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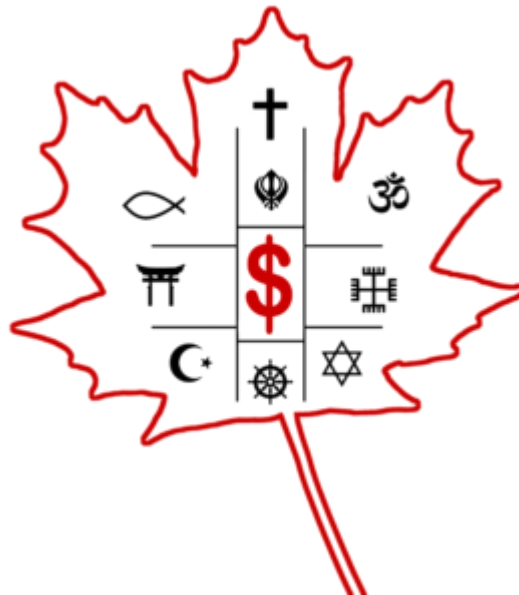
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# Is Religion's Economic Contribution Beneficial?

📌 Critical Links   📅 September 30, 2020   📄 Secular Check, Secularism

By *Sandra Dunham*

Recently, the Sarnia Observer printed an [article](#) from [Cardus](#), a faith-based think tank, describing the “overall totally beneficial effect of religion on the lives of everyday Canadians,” not just the religious. For those reading only the headlines, and not noting the self-serving nature of the think tank, it appears that religion is good for the economy. For people who dig a little deeper and read the full article, this drivel is offensive as is the willingness of media to promote it.



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The story claims that religion contributes \$67.5 billion to the economy. Approximately half of this involves the actual spending of churches. The other half involves so-called “halo effects,” which include the value of services supported by churches and purchases made by individuals to follow their faith, such as kosher or halal food sales.

Let's delve into this economic benefit, as outlined in the article:

1. \$7 billion is donated by congregants to support the activities of churches. Remember that these donations receive a charitable tax receipt, which means that these revenues are subsidized by all Canadians, whether religious or not. (For more information, see our analysis on the [cost of religion](#).)
2. \$14.5 billion is the “value” of publicly funded Catholic schools. We would argue that the \$14.5 billion would more adequately fund a single school board in the three provinces which continue to direct taxpayer's resources to schools which discriminate against non-Catholics when employing staff.
3. \$13.4 billion is spent on “social safety net” programs led by churches, such as food banks, housing, counselling, and other programs. These programs are supported by a combination of tax receipted charitable donations and direct government transfers. These safety net programs are also offered by secular groups. When offered by religious charities, we risk these charities proselytizing to participants and potentially [doing harm with their faith-based](#) programing.
4. The remaining \$60+ billion is likewise referring to expenses related to religion that would otherwise occur outside of religious institutions.

While there is no debating the truth that people spend money on churches and faith-based activities, the value of this (as opposed to the cost of it) leaves much to debate. Imagine if we read a similar article extolling the “value” of the drug trade or human trafficking or tax fraud? Just because something contributes to the economy, that does not mean it makes a positive contribution to society.



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