credit contribution room on their annual tax forms, will encourage more strategic and informed giving.

Canadians will reap the benefits of these new investments in their local communities. A five percent increase in donations under \$10,000 would generate over \$400 million in new investment in communities across Canada, helping charities prevent and alleviate social problems, enhance quality of life, and support individuals and families affected by the recent recession. For those charitable organizations relying on a large number of individual donations, the effect of the increase will be all the greater.

For more information

Please visit Imagine Canada's website (<http://www.imaginecanada.ca/stretchtaxcredit>) for additional information on the Stretch Tax Credit:

- [Stretch Tax Credit Q&A](#) – Answers to the most common questions on the Stretch Tax Credit with examples of how it will work.
- [2010 Pre-budget brief](#) – Submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance 2010 pre-budget hearings by Imagine Canada.
- [Report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance](#) – Recommending adoption of the Stretch Tax Credit.
- [Media coverage](#) – National and regional editorials and news coverage of the proposed Stretch Tax Credit.

DIVERSIFYING AND SUSTAINING FINANCING FOR CHARITIES AND NONPROFITS

The issue

Canada needs to support charities' and nonprofits' efforts to enhance their sustainability and diversify their revenues so that they can better fulfill their missions. This includes providing greater predictability and stability of government funding, increasing earned income opportunities and facilitating access to new sources of capital.

- **Charities and nonprofits rely on three core sources of revenue:** government funding, philanthropy, and earned income.
- **However, governments are cutting spending to reduce their deficits.** The March 22, 2011 [federal budget](#) proposed to reduce department spending by at least \$4 billion per year by 2014-15 and many provinces are also anticipating or announcing cutbacks.
- **Total charitable donations are also declining** – from \$8.2 billion in 2008 to \$7.8 billion in 2009.^v While philanthropy will likely rebound in the short-term, it could begin stagnating, and even decline in real dollar terms, in the longer term due to demographic factors.^{vi}
- **Earned income is the most viable potential source of new revenue for many charities and nonprofits.** Many organizations are already involved in enterprising activity of some form as almost 50 percent of funding for sector services currently comes from earned income.^{vii}
- **Policy, tax and regulatory clarifications and changes are needed, however, to support these efforts,** as well as a significant rethinking of the traditional roles of business, government and the nonprofit sector, and the accountability mechanisms that govern their activities and the relationships among them.

What you can do

1. **Encourage the federal government to help charities and nonprofits achieve more diversified and sustainable financing by creating a more enabling environment for organizations that wish to expand their earned income activities or access a broader range of capital sources.** The federal government can do this by:
 - **Improving charities' and nonprofits' access to federal small business development and support programs** offered through Community Futures Development Corporations, Business Development Canada, Canada Business Service Centres, and other federal initiatives.
 - **Providing charities and nonprofits with greater clarity on what enterprising activities they can pursue and, where necessary, removing regulatory and tax barriers** that unduly constrain enterprising activities to give organizations the leeway they need to achieve sustainability.

- **Exploring with charities and nonprofits the development of innovative new financial instruments, like the Community Bond and Social Impact Bond, that can help to mobilize more private capital for public benefit initiatives.**
- 2. Recognizing the federal government’s commitment to deficit reduction and the difficult choices this entails, encourage the federal government to minimize negative impacts on charities and nonprofits by ensuring all departments employ effective governance and administration practices such as:**
- **Fully adopting and implementing the [recommendations](#) of the federal Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contributions and adhering to the principles of the [2001 Accord](#) between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector and the 2002 Code of Good Practice on Policy Dialogue and Code of Good Practice on Funding.**
 - **Consulting organizations on decisions that will affect them and the constituencies they serve, so they can provide input and assess and prepare for any impacts.**
 - **Making and communicating policy and funding decisions in a timely way to organizations to minimize uncertainty and unnecessary disruption of services.**
 - **Giving organizations affected by funding cuts or policy changes a reasonable transition period to take measures to minimize the impact on those they serve and those they employ.**
 - **Engaging organizations in policy development and respecting their right to articulate the diverse perspectives of Canadians without consequences to their funding or charitable status.**

How this will benefit Canadians

Charities and nonprofits will have greater flexibility to respond to the growing and changing needs of Canadians. With expanded revenues and access to capital, organizations will have more flexibility to respond to changing demands and more options for financing infrastructure, programs and innovation.

