

PRD Manual Extracts – 02. Public Relations & Communications

0202.1 Discussion Points

The discussion points may be helpful when you are being interviewed, or when you need to explain The Salvation Army's mission and work.

1. What does "Giving Hope Today" mean?

The Salvation Army's wide range of programs and services help to restore dignity and self-worth to those who might otherwise remain invisible in society.

As the largest non-governmental direct social service provider in Canada, The Salvation Army has the geographic and organizational reach to provide hope to over 1.5 million people each year.

We are on the street every day, serving marginalized and overlooked people through dozens of programs, including family assistance, homeless shelters and rehabilitation for people struggling with chronic addictions.

2. What makes you different from the thousands of other charities throughout Canada?

We are the largest non-governmental direct provider of social services in the country and provide a tremendous breadth and depth of services to society's most vulnerable.

The scope of our services means that if you need a helping hand, for virtually any reason, we will likely be able to assist you either directly or through a referral.

Our unprecedented footprint nationwide allows us to invest in the future of marginalized and overlooked people in virtually every community in Canada. The Salvation Army has over 500 units located in over 400 Canadian communities.

3. What does The Salvation Army do other than stand at Christmas kettles and operate thrift stores?

Among dozens of programs, The Salvation Army in Canada is a major provider of practical assistance for children and families, shelter to the homeless and rehabilitation for drug and alcohol abusers.

In 2006 alone, The Salvation Army provided 6,300 shelter, addictions, detox and mental health beds for vulnerable men, women and families, served 2.1 million meals and provided 994,000 persons with food, clothing or other practical assistance.

In addition, The Salvation Army as an organization provides service in over 175 languages to vulnerable communities in 111 countries worldwide.

4. Do you worry that by being involved in so many different things that a lack of focus might compromise your mission?

The Salvation Army's mission is to share the love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world.

As we face new issues that develop over the years – AIDS treatment, for example – the Army has been able to devise programs to meet those challenges and to secure private and public funding for our services.

Regardless of the changes ahead, the Army will remain true to its mission of serving vulnerable people.

5. As the largest non-governmental provider of social service in Canada, do you feel that the federal government puts undue pressure on you to “fill in the gaps” of their social welfare programs?

The Salvation Army’s goal is to give hope to as many marginalized and overlooked people as possible in communities nationwide.

Our sole interest lies in fulfilling this mission to the extent that we are able through both government and public financial support.

As the government downloads responsibility for social programs to organizations like The Salvation Army, we find ourselves with a heightened demand for our services, raising our dependency on private donations.

6. What are some specific programs that The Salvation Army in Canada is involved with overseas?

As an organization, The Salvation Army serves vulnerable communities in 111 countries around the world. The Salvation Army in Canada is currently involved in some 140 projects in 9 countries worldwide.

For example, we recently completed 100 new homes in Sri Lanka as part of an effort to provide permanent housing solutions for 650 families, whose lives were devastated by the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004.

More recently, The Salvation Army in Canada and Bermuda sent 126 staff and volunteers to assist our American neighbors in need after Hurricane Katrina by providing life sustaining necessities of safe food and water.

7. How much money did The Salvation Army raise in public donations last year? What does The Salvation Army do with all the money it raises?

The public generously donated approximately \$150 million to The Salvation Army in Canada last year -- a 3 percent increase from the year before.

The Salvation Army will seek to honor the donor’s intent when making a gift. This may be related to what was communicated in a general or special fundraising appeal or to specific instruction accompanying the gift.

On average, 88 cents of every dollar donated to The Salvation Army are used directly in charitable activities – exceeding the Canada Revenue Agency guideline of 80% donation efficiency.

8. As a church with Christian values, do you discriminate when you provide services?

As an international Christian movement with an acute social conscience, The Salvation Army’s faith motivates its mission.

We will never deny service to anyone on the basis of faith, values or lifestyle.

9. Does your status as a church impact your hiring practices?

We embrace employees of many different faiths and lifestyles and abide by all applicable anti-discrimination laws in our hiring.

At the same time, as a church, we often seek to hire individuals whose faith and values are consistent with our theology where religious responsibilities are integral to their job duties.

We seek those applicants who are most qualified to help fulfill our promise to Canadians of giving hope to those in need.

10. Do you require the people you help to become members of your church to receive services?

While faith is certainly present in our centres, there is no requirement that the people we serve share our beliefs or become members of our church.

Again, our faith motivates our mission, but it is not a requirement to receive our services.

Spiritual counsel and support is always available on request as a part of our social service, but we will never force anyone to engage in religious activities as a prerequisite for receiving assistance.

11. What is your stance on the government's 2006 changes to capital gains tax laws to provide incentives to charitable giving? What kind of impact has this had on your donations?

We applaud the government's decision to eliminate the capital gains tax on charitable donations of securities and are encouraged that the changes will encourage public donations, allowing us to give hope to more people in communities throughout Canada and around the world.

The impact of this change in legislation was very significant. There was a 579% increase in the number of gifts of securities received in 2006/07 compared to the previous year. In dollar terms, this represented a 217% increase in funds received. We are thankful that this change in legislation has increased public generosity and is allowing us to invest even more in the future of marginalized and overlooked people in our communities.

As the government shifts more burden to charities to provide for vulnerable people, we appreciate the government's efforts to encourage private giving.