

Put that rebate to greatest use by helping others

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As the end of the month approaches, Calgarians are opening their mailboxes and finding a \$400 resource rebate cheque. For some, this money will provide welcome relief after overspending during the holidays; for others it will simply help make ends meet.

For many in our booming economy, this is a unique opportunity to donate some or all of the money to the nonprofits and charities that make our city a great place to live.

When Ralph Klein first announced the government's plan to distribute over \$1.4 billion directly to Albertans in the form of \$400 resource rebate cheques, there was intense debate about the merits of this decision. At the time, many Calgarians pledged to donate some or all of their cheques to charities and nonprofit organizations.

The pledges reflect Calgarians' commitment to their community. When the recent imagineCALGARY project asked over 18,000 Calgarians about their vision of our city in 100 years, they talked about strong, connected and caring communities, access to services, vibrant cultural life, and the natural beauty of our surroundings and the mountains on our horizon.

Local nonprofits and charities play a critical role in ensuring these and other parts of our quality of life are supported, maintained and protected.

We know that people from across Canada and the world are drawn to Calgary for work, but the city's high quality of life keeps them here. This high quality of life is built on many of the programs, activities and services run by nonprofits and charities including after-school sports for our kids; programs to help new immigrants settle in Calgary; training to give people the skills they need to fill gaps in our workforce; food and clothing for the homeless; and arts and cultural activities for the whole community.

The call for Calgarians to consider donating some or all of their rebate could easily be drowned out by advertisers urging Albertans to spend their new found wealth at the local shopping mall. But this is a unique opportunity for all Albertans to use the wealth of our resource-rich province to continue to support a healthy and vibrant community.

Many people might already know who they want to support with a donation. For those that don't, making a donation is like any investment and it is important to make an informed decision. Donating wisely means learning more about the charity, and its programs and activities.

If you are interested in a tax credit, ensure the organization you choose is a registered charity, as this means they can issue tax receipts. By donating under \$200 to a registered charity you will reap a 25 per cent tax credit, and over \$200 will mean a 44 per cent tax credit.

If you have questions about an organization or their activities, visit their website, or call them. It is in the organization's best interest to share information about their finances, activities and programs with the community and potential donors. In talking to the charity you might realize that you can become a volunteer and share your time and skills as well.

The province's natural resources that led to high revenues are finite, but by donating some or all of your rebate, you are helping to create a legacy of Albertans' generosity and sending a clear message about what really matters to Albertans.

Katherine van Kooy, President & CEO
Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations
