



O'NEILL: Giving is good, it's that simple

By [Terry O'Neill - The Tri-City News](#)

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FACE TO FACE: What could possibly be wrong with giving to charity?

Give a food basket to one needy neighbour and you're a hero. Set up a non-profit charity to distribute food baskets to hundreds of needy families — and hold glamorous galas and expensive lotteries to support the charity — and you're a scoundrel.

That, at least, is my understanding of my debating partner's position on "charity." He likes the little, private stuff but can't abide big, look-at-me, capital-C Charity. It's my guess, then, that he's especially appalled by, for example, local developer Ryan Beedie's highly publicized \$22-million gift to SFU earlier this month.

Of course, we both agree that individual, private acts of charity are to be commended. I see them not only as a sure sign that donors have a good grasp of their responsibility towards their fellow citizens but also as an indicator of a certain level of spiritual maturity. There's real truth in the saying, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Big charities also win my support for a multitude of reasons related to the above but also for a very specific one that I think gets to the heart of this debate. I am not bothered by big charities because, like individual acts of charity, they involve voluntary action. No one is compelling membership and no one is forcing anyone to give anything they don't want to give.

Furthermore, all charity, whether a random act of kindness or a multi-million-dollar endowment, connects the giver more closely to the recipient — a quality that is especially important in our increasingly scattered lives.

My debating partner will no doubt offer up an effusive explanation for his anti-charity pet peeve but I suspect what's really driving his distaste is a belief, held by many champions of

the left, that government is always the best vehicle to deliver social services.

Indeed, to ideologues of the left, there's never a social problem that can't be solved by setting up new bureaucracies and hiring new bureaucrats to deliver costly new programs to the public. Taxes must be raised and debt increased. Incomes must be levelled and wealth redistributed.

And, thus, in the perfect world, Big Charity would not be needed because Big Government would do all the giving. And, of course, all the taking.

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