

Donor Rights

By Greta Luimes, CFP

It had been so nice to meet with a group of friends to enjoy his 70th birthday. Celebrating anything after Ella's death seemed so difficult. She had shared all his celebrations for so many years, but these friends had made this a really special time for him. They were genuinely interested in what he was doing now and what was important to him.

He had shared with them what was going on at The Mission lately, the place where he spent so much time making sandwiches, ladling out soup, talking with the people who came in. He shared about his role on the Board of Directors and the discussions they had been having about raising more money and support for their plans.

He'll never forget Arnie's response when he urged them all to consider what they might give to The Mission. He had said, *"I'm through giving away my hard earned money to organizations that could very well spend it foolishly. How do I know what they do with what I give them? The directors and leaders in these charities could be padding their own pockets with what I worked so hard to put away."*

He'd always known there were people who felt that way but nobody had ever been quite so frank and candid with him about it. He decided that the reason he was committed to supporting The Mission was because he was so familiar with it. He also had every confidence in the leadership as they carried out the purpose of this ministry. These folks were devoted to the vision that they were convinced God had placed before them.

So the question in his own mind now was - what could they give a potential donor to ensure confidence in what they were all about, in our purpose at The Mission? He needed to raise this at the next Board meeting.

After some research of other charities and ministries, they came upon the Donor Bill of Rights. Including it in all mail-outs and posting it in their lobby might bring some attention to their commitment and dedication to their donors. Living by its pledges as an organization would give them focus and purpose in meeting with these supporters. It would be a start in showing some integrity as an organization and putting to rest the mind-sets of the Arnie's of the world.

Donor Bill of Rights

Philanthropy is based on voluntary action for the common good. It is a tradition of giving and sharing that is primary to the quality of life. To ensure that philanthropy merits the respect and trust of the general public, and that donors and prospective donors can have full confidence in the nonprofit organizations and causes they are asked to support, we declare that all donors have these rights:

- I. To be informed of the organization's mission, of the way the organization intends to use donated resources, and of its capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes.
- II. To be informed of the identity of those serving on the organization's governing board, and to expect the board to exercise prudent judgment in its stewardship responsibilities.
- III. To have access to the organization's most recent financial statements.
- IV. To be assured their gifts will be used for the purposes for which they were given.
- V. To receive appropriate acknowledgement and recognition.
- VI. To be assured that information about their donation is handled with respect and with confidentiality to the extent provided by law.
- VII. To expect that all relationships with individuals representing organizations of interest to the donor will be professional in nature.
- VIII. To be informed whether those seeking donations are volunteers, employees of the organization or hired solicitors.
- IX. To have the opportunity for their names to be deleted from mailing lists that an organization may intend to share.
- X. To feel free to ask questions when making a donation and to receive prompt, truthful and forthright answers.

The Donor Bill of Rights was created by the American Association of Fund Raising Counsel (AAFRC), Association for Healthcare Philanthropy (AHP), the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). It has been endorsed by numerous organizations.

Endnote: Many charities and ministries today are under the scrutiny of not only the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) but also their own donors. Subscribing to a Donor Bill of Rights encourages excellent communication, relationship building and loyalty between ministry and supporters.

* Please refer to previous issues of the Christian Advisor for stories related to gifting securities, giving through a Will and giving through the drawing down of registered assets.

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