

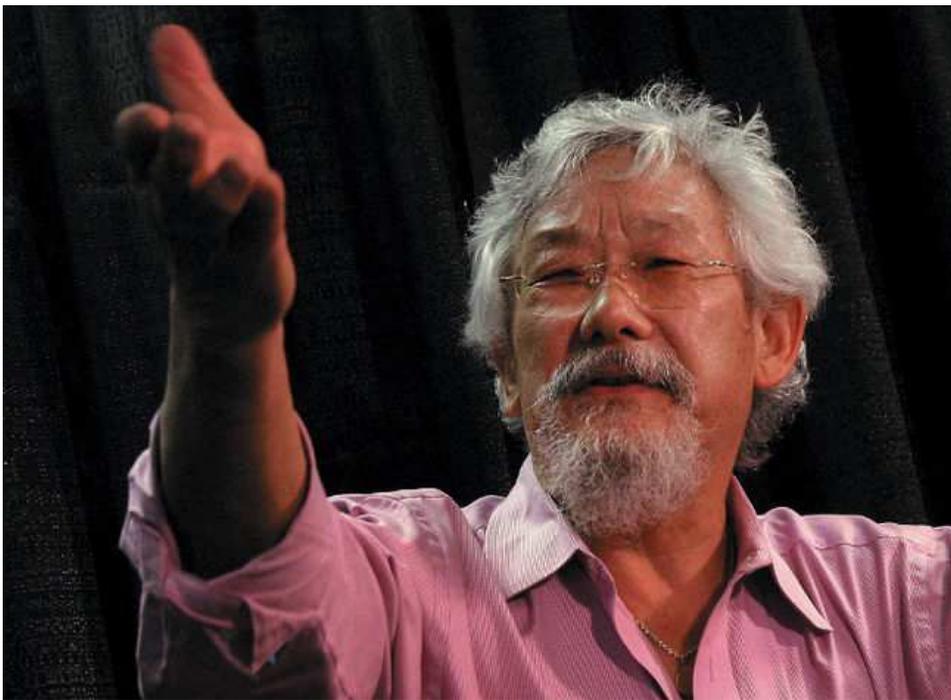
# Suzuki isn't special

## The rules for charities apply to everyone



BY LORRIE GOLDSTEIN, TORONTO SUN

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### **Environmentalist David Suzuki. (QMI Agency files)**

If environmentalist David Suzuki wants to be a cheerleader for the Liberals, that's his right.

There's nothing wrong with Suzuki publicly endorsing, as he did in the last Ontario election, Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty over Conservative Leader Tim Hudak.

There was also nothing wrong with Suzuki strolling with McGuinty in Vancouver's Stanley Park for a campaign video the Liberals posted on their website.

Suzuki was free, as he did in the 2008 federal election, to endorse then Liberal Leader Stephane Dion, while attacking Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper and late NDP Leader Jack Layton, on environmental issues.

He had the right, also in 2008, to suggest in a speech Harper and then Conservative Alberta premier Ed Stelmach should be jailed for intergenerational climate crimes.

Ditto in 2007, when Suzuki told school children in Calgary Harper didn't care about the environment, only about winning a majority government.

But what Suzuki doesn't have a right to do, what no one has a right to do, is to raise money for his charity while making politically partisan statements.

The reason is that registered charities enjoy tax-exempt status and can issue tax receipts for donations.

The rules for charities, overseen by the Canada Revenue Agency, are clear.

A charity, "cannot be involved in partisan political activities ... a political activity is considered partisan if it involves direct or indirect support of, or opposition to, a political party or candidate for public office."

Charities can promote the policies of parties and candidates they agree with, but "must not directly or indirectly support the political party or candidate for public office."

When Suzuki complained about Harper to those school children, he was accepting \$835 they had raised for his charity, the David Suzuki Foundation, which today has revenues of \$8.7 million annually.

A year before Suzuki endorsed McGuinty in the 2011 Ontario election, his foundation received between \$100,000 and \$250,000 from the government-affiliated Ontario Trillium Foundation.

As the Toronto Sun's Terry Davidson reported last September, and other media discovered last week, Suzuki resigned from the board of his foundation last summer, a move he blamed in recent interviews on what he said were campaigns by Sun Media and Sun News to decertify his charity and deny him free speech.

Suzuki and his foundation also criticized the recent federal Conservative budget for earmarking \$8 million to the CRA to increase its oversight of charities, requiring them to provide more information on their activities and foreign funding.

Despite their objections, an Angus Reid poll of 1,060 adults in the wake of the budget found 80% of Canadians approved of those measures.

Suzuki may have solved the problem of his partisan statements by resigning from his charity's board, although questions remain such as: What will his relationship be with the foundation's board and management going forward?

Will he stop giving advice to them? When he makes partisan statements, how will his foundation distance itself?

After all, it's still called the David Suzuki Foundation. If you go to its website (davidsuzuki.org) Suzuki's picture is still at the top. It now features a letter from Suzuki noting he has resigned from the board as part of an appeal for donations.

My position remains the same. Suzuki has every right to make partisan statements. But not to raise money for his charity while doing it.

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