

CANADIANS & THE COMMON GOOD:

BUILDING A CIVIC NATION THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

2007



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Good things happen when people engage with others. This report takes this simple message and applies it to the complex case study of Canadian civic life. It argues that the process of civic engagement – defined as interacting more often and more meaningfully with others in respect of civic issues – will help to build a stronger and more unified civic nation.

For Canada's individuals, civic engagement can enrich, empower, and foster a sense of belonging. For Canada's communities, civic engagement can promote innovation, democracy, inclusiveness, and unity. Striving for these goals is essential if Canada wishes to reverse the trend of long-term detachment that too many Canadians are increasingly feeling toward their institutions, compatriots, and country.

WE PROPOSE TWENTY POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ALONG FIVE THEMES:

- **MIND THE GAPS: DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING OF A SHARED CIVIC IDENTITY** – clarify the ties that bind us, hold coming-of-age ceremonies for eighteen-year-olds, promote inter- and intra-regional encounters, reassess the intersection of religion and education, challenge the status quo on exclusion, and reach out through families and peers.
- **LET THE SUNSHINE IN: MAKE POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT MORE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL** – focus on increasing informed voter turnout, stimulate public interest in political decision-making processes, improve the way that political parties nominate election candidates, teach the skills of dissent and activism, and increase the use of online technology in the election process.
- **BUILD A PIN FACTORY: HELP NON-PROFITS DO WHAT THEY DO BEST** – provide more favourable income tax treatment of charitable donations, give stronger incentives for employers to contribute to communities, make core funding for non-profits more available, professionalize volunteer management practices in non-profits, and increase the teaching and research of non-profit studies.
- **PUT THE PUBLIC INTO PUBLIC SPACE: IMPROVE THE STEWARDSHIP OF COMMON AREAS** – turn civic facilities into true hubs of their communities, and establish public space users' committees on a highly localized basis.
- **THINK GLOBALLY, ACT GLOBALLY: EXTEND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BEYOND CANADA'S BORDERS** – look to other countries for inspiration, and put Canada forward as an inspiration to other countries.

Canada25 is a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to bringing the voices and ideas of Canadians aged 20 to 35 to our country's public policy discourse. Canada25 fulfils this mandate by developing policy ideas on issues of local, national, and international significance and by acting as a resource for policymakers interested in the perspectives of young Canadians. Founded in 2001, Canada25 currently has a global membership of 2,500.



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**Canadians and the Common Good:
Building a Civic Nation Through Civic Engagement**

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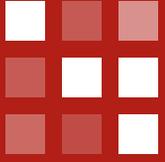
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I. INTRODUCTION

II. ACTIONS

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A SIMPLE MESSAGE

GOOD THINGS HAPPEN WHEN PEOPLE ENGAGE WITH OTHERS.

This simple message forms the basis of our report. It is a message that all people understand in relation to their personal lives. The quality of relationships and friendships brings happiness, support, and love. Reading widely and discussing ideas with others bring knowledge. Networking and mentoring contribute to professional development, and a personal connection is invaluable in any business or social setting.

It is also a message that resonates in the civic sphere. In *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, sociologist Robert Putnam observed that the bonds formed in personal networks and social institutions make people and their communities healthier and more productive. Almost 40 years before Putnam, urban theorist Jane Jacobs argued in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* that communities in which people interact with each other – on sidewalks, in parks, and in neighbourhoods – become more vibrant, safe, and interesting. Almost 250 years before Jacobs, economist Adam Smith held in *The Wealth of Nations* that the best mechanism to regulate economic production and prices grew out of the day-to-day encounters among individuals. And almost 2,500 years before Smith, the leaders of ancient Greece developed the concepts of the agora and assembly as central public spaces where people came together to trade and talk.

It is also a message that extends beyond the civic sphere. Literary and artistic circles allow individuals to learn from each other, whether through formal circles such as Bloomsbury, Montmartre, or Montparnasse, or through informal circles such as Azar Nafisi's classes for women to read works of Western literature in Iran, as chronicled in *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. Musicians regularly interact with other genres and integrate new concepts into their own sounds, thereby driving music forward: consider Bob Dylan's fusion of folk and rock, the Beatles' trip to India, or the way in which Elvis or Eminem adapted – some might say appropriated – black street music. Today, many of the most popular websites are those that facilitate peer-to-peer interaction and have user-driven content, among them craigslist, eBay, MySpace, Wikipedia, and YouTube.

This report takes this simple message – that good things happen when people engage with others – and applies it to the complex case study of Canadian civic life. It observes that Canadians are becoming increasingly detached from each other with respect to civic issues, and it warns that such detachment is leading to undesirable social and political consequences. It argues that Canadians – through their governments, their private sector enterprises, their non-profit organizations, their political parties, and themselves – can avert these consequences by interacting with others more often and more meaningfully. And it suggests that the process of civic engagement can lead Canadians to a better appreciation of their civic nation and their role in helping to shape it.

A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES

IMAGINE TWO COUNTRIES.

The first country is one in which many people have the ability, desire, and opportunity to engage with others in respect of civic issues. It is a country where people appreciate common civic values and celebrate an identity based on such values. A country where people actively inform themselves about – and take action on – political issues, voter turnout is high, political parties are incubators of new and exciting leaders and policies, and citizen input in political decision-making is valued and encouraged. A country where non-profit organizations have enough funding and volunteers. A country where public space is sufficiently abundant to meet all of the civic and recreational needs of the population. And a country that not only looks to the world for inspiration, but also seeks to promote itself to the world.

The second country is one in which few people have the ability, desire, or opportunity to engage with others in respect of civic issues. It is a country where people reject notions of common civic values that cut across non-civic forms of identity, like regionalism, religion, or ethnicity. It is a country where people are uninterested in political issues, voter turnout is low, political parties are dominated by politicking rather than policymaking, and political institutions are remote and unresponsive. A country where non-profit organizations lack sufficient support and are run less effectively than they could be. A country where public space is undervalued and inadequately maintained. And a country where insularity and hesitation are the key characteristics in its international relations.

“How can there be peace without people understanding each other, and how can this be if they don’t know each other? How can there be cooperative coexistence, which is the only kind that means anything, if men are cut off from each other, if they are not allowed to learn more about each other? So let’s throw aside the curtains against contacts and communication. I realise that contact can mean friction as well as friendship, that ignorance can be benevolent and isolation pacific. But I can find nothing to say for keeping one people malevolently misinformed about others. More contact and freer communication can help to correct this situation. To encourage it – or at least to permit it – is an acid test for the sincerity of protestations for better relations between peoples.”

Lester B. Pearson,
acceptance speech for the
Nobel Peace Prize, 1957

The first country is what Canada should strive to become, but the second country is what Canada is in danger of becoming. Detachment, not engagement, is the prevailing sentiment among too many Canadians.

Such detachment takes two forms. The first form relates to detachment from the country's institutions. Some Canadians feel detached from governments that they view as remote, political parties that they view as insular, and bureaucracies that they view as unresponsive. Similarly, some Canadians feel detached from non-profits that they view as ineffective, or from social activist movements that they view as acting in ways that contradict liberal democratic principles.

The second form of detachment relates to detachment from other people. Many Canadians are frustrated by regionalism that produces such concepts as Western alienation, the "two solitudes," and anti-Toronto sentiment. Many Canadians are discouraged by the living conditions of too many of the country's Aboriginals, and are equally concerned about the growth of ethnic ghettos in our larger cities. Many Canadians are also dismayed by the gap between well-off and less well-off, formally educated and not formally educated, and professional and non-professional people.

These findings concern us. Detachment does not bode well for Canada's present, in that it highlights our country's failure to benefit from the involvement of all people. Detachment also does not bode well for Canada's future: any country in which large numbers of people feel detached from each other will eventually cease to be a country. Why should people stay together if they no longer believe that they belong together? To ask the question that follows, what can Canadians do to keep themselves together?

WHY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

We believe that civic engagement matters because it is a promising method to build a civic nation. With respect to Canada's individuals, we believe that civic engagement can bring:

- **ENRICHMENT.** Individuals who engage with others are more likely to be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions. This process of engagement will compel them to consider new viewpoints that they may accept, reflect on, or dispute – but in all cases it

creates a dialogue between these individuals.

- **EMPOWERMENT.** Empowerment means that individuals are able to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and that such participation can make an actual difference. This sense of empowerment can be gained through positive experiences with any kind of decision-making process where participants play an active role, are listened to by others, and listen to others.
- **BELONGING.** Engagement with other people stimulates people's recognition that they belong to a community that needs and wants their contributions. This enhanced sense of belonging is essential to individual wellness and social cohesion, and can be fostered through engagement.

With respect to Canada's communities, we believe that civic engagement can bring:

- **INNOVATION.** Innovation occurs through the refinement of ideas in the crucible of public debate. In politics, social activism, volunteerism, or any other area of civic life, the engagement of individuals in problem solving will contribute to innovative results.
- **DEMOCRACY.** Democracy means more than the right to mark a ballot in an election. Democracy in its purest form is the involvement of all people in discussions and decision-making about public issues. A call for increased citizen engagement is a call for all people to ensure a responsive and accountable government and to have a meaningful voice in how their country is run.
- **INCLUSIVENESS.** An inclusive society is one in which all people are welcome and able to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Many people feel alienated because they believe that established institutions do not know or represent them. A more engaged society would actively attempt to involve them in the decision-making process.
- **UNITY.** A society in which people do not believe that they belong together is one whose unity is at risk. Civic engagement promotes the growth of networks that cut across artificial boundaries and that create a community founded on common core civic beliefs.

“Canada’s size and widespread population requires creative institutions and networks, governmental and non, supported above all by an active citizenry, to keep it working together... Ultimately, this country needs a critical mass of people who care, who are networked, and who can work across the geographical, cultural, and professional boundaries that have traditionally kept Canadians apart.”

Alison Loat, Canada25’s co-founder, and joint winner of the Public Policy Forum’s Young Leaders Award in 2006

HARNESSING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The “Actions” section of this report develops our policy recommendations in five chapters.

Our first chapter, “**shared civic identity**,” discusses the relationship between civic engagement and a national civic identity. In it, we consider the type of identity that we seek to construct, as well as the way in which civic engagement can build such an identity by bridging gaps between Canadians.

Our following three chapters discuss the different settings in which individuals engage and, by extension, build a civic nation.

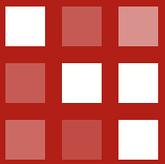
In “**Let the sunshine in: make political involvement more accessible to all**,” we focus on the political system. We argue in favour of greater openness and accessibility, and propose ideas such as reforming the way in which political parties nominate election candidates, emphasizing the teaching of dissent and activism in the country’s schools, and recasting the debate about increasing voter turnout in favour of a new debate about increasing *informed* voter turnout.

In “**Build a pin factory: help non-profits do what they do best**,” we focus on non-profit organizations, charities, and other groups of individuals united by common interests. Our ideas include more favourable tax conditions, better incentives for employers, improved volunteer management practices, and increased teaching and research capacity about non-profit studies.

In “**Put the public into public space: improve the stewardship of common areas**,” we focus on the physical and virtual spaces in which individuals engage. Our ideas include a stronger focus on informal common facilities and the formation of highly localized committees charged with cherishing and overseeing their respective public spaces, whether as small as a neighbourhood, a park, or a single street corner.

Finally, in our closing chapter, “**Think globally, act globally: extend civic engagement beyond Canada’s borders**,” we assert that Canada should simultaneously seek out best practices from overseas and promote itself more assertively to the world.

I. INTRODUCTION



II. ACTIONS

III. CONCLUSION

IV. APPENDICES

MIND THE GAPS:

DEVELOP UNDERSTANDING OF A SHARED CIVIC IDENTITY

“That simple, declarative sentence – Canada is a nation – implies a whole set of ideas about the country and how it works. It implies that every Canadian is tied to every other Canadian, directly, without the intermediation of province or other affiliation. It implies that they combine to make up a single political entity – not a “marriage” or a “partnership” or a “compact” between sub-entities – even if they choose to govern themselves federally. And it implies a direct relationship between those citizens, individually and collectively, and the one government that answers to them all: the national – or if you prefer, federal – government. That’s critical. Federalism, as such, is impossible without it.”

