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Survey shows BC charities still on the rebound, but surprisingly optimistic

BC's non-profit sector is still struggling with financial challenges but the majority of organizations feel prepared for the future, according to a survey of 575 charities conducted by Vancouver Foundation this fall.

After the Storm, a report on the survey's findings was released today, providing a definitive analysis about how charities fared in 2010, as well as new strategies organizations are using as they move forward.

The charities that participated came from a broad range of sectors: social services, arts and culture, education, health care, environment, animal welfare and sports and recreation.

This report is a follow-up survey from last year's *Weathering the Storm* report, which had input from 470 charities.

Key findings of this year's survey include:

- The picture is slightly improved from last year. The economy is faring better, and the initial shock of the market crash has faded. But charities are still on the rebound and struggling with new financial realities.
- Organizations are feeling more optimistic. Three quarters (75%) of respondents say they feel prepared or well prepared to meet their mandate in the upcoming fiscal year, which is very positive news. Less than a quarter (24%) said they were only somewhat prepared to meet their mandate. This is a much improved picture from last year, when only half of charities said they were prepared, and 45% felt only somewhat prepared.
- The revenue situation has improved only somewhat since last year. Half of the organizations reported their revenue decreased this year, a slight improvement from 2009 where 53% reported a decrease. However, the cumulative effects mean that for two consecutive years, approximately half of the organizations surveyed have been hit by a decrease in revenue. Some types of organizations are struggling more than others, particularly arts and culture, environmental organizations and small charities with budgets under \$250,000.

- Financial challenges are negatively impacting programs, morale and even the very sustainability of some organizations, and that is compounded by an increased demand for the services that non-profits provide. Some 65% of organizations reported that demand for their services was up. This factor is particularly true among social service organizations.
- Many organizations are using or plan to use new tactics to reach their goals, such as collaborating with other organizations on service delivery, improving efficiencies or processes and revising their strategic plan.

“They say life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass, it’s about learning how to dance in the rain,” said Faye Wightman, CEO of Vancouver Foundation. “The non-profit sector is full of some of the most dedicated, passionate people in BC. Despite the financial challenges, the fact that so many charities feel ready to meet their mandate next year shows the sector is evolving, whether by necessity or determination. Organizations continue to struggle relentlessly towards their vision of improving and enhancing the lives for the people in BC.”

“As one of survey respondents said, the non-profit sector is the backbone of our society. Our social services make such a big difference to people’s lives, our arts organizations make a major contribution to the economy,” said Wightman. “We need to let the public know how much the non-profit sector matters in our province.”

To download a copy of the report, go to www.vancouverfoundation.ca

Vancouver Foundation is Canada’s largest community foundation. Established in 1943, it works with donors to fund innovative projects in communities across the province. The Foundation is one of the largest funders of charities in BC and supports work in everything from arts and culture to environment, from health to homelessness.

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