

THE CITY BUILDERS

Three philanthropists with impact

IN 1999, VANCOUVER ENTREPRENEUR JIMMY

Pattison donated \$20 million to Vancouver General Hospital's centre for prostate cancer research. For a gift of such magnitude, the former car salesman and negotiator supreme naturally attached a few strings. He insisted the hospital's foundation match his gift, and that the B.C. government finish a 19-storey hospital building that had largely stood empty for a decade. Total cost of the project: \$298 million.

In 2002, oilman Richard Haskayne gave the University of Calgary its biggest donation ever: \$16 million. The gift, to the quickly renamed Haskayne School of Business, consisted of \$8 million in cash and 220 acres of ranchland.

In Toronto, billionaire Kenneth Thomson donated his \$300-million art collection to the Art Gallery of Ontario. He also pledged \$70 million to help the gallery expand—and played an active part in shaping the \$195-million project, designed by all-star architect Frank Gehry. Now, many critics find that expansion plan low-key, while a philanthropist who helped fund the last round of AGO renovations is incensed at the destruction of his work.

Across the country, for better or worse, private donors are changing the face of our cities. As Canada's cultural, educational, health-care and social institutions all devise new plans for growth and success within an environment of tight public funding, they are turning increasingly to a tiny minority of public-spirited and affluent individuals who can make miracles happen.

These new Medicis, patrons of arts, education, medicine and social service, are eagerly courted by institutions, to whom a cheque for \$1 million, \$100,000 or even \$10,000 can make a huge difference. The result: people long accustomed to status and power in the business sector now enjoy increasing influence in the non-profit world.

So what sensibilities do prosperous, civic-minded Canadians actually bring to their charitable decisions? When Corporate Knights talked to three prominent philanthropists about their non-profit principles, we found several distinct strategies, but a common determination to address genuine needs in innovative ways.

Milton Wong, Vancouver *Sustainability Superstar*

Milt Wong puts his money (and time) where his mouth is. And that's important because his mouth gets around a lot. "Some people call me a do-gooder, a dreamer, a social activist," says Wong. "I'm all of the above. But I'm a businessman, too."

The son of Chinese immigrants who ran a tailoring business, Wong was a portfolio manager for National Trust before starting his own investment firm, M.K. Wong & Associates, in 1980. His success at managing clients' investments earned him wealth and influence in Vancouver, and he has used both to make the city a better place. As chairman of HSBC Asset Management Canada, the company that bought Wong & Associates in 1996, Wong now spends more than half his time on community projects. He puts in money where necessary, but is just as likely to donate his time to a worthy organization, to make sure that it's on the right track and knows the right people.

In the past decade or two he has helped found Science World, Vancouver's science centre, lobbied for the resolution of native land claims, launched the annual Dragon Boat Festival, started the Laurier Institution (a respected think-tank on multicultural issues), raised funds for the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and the YMCA, and led a campaign to raise \$100 million for cancer research. Wong himself fits the Inuit definition of a great man that he likes to quote: "one who creates an environment where good things happen."

Consider the dragon boats. Wong was distressed to see prejudice and ignorance on the rise in 1980s Vancouver as a new wave of Chinese immigrants began transforming the face of the city. Many would have complained and done nothing. Wong and financier David Lam founded the International Dragon Boat Festival to showcase Chinese culture and help Vancouverites see themselves as part of the Pacific Rim. "Now," says Wong, "we have 130 teams participating and hundreds of thousands of people, from all races, who come to watch."

Wong insists that succeeding in business and supporting the community are two sides

of the same coin. The same careful observation of human behaviour that made him a successful stock picker, he says, also shows him areas where help is needed. "I don't separate my life, with this pocket to make money and this pocket to give money. I take a holistic approach to my life."

In recent years Wong has embraced another new cause: sustainability. As a young portfolio manager, he remembers specifically dissing idealists from Greenpeace and other environmental groups. "What do they know of life or making money?" he would sourly ask. Key to Wong's conversion was the time he spent studying genome sequencing as part of his anti-cancer campaign. "I discovered that all matter has the same DNA code—that on a cellular level, we're all the same," he says. "You, me, the dolphins, the eagles, and a blade of grass." Now he drives a hybrid Honda, regrets many past investments in mining companies, and advocates publicly for environmental initiatives. He's also busily promoting sustainability issues and solutions at Simon Fraser University, where he is chancellor.

Wong says corporate Canada is slowly coming around to the sustainability agenda, but he is used to being ahead of his time. "When you have convictions and beliefs, it doesn't matter," he says. "There is always a price to be paid."

