

GIVING

Charities anticipate drop in donations

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TORONTO -- Four out of 10 Canadian charities expect a drop in donations this year, a new survey suggests. But when it comes to giving, another poll shows there appears to be no place like home.

The Innovative Research Group conducted two polls - one of charities and the other of the public - to gauge giving in tough economic times.

The data released today show public priorities have changed: While health-related charities once received the bulk of support, social-service agencies, such as the United Way and the Salvation Army, have now surpassed them to become the top choice among donors.

"In down economic times, charity starts at home," senior consultant Jason Lockhart said yesterday. "Donors want to see something tangible. ... They're focusing their donations to community-based organizations, where they probably feel they'll have the biggest, most immediate impact."

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The figures show that even though 40 per cent of charities say donations will drop, most people say they plan to give about the same this year as previous years.

Another bright spot is that fewer people say they plan to donate less. The number of people who plan to give less this year has dropped six percentage points to 18 per cent since last October, when stock markets were taking the biggest hit.

Still, as donors refocus where to direct their dollars, hospital foundations and the arts and culture sector believe they are most likely to bear the brunt of the hit, according to the survey of charities.

Despite many charities fearing that contributions will decline, they're holding steady so far. More than 80 per cent of organizations haven't cut any jobs, and 65 per cent said they don't plan to do so this year.

The survey of 802 fundraising professionals was conducted online between Jan. 19 and Feb. 2, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. The online survey of 2,015 Canadians was conducted between Jan. 6 and Jan. 20, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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