

PRESS RELEASE

New Study Finds Canadian Think Tanks Lag behind UK, US in Funding Transparency

Tbilisi, Georgia, 05 December 2017

Canadian think tanks lag behind their counterparts in the United States and United Kingdom in funding transparency, according to a new study released today at 12:01 Eastern Standard Time. Transparify, a non-profit initiative based in Georgia (Caucasus), rated 14 think tanks on their levels of online disclosure, finding that only half of the policy research and advocacy organizations rated are broadly or highly transparent.

Canadian think tanks lag behind their peers in the United States and United Kingdom, with a significantly lower average transparency rating. Dr. Hans Gutbrod, Transparify's Executive Director and formerly a policy researcher based in Ottawa, stated, "Our past work demonstrates that top transparency performers can be found in places as far apart as the United States, Ecuador, Ethiopia, and Ukraine. Clearly, transparency is a feasible option in a wide variety of contexts, and a higher level of financial disclosure should be expected in Canada."

Four think tanks were found to be highly opaque. Dr Gutbrod stated, "In Canada, the four think tanks we rated whose funding sources are highly opaque have sought to influence the policy making process through at least 216 appearances in front of parliamentary committees, and have generated 59,875 mentions in the national media between 2000 and 2015. In a democracy, players that wield strong political influence should open their books to public scrutiny."

Donald E. Abelson, Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at The University of Western Ontario, stated, "For think tanks to retain credibility and legitimacy as repositories of policy expertise, it is critical that they reveal their sources of funding. Only then can those who are apt to consider their recommendations be in a position to weigh the various factors that may influence their research findings."

Michael Roberts, Communications Manager at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada which received a 5-star transparency rating, stated "Above and beyond meeting our Canadian Government reporting requirements, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada prides itself on proactive disclosure of its financial activities and reports. As Canada's leading not-for-profit focused on Canada's relations with Asia, credibility and trust are our stock-in-trade. Transparency, therefore, drives to the very core of who we are, and what we do."

Aaron Shull, Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel at the Centre for International Governance Innovation which received a 5-star transparency rating, stated, "Trust is fundamental to our work; without it, our research, opinions and expertise would not be respected by our stakeholders. Transparency about funding and partnerships is a core aspect of maintaining that trust."

Note to editors: The full report is posted on www.transparify.org. Background information on debates and concerns related to think tank transparency can be found on our blog, and in our bibliographies accessible at <http://www.transparify.org/publications-main/>. Transparify's previous reports have been covered by the [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), and [Financial Times](#), among others.

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