Andrew Coyne
(November 15, 2006),
“The real question: Is
Canada a nation?”
www.andrewcoyne.com

Identity is a peculiar force. Identity can unite people who have never personally encountered each other for the sole reason that they feel like they are similar, and identity can drive people apart – or worse – for no reason other than that they feel themselves to be different from each other.

Canada has a complex relationship with the concept of identity. Novelist Yann Martel’s oft-repeated – and oft-misunderstood – remark in 2002 that Canada was “the greatest hotel on earth” reignited a debate whose ramifications continue to reverberate. What type of identity does a Canadian have? How does a person acquire such an identity? Is it even healthy to talk about a “national identity” – or is this just a euphemism for chest-thumping xenophobia?

Canadians themselves appear to be divided on these questions. Some Canadians resist any discussion whatsoever of a “national identity,” preferring instead to think exclusively in terms of other identities. The place of Quebec in Canada is one manifestation of this phenomenon, but it also exists among those who believe that being an Albertan or a Newfoundlander, or being a Christian or a Muslim, or being white or black, is a far more fundamental identity than being a Canadian. Alternatively, some Canadians are happy to embrace the concept of a “national identity,” so long as such an identity reflects a single dominant culture or heritage. Such a belief underlies every claim that immigrants should “become more like us,” or that people can “like Canada or leave it” – a sentiment voiced not only by those who want to return immigrants to their homelands, but also by those who tell people who want lower taxes or gun rights, for example, to go to America.

In this chapter we view these questions from a different angle. We acknowledge that it is not possible to discuss the concept of a national civic identity without attempting a definition of this identity, and our first set of recommendations addresses this issue

by considering the unifying power of civic values such as small-l liberalism, pluralism, and tolerance. But our other sets of recommendations focus on the way in which such an identity can be built and understood through civic engagement. Put another way, our first set of recommendations suggests our destination, while our subsequent sets of recommendations detail how our country can get there.

- **CLARIFY THE TIES THAT BIND US:** improve understanding of the fundamental freedoms of the individual, recognize the complexity of identity groups, and define the state’s role in guaranteeing pluralism.
- **HOLD COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONIES FOR EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLDS:** orient the ceremony as celebrating Canada as a nation built on a notion, incorporate provincial/territorial involvement, de-emphasize the governmental focus, make participation in these ceremonies optional, and honour all Canadian citizens and permanent residents.
- **PROMOTE INTER- AND INTRA-REGIONAL ENCOUNTERS:** develop regional immersion programs, twin every rural constituency with an urban constituency, and formalize the concept of a “provincial/territorial” roundup in national news media.
- **REASSESS THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN RELIGION AND EDUCATION:** increase the academic, bias-free study of religion (including the non-belief in religion) in the country’s secondary schools, and twin schools in one denomination with schools in another denomination.
- **CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO ON EXCLUSION:** run public awareness campaigns on specific forms of exclusion, including mental health, elder abuse, and human trafficking, take action on issues facing Canada’s Aboriginals, and support and reinforce communities most affected by modern social challenges, whether cultural, historical, or religious.
- **REACH OUT THROUGH FAMILIES AND PEERS:** publish a simple, plain-language civic engagement guide for parents or caregivers of children, integrate the teaching of civic engagement into parenting support services, especially for at-risk families, and form closer bonds with student associations in universities and colleges on relevant civic issues.

SECTIONS 1 & 2, CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Section 1

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Section 2

Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- d) freedom of association.

CLARIFY THE TIES THAT BIND US

Canadians have a curious tendency to be simultaneously very confident about who we are not – Americans – and very unconfident about who we are. It is unclear why we feel this way – and Canada25 believes that it is a shame. We argue that having a “national identity” is a perfectly healthy and reasonable goal – provided, of course, that the criteria on which such an identity is based are themselves healthy and reasonable.

Our ideas in this recommendation reflect the opinions of those who want a national identity based on those civic values that have the capacity to unite us. They include the following:

- **IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS OF THE INDIVIDUAL.** Canada’s constitution sets out an individual’s fundamental freedoms and establishes the narrow range of procedures by which state authorities may constrain such freedoms. Although these freedoms are the building blocks of a civically engaged society, we are apprehensive that they are not fully understood or appreciated within the country as a whole. Few people would be able to point to the constitutional guarantee of fundamental freedoms, as set out in section 2 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and even fewer people would be able to contemplate the mechanics by which such fundamental freedoms may be validly constrained, as set out in section 1 of the *Charter*. The results are predictable: too frequently, we hear calls for blocking the exercise of such freedoms. We lament such calls because they inhibit civic engagement and, thus, the formation of a common civic identity based on precisely those same fundamental freedoms. We urge improved understanding of these fundamental freedoms through better teaching of the relevant constitutional provisions within educational institutions – not just law schools – enhanced security so that those who choose to exercise their freedoms can do so without fear, and the vigorous disputing of the arguments of those who would seek to suppress the free expression of others.
- **RECOGNIZE THE COMPLEXITY OF IDENTITY GROUPS.** Identity groups – religious, cultural, ethnic, or along any other lines – are not monolithic blocs whose members all think and believe certain things. Rather, identity groups are complex entities whose members are free-thinking individuals and, at

times, may dissent from prevailing ideas within their groups and may even be members of other identity groups. The result is that “identity groups” – such as the “black community,” or the “gay community,” or the “Jewish community” – are far more heterogeneous than they are often understood to be, and it can be unhelpful, if not wholly counterproductive, to think of such groups as unified blocs or to ascribe stereotypical characteristics to them. At worst, ascribing such unity can have the effect of ignoring the very real divisions that can occur within such identity blocs, including socioeconomic status or gender. For example, the debate in Ontario in 2005 about whether to outlaw religious family law arbitration, including Sharia law, tended to be portrayed incorrectly as a division between Muslims and non-Muslims. Yet numerous Muslim groups, such as the Canadian Council for Muslim Women, supported the move, while groups including the Canadian Jewish Congress opposed it. Recognizing the complexity of identity groups means focussing more on individuals within such groups, understanding the divisions that may exist within them, and resisting the temptation to make blanket statements about what they think.

- **DEFINE THE GOVERNMENT’S ROLE IN GUARANTEEING PLURALISM.** The picture that we have painted above requires a basic system of regulation and structure in which individuals and groups can operate safely and respectfully. Such a role, we believe, is one best played by government, and we seek to define the role of the Canadian federal government as one of guaranteeing a pluralistic society in which different individuals and groups can engage with each other constructively.

“The internal struggle going on within the Muslim community is not an easy one. As an individual who loves Canada and the values we stand for, it pains me to see the Canadian Muslim community feel like they’re being forced to pick one identity and choose between either being Canadian or being Muslim. For the majority of us there is no struggle: I’m a Canadian and a Muslim, and my identity as such makes me both a better Canadian and a better Muslim. I crave the day when we no longer have labels and where citizens of all stripes work together to resolve all forms of discrimination that face our society, to see human rights as ubiquitous.”

Salima Ebrahim, delegate to Canada25’s national forum

“Like a growing number of people around the world, I am not interested in being identified with the coincidence of where I happen to have been born, or with the administrative jurisdiction I happen to call home. But I’m happy to participate in societies, such as the ones in Canada or the European Union (through Britain) that are aiming for higher human values – social justice, equality, open markets, generous social programs. Do I love my countries? Yes, but as I love my house, not as I love my wife.”

Doug Saunders (February 18, 2006), “I’d rather pledge allegiance to a notion, not a nation,” *Globe & Mail*

HOLD COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONIES FOR EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLDS

The concept of the ritual is powerful and timeless. People celebrate marriages with ceremonies and receptions, commemorate graduations with convocations, and have parties to celebrate birthdays, holidays, retirements, and almost anything else that provides a reason.

Canada25 believes that turning eighteen – the age of enjoying the full scope of civic rights and responsibilities – is a coming-of-age event on a similar scale. This occasion is deserving of a ceremony that celebrates this occasion and that communicates the importance of these rights and responsibilities.

We envision civic ceremonies for all Canadian citizens and permanent residents in the year in which they turn eighteen. Our inspiration for such a ceremony is the citizenship ceremony held for people who become naturalized as Canadian citizens, which creates a powerful link between people and their new home. Ideas for these ceremonies include the following:

- **ORIENT THE CEREMONY AS CELEBRATING CANADA AS A NATION BUILT ON A NOTION.** Rather than orienting the event as support for Canada as a nation in the sociological sense, we seek to orient the event as support for Canada as a nation that celebrates civic notions of liberal democratic values, pluralism, and tolerance.
- **INCORPORATE PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL INVOLVEMENT.** Canada is a federal country, and the provinces and territories are constitutionally recognized players. The civic ceremony should not be limited only to discussion of Canada, but it should be extended to include discussion of an individual province/territory.
- **DE-EMPHASIZE THE GOVERNMENTAL FOCUS.** Civic ceremonies should not be dry, dusty events at which eighteen-year-olds listen to a series of political speeches. Rather, such ceremonies should be more celebratory affairs featuring different Canadian cultural traditions, artistic displays, and – yes – an exhortative speech or two welcoming the honourees to the notion of Canada.

- **MAKE PARTICIPATION IN THESE CEREMONIES OPTIONAL.** Just as a university or college graduate can choose not to attend her or his convocation, an individual should have the freedom of choice to decline to attend her or his civic ceremony. These ceremonies should stand on their merits as being special, moving, and valuable, such that people would want to attend them.
- **HONOUR ALL CANADIAN CITIZENS AND PERMANENT RESIDENTS.** Although we agree that formal political rights, such as voting or standing for political office, should be limited to citizens, we note that other opportunities and obligations of living in Canada – volunteering, paying taxes, or speaking up on public issues – are held by all people. As such, we see no reason to distinguish between citizens and non-citizens for the purpose of these ceremonies. Indeed, the inclusiveness of civic ceremonies may convince permanent residents who are not citizens to become citizens at a future time.

EXPLORE PROGRAM / DESTINATION CLIC

In the Explore Program / Destination Clic (formerly the Summer Language Bursary Program), students enrol in a second-language immersion program lasting for five weeks in the spring or summer. Students pay a nominal contribution toward their tuition, room, and board, and governments cover the balance.

The program has two broad purposes. First, it develops students' language skills through approximately one hundred hours of classroom instruction and appropriate oral and written testing. Second, it exposes students to another culture in Canada. For many participants, it is their first prolonged experience in a different community, and many alumni speak glowingly about the program.

www.jexplore.ca
www.destinationcllic.ca

PROMOTE INTER- AND INTRA-REGIONAL ENCOUNTERS

Throughout Canada's existence, the gap between the two solitudes has dominated the conceptualization of our country, whether expressed as English versus French, Anglophones versus Francophones, Wolfe versus Montcalm, or Quebec versus the Rest of Canada. A series of efforts have aimed to bridge this gap. The *Official Languages Act* (1969) established English and French as the two official languages of Canada. Schoolchildren across the country take lessons in both languages. Governments fund an array of linguistic immersion programs, including summer immersion programs and language assistant programs.

Without minimizing the significance of this gap, and without suggesting that Canada should slacken in its efforts to close this gap, we assert that regionalism is an equally potent threat. Regionalism undermines efforts to build a sense of countywide purpose and reinforces antiquated stereotypes that inhibit understanding and co-operation: we've all heard the unfortunate depictions of intolerant Alberta cowboys, champagne-swilling Toronto intellectuals, igloo-dwelling Nunavummiut, and lazy Atlantic Canadians. Equally, regionalism promotes an "us-versus-them" mentality that dictates everything from representation in political bodies to the formula of calculating equalization payments. Thanks to regionalism, too little consideration is given to the way in which public policies enhance overall efficiency and fairness throughout the country, and too much consideration is given to the way in which public policies affect the self-interest of individual regions.

Of equal worry are the gaps that exist within individual regions, particularly between people living in rural or remote areas and people living in cities. As with inter-regionalism, inadequate intra-regional understanding can manifest itself in negative viewpoints and stereotypes.

Our ideas for addressing regionalism include the following:

- **DEVELOP REGIONAL IMMERSION PROGRAMS.** These programs, modelled after Canada's successful linguistic immersion programs such as *Explore* and *Destination Clic*, would encompass the academic study of, and cultural immersion in, any region of Canada that is different from a

person's own region. Young people would be supported to study for a few weeks in a region of Canada for a period in the summer, and classroom learning would be supplemented with appropriate outings and extracurricular activities. Funding this program would be an excellent opportunity for private enterprises, educational institutions, charitable foundations, and governments to work together.

