

# Building *our* Canada: Engaging Youth with Public Policy and Active Citizenship



In 2005, Canadian Policy Research Networks randomly chose 144 Canadian youth aged 18-25. They participated in a three-day summit geared towards understanding the motivating factors in getting youth involved in public life and decision-making. The participants created their vision for a better Canada around four issues: learning, work, health, and the environment.

Youth may dress, act and communicate differently than older Canadians. Through the conference, though, it became clear that there is no real generation gap when it comes to core values. Mostly, youth want the same things as their older counterparts.

This is what they said about how to build a Canada for the next generation:

- We need to build connections for a stronger Canada. This means more bilingualism, standardized education, valuing difference while building on common ground.
- We need to update Canadian governance! This means revamping civics education in schools, making democratic renewal a priority, and looking to youth for leadership.
- We need to strive for sustainability. This means measuring success holistically, collaborative decision-making, and bold environmental action.
- We need to achieve equity and efficiency in the federation. This means setting Canada-wide standards for critical public services as well as policies that break down barriers to mobility within Canada.
- We need to connect education, quality of life for all, and productivity. This means re-working government financing for education, enabling human potential, expanding avenues for job preparation after high school, as well as promoting better work environments.
- Finally, we need knowledge and information to act as catalysts for active citizenship. Public information and reporting should focus on the needs of the citizen.

What in these points speaks most to you?

Why not propose a class project, start a community focus group or get some friends together to write a letter to your MP and Senators about your priorities?

It's our Canada, let's get involved so we get it right!

If you want to read more check out: <http://www.cprn.org/doc.cfm?doc=1439&l=en>