Canadians can expect to see more innovation in meeting community needs as charities and nonprofits benefit from expanded opportunities to experiment with new approaches, including different models of social enterprise, and to access private sector financing that was previously unavailable to them.

Better managed grant and contribution programs will mean better managed nonprofits and charities as they are freed from chronic short-term funding that leads to staff turnover, interruption of service and crisis management to focus on building organizational capacity, long-term priorities, and sustainable strategies to better serve and engage communities at home and abroad.

For more information

- [Recommendations](#) of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Grants and Contributions
- Imagine Canada position [statement](#) on Federal Grants and Contribution Funding
- Canadian Social Finance Task Force [Report](#)
- [2001 Accord](#) between Government of Canada and Voluntary Sector

ENHANCING CAPACITY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN SKILLED STAFF

The issue

Canadians need to better understand why charities and nonprofits legitimately seek to recruit and retain highly qualified talent with strong management, financial, information technology, communication, collaboration and legal skills to fulfill their complex missions and meet growing public expectations. A career in the nonprofit sector needs to be on the radar screen of young Canadians and organizations must be financially sound so as to both offer fair salaries, benefits and retirement saving opportunities and make a career in the sector a viable option for all.

- **The charitable and nonprofit sector as a whole employs approximately two million Canadians^{viii}, or 11 percent of the active Canadian labour force.**
- **Among organizations that form the core of the nonprofit and charitable sector, well over half of these have fewer than five employees**, and three-quarters of them have fewer than 10 employees. Only three percent of these organizations have more than 100 employees.^{ix}
- A 2008 survey of sector^x employers revealed that half of those who recruited new employees in the preceding year experienced difficulty finding and hiring qualified staff.^{xi}
- While 88 percent of sector employees surveyed are satisfied with their current job, aspects they are less satisfied with included: compensation for overtime and pay more generally, access to retirement savings, professional development opportunities, and career advancement.^{xii}
- **As the baby boom cohort ages and retires, all employers will be competing for talent from a smaller labour pool.** Ensuring the charitable and nonprofit sector is able to compete effectively is critical given the growing and changing demands for their services and supports – demands that governments alone cannot meet.

What you can do

1. **Raise awareness about the existence and the value of this sector's workforce** by asking candidates and Canadians if they know how many people work with charities and nonprofits in their communities and if they recognize that employees in this sector constitute an important and integral part of the Canadian labour force. Encourage them to consider what communities would look like if no employees or volunteers showed up for one day.
2. **Encourage the federal government, as it works to develop options to better meet the retirement income needs of Canadians, to actively include charities and nonprofits in its consultations**, to give consideration to the particular challenges of the charitable and nonprofit sector, and to include mechanisms to address these challenges.
3. **Invite the federal government to work with charities and nonprofits to improve access to training and learning opportunities** so as to enhance the skills and knowledge of workers who are dealing with an increasingly complex and rapidly changing environment.

How this will benefit Canadians

Canadians will continue to enjoy key services and opportunities to engage in their communities through well managed organizations that have the skilled personnel required to meet growing service demand and public expectations regarding high quality programs, cost-effective delivery, transparent governance, accountability for tax and donor dollars, and sustainable operations.

Canadians working in the charitable and nonprofit sector will enjoy fairer compensation, better retirement saving opportunities and other improved benefits that better reflect their expertise, education, contributions to society and true earning potential.

Young Canadians will be able to “afford” to choose a career in the charitable and nonprofit sector without sacrificing their own or their family’s well-being and future security. When these Canadians eventually retire, they will not place an undue burden on governments or their families due to insufficient earnings and retirement savings.

For more information

For more information, please visit the HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector website (www.hrcouncil.ca) where the following documents can be found:

- [Labour Force Statistics](#)
- [2008 Labour Force Study](#)
- [Money Matters: Compensation in the nonprofit sector](#)

RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

The issue

Canada needs to sustain and expand its volunteer base – and to more fully engage a new generation. Today’s volunteers are more goal-oriented, results-driven, mobile, autonomous, tech-savvy, and have multiple interests.^{xiii} Organizations need support to provide a better overall experience making better use of volunteers’ time, maximizing their contribution and skill development and motivating them through personalized volunteer opportunities.

- **More than half of Canada’s 161,000 charitable and nonprofit organizations are managed and governed entirely by volunteers,**^{xiv} with the remainder also drawing on volunteers for activities like governance, fundraising, and program and service delivery.
- **While 46 percent of Canadians volunteer, the majority of volunteer hours is provided by only a small portion of these volunteers.**^{xv} This narrow base risks being stretched to its limit because the demand for volunteer hours is growing while overall volunteer rates remain the same.
- **Currently, almost 12.5 million Canadians aged 15 and over volunteer, contributing more than 2 billion volunteer hours annually.**^{xvi} A quarter of those who volunteer – about 12 percent of Canadians overall – provides 78 percent of all volunteer hours.^{xvii}
- **In a 2003 national survey, over half of organizations reported problems recruiting volunteers (57 percent), with 13 percent of organizations saying that the problem is serious.** In many cases, the challenge for organizations was to find the right kind of volunteer for the tasks to be done. Just under half (49 percent) of organizations reported problems retaining volunteers, with nine percent indicating that the problem is serious.^{xviii}

What you can do

1. **Encourage the federal government to work with Volunteer Canada, Imagine Canada and other nonprofit sector organizations to develop a comprehensive national strategy to sustain and renew Canada’s volunteer base** and build the capacity of charities and nonprofit organizations to recruit, support, train and retain the next generation of Canada’s volunteers.
2. **Recommend, as part of this national strategy, that the federal government engage its provincial/territorial counterparts in a national dialogue** on key demographic, technological, and other societal trends that are reshaping volunteerism in Canada, with a view to fostering a coordinated and collaborative action on volunteerism in Canada.
3. **Urge the federal government** to ensure the long-term sustainability of the crucial data collected through the Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating.
4. **Encourage the federal government to work with charities and nonprofits** to address the issues of cost and timeliness in obtaining Police Records Checks and Vulnerable Sector Verification Checks for volunteers who work with vulnerable populations including children, seniors and people with disabilities.

How this will benefit Canadians

By helping to sustain and renew Canada's volunteer base, the federal government can help secure the programs, services, and benefits that Canadians value, but that could not exist without volunteers who give over 2 billion hours of their time annually – the equivalent of over 1 million full-time jobs.^{xix}

By strengthening the capacity of organizations to attract, support and retain volunteers, governments can increase the public benefits and services they leverage through grants and contributions to charities and nonprofit organizations, yielding more value for Canadians as taxpayers and citizens.

Communities will also benefit from the social and human capital that volunteerism fosters – social inclusion and cohesion, community spirit, civic capacity, new friendships, and skills and opportunities are all generated when Canadians volunteer their time for each other and the causes they care about.

Canadians who volunteer will be better supported and enjoy more rewarding and timely volunteer experiences that fulfill their expectations and help them to achieve their personal goals.

For more information

For comprehensive information on volunteerism issues, supports, and initiatives in Canada, please visit Volunteer Canada's website at: <http://volunteer.ca>

For additional research and public policy information related to volunteerism, please visit Imagine Canada's website at: <http://www.imaginecanada.ca/node/31>

For fact sheets, reports and presentations drawn from the *Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating*, please visit: <http://www.givingandvolunteering.ca>

Bridging the Gap – *Enriching the volunteer experience to build a better future for our communities*, Volunteer Canada and Manulife Financial, 2010.

Cornerstones of Community: *Highlights of the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (2003 revised)*, Statistics Canada, 2005.

Satellite Account of Non-profit Institutions and Volunteering 2007, Statistics Canada.



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[Date]

[Address]

Dear [Party Leader],

Re: Imagine Canada - Election Questionnaire 2011

Imagine Canada works on behalf of the charitable and nonprofit sector in Canada, which encompasses 161,000 organizations across the country, of which more than 85,000 hold charitable status. The sector accounts for some seven percent of GDP, employs two million Canadians and engages over 12 million volunteers. Charities and nonprofits across the country want to work with the federal government to ensure that Canadians continue to benefit from federal investments that enable their communities to be vibrant, resilient and welcoming ones.