- **TWIN EVERY RURAL CONSTITUENCY WITH AN URBAN CONSTITUENCY.** An example is the Agriculture 101 – Toronto 101 program between the Ontario provincial ridings of Perth-Middlesex and Don Valley West, in which community members from one constituency have the opportunity to tour the other constituency, meet and mingle, and learn about the society in which members of the other side live. How many urban residents are familiar with rural concerns such as the remoteness of medical services or the challenges facing young people? Conversely, how many rural residents are familiar with food banks, the resources required for proper English or French second-language instruction, or the need for urban public transit? Canada²⁵ encourages all members of Parliament and members of provincial/territorial assemblies, where appropriate, to form such programs as a means of increasing interactions across the urban-rural divide.
- **FORMALIZE THE CONCEPT OF A “PROVINCIAL/ TERRITORIAL” ROUNDUP IN NATIONAL NEWS MEDIA.** Visit the main news website of the British Broadcasting Corporation – arguably the pre-eminent news service in the world – and you will see the top headline from each region in the world. Open a copy of *USA Today* – the largest circulation newspaper in the United States – and you will see a chart with one news story from each state. No formalized equivalent exists among mainstream Canadian media. We call upon Canada's newspapers, news websites, and magazines to commit to mentioning one story per province/territory per day or issue, as applicable.

“The appalling violence and hysteria that followed the 2005-2006 Danish cartoon controversy made clear both the importance of religious commitments to many people and the potential danger that an overzealous interpretation of these commitments poses for core liberal freedoms, above all freedom of speech. Such tension can be overcome, in part, through the expanded teaching of comparative religion, including atheism, in schools, and the grounding of that tuition in an academic, unbiased and non-theological approach. Understanding religion’s importance – for our history and for many people’s daily lives – is important; understanding the limits of religions’ precepts – that they apply to voluntary members of that religious group and to no one else – is equally important.”

Randall Hansen,
Canada Research Chair
in Immigration &
Governance, Department
of Political Science,
University of Toronto

REASSESS THE INTERSECTION OF RELIGION AND EDUCATION

Few issues arouse a stronger emotion than the place of religion in the country’s schools. On the one hand, many people view any mention of religion in a publicly funded educational institution as a violation of the wall between church and state. On the other hand, a small number of people point to the lack of discussion about religion in public schools as a reason to support denominational schools that, depending on the province/territory, may or may not be publicly funded. The result is that many students in non-denominational schools graduate with little to no exposure to the historical origins or basic factual tenets of any religion (including atheism), and many students in denominational schools graduate with exposure only to their own religion.

This tension is worth addressing. We believe that Canada is witnessing a growing gap between members of different religious groups, including those who are not religious. Understandably, people tend to be suspicious of things that they are not personally familiar with. Closing this gap, we believe, lies in the reassessment of the intersection between religion and education.

Uniquely, and due to the sensitive nature of this issue, we wish to state our biases up front. Members of Canada²⁵ tend to support a secular conception of a state, one in which makes no attempt to coerce people into adopting a particular system of religious belief, or indeed adopting religious belief of any kind. We also tend to respect the religious choices (or lack thereof) of other people. Those of us who are not personally religious do not look down upon those who are, and conversely, those of us who are religious do not look down upon those who are not. Lest these statements sound trite, we understand that they are not universally shared within the Canadian population.

Our ideas for reassessing the intersection between religion and education include the following:

- **INCREASE THE ACADEMIC, BIAS-FREE STUDY OF RELIGION (INCLUDING THE NON-BELIEF IN RELIGION) IN THE COUNTRY’S SECONDARY SCHOOLS.** We support increasing the amount of learning time devoted to teaching the basic historical foundations and critical beliefs of different religious traditions. This means, for example, giving all

secondary school students, including those in public schools, the opportunity to learn about Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the five pillars of Islam, the Sermon on the Mount, and – because any study of theoretical thought demands critical analysis of such thought – the writings of Bertrand Russell and Richard Dawkins. Education about religion, as opposed to religious education, also means teaching students about the value of religious pluralism and acceptance of the religious choices of others. Knowing facts about religion (including the non-belief in religion) is a way of demystifying concepts that remain mysterious for too many people, thereby inhibiting understanding across religious boundaries.

- **TWIN SCHOOLS IN ONE DENOMINATION WITH SCHOOLS IN ANOTHER DENOMINATION.** Many, though not all, denominational schools are composed primarily of people who belong to the same religious group, to the extent that students may graduate without ever having encountered someone of a different religion in a meaningful way. We believe in the value of breaking down these barriers, and we suggest that a twinning program between schools of different denominational groups may provide a promising way of doing so. Under a twinning program, two schools would commit to a series of exchange programs, official visits, and lessons about a different faith perspective.”

“MAID IN CANADA”

In early 2006, the Globe & Mail ran a series of five articles in which a journalist, Jan Wong, went undercover to work as a housemaid. The series aroused considerable attention, not only because it depicted the significant struggles facing someone in the service sector and living on a low income, but also because it revealed the curiosity of so many Canadians about the everyday life of a person who works and lives among them.

CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO ON EXCLUSION

When considered on an overall level, Canada is becoming a more prosperous and affluent country. Compared with ten years ago, all generally accepted leading social and economic indicators look positive: gross domestic product is up, unemployment and crime are down, more Canadians are homeowners, and fewer Canadians are dropping out of school.

However, when considered on a more individual level, Canada is failing some of its people. The unemployment rate, while low, fails to acknowledge that many people are underemployed in positions that do not make full use of their skills and abilities, and that others are chronically unemployed. The crime rate, while falling, nevertheless afflicts certain communities disproportionately. Homelessness remains a problem in Canada’s cities. Fully one-third of Canadians lack a high-school diploma. Of particular concern are the living conditions of too many of Canada’s Aboriginals, particularly those living on reserves, for whom poverty, abuse, and a lack of basic infrastructure are facts of life.

Measuring a country’s social and economic health demands more than looking at average conditions. It also requires – borrowing a phrase from philosopher John Rawls – looking at the conditions of a country’s least well-off. And we believe that the gap between haves and have-nots should give our country cause for concern. In addition to self-evident ethical reasons – which alone should compel us to act – the gap is concerning because it effectively sets the have-nots apart from our country’s civic identity. If they do not benefit from the prosperity and affluence of our country, why should they feel like they are a part of it?

We want to challenge the status quo on exclusion. Our ideas include the following:

- **RUN PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS ON SPECIFIC FORMS OF EXCLUSION, INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH, ELDER ABUSE, AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING.** A well-run public awareness campaign can be memorable and effective: the ParticipAction campaign informed Canadians about the benefit of physical exercise, and Heritage Minutes brought to life anecdotes in Canadian history. We recommend the launch of similar programs with respect to certain specific forms of

exclusion that go generally under-noticed in the mainstream media.

- **TAKE ACTION ON ISSUES FACING CANADA'S ABORIGINALS.** Too many of Canada's Aboriginals live in conditions that are typically associated with developing countries: impassable roads, undrinkable water, housing shortages, inadequate education, and rampant unemployment are only a few of the socioeconomic problems that exist. Such conditions are ironic and cruel in light of the country's general prosperity. Although we are aware that many ideas have been raised to improve these conditions, and although it appears as though such ideas are always about to be implemented, we remain frustrated by the lack of pace and sense of urgency. Our call to action is directed primarily to the federal government, which has not only an ethical but also a constitutionally mandated obligation to act, and it extends to other levels of government and band councils themselves. Increased funding is certainly a component of any solution, but it is also not the only component. Better training in self-governance, stronger accountability measures, and a clearer focus on the needs of at-risk individuals within Aboriginal communities – not just leaders – are also essential measures to improve the living conditions of a population that deserves far better.
- **SUPPORT AND REINFORCE COMMUNITIES MOST AFFECTED BY MODERN SOCIAL CHALLENGES, WHETHER CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, OR RELIGIOUS.** Certain communities face unique – and often severe – social challenges that stem from, at least in part, a sense of disconnectedness from the broader social fabric of our country. These challenges are real, they have serious and largely negative consequences, and they ought not to be sustained. Civic engagement, although not independently able to address these challenges, and although not a substitute for better economic opportunities, is nevertheless a component of any solution in reaching out to them with respect to civic values. We call for greater efforts to help such communities by supporting and reinforcing leaders within these communities who are well positioned to help with the design and delivery of appropriate social services, to identify at-risk individuals within those communities, and to encourage early intervention to avoid the escalation of social concerns.

“Civic engagement is not an exclusive act separate from other aspects of our lives. A conversation about civic engagement must involve a discussion of the structural barriers that limit access to information, opportunities, and institutions in the everyday lives of many Canadians.”

Debbie Pacheco, delegate to Canada25's national forum

“I was fortunate to grow up in a family where the concept of civic engagement thrived. My parents were always volunteering for something in our community, and we still have lively discussions on politics and current events. It seems that more parents are relying on schools to teach their children about how to get involved or how to vote, but schools can never replace a parent’s example. I know that my parents’ example led to my own volunteer activities; the attitude that we have a responsibility to give back is as much a part of their legacy as the colour of my eyes.”

Erin Chrusch, delegate to Canada25’s national forum

REACH OUT THROUGH FAMILIES AND PEERS

When researching this project, Canada25 asked people where they first learned about one particular form of civic engagement: voting. An overwhelming majority responded that their most important influence was their family – mostly parents, but also older siblings and members of their extended families – and that they felt this influence from an early age. Crucially, they added that they received not only technical information about voting, such as where and when to vote, but also more substantive information about voting, such as why it was important and why they should participate in it.

The key lesson from this finding is that families can be effective and efficient vehicles for passing on important information, whether about voting, other ways of engaging with people about civic issues, or anything else. Families are “effective” because they tend to be dominant forces in young people’s lives, and – for better or for worse – the values espoused by parents tend to be reflected in their children. Families are also “efficient” because, on a purely practical level, they number in the millions and have a far greater capacity to reach people than do governments and non-profits, which have finite financial and human resources.

Of course, families come in all shapes and sizes. They include not just nuclear families with one father and one mother, but also single-parent families, blended families, families with parents of the same sex, and multi-generational families. All of these families are equally valuable and are equally capable of teaching the value of civic engagement.

A similar principle applies to peer groups. Few people are immune to the influences of their peers. How people speak, dress, and act depend significantly on their friends and colleagues. Consider, for example, the strategies of advertisers. Turn on the television, and you see children playing with certain toys, teenagers dressing in certain clothes, and adults drinking – or, in Canada, holding – certain beers. Advertisers know that people are more likely to do things if they see members of their peer group doing them as well.

- **PUBLISH A SIMPLE, PLAIN-LANGUAGE GUIDE FOR PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN.** This guide would explain such civic values as voting, expression, and volunteerism, and it would stress the need for families to speak with children about the subjects. The guide would also direct parents to suitable online resources. As English and French are not the only languages spoken in Canada's homes, the guide should also be translated where appropriate.
- **INTEGRATE THE TEACHING OF CIVIC VALUES INTO PARENTING SUPPORT SERVICES, ESPECIALLY FOR AT-RISK FAMILIES.** Parenting support services can be effective vehicles to transmit information about a variety of topics, including nutrition, safety, and health, and they exist both formally (through classes) and informally (through support circles or activity groups). They can be particularly useful for children in at-risk groups, such as low-income, teenage-parent, or single-parent families, who are generally more likely to lack other support services. We note that such services exist with respect to certain topics, most notably the federal government's Community Action Plan for Children (CAPC), part of the Child Development Initiative that was launched after the 1990 United Nations World Summit for Children, directed toward children in at-risk groups. We believe in expanding the remit of these services to encompass core civic values.
- **FORM CLOSER BONDS WITH STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS IN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES ON RELEVANT CIVIC ISSUES.** Many students identify closely with their educational institutions – or, perhaps more accurately, they identify closely with the networks and bonds that they form within their educational institutions. Student associations at Canadian educational institutions, many of which are sophisticated corporations that deliver a variety of services, know these networks and bonds better than anyone else. Similarly, student media, particularly student newspapers, reach hundreds of thousands of young people in a way that conventional media do not. Co-operating with them – and, for the most part, they are happy to co-operate, as programs like Meal Exchange demonstrate – may be the most effective way of reaching these people with respect to civic values. For example, Elections Canada could expand their voter outreach programs by liaising, on an ongoing basis, directly and personally with student leaders.

MEAL EXCHANGE

Founded by students in 1993, Meal Exchange is a registered charity that involves students in projects to address hunger. Its aims include organizing food drives for those in need, educating students about the social factors behind hunger, involving students in relevant volunteer activities, and implementing solutions raised by students. Over the past thirteen years, Meal Exchange has operated on over fifty campuses across Canada and has generated over \$1,300,000 in donations.

www.mealexchange.ca

LET THE SUNSHINE IN: MAKE POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT MORE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

In a series of essays compiled in *Other People's Money and How the Bankers Use It*, Louis D. Brandeis, later appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States, wrote the memorable line: “Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial diseases. Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants; electric light the most efficient policeman.”

Over time, his observation has been applied with particular force to the political system. Public scrutiny – sunlight – is indeed the best way to ensure fair, clean, and effective government. Equally, a government that possesses these traits is more likely to attract people to engage with it, whether directly as voters or as candidates, or indirectly as interested community members. Sunlight creates a virtuous cycle in politics.

Canada, as compared to many other countries in the world, remains relatively free of corruption and opacity. As a liberal democracy, people have the right to contribute to public discourse, to elect the people who will govern them, and to expect that these people will act with their best interests in mind. Moreover, people have the right to associate informally with others who share their viewpoints, to join or form organizations that support their viewpoints, and to agitate – non-violently – for social change.

Nevertheless, we believe that the political system is not as accessible as it could be. Too many people feel alienated from it; others simply do not have enough information. In many cases, the political system appears mysterious. Moreover, many discussions about increasing accessibility to the political system begin – and end – with a focus on voter turnout. Although we believe that voting is certainly one component of political engagement, it is not the only one.

In order to dispel these notions and to make political involvement more accessible to all, we propose the following ideas:

- **FOCUS ON INCREASING INFORMED VOTER TURNOUT:** conceptualize informed voter turnout as a dependent variable rather than an independent one, develop targeted programs to build the political awareness of economically and socially marginalized individuals, and focus less on hot-button fixes like mandatory voting or making Election Day a holiday.
- **STIMULATE PUBLIC INTEREST IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES:** adopt techniques of participatory budgeting, increase opportunities for learning-by-doing, and replace desks with benches in the House of Commons chamber.
- **IMPROVE THE WAY THAT POLITICAL PARTIES NOMINATE ELECTION CANDIDATES:** encourage riding associations to conduct rigorous searches to identify and recruit election candidates, recognize the ability of national party executives to ward off “takeovers” of candidacies by balancing the result of a contest against the size of the riding association’s membership and turnout among the membership, and ensure that voting in nomination contests takes place not at a nomination meeting but at voting booths open throughout the day and throughout the riding.
- **TEACH THE SKILLS OF DISSENT AND ACTIVISM:** create an activism toolkit for teachers to use in classrooms, and further integrate works by noted contrarians – whether against prevailing political, religious, legal, or other forms of dominant ideology – into school curricula.
- **INCREASE THE USE OF ONLINE TECHNOLOGY IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS:** enable Canadians to verify and update their registration status online, enable expatriate Canadians to submit their registration forms and supporting documentation online, and provide more practical information, such as polling station locations and opening hours, on a personalized basis online.

“The more a society relies on the rigidities of politics and law, the less resilient it will be in the face of challenges. More attention must be given to the context in which politics take place, and that context is shaped by civic engagement. Canadians should develop a shared sense of what it means to be a citizen - not in a legalistic sense, but in terms of what our responsibilities are as members of a community. Citizenship starts with a willingness to engage founded in the belief that each of us has a responsibility to understand other perspectives and accept the possibility of compromise in the interest of nurturing a strong and just community.”

Mitchell Gray, member of organizing committee for Canada25’s national forum

“Design an advertising campaign that appeals to a sense of duty – show the queues of people voting in post-apartheid South Africa, the purple fingers of Iraqi voters, the leading lights of our women’s suffrage movement, and our boys going over the top in Vimy.”

Canada25 (2006),
*Reaching 100%:
Increasing Informed
Voter Turnout by Young
Canadians*, report for
Elections Canada.

FOCUS ON INCREASING *INFORMED* VOTER TURNOUT

Low voter turnout is a fact of recent Canadian politics. With respect to voter turnout in all 39 federal general elections since Confederation, the past four elections rank last (2004), third last (2006), fifth last (2000), and seventh last (1997). With respect only to voter turnout in the 20 federal general elections since the end of World War II, the past four elections occupy the bottom four spots.

Discussions about increasing voter turnout tend to focus on the percentage of people who cast a ballot. Although we recognize that this is the easiest way to measure voter turnout, we suggest that the primary goal of political engagement should not be to increase this number in and of itself. Rather, the primary goal of political engagement should be to increase the number of people who are casting an informed vote. Put another way, increasing voter turnout is not the same as increasing informed voter turnout, and we encourage a greater focus on the latter rather than the former.

- **CONCEPTUALIZE INFORMED VOTER TURNOUT AS A DEPENDENT VARIABLE RATHER THAN AN INDEPENDENT ONE.** When researching this project, Canada25 asked young people a variety of questions about voting. Where did they learn about it from? What factors led them to vote? Have they ever not voted? If so, what kept them away? What we heard surprised us. We did not hear excuses: that voting was too intimidating, that politicians were all alike, that voting did not make a difference under the current electoral system, or that the act of voting was too difficult or cumbersome. Instead, we heard two messages: first, that individuals must accept the responsibilities of informing themselves about the issues at stake in an election and getting themselves to a polling booth, and second, that society – governments, schools, the media, political parties, families, and other bodies – had the responsibility to create the conditions in which individuals can better understand and appreciate these responsibilities. These findings emphasize that “voter turnout” is not something easily adjusted through minor tweaking, but instead is a complex reflection of various factors that include improving civic education, working with families, peers, and employers, and making people feel more strongly as though they truly

belong in the country. The process of building a more civically engaged society, as outlined throughout this report, is the surest way of increasing informed voter turnout.

- **DEVELOP TARGETED PROGRAMS TO BUILD THE POLITICAL AWARENESS OF ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY MARGINALIZED INDIVIDUALS.** In the course of our research into this project, efforts by government officials and politicians to reach out to underprivileged young people were criticized as uneven. For example, in a consultation held with young people from a community housing project, we heard that no attendee could recall a visit of any form from an Elections Canada official or a politician. We encourage a greater focus on building the political awareness of economically and socially marginalized young people, and we suggest that forming closer partnerships with those who deliver social services may be particularly useful – if not essential – in reaching out to them successfully. The most appropriate beginning would be to conduct focussed research with members of these groups themselves. That involves going to them and listening to what they perceive are the barriers between them and the political process. It also means providing relevant and targeted information written in an appropriate and accessible style – and, of course, in appropriate languages.
- **FOCUS LESS ON HOT-BUTTON FIXES, LIKE MANDATORY VOTING OR MAKING ELECTION DAY A HOLIDAY.** Although mandatory voting would probably increase voter turnout, it is difficult to understand how it would increase *informed* voter turnout. If anything, mandatory voting may fuel resentment among people who would prefer not to vote, and in a liberal democratic society, people should have the right to decline to participate in certain processes. With respect to the idea of making Election Day a holiday, we also disagree. With few exceptions (e.g., Canadians living abroad or students temporarily residing in a different riding), voting is already very convenient: polls are open for twelve hours on voting day, employers must grant employees sufficient time to vote, and there are generous provisions for advance voting. Setting an entire day aside for voting would be unnecessary and be harmful to economic productivity. At best, hot-button fixes would have no effect on increasing informed voter turnout; at worst, they would distract policymakers and the public from addressing the true causes of low voter turnout.

PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

“Participatory budgeting... is generally characterized by several basic features: community members identify spending priorities and elect budget delegates to represent their neighborhoods, budget delegates transform community priorities into concrete project proposals, public employees facilitate and provide technical assistance, community members vote on which projects to fund, and the public authority implements the projects.”

www.participatorybudgeting.org

STUDENT VOTE

Student Vote asks primary and secondary school students to participate in parallel elections that coincide with actual federal or provincial election periods. In the 2006 federal election, over 486,000 students from 2,500 schools cast “votes” for their local candidates, an exercise that has helped to introduce the value of voting as one form of engagement with the political system.

www.studentvote.ca

STIMULATE PUBLIC INTEREST IN POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Although voting is a crucial component of civic engagement, it is not the only component. As civic engagement is about interacting more often and more meaningfully with others in respect of civic issues, discussion about civic issues should not be limited to election campaigns. Canadians must remain actively involved in the decisions of governments to keep them accountable for their actions and ensure that they remain committed to meeting the needs of their constituents. Stimulating public interest in political decision-making is necessary to driving this type of accountability and building a more engaged Canada.

Canada25 believes that certain ideas could help to encourage greater public interest and, by extension, involvement in political decision-making:

- **ADOPT TECHNIQUES OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING.** Participatory budgeting is a process in which residents of a city help to decide how to allocate a pre-determined component of their municipal budget. As a basic premise, it holds that political engagement does not begin and end with the act of voting, but also extends to policymaking decisions that occur between elections. Although we do not necessarily advocate turning over decision-making power to participatory budgeting exercises, we endorse better community consultation as a technique to be expanded within the budgeting process. As a meaningful citizen engagement process, this model can be used effectively to reach out and solicit the contributions of individuals who might otherwise be excluded from the process, such as the economically marginalized.
- **INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING-BY-DOING.** Although classroom learning is an essential component of political education, personal involvement can help to reinforce a student’s understanding of an issue. We believe that this principle is as valid for understanding the formal political process as it is for any other discipline. We encourage our educational institutions to foster greater participation through simulation exercises, whether formal or informal. Formal exercises include model parliaments/legislatures in which students play the roles of various actors in the domestic political system, and model United Nations assemblies in

which students play the roles of various countries in the international system, and informal exercises include role-playing within classrooms, public speaking, and even walking tours of a community. We also urge governments and private enterprises to be more active in their support of bodies that operate simulation experiences, and we call for greater clarification about the eligibility of such bodies to qualify for charitable status.

- **REPLACE DESKS WITH BENCHES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS CHAMBER.** A political chamber where members sit in close proximity is more likely to foster vigorous, cut-and-thrust debate than a political chamber in which members are separated by physical distance. Consider, for example, the British House of Commons, the concept on which the Canadian equivalent is modelled. The British chamber, which features rows of benches for members to sit, is one-quarter smaller than its Canadian counterpart, but it fits over twice as many representatives. Just as the Canadian House of Commons takes its history, purpose, and name from the British House of Commons, we argue that the Canadian House of Commons should also take its design format. Dynamic debate, give-and-take between members, and the quick interchange of ideas are all necessary attributes for fostering public interest in political decision-making.

“[Churchill] recognised that the intimacy of the old chamber had created an environment for lively and intense debate, whilst the rows of opposing benches had created the two-party system – in Churchill’s eyes the bedrock of British parliamentary democracy. Thus the limited space and seating – so often berated by Members in the past – was now seen as a virtue, along with the confrontation-inducing layout. Indeed it had come to define the very nature of government and parliament.”

Jacqueline Riding (2005), “St Stephen’s Chapel: From the Crown to the People,” BBC.

IMPROVE THE WAY THAT POLITICAL PARTIES NOMINATE ELECTION CANDIDATES

Political parties enjoy considerable access to public funds. Not only do they receive funds directly on the basis of the number of votes that they attract, but they also receive funds indirectly through a generous system of tax credits. At the federal level, a tax credit of 75 percent applies to the first \$400 of political donations, 50 percent to the next \$400, and 33 ⅓ percent to all amounts above that, up to a maximum cap. For example, a taxpayer who donates \$100 will be able to reduce her or his income tax payable by \$75, meaning that he or she is out of pocket by only \$25.

Given the public funding of political parties in Canada's political system, one would expect them to conduct themselves as transparently as possible. Unfortunately, it is uncertain that they do so. It may have been an apocryphal general who told his subordinates that the armed forces defended democracy rather than practiced it, but the same story could apply to many of Canada's political parties.

One aspect stands out: how political parties nominate election candidates. Under the current process, a nominee is selected at a meeting of the members of a riding association. To be successful in this process, a nominee is encouraged to sign up as many members to the riding association as possible and to convince them to attend the nomination meeting. Many candidates win a party's nomination with only a few hundred votes – hardly a demonstration of broad-based appeal when the average riding holds over 100,000 residents.

This system is problematic. Democracy does not follow from riding associations that are run like exclusive clubs, as the low numbers of party membership would attest. Instead, democracy follows from riding associations that have large numbers of members, proactively gauge the opinions of all residents in a riding, and conduct active recruitment campaigns for the most talented and capable candidates.

Our ideas include:

- **RIDING ASSOCIATIONS SHOULD ACTIVELY CONDUCT A RIGOROUS SEARCH TO IDENTIFY AND RECRUIT NOMINATION CONTESTANTS.** Currently, many riding associations fail to advertise that they are seeking possible candidates. Information about these contests generally tends to spread through word-of-mouth, which is unreliable and acts against those who are not close to party inner circles. If a riding association fails to show that it conducted this process, the national party executive should be empowered to nominate a candidate directly.
- **POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD STRIKE THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN MONITORING RIDING ASSOCIATIONS AND SHOWING DEFERENCE TO THEM.** Low levels of party membership – sometimes numbering in the hundreds – mean that riding associations can be easily taken over by “instant members” that represent a narrow faction of the population. Explicit guidelines should be set: little deference to riding associations that are lackadaisical in their attempts to increase membership and to attract turnout, and great deference to riding associations that are pro-active and inclusive.
- **VOTING SHOULD NOT TAKE PLACE AT A NOMINATION MEETING BUT AT VOTING BOOTHS OPEN THROUGHOUT THE DAY AT SEVERAL LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT A RIDING.** It is inconvenient for people to attend a nomination meeting at a fixed time and location. Everyone agrees that voting in a general election should be made as easy and convenient as possible – why should the same principle not apply to voting in a nomination contest? Applying this principle in practice requires an abolition of the conventional nomination meeting, in which eligible party members must gather at a fixed time in a fixed place, and a move toward voting booths open throughout a nomination day at several convenient locations throughout a riding.

THE DOMINANCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES?

Among the 2,096 seats contested in the past seven federal general elections – 1984, 1988, 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004, and 2006 – only five independent candidates have been elected:

- Tony Roman in 1984
- Gilles Bernier in 1993
- John Nunziata in 1997
- Chuck Cadman in 2004
- André Arthur in 2006

Of these candidates, Messrs Bernier, Nunziata, and Cadman were sitting as incumbent members of parliament.

CLAYOQUOT SOUND REVISITED?

“A half dozen environmental groups, including Greenpeace and the Natural Resources Defense Council, say they are shocked that Clayoquot Sound – designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a region the groups fought to save – is once again under threat from logging in pristine valleys...”

“Clayoquot Sound became an area of international prominence when a government decision [Clayoquot Land Use Decision, 1993] to allow logging in the fragile rainforest came under intense scrutiny from major environmental groups and the international marketplace. Debate over the future of the region led to the largest civil disobedience protests in Canada’s history with over 10,000 people standing on logging blockades and more than 800 people arrested. A 1999 agreement signed by environmental groups, First Nations and the logging company McMillan Bloedel to voluntarily put the pristine valleys off limits to logging signaled the end of intense campaigns.”

Friends of Clayoquot Sound press release (August 1, 2006)
www.focs.ca

TEACH THE SKILLS OF DISSENT AND ACTIVISM

Dissent and activism are oft-neglected forms of political engagement – “dissent” being defined as a healthy scepticism of the status quo and a willingness to understand the best possible alternatives to the way in which a society operates, and “activism” being defined as actions or expressions that originate with everyday citizens, including social protests, petitions, and campaigns to raise awareness about a particular issue.

Without dissent and activism, there can be little progress in society: formal institutions tend to lag behind societal needs, and they require ongoing input by people to raise awareness and lobby for social changes. Furthermore, dissent and activism afford individuals from marginalized communities, many of whom feel excluded from Canada’s formal institutions, opportunities for civic involvement.

Needless to say, dissent and activism must take place non-violently. People like Thomas Paine and Mohandas Gandhi should be applauded – and people who appropriate these values and use them as an excuse for rampaging and rioting should be denounced.

We suggest that the appropriation of dissent and activism has occurred because many formal institutions have shied away from teaching them. Yet dissent and activism should not be dirty words. Taught properly, these traits encourage people to think critically for themselves and to be empowered with the necessary skills for taking informed action. More broadly, if we accept the philosophical concept of the dialectic – basically, that society progresses only when a thesis and an antithesis clash, giving rise to a synthesis – then we have as much responsibility to promote the creation of antitheses as we do theses.

To nurture the skills of dissent and activism, we suggest the following:

- **CREATE AN ACTIVISM TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS TO USE IN CLASSROOMS.** The toolkit should review the intellectual tenets underlying dissent and activism (including, for example, the teachings and practices of Paine or Gandhi), study domestic and international examples, and teach

practical skills for dissent and activism. In order to ensure the responsible teaching of dissent and activism, teachers will need to be given adequate resources and training through education sessions and workshops.

- **WHEN TEACHING WORKS BY NOTED CONTRARIANS – WHETHER AGAINST PREVAILING POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, LEGAL, OR OTHER FORMS OF DOMINANT IDEOLOGY – FOCUS BOTH ON THE WORK AND ALSO ON THE DISSENTING NATURE OF THE WORK.** Examples of contrarians include George Orwell, Galileo, the leading lights of the suffragist movement, and the abolitionists of slavery. Teaching about these works should focus on the work itself, the way in which such works dissented from prevailing social norms, and the manner in which they may still be relevant in contemporary society.

“We must be wary of giving education an overwhelming (and perhaps misplaced) mandate without providing support and resources for a system that has been battered and bruised. Inviting and involving critical input from teachers is a necessary prerequisite to the engagement of Canadian children.”

Elaine Lam, delegate to
Canada25’s national forum

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION

The CGI study, “On-line Voter Registration Feasibility Study,” dated March 20, 2003, is available on Elections Canada’s website (www.elections.ca).

INCREASE THE USE OF ONLINE TECHNOLOGY IN THE ELECTION PROCESS

Canadians’ use of the internet continues to grow exponentially. More and more of us are using the internet to read the news, participate in discussion forums, do our banking, shop, and file taxes. Nevertheless, one area remains elusive: participation in the electoral process.

In 2003, Elections Canada asked CGI Information Systems and Management Consultants Inc. (CGI) to consider aspects of a proposed online voter registration system. CGI held numerous in-depth interviews with stakeholders and government agencies, reviewed online projects in Canadian provinces, several American states, and fifteen other countries, and conducted high-level analysis of the specific objectives and constraints of an online registration system.

CGI’s main finding was that an online registration system was feasible using existing infrastructure to ensure security. Services could include the ability for voters to change, update, or confirm their registration information through a secure online portal. The study also identified potential legislative issues to be resolved, particularly those involving the authentication of online registrants, before their recommendations could be fully implemented.

The study concluded that, by the end of 2003, Elections Canada should be able to implement an initial system to allow voters to confirm whether they were registered to vote, to download voter registration cards, and to find out where they could go to vote. As a longer term goal – achievable by 2005 – CGI recommended that Elections Canada develop a common-user interface that could be used to implement other online registration services, such as the ability to update one’s voter registration information from a dynamic list of voters.

Over three years – and two federal general elections – have passed since the study was released, and electors are no closer to doing any of those tasks. We believe not only that the above ideas should be implemented, but also that they be viewed as a first step toward greater use of online technology in the election process.

Our ideas include:

- **ENABLE CANADIANS TO VERIFY AND UPDATE THEIR CURRENT REGISTRATION STATUS ONLINE.** A National Register of Electors (NRE) – a permanent voters’ list – already exists. We believe that Canadians should be able to verify their personal information on the NRE and update their information as necessary.
- **ENABLE CANADIANS LIVING OVERSEAS DURING AN ELECTION PERIOD TO SUBMIT THEIR VOTER REGISTRATION FORM AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION ONLINE.** Canadians who reside overseas during an election period need to complete a registration form and attach supporting documentation in order to receive a ballot. Currently, these Canadians can submit these materials by mail or fax. Why do they remain unable to do this online?
- **ENABLE CANADIANS TO CHECK THE LOCATION AND HOURS OF THEIR POLLING STATION ONLINE.** Users of the Elections Canada website may enter their postal code in order to receive certain information about their electoral district, including a map of the district, the name of their Member of Parliament, and the candidates in the previous election. We believe that entering a postal code should also provide practical, personalized information, such as the address and opening hours of the polling station at which they can vote.

BUILD A PIN FACTORY:

HELP NON-PROFITS DO WHAT THEY DO BEST

“Current government funding practices seem to be aimed at trying to turn nonprofit and voluntary organizations into cost-efficient extensions of government. As a result, the ability of these organizations to do what they do best may be undermined. Because nonprofit and voluntary organizations are often rooted in the communities they serve, they are able to identify and respond to needs earlier, more quickly, and more innovatively than their government funders. However, this requires some degree of autonomy and capacity for independent action.”

The Capacity to Serve: a Qualitative Study of the Challenges Facing Canada’s Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations (2003)

Non-profit organizations are engines of civic engagement. Defined as groups of people drawn together by a shared purpose without seeking to make a profit, non-profits serve a variety of valuable functions. They connect people with common interests, they reach out to new people, including those not reached through conventional channels, they draw attention to issues that might otherwise be neglected, they serve as an outlet for many people looking to improve their communities and their country, and they can deliver important social services.

However, non-profits cannot operate in isolation, and to illustrate this point, we draw upon the analogy of the pin factory. Made famous by Adam Smith, the analogy hypothesizes that a factory in which each worker is responsible for manufacturing a specific aspect of a pin would be superior to a factory where each worker is responsible for manufacturing an entire pin from start to finish. This division of labour would lead, Smith reasoned, to individual specialization and its associated benefits: efficiency, expertise, and innovation. According to him, the most effective system would divide labour according to different responsibilities and ensure the collaboration of these labours into one cohesive whole.

Canada25 believes that a similar principle applies to the roles of different institutions in fostering civic engagement. Certain types of institutions are more specialized in certain roles, and other types of institutions are more specialized in other roles. **Governments** are well positioned to regulate, provide infrastructure, and offer financial support, whether directly (through funding) or indirectly (through appropriate tax incentives). **Private enterprises** are well positioned to innovate, encourage the skills of boldness and entrepreneurship, offer practical management and governance skills, and offer financial support. **Educational institutions** are well positioned to offer knowledge, whether to students or to the general public, form partnerships with community groups, and offer teaching and research options. In short, non-profits need

other actors within the civic system – the pin factory – to do more to help them.

The conditions are right for improving collaborative efforts to assist non-profits. Governments are gradually recognizing the responsibilities that non-profits are capable of undertaking. Private enterprises are expressing increasing interest in becoming more active corporate citizens. Educational institutions are becoming more aware of their need to diversify their educational offerings and to provide practical experience to their students.

Our recommendations for promoting closer collaboration between non-profits and these different institutions include:

- **PROVIDE MORE FAVOURABLE INCOME TAX TREATMENT OF CHARITABLE DONATIONS:** abolish the arbitrary distinction between small and large donations, and extend the donation window until March 1st of the following calendar year.
- **GIVE STRONGER INCENTIVES FOR EMPLOYERS TO CONTRIBUTE TO CHARITABLE PURSUITS:** grant tax credits to employers for the time that their employees spend in assisting registered charities, grant tax credits for salaries paid to employees on secondment to registered charities, and increase the recognition of corporations that encourage employee volunteerism.
- **MAKE CORE FUNDING FOR NON-PROFITS MORE AVAILABLE:** encourage multi-year funding arrangements, acknowledge that personnel and infrastructure costs are often integral to success, and make reporting requirements more flexible for smaller organizations – without sacrificing accountability.
- **PROFESSIONALIZE VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES WITHIN NON-PROFITS:** match people’s abilities to appropriate positions, minimize volunteer turnover, and validate volunteer positions.
- **EXTEND THE EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS REGARDING NON-PROFITS:** increase degree- and diploma-level programs for civic group leaders, increase the number of elective courses regarding non-profits, and raise funds for awards for students who wish to pursue degree work to study non-profits.

ISUMA FELLOWSHIP

In 2002, Canada25 embarked on a series of discussions focused on finding ways to make Canada’s cities magnets for talent and engines of development. During these discussions, participants from across the country indicated that young Canadians value civic participation, but felt that they lacked opportunities to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Canada25 responded by developing the concept of the Isuma Fellowship Program, a program that will harness the skills and energies of young Canadians to strengthen the capacity of non-profit organizations to serve Canadian communities.

With the support of the Centre for Social Innovation, the Isuma Fellowship Program will create placement opportunities for young Canadians in non-profit organizations by facilitating partnerships between the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Students and young employees will have the opportunity to transfer their skills to the non-profit sector, and will gain valuable hands-on experience that will benefit both themselves and their school or employer. Isuma is scheduled to launch as a pilot in 2007.

CAPITAL GAINS TAX AND DONATIONS OF LISTED SECURITIES

Before 2006, charitable donations of certain listed securities (e.g., shares) received unfavourable tax treatment. The Canada Revenue Agency considered such donations to be “dispositions,” meaning that it compared the value of the shares at the time of donation with the value of the shares at the time of their original acquisition, and then levied capital gains tax on the increase. Unsurprisingly, the anticipation of a large tax bill – payable in cash – discouraged people from donating securities. In 2006, with all-party support, the federal government eliminated the application of capital gains tax in these circumstances. People can now donate shares to registered charities without fearing a large tax bill.

PROVIDE MORE FAVOURABLE INCOME TAX TREATMENT OF CHARITABLE DONATIONS

Canadians voice overwhelming support for the role of charities in society. The Muttart Foundation’s biennial study of charities, released in 2006, found that 94 percent of Canadians viewed charities as important to them, 76 percent of Canadians thought that charities understood the needs of average Canadians better than governments did, and 70 percent of Canadians thought that charities were better than governments at meeting the needs of average Canadians.

Encouraging Canadians to give more to charity is a desirable goal, and sometimes a few lines in a tax code can do more to influence people’s behaviour than the best designed advertising or publicity campaigns. While not particularly straightforward, let alone glamorous, taxation rules are monumentally influential in providing incentives for individual Canadians to behave in certain ways.

An example of such an incentive is the scheme of income tax credits for charitable donations. Under this scheme, a taxpayer who makes a donation to a registered charity receives a tax credit equal to a percentage of the value of her or his donation. Donations that add up to \$200 or less produce a federal credit equivalent to the lowest marginal tax rate; donations that add up to more than \$200 produce a credit equivalent to the highest marginal tax rate. Provincial/territorial tax credits may also apply. A taxpayer may then use these tax credits to reduce her or his income tax payable.

DONATION AMOUNT	CALCULATION OF FEDERAL TAX CREDIT (2007)	VALUE OF FEDERAL TAX CREDIT	EFFECTIVE RATE
\$200	\$200 @ 15.5% = \$31.00	\$31.00	15.5%
\$400	\$200 @ 15.5% = \$31.00 \$200 @ 29% = \$58.00	\$89.00	22.25%
\$600	\$200 @ 15.5% = \$31.00 \$400 @ 29% = \$116.00	\$147.00	24.5%
\$800	\$200 @ 15.5% = \$31.00 \$600 @ 29% = \$174.00	\$205.00	25.625%

In principle, Canada25 praises tax credits as being efficient and effective methods of achieving public policy goals. Nevertheless, we suggest the following improvements to the scheme of tax credits for charitable donations:

- **ABOLISH THE ARBITRARY DISTINCTION IN THE TAX TREATMENT BETWEEN SMALL (\leq \$200) AND LARGE ($>$ \$200) DONATIONS.** As the above chart shows, larger donations receive more favourable tax treatment than do smaller donations. A \$400 donation is twice as large as a \$200 donation, but it produces a tax credit almost three times as large (\$89 versus \$31). This distinction unfairly operates against people who are only able to make small donations – and as such may be considered regressive. More damaging, it may inhibit people from making small initial donations, thereby preventing them from getting into the habit of donating.
- **EXTEND THE DONATION WINDOW FOR A TAXATION YEAR TO MARCH 1ST OF THE FOLLOWING YEAR.** Currently, a taxpayer must make a donation within a calendar year in order to claim a tax credit for that year. However, the end of a calendar year typically imposes significant personal financial demands for many people – and January sees low levels of spending as people pay off these demands. Extending the donation window to March 1st, as with contributions to registered retirement savings plans (RRSPs), may encourage more charitable donations.

SASKATCHEWAN GOVERNMENT INSURANCE

In 2006 the President's Youth Advisory Council (PYAC) of Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) undertook a project in employee volunteerism with the purpose of increasing employee engagement and achieving community benefits. At the encouragement of PYAC, the SGI Board of Directors granted \$60,000 to a build project for Habitat for Humanity. Rallied by the substantial support of the Board of Directors and the encouragement and leadership of PYAC, 156 SGI employees volunteered a total of 550 hours on their own time to complete the build of two family homes. On September 22nd PYAC executive members dedicated the house keys to their new owners in an emotional ceremony at their annual Youth Conference.

GIVE STRONGER INCENTIVES FOR EMPLOYERS TO CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITIES

Canadians face pressing demands on their time in their family and work lives. Although many people would like to become more engaged in their communities, the simple fact is that community activities, such as volunteering, are something extra that many people cannot easily add to their already hectic schedules. Employers are uniquely positioned to surmount this obstacle. For many Canadians, workplaces are the only locations, other than their own homes, where they spend any significant time. Any strategy to increase civic engagement among employed Canadians must begin with their employers.

We accept as our starting point that employers, like most other entities, generally act out of enlightened self-interest. The higher the benefits, the more that they will do to encourage civic engagement. Although some of these benefits may seem obvious – attractiveness to employees in the recruitment process, better retention of employees, higher employee satisfaction and productivity – these benefits are not always financially quantifiable. As such, what are needed are better financial incentives for employers to allow their employees to become more engaged with respect to their communities.

We propose the following:

- **GRANT TAX CREDITS TO EMPLOYERS FOR THE TIME THAT THEIR EMPLOYEES SPEND IN ASSISTING REGISTERED CHARITIES.** As noted earlier, individuals who donate money to registered charities receive a tax credit that they may apply against their personal income tax payable. We suggest extending this concept to donations of time. Employers that allow their employees to devote a portion of employment hours toward charitable activities should be entitled to receive a tax credit against their corporate income tax payable.
- **GRANT TAX CREDITS FOR SALARIES PAID TO EMPLOYEES ON SECONDMENT TO NON-PROFITS.** Many skilled Canadians would like to contribute in a meaningful way to their communities, but they see few opportunities to do so without “stepping out” permanently from their career track. One way of bridging this divide is the greater

use of secondment programs: employees with several years' standing would be invited to find a full-time placement of a fixed duration, such as six months or one year, at a non-profit organization in their community. The exact salary payable to the employee would be a matter for the employer, employee, and the non-profit to resolve.

- **INCREASE THE RECOGNITION OF CORPORATIONS THAT ENCOURAGE EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERISM.** Employers love awards. Governments should institute a formal system of recognizing employers that encourage volunteerism among their employees, such as the creation of tiers of award status or formal ceremonies for particularly strong or innovative techniques. Similarly, media rankings of corporations, such as “best places to work” listings, should consider place greater emphasis on employee volunteerism as a component of the rankings.

“Making investments in the communities where our employees and customers live and work makes good business sense. Benefits to brand and reputation are obvious, but the true value lies in the positive impact we’re having on the overall well-being of our society and our future workforce. We also believe there are benefits in encouraging our employees and retirees to gain a wide range of experiences by volunteering with civic groups, non-profits and within the school system. They strengthen the groups they’re helping, further develop their skills, and enrich our organization with their new ideas and perspectives. It’s a win-win.”

Robyn Tingley, VP
Communications & Public
Affairs, Bell Aliant

CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE ON FUNDING

www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/funding/funding_code.cfm

“Core funding should be provided at minimum for salaries of those working within the organization – enabling them to provide the critical services they are employed to do.

Governments talk about poverty? I have two staff employed just above the poverty line because I (and the board) am nervous to offer further salary due to the financial situation that we may find ourselves in next year. Governments should take responsibility for core salaries to ensure such key services are provided and, at the very least, approach this as part of a poverty reduction strategy!”

Brenda Kitchen, Executive Director, Newfoundland & Labrador Sexual Health Centre

MAKE CORE FUNDING FOR NON-PROFITS MORE AVAILABLE

Despite the importance of non-profit organizations, many of them operate in precarious financial situations on account of the long-term trend away from core funding and toward project-based funding. Reasons for the trend are varied. Some donors believe they will be able to see the results of their investment more clearly if it is centred on a single program. There is also a widespread yet incorrect belief that non-profits have minimal core expenses, or that money earmarked for administration will be “wasted” on ballooning salaries.

In truth, volunteers require significant training and supervision in order to be effective, the day-to-day operations of any civic group can be substantial, and many non-profits rival private enterprises for the efficiency with which they use their financial resources.

The result of this trend is indisputable. Many non-profits spend an inordinate amount of time and resources on activities relating to fundraising and grants – in short, bureaucracy – rather than on their core programming work. Furthermore, the possibilities for long-term planning and stability are undermined when non-profits cannot reliably forecast their future income.

Non-profits need to benefit from smarter funding, and the Code of Good Practice on Funding is a good place to start. Born out of collaboration with the federal government as part of the Voluntary Sector Initiative, the Code calls for strengthened sustainable capacity for non-profits, and is based on such values as accountability, transparency, equity, diversity, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Donors at all levels – whether governments, foundations, or individuals – ought to be mindful of the principles underlying the Code. Its implementation would enhance the capacity and stability of many of the country’s non-profits, and it would allow them to redirect their focus away from fundraising and administration, and toward their core activities.

Specific actions to improve funding flexibility and consistency include:

- **ENCOURAGE MULTI-YEAR FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS.** This could be achieved by, for example, allowing donors to claim a deduction in the first year for the entire amount of their multi-year donation.
- **ACKNOWLEDGE THAT PERSONNEL AND INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS ARE OFTEN INTEGRAL TO SUCCESS.** Examples of these costs include staff, computers, and facilities.
- **MAKE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS MORE FLEXIBLE FOR SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS – WITHOUT SACRIFICING ACCOUNTABILITY.** Often government or foundation grants require the same application – whether it is for \$5,000 or \$50,000. Reporting requirements operate in much the same way. This puts an unfair burden on smaller organizations that lack the full-time staff to dedicate to their reporting and grant-writing responsibilities. By moving to a more tailored approach, with reporting requirements linked to the size of the grant, funding organizations could ease the burden on Canada’s many small non-profits.

“A complex web of unpredictable, short-term, targeted project funding that may unravel at any time.”

Katherine Scott (2003),
Funding Matters: The
Impact of Canada’s New
Funding Regime on
Nonprofit and Voluntary
Organizations.

“Recruitment challenges mean that many organizations increasingly rely on a small number of volunteers. As a result, volunteers feel pressured and overloaded, which leads to burnout. Moreover, few organizations can afford the time or money to properly manage or train their volunteers. This means that many volunteers are doing tasks that are not well-suited to their skills, abilities, or interests.”

Imagine Canada (2006), *Strengthening the Capacity of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations to Serve Canadians* (Toronto: Imagine Canada).

PROFESSIONALIZE VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN NON-PROFITS

Volunteers are fundamental to non-profits: a recent study by Statistics Canada, *Cornerstones of Community*, found that nearly all non-profits rely on volunteers to execute their programming, with 54 percent having no paid staff at all.

Nevertheless, many non-profits struggle with recruiting and retaining volunteers. In *Strengthening the Capacity of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations to Serve Canadians*, Imagine Canada reported that the lack of formal volunteer management structures, a failure to provide clear job descriptions, and the incapacity to use the unique skill sets of their volunteers are more common in non-profits than is desirable.

Non-profits need to improve their volunteer recruitment and, especially, volunteer retention strategies. While volunteers are often motivated by an interest in “giving back” to their communities and are passionate about the cause of the civic group, their interest and passion can quickly dissipate if the organization pays insufficient attention to their personal development.

Although there may be some scepticism among non-profits toward private enterprises (and vice versa), the truth is that private enterprises have developed, often out of necessity, effective ways of recruiting and retaining talented individuals. The paradigm of “non-profit good, private sector bad” is outmoded. We encourage non-profits to look to private enterprises for inspiration, and for private enterprises to be more proactive in offering assistance to non-profits, with a particular focus in the following areas:

- **MATCH PEOPLE’S ABILITIES TO APPROPRIATE POSITIONS.** There is a common misconception among many non-profits that volunteers can be given only certain rote tasks to perform, and that it is too difficult to put volunteers into project management or leadership roles of any form. We believe that this view sells volunteers short: they are capable of more than just envelope-stuffing. With appropriate training, support, and trust, volunteers can contribute in a meaningful way to the operations of many non-profits. To achieve this goal, non-profits need to develop better skill assessment procedures so that volunteers can be better matched to positions.

- **MINIMIZE VOLUNTEER TURNOVER.** In recognizing that some volunteer positions are very demanding, non-profits should attempt to limit the amount of pressure that volunteers experience by providing support and social outlets. Volunteers may join a group for the cause, but they stay in the group for the people. To retain volunteers, non-profits need to ensure that volunteers can plug quickly into social networks, receive support (whether formally or informally) from them, and have fun while doing so.
- **VALIDATE VOLUNTEER POSITIONS.** This process involves writing clear position descriptions, incorporating volunteer contributions into organizational mandates, and providing certificates for training and reference letters.

“Governments in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia and other jurisdictions worldwide are deeply engaged in efforts to strengthen relationships with the voluntary sector. In these countries a climate of cooperation is gradually developing in which services are delivered effectively and efficiently through government/non-profit partnerships and there are opportunities for citizen engagement in this work at the grassroots level. Canada needs to reverse its recent trajectory in this area through investing in a successor to the Canadian Volunteerism Initiative and integrating sector experts in the development of policy that affects their governance and core work.”

Emmaline Hill, delegate to Canada25’s national forum

“Given the trends in Canadian demography, it’s a cinch that more and more of the essential services that define our quality of life will be delivered by not-for-profits or charities. As such, more emphasis and scrutiny will be placed on the management of those organizations. To date, most of the management education required is either derivative of business or public affairs – two domains that contribute a lot but which are not always fully relevant to the world of a not-for-profit executive director. Moreover, there is demand for management education to serve Canada’s ‘third sector.’ Before the needs of baby boomers make their presence felt in the world of Canadian not-for-profits, we need to be developing managers who can lead organizations delivering vital services right across the country.”

Dr. Douglas Reid, Assistant Professor & Distinguished Faculty Teaching Fellow in Strategy, Queen’s School of Business, Queen’s University

INCREASE THE TEACHING AND RESEARCH OF NON-PROFIT STUDIES

Curiously, in spite of the importance of non-profits in Canadian society, they go relatively unstudied. Canada’s post-secondary institutions are great places to study the operations of government and business; almost every university and college offers courses in public administration and management, and such courses tend to be well subscribed. In contrast, courses that focus on non-profits are rare. It would not be an exaggeration to state that students regularly graduate with degrees or diplomas in public administration or management yet have never taken a course in the operations of the country’s non-profits.

Canada25 laments the relative lack of teaching and research of non-profit studies in Canada’s post-secondary institutions. Non-profits are playing a significant role – and, given demographic changes associated with the aging of the population, will be playing an increasingly significant role – as deliverers of social services and as venues of social interaction. As such, there is a growing need for people to be familiar with the way in which non-profits operate, such that they can manage, help, or otherwise contribute to them.

We call upon Canada’s universities and colleges to extend the educational offerings about non-profits. Ideas include:

- **IMPROVE RESEARCH CAPACITY REGARDING STUDIES OF NON-PROFITS.** Research degrees in non-profit management are rare in Canada – and where the topic is discussed as part of research degrees in other fields of management, non-profit management is generally undervalued. The narrowness of research options restricts aspiring non-profit leaders by impeding their access to appropriate resources and training, thus depriving organizations of much needed skill sets. We call upon Canada’s educational institutions to take the lead in offering non-profit management courses in tandem with their courses in business and public administration.

- **INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ELECTIVE COURSES REGARDING NON-PROFITS.** Some people wish to learn more about non-profits even if they do not want to study or work full-time in the field. Increasing course offerings would allow them to understand non-profits and would round out their general knowledge about management or political science.
- **RAISE FUNDS FOR AWARDS TO STUDENTS WHO WISH TO STUDY NON-PROFIT MANAGEMENT.** Financial assistance in non-profit management is particularly important on account of the generally low salaries received by people who enter work in this field. Entrance awards would help to encourage students to contemplate the field more seriously.

“Mount Royal College has offered continuing education in non-profit management for many years, and launched Canada’s first and only undergraduate degree in the field in 2002. At the moment, we get three job postings for each student, and our graduates are already in positions of leadership in the sector nationally. Much as I would like everyone to come to Calgary for this great program, we can’t solve the leadership challenges of civil society alone. I call upon other colleges and universities to learn from our experiences, and help us expand this field, from continuing education courses to graduate programs.”

Naheed Nenshi, Instructor,
Non-profit Studies, Bissett
School of Business, Mount
Royal College

PUT THE “PUBLIC” INTO “PUBLIC SPACE”:

IMPROVE THE STEWARDSHIP OF COMMON AREAS

“When I lived in Paris, the city’s physical layout facilitated connections to the surrounding communities and culture. Low density and mixed zoning made it easy to meet and interact with the people living in my building and neighbourhood. Pedestrian-oriented and attractive streets encouraged me to leave my apartment and explore the spaces where I made acquaintances and friends. Nearby community centres and abundant parks provided spots to experience cultural offerings, and to join in Bastille-day celebrations. Public spaces facilitated experiences that transformed feelings of foreignness and isolation to ones of familiarity and belonging.”

Gavin Stanley, delegate to Canada25’s national forum

A visit to a bustling public space is an invigorating experience. Sampling foods at farmers’ markets, hanging out with friends in public parks, and wandering around city markets are joys. Such experiences allow for serendipitous findings, and they convey a sense of belonging with the larger community. No visit to Vancouver would be complete without visiting Granville Island; no visit to Ottawa would be complete without visiting Byward Market.

Public spaces are, by definition, the places where individuals and groups leave their private zones and interact with each other. They include sidewalks, streets, public transportation, parks, civic buildings, religious centres, schools, shopping malls, and – as the phenomenal growth of websites such as MySpace or Facebook demonstrates – the internet.

The design of public spaces strongly influences the potential for individuals and groups to engage and identify with others. Interesting, attractive, and accessible public spaces can draw people to interact with individuals, activities, and ideas that they otherwise would not. Conversely, if such spaces are improperly planned, inadequately maintained, or inaccessible – or if they do not exist at all – they will discourage people from entering the public sphere and, by extension, prevent them from engaging with each other.

Certain attributes should guide the design of any public space. It should be “safe.” Anyone at any time should be safe and, just as importantly, should feel safe to use any public space. It should be “interactive.” Public space is more than simply the physical distance between private spaces, but is itself a zone where people meet, mingle, talk, and hang out. Finally, it should be “organic.” The best designs are not always those that are meticulously planned and crafted by distant observers – although they of course have their role – but are instead those that incorporate the

needs and wants of individuals who use the spaces. And to a large extent, these attributes feed off each other. A space that people help to design organically is one where they will be more likely to interact, a space where more people interact is generally a safer one than a space devoid of people, and a space where people feel safe is more likely going to be a space that people will use and propose ideas for further improvement.

Our ideas for helping communities to encourage the growth of vibrant public spaces include the following:

- **TURN CIVIC FACILITIES INTO TRUE HUBS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES:** launch mentorship programs, focus also on informal common facilities and unstructured activities, and assure the availability of online services to all.
- **ESTABLISH PUBLIC SPACE USERS' COMMITTEES ON A HIGHLY LOCALIZED BASIS:** articulate local visions for community development, serve as “early warning systems,” and be resources for developers and advertisers to consult.

TURN CIVIC FACILITIES INTO TRUE HUBS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

Community centres, athletic facilities, and libraries should be hubs for civic life for all people within their neighbourhoods. Although certain municipal governments have successfully managed to increase the profile of these institutions within their communities, the situation across the country is not uniform.

We believe that accessibility to public buildings is central to the vitality of community groups and more generally to the health of the broader community. To encourage people to use these public buildings, we suggest the following four courses of action:

- **LAUNCH MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS.** Mentorship programs would match talented local people with interested members of the public. For example, an Artist-in-Residence program would sponsor a local artist to work on a part-time basis with interested community members in using creative expression as a vehicle to address issues of local concern. Artists-in-Residence would have a mandate to establish connections with diverse segments of the community, hold workshops to provide support and mentorship to local artists in order to ensure sustainability, and encourage the accessibility of artistic projects within a community. Similar programs could be launched, perhaps on a rotating basis, in the form of an Athlete-in-Residence, a Writer-in-Residence, a Scientist-in-Residence, or a Businessperson-in-Residence.
- **FOCUS ALSO ON INFORMAL COMMON SPACES, UNSTRUCTURED ACTIVITIES, AND DROP-IN FACILITIES.** Not everyone wants to engage with their communities through formal activities such as classes. Some people prefer to connect with others more informally, such as having a space to go to that is welcoming and comfortable. Community centres can help to fulfil this function by maintaining a wide range of attractions that bring people into their buildings. Coffee-shops, pubs, or games rooms are all examples of places that people can access on a drop-in basis and where they can linger safely. Wherever possible, such informal facilities should be visible and easily accessible from the outdoors. In such cases, there is the potential of fruitful partnerships with the private sector, which could assume the responsibility (and risk) of operating commercial enterprises within community centres.

- **ASSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF ONLINE SERVICES TO ALL.** Online engagement – a powerful form of engagement that minimizes geographical boundaries and allows for the rapid dissemination of information – requires regular and reliable access to the internet, computer equipment, and the training to use such tools. Although internet usage is growing significantly, its usage among certain social and economic demographics remains low. We suggest that civic buildings should offer basic internet training for individuals who may not have been exposed to it, as well as improved public access to advanced technologies, such as webinars (i.e., online interactive seminars).

HATS IN YOUR COMMUNITY CENTRE

“HATS stands for Health Action Theatre for Seniors, aptly named for the health education benefits this action theatre brings to all participants. By participating in the performance, whether as actors or audience, seniors gain awareness of complex health and social issues and are empowered to act and deal with those challenges...

“The HATS program has proven effective in reaching St. Christopher’s senior immigrant communities. In fact, the program came to life from the merging of two organizations: one serving immigrants as a community, and the other serving seniors. The St. Christopher HATS program is currently aimed at Portuguese and Vietnamese seniors.”

www.seniorstheatre.org

“In speaking about city sidewalk safety, I mentioned how necessary it is that there should be, in the brains behind the eyes on the street, an almost unconscious assumption of general street support when the chips are down – when a citizen has to choose, for instance, whether he will take responsibility, or abdicate it, in combating barbarism or protecting strangers. There is a short word for this assumption of support: trust.

The trust of a city street is formed over time from many, many little public sidewalk encounters. It grows out of people stopping by at the bar for a beer, getting advice from the grocer and giving advice to the newsstand man, comparing opinions with other customers at the bakery and nodding hello to the two boys drinking pop on the stoop, eying the girls while waiting to be called for dinner, admonishing the children, hearing about a job from the hardware man and borrowing a dollar from the druggist, admiring the new babies and sympathizing over the way a coat faded.”

Jane Jacobs (1961), *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

ESTABLISH PUBLIC SPACE USERS' COMMITTEES ON A HIGHLY LOCALIZED BASIS

Public spaces ought to be clean, safe, friendly, and inviting to public use. Such a goal requires careful treatment of zoning, architecture, design, and developments, as well as consideration of the influence of commercial pressures, natural elements like water, trees, and plants, and installations like benches and artwork.

Canada²⁵ suggests that the best way to build effective public spaces is through the active involvement of the people who are intimately familiar with them. Individuals who are personally acquainted with a particular neighbourhood or block tend to be the best positioned – as well as the most relevant stakeholders – to determine the strengths and needs of its public spaces.

We suggest that municipal governments take the lead in forming public space users' committees on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood, block-by-block approach. In our experience, soliciting ideas is made easier by asking people specifically to do something rather than sitting back and hoping for people to come forward.

