

Why hasn't the pie grown more?

What three years of research told us about Canadian environmental philanthropy.



DONOR-SIDE REASONS

Six of the reasons are about the donor.

1. High concern doesn't translate to giving
2. The “consume-your-way-out” trap
3. Crisis fatigue
4. Solutions confusions
5. Fear of moral judgment
6. Belief that philanthropy isn't the lever for the environment

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I care — but I need to prioritize what matters most right now.”

Abacus Recollective participant, 2026



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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I feel, as an individual, I already do what I can as my part to keep my environment clean. I recycle, I pick up litter in my surroundings...”

Caddle survey participant, 2025



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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

« *Des messages catastrophistes sans solution... ils créent de l'angoisse inutile.* »

Abacus Recollective participant, 2026 (Quebec)



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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I’m not sure what certain organizations do to help the environment. What actions do they do?”

Caddle survey participant, 2025



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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I try to live my values, and yet it’s hard to feel ‘pure enough’ to engage.”

Major donor interview, KCI, 2026



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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I think environmental issues is bigger than any charity and needs to be accomplished at the government level.”

Caddle survey participant, 2025

II

SECTOR-SIDE REASONS

Ten are about how the sector is built.

1. 1-in-6 Canadians cannot name a single ENGO
2. We simply don't ask
3. No peer signal
4. We are not where giving decisions get made
5. DAF capital is locked up
6. Family offices are closed off
7. No visible point of entry for beginners
8. Not enough volume and consistency of messaging
9. No coordinated giving moment
10. Believe to belong, not belong to believe

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

« *Je ne connais pas suffisamment les causes et leurs valeurs pour faire un don.* »

Caddle survey participant, 2025 (Quebec)

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I was never asked to donate.”

Caddle survey participant, 2025 (Quebec)

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I don’t see philanthropists like me in this space — so I’m not sure how I’m supposed to show up.”

Major donor interview, KCI, 2026

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“It’s often not that people don’t care. It’s that they don’t know how they’re supposed to show up — or how philanthropy fits alongside everything else.”

Major donor interview, KCI, 2026

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“More information on where and who is deciding where our money is going.”

Caddle survey participant, 2025

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I donate to causes that support friends and family, and so far, friends and family haven’t raised money for environmental causes.”

Caddle survey participant, 2025

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I’ve never been aware of such or where to donate to environmental causes.”

Caddle survey participant, 2025

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Reach out to me again.”

Caddle survey participant, 2025 (Quebec)

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Campaigns created community. Infrastructure didn’t.”

Sector leader interview, KCI, 2026

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“It feels like it’s either activism or nothing. Where do I fit?”

Major donor interview, KCI, 2026

III

INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Three are about the world we operate inside.

1. NGO trust is middling at 53%.
2. The trusted messengers aren't the ones fundraising.
3. Mis- and disinformation actively suppresses giving.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“Don’t trust organizations.”

Caddle survey participant, 2025

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“The people who are on the field are the ones that I trust.”

Abacus Recollective participant, 2026

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

« Je reçois des demandes par courriel et j'ai des craintes que ces sites ne soient vraiment vrais ou honnêtes, ce qui m'amène à ne pas donner. »

Caddle survey participant, 2025 (Quebec)

IV

STRUCTURAL TRENDS

Two trends will keep us stuck if we don't move.

THE GENERATIONAL HANDOFF

Millennials are now Canada's largest cohort.

They give differently: hands-on, through DAFs and securities, with high expectations of transparency. Our fundraising is built for boomer habits at the moment wealth is transferring.

WOMEN AND WEALTH

Women now control 47% of personal wealth in Canada.

Projected to rise to \$4.2 trillion by 2030. Trust is the dominant driver in women's philanthropic decisions. Environmental fundraising has not reorganized around the shift.

6

donor-side

10

sector-side

3

info environment

2

structural trends

*Twice as many barriers are about how we're structured
as they are about the donors.*

Being stuck at 2% is a sector structure failure.