With this in mind, Imagine Canada is asking each of the major federal political parties to share their views and positions on the issues that affect our communities. To help inform debate among voters during the federal election, we will share the responses received with the many organizations and individuals who make up the charitable and nonprofit sector. The responses will be posted on Imagine Canada's web site, shared through our social media networks and forwarded to charities and nonprofits operating in communities across the country and around the world.

Please return the completed questionnaire to Dr. Michelle Gauthier, Vice-President, Public Policy and Community Engagement by April 15. We would also appreciate receiving the name and contact information for an individual with whom we might follow up on your responses. If you have any questions about this document, please contact Dr. Michelle Gauthier by email at mgauthier@imaginecanada.ca or by telephone at (613) 238-7555, ext. 225.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marcel Lauzière".

Marcel Lauzière
President and CEO
Imagine Canada

Encl.: (1)

IMAGINE CANADA - ELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE 2011

1. Canada's 161,000 charities and nonprofits have a far reaching influence. They deal with some of the most intractable social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges facing individuals and communities and contribute greatly to quality of life, prosperity, and civic and community engagement. The sector is also a major economic force in Canada, contributing 7.1 percent to GDP and employing the equivalent of two million Canadians or 11 percent of the economically active population. **What is your party's position on the role of these organizations in Canadian society?**

2. Canada's social fabric is changing due to a variety of factors such as an aging population and increased immigration from other parts of the world. At the same time, fiscal constraints are reducing the capacity of governments at all levels to provide services to Canada's population. Changes such as these are increasing the demands placed on organizations in the charitable and nonprofit sector. **What specific federal government initiatives would your party support to ensure that the sector is able to respond in a sustainable way to the increased and changing demand for its services?**

3. Governments sometimes respond to the fiscal challenges they face by cutting grants and contributions. For funding recipients in the charitable and nonprofit sector, these cuts can have a serious impact on the sector's ability to serve and engage Canadians. To ensure that even in challenging times the partnership between the federal government and the sector remains constructive, it makes sense to follow certain principles, including appropriate up-front consultation with the sector and affected communities; engagement of the sector in the consideration of alternatives; transparency and accountability in the decision-making process; reasonable transition periods when funding is discontinued or realigned; and attention to the sustainability and continuing capacity of organizations to do their work effectively. **How would your party propose to incorporate these principles in funding processes and decisions?**

4. To expand the base of charitable giving, Imagine Canada has proposed a stretch tax credit to increase the federal charitable tax credit by 10 percent on charitable donations for amounts exceeding an individual's previous highest level of giving. A similar proposal received the endorsement of the House of Commons Finance Committee in its December 2009 report. A private member's bill calling for the implementation of the stretch tax credit was also introduced in the last session of Parliament. **Does your party support Imagine Canada's Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving? If not, does your party support an alternative approach? What additional tax measures would your party support to improve the level of charitable giving in Canada?**

5. Revenues for charities and nonprofits come from a wide variety of sources, including the sale of goods and services; transfers from all levels of government; membership fees; donations and philanthropy; and investment income. However, the economic challenges of recent years have made revenue generation through donations and government transfers increasingly challenging. In response, the sector is putting renewed emphasis on revenue diversification and earned income is becoming an increasingly important source of funding. The federal government offers a number of initiatives to support small and medium-sized enterprises to undertake business plans, market research and technology development, among other services. **Do you support broadening the eligibility criteria for**

access to these kinds of federal business development services to include charities and nonprofits? What other federal measures does your party support to help the sector to diversify and increase revenues?

6. Charitable and nonprofit organizations are subject to a variety of regulations. Some of these can limit their ability to engage effectively in more entrepreneurial activities that would help them to diversify and render more sustainable their revenue base. Providing charities and nonprofits with greater clarity on what enterprising activities they can pursue and, where necessary, removing regulatory and tax barriers that unduly constrain enterprising activities are increasingly important to give organizations the leeway they need to achieve sustainability. Other regulations, such as those proposed in the most recent federal budget, are designed to ensure compliance with Canada Revenue Agency requirements and can potentially burden charities unduly. **What measures does your party support to clarify, and where necessary, reform, the regulatory framework governing the sector?**

