

WE Scandal Highlights the PM's Ethical Incoherence

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There are limits to public credulity and tolerance for blatantly reckless behaviour with public funds. The failed attempt by Prime Minister Trudeau to funnel \$43.5 million of taxpayer money to his friends at the WE Charity Foundation fell outside those limits. The optics were bad. The amounts were staggering. The lies uttered to cover it up were appalling.

This was not simply a Prime Minister's error in judgment. This was a campaign to divert public funds into behind-the-scenes partisan grooming. The idea of passing nearly a billion dollars (\$912 million, to be exact) into the hands of a charity connected with the Liberal brand raises questions on its face. Investigators have also discovered that the since-aborted contract to administer \$912 million was not even made directly with WE Charity but with the WE Charity Foundation, a separate (sort of) charity that has only been registered for just over a year. It has no significant assets and no proven track record; it appears the reason for using a separate charity was to minimize liability risk for We Charity.¹

The fact that the WE Charity Foundation would have pocketed about \$43.5 million for distributing the rest of the money makes one blink hard, especially when Canada already has an army of civil servants who have proven themselves quite capable of handing out taxpayers' money. Side-stories, new angles and "footnotes-of-interest" seem to be sprouting up all along the trail. The more scrutiny is applied, the more explaining needs to be done. Let's lay out some of the disturbing aspects of this case to get a broad overview:

- The decision to entrust the \$912 million to the WE Charity Foundation was made, not by the public service, as originally claimed by Mr. Trudeau, but by the Liberal Cabinet. Both Mr. Trudeau and Finance Minister Bill Morneau participated in the decision, although both had obvious conflicts-of-interest. Mr. Trudeau's family members have been paid speakers at events hosted by the WE Charity. The PM's mother, Margaret Trudeau, received \$250,000 for 28 speeches and his brother Alexandre was paid \$32,000 for eight speeches.² Mr. Morneau's two daughters work for the organization. The Prime Minister and the Finance Minister have both apologized (after these details came to light). Both have said they should have recused themselves. This is beginning to be a pattern: Ethical violation. Exposure. Apology. Repeat. The first notable ethics breach had to do with accepting a family vacation (security detail and all) on the Aga Khan's private island resort. The second brush with the ethics commissioner arose out of the many questions about the sweetheart deal with the Quebec firm, SNC-Lavalin and the taint of tampering with the Justice Minister, Jody Wilson-Raybould.³
- The Prime Minister lied about the details of the deal with the WE Charity Foundation. Anytime an elected official lies to the public he claims to represent, this should set off alarm bells. The PM first said that his family members had not received money for speaking at WE events. That was a lie. He said that the public service had made the decision. That was also a lie. At the beginning of his first term, Mr. Trudeau promised transparency in the PMO. That claim has lost its charm. Canadians should be able to trust their elected officials to tell the truth. They should not have to guess about the motives and excuses for questionable government expenditures.
- The allocation of funds to the WE Charity Foundation (since cancelled) and the plans for disbursement contained some details that were very generous and very sloppy. For instance, there was an incentive proposed to reward public school teachers who managed to recruit 75 or more students for the program—an incentive of \$12,000!⁴ What other charities have access to public schools in this way? And why should teachers, already being paid to educate Canadian young people, be given a further dollop of tax dollars for enticing those same students to jump on the money wagon!
- The use of taxpayers' money to curry favour with young people **as they transition to voting age** is troubling. This grant of nearly a billion dollars is only one of the ways this PM has used taxpayers' money to influence

public opinion in a partisan way. For two years now, the Canada Summer Jobs Program has subsidized summer employment through businesses and charities; only organizations that endorse Liberal policies in regard to sexuality and abortion need apply. Another flagrant use of tax dollars to promote Liberal policies was the grant of \$595 million to certain struggling news media outlets—again, limited to only those news sources that support socially-liberal policies. That was in addition to the \$1 billion+ that goes every year to our left-leaning public broadcaster, the CBC.⁵

- Another question I haven't heard raised is: exactly where in the world were all these student "volunteers" going to be placed? With even the Canada-US border closed to all but essential services and 14-day quarantines waiting for those who travel outside the country, the idea of mobilizing an army of young people to travel to foreign countries to "build schools, improve water systems, etc." seems like a significant challenge in 2020. In many parts of Canada, particularly native reserves, there are specific bans on visitors from outside the communities. The PM has pledged \$9 billion (with a 'b') to help students cope with COVID-related shortfalls . . . but if the \$912 million designated for the Canada Student Service Grant was really intended to engage students in volunteer service, 2020 may not have been the year to try it. Some have said that paying students as volunteers would mean they were working for less than minimum wage.⁶ Still others (including many students and socialist MPs) think the money should bypass the middle-man and go straight to students as a grant. Of course, there is no pot of surplus money just waiting to be distributed. Every dollar under discussion is borrowed.⁷

In addition to the concerns listed above, on July 22, one more troubling detail came to light: Finance Minister Bill Morneau "suddenly realized" that he should have repaid the \$41,366 that WE Charity had spent on his family's trips to Kenya and Ecuador. He repaid them in the past few days.⁸ What's with that?

Canada's government has lost its way. Using taxpayer dollars borrowed from future generations to pay for poorly-thought-out schemes designed to feather the personal and partisan nests of those currently in power is ethically incoherent. In the words of Dr. Jordan Peterson, "Untruth corrupts the soul and state alike, and one form of corruption feeds the other".⁹

Those making the types of decisions noted above are wearing ethical blinders. Only a return to Canada's historical moral values can restore the vision and wisdom needed to avoid scandal, bankruptcy and moral collapse. To help turn this country back to the righteous values upon which she was founded, join CHP.¹⁰

Footnotes

¹ globalnews.ca/news/7203337/trudeau-we-charity-foundation-real-estate-holding-company/

² www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/margaret-trudeau-alexandre-trudeau-paid-thousands-to-speak-at-we-charity-events/ar-BB16y8fP

³ www.cnn.com/2020/07/17/opinions/trudeaus-ethics-scandal-pandemic-we-charity-bociurkiw/index.html

⁴ www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/rex-murphy-the-we-charity-scandal-is-far-from-over/ar-BB16qD8h

⁵ maplemoney.com/do-we-need-the-cbc/

⁶ www.atinonews.com/2020/07/paying-volunteer-students-less-than-minimum-wage-was-federal-governments-idea-says-we-charity/

⁷ www.chp.ca/commentary/a-trillion-in-the-hole

⁸ globalnews.ca/news/7204135/bill-morneau-we-charity-scandal/

⁹ www.facebook.com/187343221807251/posts/untruth-corrupts-the-soul-and-the-state-alike-and-one-form-of-corruption-feeds-t/447045425837028/

¹⁰ www.chp.ca/get-involved/

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