

The gift of giving

Few Canadians realize their money and assets can be put to good use by charitable organizations after they've passed away. The fact is, 81 per cent of Canadians contribute to charitable organizations throughout their lifetimes but only seven per cent continue this support through a gift in their will or estate plan.

A program of the Canadian Association of Gift Planners, LEAVE A LEGACY™ encourages people from all walks of life to make gifts through a will or other gift-planning instrument to the charity or non-profit organization of their choice through 21 regional programs, including one in the Ottawa area.

The program is helping Canadians learn how a legacy gift to a favourite charity can make a difference for years to come.

“If you have lived a full and happy life and would like to consider giving something back, leaving a legacy in your will can be the vehicle,” says Nadine Fowler, coordinator of the Ottawa-area program.

Before deciding where your assets will go after you die, consider this:

...In coming years more than \$1 trillion (Cdn) will be transferred nationally from one generation to the next by means of individual estates.

...The federal government has supported the LEAVE A LEGACY™ goal of increasing bequests and other estate gifts by implementing legislation designed to encourage more and larger gifts to charities from individuals and corporations.

...Although you'd like to leave your entire estate to family and friends, depending on the current tax laws, leaving a gift to a charity in your will may reduce the taxes payable upon your death significantly.

... LEAVE A LEGACY™ does not solicit gifts for any particular organization. Its aim is to raise awareness of the importance of including a charitable gift in the estate planning process.

LEAVE A LEGACY™ helps put money into the coffers of a variety of not-for-profit groups that raise funds for causes such as health care, education, animal welfare and the environment. It is a painless way to make an enormous difference because a donation will not affect a person's current lifestyle but will make a big

difference for charities, many of which are strapped for funds. It is a win-win situation, say those close to the program. People who decide to will money to charities can do it in several ways.

Easiest is to make a simple notation in a will, specifying exactly how much should be left and where it should go. Prospective donors can also purchase a life insurance policy and make the charity of their choice the beneficiary. The best strategy is to talk to your lawyer, your family and your financial planner before making a decision.

If you want your bequest to go to a specific office and be used in a specific manner, state in your will that you are leaving a gift to the Red Cross, Ottawa Division, rather than simply the Red Cross. And state clearly that your donation to the Canadian Cancer Society is to be used in a specific way, such as for breast cancer research, if that is your desire.

LEAVE A LEGACY™ is hearing from older donors who are interested in leaving money behind for charity. But organizers also hope to interest younger people who will be around for years to come and would consider earmarking gifts to not-for-profit groups when they draw up or amend their wills.

The charitable sector is aware of tremendous unmet needs in the community and also that there is an enormous intergenerational transfer of wealth taking place as baby boomers inherit the wealth of their parents. In many cases, baby boomers do not need all of this cash and are urged to persuade their parents that they are okay and that some of this money could be willed to charities.

“By making bequests and other “planned gifts,” you can continue to help organizations that are making an important difference in your community, across the country or around the world,” says Ms. Fowler.

“What better way to thank the people or organizations that have had an impact on your life, than to make a contribution from your estate through a bequest? Gifts large and small are important. Charitable giving is not only for the wealthy.”

For more information on LEAVE A LEGACY™ call (888) 430-9494 ext. 3 or in Ottawa, (613) 232-7991 ext. 3, email: leavelegacy@cagp-acpdp.org or visit the LEAVE A LEGACY™ Web site at www.leavelegacy.ca.

10 Things You Can Do To LEAVE A LEGACY™

...Prepare a will. Without a will you lose control over your property at death.

...Leave a gift in your will for the not-for-profit organizations that made a difference in your life.

...Leave a specific dollar amount or a percentage of the assets in your will to a not-for-profit of your choice.

...Consider using assets for your legacy gift. These include but are not limited to cash, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, term deposits, real estate, vehicles, art, jewelry, or insurance. Such gifts may even provide tax savings.

...Name a not-for-profit organization as a beneficiary of your RRSP, RRIF or pension.

...Name your favourite not-for-profit as the beneficiary of an existing or paid-up life insurance policy.

...Purchase a new life insurance policy naming your favourite not-for-profit as the beneficiary.

...Remember loved ones with memorial gifts.

...Encourage family and friends to leave gifts to not-for-profits in their wills.

...Ask your financial or estate planning advisor to include charitable giving as part of their counsel to clients.

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