

# Opinion: Anglophone philanthropy is an example for Quebec

BY MICHEL KELLY-GAGNON, THE GAZETTE APRIL 13, 2014

I have been raising funds for various charities since the late 1990s — mostly, but not exclusively, among francophone and anglophone business communities and foundations.

My anecdotal observation, which is confirmed by the observations of many other people, is that anglophones in Quebec give more, and more often, than francophones. This impression is at least partially borne out at the national level. According to Statistics Canada, in 2010, similar proportions of francophone and anglophone Canadians had made donations, but anglophones gave significantly more — on average \$523, versus \$184. Just this past March 31, for example, the Montreal-based investment firm Formula Growth Limited made a combined donation of \$1.1 million to support business and entrepreneurial education at four Quebec universities: Bishop's, Concordia, HEC Montréal and McGill.

Now, I happen to know the people working at Formula Growth. They have been very successful, especially over the past few years. But I know many francophone businesspeople who are involved with various universities and who don't give very much, even if they have 10, 20 or 50 times as much wealth as the Formula Growth people.

Now, to be fair, I also know a French-Canadian businessman who gave away close to 90 per cent of his wealth (which meant a \$9-million gift, in his case). But again, anybody who knows anything about fundraising in this province will tell you that, overall, the English outgun the French by a long shot when it comes to charitable giving.

With proposed tuition hikes cancelled and provincial funding of universities slashed in the fall of 2012, Quebec university administrators might be forgiven for scratching their heads. Do we value education in this province?

How are we going to be able to continue to have competitive universities (relative to other very good Canadian and American universities) in key program areas? You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that if a substantial increase in funding is not going to come from Quebec's provincial government (given the state of public finances), and not from students either, then it has to come from private donors. And not just the ultrarich ones, but including the ultrarich ones.

Yet many businesses and individuals have left the province of Quebec over the years.

Departures to other provinces rose significantly in the second and third quarters of last year. And just as an indication of the kinds of people who are leaving, only 22 per cent of businesspeople who immigrated to Quebec in 2011 were still here in January 2013.

These people who have left have done so not just for political considerations, but also for economic reasons as well as for a wide range of other motives.

The bottom line is this: We must have a business and political environment that will make successful and mobile anglophones want to stay in Quebec, and feel welcomed and appreciated.

Recent developments may contribute favourably in this respect. In any event, we also (and the word “also” is key here) need francophones in general, and financially successful francophones in particular, to step up to the plate more than they have in the past, in terms of supporting the institutions they say they care about.

**Michel Kelly-Gagnon** is president and chief executive officer of the Montreal Economic Institute.

© Copyright (c) The Montreal Gazette