7. Like most small and medium-sized enterprises, many charitable and nonprofit organizations face significant challenges in attracting and retaining talent when the private and public sectors are often able to offer salaries and benefits that they cannot match. A number of federal initiatives could help the sector address these challenges for its two million employees. In particular, like small and medium-sized enterprises, organizations in the sector would benefit from access to new retirement savings or pension plan options for their employees. **What federal measures does your party propose to increase the attractiveness of pursuing a career in the nonprofit sector?**

8. Charitable and nonprofit organizations depend on and benefit from the engagement of more than 12 million volunteers to achieve their missions. However, the expectations of volunteers are evolving and reflect their changing values and needs as they seek a more personalized and flexible form of engagement. Organizations in the sector must be responsive to these expectations in order to retain existing volunteers and attract new ones. **What federal initiatives can your party offer to help the sector engage and support volunteers more effectively?**

9. The federal government transfers funds to the provinces and territories through the Canada Social Transfer and the Canada Health Transfer in support of health, education and social service programs delivered by the provinces and territories. The amounts to be transferred have been determined through 2013-14, but the formula for subsequent transfers remains to be negotiated. Ideally, a new intergovernmental agreement will minimize potential negative impacts on charities and nonprofits and help them plan for their operational activities after 2014 by consulting about and communicating potential changes in a timely manner. **What is your party's position on negotiating levels of funding for transfers after 2014 and ensuring that any potential negative impact on the communities served by the sector is minimized?**

CHARITABLE AND NONPROFIT DOS AND DON'TS DURING AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Whatever the issue, a charity is not permitted to support or oppose directly or indirectly any political party or candidate for public office, at any level of government.

According to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) [guidance](#) regarding political activities, there are three types of activities: **Charitable Activities, Political Activities, and Prohibited Activities.**

- Activities are considered *charitable* when they are well reasoned and aim to increase awareness of an issue related to the charity's purpose, but do not include a call to [political action](#). While public awareness campaigns cannot be the charity's primary activity, charities are allowed to devote significant organizational resources to charitable public awareness and policy activities.
- [Political](#) activities seek to persuade the government on an issue related to the charity's purpose. Activities are permitted if they are non-partisan and if the charity devotes substantially all of its resources (usually considered 90 percent or more) to charitable activities.
- [Prohibited](#) activities are those that fall outside the boundaries of these categories (e.g., partisan political activities, activities not related to the charity's purpose, etc.). A partisan political activity is one that involves direct or indirect support of, or opposition to, any political party or candidate for public office. Charities that engage in partisan political activity risk having their status revoked.

Charitable Activities

Public awareness campaigns

Communicating with an elected representative or public official

Providing information to policymakers or public officials

Responding to an information request from elected representatives or public officials

Making a submission to a government-related body

Serving on an government advisory body

Conducting or disseminating research (including on website/through social media)

Hosting an all-candidates meeting

Releasing the full text of a representation made to an elected representative or public official

Education (based on factual information)

[Examples](#)

Political Activities

Encouraging the public to contact elected representatives or government officials

Making a statement to the media for a particular position

Publicly urging representatives/officials to adopt a position

Organizing an event to promote a position, including a conference, march or rally

Conducting or disseminating research *with a call to action*

Showing how **all** the Members of Parliament or the legislature of a province, territory or municipal council voted on an issue

Examples

Prohibited Activities

Partisan political activity

Explicitly connecting views to any political party or candidate for public office

Supporting an election candidate in the charity's newsletter

Distributing leaflets highlighting lack of government support for charity goals

Preparing dinner for campaign organizers of a political party

Inviting competing election candidates to speak at separate events

Examples

For more information

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/chrts-gvng/chrts/plcy/cps/cps-022-eng.html>

<http://charitytax.imaginecanada.ca/topics/activities/political>

http://www.imaginecanada.ca/files/www/en/sectormonitor/resources/sectormonitor_vol1_no3_factsheet_2_2010.pdf

