

Simply, Thank You

Merci, tout simplement

December 24, 2025 · By Daniel H. Lanteigne

This is an AI-generated English translation of Daniel H. Lanteigne's original French-language column, provided for reference. Read the original in French on Les Affaires → <https://www.lesaffaires.com/dossiers/philanthropie-automne-2025/merci-tout-simplement/>

With just days left in the year, year-end reviews are piling up. And, as is often the case in philanthropy, they're tinged with worry. The latest Generosity Index 2025 from the Fraser Institute reminds us that a smaller proportion of Canadians report making a charitable donation than a decade ago, and that the share of income devoted to giving is slipping slightly.

This data is real. It needs to be heard, but it doesn't tell the whole story. While we dwell on the declining indicators, we talk much less about the people behind the numbers. Those who are still giving. And those who are just starting to.

So, at this year's end, I want to do something other than paint a bleak picture of philanthropy. I want to say thank you.

What the Numbers Leave in the Shadows

According to data analyzed in the Generosity Index 2025, published a few days ago, the proportion of Canadian tax filers reporting a charitable donation fell from 21.9% in 2013 to 16.8% in 2023, and the share of overall income donated has declined slightly.

Against a backdrop of persistent inflation, rising cost of living and economic uncertainty, this finding obviously surprises no one. For many households, every act of generosity today requires more thought, more restraint, sometimes more courage. Because yes, giving costs more than it used to. Let's call things as they are.

But these indicators have their limits. Based on tax filings, they only capture part of real engagement and leave in the shadows everything that doesn't translate into a receipt. Nor do they capture generosity as a practice that unfolds over time, as a way of life.

In Quebec, however, the recent Léger survey conducted for the Institut Mallet offers a valuable window into how forms of philanthropic engagement are evolving, in connection with life paths, values and the causes that mobilize people. It's in light of this diversity that we need to recognize what's really happening on the ground today.

To Those Who Give

Organizations know it well: every form of generosity counts. Volunteer work, shared expertise, sustained engagement all make a real difference. And at the same time, we shouldn't bury our heads in the sand. To respond to urgent needs, to maintain their services, to keep up with growing demand, they also need money.

It's with this reality in mind that I write this piece. Not to make anyone feel guilty, not as a reminder to do better. Just to say thank you. To those who keep giving, even while adjusting how they give, even while hesitating at times, even while navigating their own constraints.

To Those Who Do Their Part

There are people who have been giving for a long time, sometimes adjusting their contributions along the way. Others who are just starting. A first gesture, sometimes discreet, sometimes hesitant, but never trivial. Giving today, in the current context, takes a kind of quiet courage. The courage to act without knowing whether it will change everything, but believing that it can, in its own way, make a difference.

There are also gifts of an unprecedented scale in our French-speaking communities. What once belonged mostly to Anglo-Saxon philanthropic culture is now taking hold in Quebec. For the people and communities who benefit, these gestures change the scale of what's possible.

And then there are those who think longer term, notably through a bequest. Extending one's values beyond one's own lifetime is an act of trust in the future—provided, of course, that you have a will.

Finally, there are all the people who receive one more envelope, one more email, one solicitation too many, and who don't sigh too loudly. Behind these repeated requests lies a very concrete reality: organizations trying to respond to growing needs in a context where it isn't easy to be heard. While companies' marketing budgets redouble their efforts during the holidays to drive impulse buying, a small envelope asking for support for a cause finally makes all the sense in the world.

Before Turning the Page on 2025

As the year draws to a close, everything moves fast. Year-end reviews, deadlines and obligations pile up. In this context, taking a moment to think of others, to support a cause, to make a gesture of solidarity, is anything but obvious.

That's why it seemed important to me to take the time to say it. To recognize those who give, in every way possible. To highlight the visible gestures and the less visible ones. And also to speak to you, reading these lines, who may, in your own way, make a gesture now or later.

This piece had only one intention: to say thank you. Truly. And to simply remind us that behind every gift, big or small, there is attention paid to someone else. And that, at this year's end, deserves to be recognized. Fully.

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