Stephen Jarislowsky, Montreal *The Fighter*

What you need to know about Stephen Jarislowsky is that he is one of three people heading the committee campaigning for the 'demerger' of upper-crust Westmount from the Montreal megacity created by the Parti Quebecois government in 2002. That should tell you that he's a loyal Quebecer, he gets things done, and he never backs away from a fight. The outspoken Jarislowsky still bristles at the 'provincial dictatorship' that merged 28 communities into one, and expresses confidence that under the new Liberal government Westmount will be independent once again.

Jarislowsky comes by his fighting spirit honestly. His stepfather helped numerous Jewish refugees, artists and intellectuals escape Vichy France during World War II—until the authorities found out, and Jarislowsky's family caught the next boat to New York. After earning an engineering degree at Cornell, Jarislowsky worked in intelligence for the U. S. Army, cracking codes and then tracking down Nazis in post-war Japan (a task he says helped



Milton Wong

prepare him for a career in investment analysis). He moved to Canada to work for Alcan Aluminium before founding Canada's first independent investment counselling firm in 1955, Jarislowsky Fraser Ltd.

Now one of Canada's largest pension-fund managers, Jarislowsky Fraser provided a base for Jarislowsky to get to know the Canadian business community and then find his role within it. Long before anyone had ever heard of Conrad Black, Enron or Martha Stewart, Jarislowsky stood up, often alone, for the rights of individual shareholders and better corporate governance. In his efforts to fight cozy management deals and extract more money for average shareholders, he challenged corporate icons such as Dome Petroleum, Canadian Tire, Southam Inc., and just this year, Cara Operations.

From the beginning, Jarislowsky made 'giving back' part of his personal philosophy. With more time than money, he joined service clubs and became a tireless fundraiser for good causes. He remembers canvassing door to door in Outremont, in winter, soliciting donations for a local hospital. Now 78 years old and semi-retired, he doesn't go door to door, but his enthusiasm for good causes is undimmed.

He's fed up, however, with charities that spend up to a third of their revenues on administration. When you're intent on having an impact, he says. "It's harder to give money away than to make it." Solution: he set up the Jarislowsky Foundation, a \$39-million foundation that aims to make a difference in Montreal, as well as in the arts, medicine, business and politics across Canada.

Jarislowsky and his assistant constitute the entire, non-paid staff of the foundation. They decide (with some input from JF staff in Montreal, Toronto and Calgary) who will benefit

from the organization's largesse, which amounts to about \$2 million a year. The list of beneficiaries hints at the range of Jarislowsky's interests: endocrine pathology research, the Montreal International Literary Festival, the Canadian Opera Company, the Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre (a neighbourhood agency in Montreal), and the Canadian War Museum.

But Jarislowsky is proudest of the foundation's work in endowing research chairs. These chairs, which cost Jarislowsky from \$500,000 to \$1.25 million (he usually arranges with the schools or other donors to match his gifts), create research positions in specific subjects in Canadian universities—in perpetuity. They are his unique vehicle for making sure the issues he cares about will be actively studied and debated, even after he is gone. "All these chairs are concerned with excellence," he growls, "something Canadians have never really espoused."

The first chair, a centre for investing, was set up at the University of Alberta. There are now 11, with another planned for this year, at the University of Toronto's faculty of law. Other endowments include chairs in: biotechnology (University of Saskatchewan); family and work (University of Guelph); environment and health (McMaster University); art history (Concordia University); and international business management (Laval University).

Jarislowsky has a story to go with each donation. He hopes the chair he endowed in technology and international competitiveness at Montreal's École Polytechnique, for instance, will help solve one of engineering's biggest problems: how do you complete big projects on time and on budget? As a longtime director of engineering giant SNC Lavalin, he encountered this issue again and again—"and yet," he complains, "nobody was teaching this." Similarly, he hopes a chair in public-sector management established last year at the University of Ottawa will help improve the way governments work. "The structures of democracy are just not working right," he says. "The civil service is a mess and overly bureaucratic. We have to study the situation in order to improve it."

Finally, Jarislowsky is tilting at one more windmill. In 2002, the shareholder's champion co-founded the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance, to put increasing pressure on corporate directors and big business to adopt stricter codes of conduct. The coalition now includes more than 30 institutional members.

While Jarislowsky hopes all Canadians will benefit from the coalition's work, he crankily notes his company is subsidizing the organiza-



Stephen Jarislowski

tion to the tune of \$50,000 a year. "There's no pay in it for us—all it is, is a hell of a lot of work," he says. "But we're not doing it because we're Pollyannas. We're interested in getting better companies, a better country, and a better business environment."