<http://thephilanthropist.ca/index.php/phil/article/view/888/751>

GET INVOLVED! ACTIONS YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN TAKE DURING THE ELECTION

- *Talk to all parties. No matter how your organization chooses to engage, remember to be nonpartisan.*
- Urge all election candidates to publicly state their position on issues of importance to your organization and the nonprofit and charitable sector.
- Increase awareness of the contributions your organization, and the sector as a whole, make to Canada and the world and speak out about how the sector can work in partnership with government to address key challenges and opportunities of interest to voters.
- Contact the media! Get your organization and the sector's message in your local media by offering your spokespeople for interviews on particular issues, or by writing an op-ed piece for your local paper.
- Attend all-candidates meetings in your area and ask questions (see our Election Questionnaire) or host an all-candidates meeting yourself.
- Organize a nonpartisan event to discuss an issue. Convene various stakeholders and invite all election candidates.
- Call or write all candidates to speak with them about issues of importance to your organization and the sector. During an election campaign, candidates are easiest to reach through their campaign offices.
- Engage candidates in conversation when they come to your door. Be non-partisan, brief and clear. Also understand that candidates cannot be experts on every issue – offer to provide them with background information that is available to all the candidates.
- Engage your stakeholders using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or a blog. Encourage them to contact election candidates themselves and to “get the vote out”! To help your message stand out, use relevant hashtags (#CNPOelection #OSBLélection #cdnpoli #charity).
- Subscribe to Imagine Canada's [Nonprofit Election Newsfeed](#). The newsfeed will provide selected listings on key charitable and nonprofit sector issues during the election. Items may feature 1) cross-cutting issues of interest to the charitable and nonprofit sector; 2) media coverage of charities and nonprofits that are raising electoral issues; and 3) information promoting and supporting civic engagement and voting. Sign up in your favourite [RSS](#) reader. Sign up to get [email alerts](#).
- Send links of online nonpartisan material to library@imaginecanada.ca if you want us to consider including it in the newsfeed and keep us informed of local, regional and provincial developments that would be of interest to colleagues and supporters across the country.
- **Most importantly, vote!**

GET OUT THE VOTE: PROMOTING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In the 2008 federal election, Canada had its lowest voter turnout ever with only 59.1 percent of eligible voters casting a ballot. As organizations that contribute daily to Canada's economic prosperity, quality of life and civic and community engagement, charities and nonprofits are well positioned to help improve Canada's voter turnout and reduce voter apathy. A federal election provides our 161,000 organizations, two million employees and 12 million volunteers with an invaluable opportunity to encourage all Canadians to participate, to make their voices heard, and to be an active part of the democratic process.

Imagine Canada supports efforts to ensure that all those who are eligible to cast a vote in a federal election are able to do so. A number of organizations have created resources to encourage citizens to cast their vote. This document presents links to a few of these resources, including "how-to" information as well as tools that can be used to "get out the vote" locally. We welcome suggestions of other sites to consult and will update this preliminary list as warranted throughout the campaign.

- **Elections Canada** <http://www.elections.ca/home.aspx>

This resource provides information about the electoral process in Canada, identifying one's electoral district, what pieces of identification are needed for voting, how to vote by mail inside or outside Canada, as well as other frequently asked questions. There are materials to assist aboriginal communities in eight aboriginal languages, ethnocultural communities in 27 heritage languages, and voters with special needs. In addition, there is a section for young voters and resources for teachers.

- **Apathy is Boring** http://www.apathyisboring.com/en/about_us/faq#faq49

This site uses art and technology to educate youth about democracy. In practical terms, this includes a variety of activities such as putting on concerts and workshops as well as providing information through its website. Among other things, this website features resources for making an organization youth-friendly as well as listing upcoming events. Apathy is Boring also provides volunteer opportunities to engage young voters in the democratic process.

- **Facebook – Get out the Vote Canada!** <http://www.facebook.com/GetOutTheVoteCanada>

This is an example of social media being used to "increase voter turnout in Canada". In addition to serving as a resource for information sharing, planning and discussion, several actions are suggested such as inviting one's neighbours over for a discussion about the issues that matter to them, a type of block party. A *Get Out The Vote Google Map* is provided (<http://bit.ly/80QicP>).

- www.TweetCommons.com and www.politwitter.ca

These resources allow users to follow the Twitter accounts of Canadian political representatives in one central location. They also evaluate how active particular representatives are on Twitter, and rank political topics in terms of how frequently they are discussed by Twitter users. These sites rely in part on users' contributions to compile relevant information in a central, easy-to-use location.

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