John Tory, Toronto *Bleeding-heart conservative*

Although he doesn't have the funds of a Wong or Jarislowsky, lawyer and businessman John Tory has committed a big chunk of his life to non-profit causes. Best known as the former Rogers Cable CEO who made a surprisingly strong showing in his bid last fall to become mayor of Toronto, Tory has proven that you don't need to throw money around to make a difference.

Although he comes from an establishment family (Tory was managing partner at Tory's, the family's law firm, and worked as an adviser to both Ontario Premier Bill Davis and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney), Tory has often chosen the hard road. He served nine years in the "doesn't anyone else want this job?" position of commissioner of the Canadian Football League, where his tenacity alone probably saved the sickly sports league from extinction. And Tory is thought to be the only Torontonian ever to chair two big-league charitable campaigns at the same time: the \$40-million St. Michael's Hospital Research/Capital Campaign in 2001 and the United Way's \$75-million campaign—which finished over budget despite following so soon on the dispiriting events of Sept. 11.

"I am a person who just loves to be involved in community organizations," Tory explained in a 2002 speech. "I find it one of the most fulfilling parts of my life. I actually love to raise



John Tory

money.” Indeed, CIBC chairman John Hunkin, Tory’s campaign co-chair at the United Way, calls Tory a “serial fundraiser”—which may help explain why he was named the Association of Fundraising Professionals’ 2002 Volunteer of the Year.

Tory has also served as a trustee of the United Way, as co-chair of the St. Michael’s Hospital foundation, and on the national advisory board of the Salvation Army. Naturally, when it’s time to pass the hat he is a faithful donor to these organizations, but he also reserves some money for the arts. “I try to mix it up,” he says, noting that he made a couple of “new donations” to arts groups this year, and personally supports one artist whom he describes as “struggling.”

But writing cheques isn’t necessarily the best way to practice philanthropy. “While it’s

important to give money, the single most important thing to give is time,” he insists. “I can’t personally write cheques for a million dollars, but I’ve gone after many people who have written cheques for a million dollars.”

Tory’s approach has been particularly important to the United Way, which has for decades raised money for its legions of social-service agencies mainly through an annual workplace campaign. Like many agencies, the United Way had to adapt to the new realities of fundraising: that big projects require big donations, and that corporations can only give so much. As a result, it only recently started targeting individual donors, a job tailor-made for networkers such as Tory (and what one journalist last year called his ‘Harry Potter charm’). Tory and former United Way president Anne Golden built a ‘cabinet’ of 90 senior people from business and education to focus on major giving and create personalized strategies to convince Toronto’s affluent to support specific programs.

Tory admits that many donors like to see their name on a building (or chair) in return for their gift. “It’s nice to be able to drive by a building that’s named after you to see it’s still there, but increasing numbers of people take greater satisfaction in knowing that a program they have funded is helping people.”

The secret of raising funds for such programs, he says, is to help potential donors see their money at work—by taking them to the homeless agencies, food banks and recreation centres helping people in need. Tory has been tireless in dragging captains of industry to parts of the city they haven’t seen in years, from downtown hostels to overcrowded

schools in the ‘inner suburbs’ of Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough. He recalls taking prospects to a drop-in centre on College Street, where a volunteer talked about the people they help, such as a middle-class man who started drinking, lost his management job, then his family and his home, and ended up on the street. The drop-in centre helped the man beat his addiction and get back on his feet with another job—to the point where he now volunteers for the centre that helped him. When donors realize that the victim is now the well-dressed, articulate volunteer they just met, it brings home, as no sales pitch can, the real problems these agencies face, and the tremendous difference they make. “It’s a revelation for a lot of people who think they know the community well,” says Tory. “Nobody can be blasé about this, or say they’ve seen it all before.”

Tory says these experiences have changed him, too. Knowing that many donors now prefer to give to specific projects, he earmarks his donations for undesignated funds—trusting the agency or charity to makes its own decisions on the best use of the money.

Clearly, Tory’s strategy is not for everyone. As the evidence indicates, there are as many approaches to giving as there are philanthropists—which could be a saving grace as Canada struggles to solve serious social problems and support so many worthwhile causes. The diversity and stubborn individualism of Canada’s philanthropists is not so much a problem to be solved as a gift to be treasured and an asset to be managed. **UK**

Rick Spence is the former editor and publisher of PROFIT magazine.



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