Ideas for the mandate of these groups would include the following:

- **ARTICULATE LOCAL VISIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.** Grassroots committees can be effective incubators for brainstorming new ideas about common areas. By establishing them and charging them with the specific mandate of articulating local visions for community development, municipal councils can solicit a broader range of ideas and gain a better sense of community preferences and priorities.
- **ACT AS “EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS.”** Any community is vulnerable to neglected, dangerous, or underused public spaces. This may be a street corner where people feel uncomfortable when walking, or a park that people avoid after dark. These spaces, whether considered in isolation or cumulatively, inhibit engagement. Committees composed of people who are intimately familiar with every nook of a neighbourhood are more likely to be able to draw attention to such spaces and to provide specific ideas for the best ways of addressing them.

- **BE A RESOURCE FOR DEVELOPERS AND ADVERTISERS.**

We recognize that developers and advertisers act at times in ways that clash with the needs and wants of local residents. We suggest – perhaps idealistically, and perhaps naively – that developers and advertisers do so not because they intend to have this effect, but because they have insufficiently researched the needs and wants of the community. In other words, their errors are generally ones arising from ignorance rather than wilful disregard. We suggest that the creation of public space users’ committees will give developers and advertisers a specific and reliable resource to consult when determining how best to adapt a project to a community’s needs.

SPACING MAGAZINE

Spacing, first published in December 2003, celebrates public space in its myriad forms. It rallies against neglected infrastructure, environmental damage, and commercial intrusions – and it calls for people to reclaim their urban environment through personal and political actions.

www.spacing.ca

THINK GLOBALLY, ACT GLOBALLY:

EXTEND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BEYOND CANADA'S BORDERS

“Part of the magic of being Canadian is the recognition that our country is still a work in progress. With this recognition comes a sense of humility, but also a sense of empowerment that an individual can make a difference to the shape of his or her society.”

Jennifer Welsh, lecturer
in international relations,
Oxford University

No single country has a monopoly on best practices. Whether the topic is political institutions, culture, social structures, or public policies, it would be irresponsible for any country to believe that it has nothing to learn from other systems – a lesson that applies to Canada as well as all other countries.

Previous chapters have discussed ways for Canadians to increase the frequency and meaning of interactions among themselves. This final chapter discusses ways that Canadians can increase such interactions with people from other countries. We believe that Canadians have much to learn from engaging with people in other countries, just as people in other countries have much to learn from engaging with us. And in both instances, a clearer sense of Canadian identity may emerge.

Our ideas in this chapter relate to ways in which Canadians can learn from others and also to ways in which other countries can learn from Canada:

- **LOOK TO OTHER COUNTRIES FOR INSPIRATION:** consider other political traditions, monitor international legal developments, draw more heavily on expatriate experience, and insist upon best-practice surveys as part of the policy formulation and evaluation process.
- **PUT CANADA FORWARD AS AN INSPIRATION TO OTHER COUNTRIES:** make Canada a network node by becoming a country that people can easily connect to, develop global markets that are freely run and fairly regulated, and enhance Canada's presence overseas by launching cultural centres, whether physical or online.

LOOK TO OTHER COUNTRIES FOR INSPIRATION...

Since its founding, Canada has consistently drawn strength from the infusion of new ideas and new people. Canada25 believes that this process should be an active and ongoing one, and that Canada should promote closer links between Canadians and non-Canadians with a view to solicit ideas for improving our country whenever it makes sense to do so.

Our ideas include:

- **CONSIDER OTHER POLITICAL TRADITIONS.** How have different countries attempted to solicit and respond to public input? How are issues relevant to Canada – federalism, for example – handled in analogous countries?
- **MONITOR INTERNATIONAL LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS.** What do we have to learn from continental or non-adversarial forms of justice? Are there any legal traditions that place greater concern for the rights and preferences of victims in criminal proceedings?
- **DRAW MORE HEAVILY ON EXPATRIATE EXPERIENCE.** Canada is well endowed with programs for overseas involvement, particularly for young people. They include educational programs at the secondary and post-secondary levels, as well as volunteer and work opportunities in a variety of humanitarian fields. It is unclear, however, whether Canada is making full advantage of the knowledge that Canadians pick up from other countries. We recommend that Canada explicitly ask them for their viewpoints about things that they have seen abroad and that they would like to see emulated in Canada.
- **INSIST UPON BEST-PRACTICE SURVEYS AS PART OF THE POLICY FORMULATION AND EVALUATION PROCESS.** Conducting global best-practice surveys should be a component of every process of formulating and evaluating public policy. We recommend that policymakers at every level explicitly consider foreign experiences when assessing might work for Canada.

“I think that Canadian democracy should reflect the best of who Canadians are: our most innovative, our most compassionate, and our most productive. We have an opportunity unique to our nation, with the great traditions from our English and French origins as well as the multitude of cultures that continue to come here and add their unique values and efforts to our national consciousness. When we put all of our best together, we can create the healthiest democratic culture in the world.”

Mike D’Abramo,
manager, account services,
Youthography

CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN DELHI, INDIA

“As a Canadian living in Delhi, I can say with certainty that the events organized by the Canadian High Commission’s Cultural Affairs section go beyond offering pure entertainment. They simultaneously provide a chance for me to reconnect with Canada and fellow Canadians, while promoting Canadian culture to those who would otherwise never hear of our many talented musicians, filmmakers, artists, and scholars. By creating this space, we as Canadians are opening the doors of our small world to the larger global community. These events invite people in, and allow us as Canadians to ask them to stay awhile and explore.”

Laurel Sherret, delegate to Canada25’s national forum

... AND PUT CANADA FORWARD AS AN INSPIRATION TO OTHER COUNTRIES

Just as we argue that Canada should look to the world for inspiration, we believe in the promotion of Canada as an inspiration – a model power – to the world. In making this argument, we acknowledge that Canada remains a work in progress, but also that its liberal democratic values are preferable to their opposites.

Our ideas, some of which are drawn from our previous national report, *From Middle to Model Power: Recharging Canada’s Role in the World*, include:

- **MAKE CANADA A NETWORK NODE.** Canada should strive to be a country that people can easily connect to. Ideas include fostering a strong and free press in which ideas are easily shared, making a greater effort to connect with expatriates, encouraging international education, supporting cities as they compete on a global stage, and recognizing the value of brain circulation: young Canadians who go elsewhere for a few years, or young foreigners who come here to live, work, or study for a few years.
- **DEVELOP GLOBAL FREE MARKETS.** Freely run and fairly regulated markets are crucial in alleviating poverty around the world. Canada should export its market practices by supporting international efforts to enhance corporate accountability, providing logistical assistance to overseas private-sector groups with respect to governance, and improving transparency and access to information throughout the supply chain.
- **ENHANCE CANADA’S PRESENCE OVERSEAS BY LAUNCHING CULTURAL CENTRES, WHETHER PHYSICAL OR ONLINE.** Venture to any foreign city of a significant size, and you will likely encounter the offices of the British Council, the Alliance Française, and the Goethe Institut. These bodies are repositories of information about their respective countries, are magnets for people who want to learn more about these countries’ cultures, and frequently sponsor cultural events. Canada has no formalized equivalent. Although certain Canadian overseas missions do a commendable job in organizing cultural events, such offerings tend to be concentrated in the capital cities of the countries in which they are situated. For example, the Canadian High Commissions in

Delhi and London organize a wide range of cultural events; the Consulate General of Canada in Mumbai, or the Honorary Consulate of Canada in Edinburgh, does not. We suggest that additional resources for enhanced cultural offerings by Canada's overseas missions – or, if some distance from government is desired, by a quasi-governmental agency like a “Maple Leaf Institute” – may be the wisest and most cost-efficient way of bringing Canada and Canadians to the world.

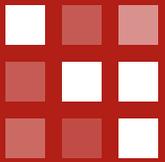
“The virtue of an organisation at arm's length from government like the British Council, is that while it is certainly a national institution, unreservedly committed to the same long-term objectives as the British government, it is able to maintain a visible (albeit largely symbolic) distance from government in its operations across the world.

“This is especially important at times and in places where policy and public opinion diverge: research that we have conducted recently in the Middle East was clear in suggesting that the British Council is appreciated and trusted in proportion to its ability to represent unofficial Britain – to speak with a different voice to that of the official Mission. We ‘do’, if you like, civic trust better than officials can.”

Sir David Green KCMG,
Director-General, British
Council (19 June 2006),
“Present & Future Public
Diplomacy: A View from
the British Council”
(Ottawa, Canada)

I. INTRODUCTION

II. ACTIONS



III. CONCLUSION

IV. APPENDICES

OUR CALL TO ACTION

Building a civic nation should be the goal of every Canadian, whether in government, in business, in the non-profit sector, in an educational institution, in their families or peer groups, or individually. In this report, we have articulated a few core concepts that guide the conception of this civic nation: a commitment to individual liberty, an understanding of the diversity within groups, and the role of the state in guaranteeing pluralism. However, our greater focus is the way in which such a civic nation can be attained. And our conclusion is that civic engagement provides a promising means of doing so.

Civic engagement is about more than voting, civics classes, or any other single activity. It is a far more fundamental force that calls upon individuals to take a more active role in their own communities. It is, as Robert Putnam puts it, a return to “barn-raising,” or collective responsibility, and all actors in society have a role in promoting civic engagement.

- **GOVERNMENTS HAVE A CENTRAL ROLE, BUT THERE ARE LIMITATIONS** – both practical and philosophical – on what they can be expected to do. They are, or they should be, getting leaner and smarter. Such a statement does not mean that governments should retreat from their role in promoting civic engagement, but rather that they should rethink their role away from the direct provision of services and toward the design of appropriate regulations and taxation policies that encourage engagement, as well as filling in the gaps where necessary.
- **POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT, AS KEY PLAYERS IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM, THEY MUST HOLD THEMSELVES TO HIGHER STANDARDS OF SCRUTINY AND FAIRNESS.** Internal reforms that aim at increasing public confidence in their operations – beginning but by no means ending with reforms to the way in which they select their election candidates – should be an ongoing process of reflection and improvement.
- **PRIVATE ENTERPRISES AND NON-PROFITS – OFTEN PERCEIVED AS OPPOSITES – SHOULD APPRECIATE WHAT THEY CAN LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.** The former have a thirst for the concepts of corporate social responsibility and

community involvement, while the latter are getting into the business of social enterprise and are recognizing the virtue of professionalizing their activities.

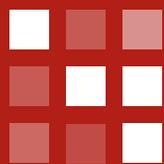
- **EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ARE OBVIOUSLY KEY INFLUENCES ON PEOPLE'S LIVES, BUT THEY ARE NEITHER THE ONLY NOR EVEN THE STRONGEST INFLUENCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE.** Families and peer networks play fundamental roles, and any efforts to boost civic engagement must acknowledge the influence of these institutions – and co-operate with them in reaching out to young people.

We close with the message that we began with. Good things happen when people engage with others. A society in which people greet each other on the street, cast informed votes in every election, enjoy and cherish their local parks and sidewalks, and help out a community group for a few hours each week is a more interesting, safer, and healthier society than its opposite. That is our conception of the Canadian civic nation – *a country that could exist, but also a country that requires all of our efforts to bring to life.*

I. INTRODUCTION

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IV. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE PROCESS

Canadians and the Common Good: Building a Civic Nation Through Civic Engagement is Canada25's fourth national policy project. Our three previous projects were *A New Magnetic North: How Canada Can Attract and Retain Young Talent* (2001), *Building Up: Making Canada's Cities Magnets for Talent and Engines of Development* (2002-2003), and *From Middle to Model Power: Recharging Canada's Role in the World* (2004-2005). Each of these projects has solicited the opinions of young people about a particular topic, synthesized these diverse opinions into a coherent vision, and set out practical policy recommendations for attaining this vision.

This report is the culmination of almost two years of work by Canada25's members. Since our organization's inception, surveys of our membership have consistently revealed a strong interest across the country in studying the interrelated areas of citizenship, civil society, and democracy. Ongoing concerns relating to the political process, perceptions of the democratic deficit, and the understanding that governments and markets could not provide all that was necessary to make Canada a "good" society led to the issue of civic engagement being selected as the theme for our fourth national policy project. Civic engagement reflects not only our vision for the country but also the way in which this vision can be achieved.

Work began with a series of thirteen roundtables, which served as the project's first idea generators. These roundtables brought together hundreds of young people to debate the issues arising from civic engagement and to develop their own policy recommendations. Roundtable participants were asked to explore eight different forms of engagement:

- **POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT**
- **COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERISM**
- **RELIGIOUS OR CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT**
- **ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY**

- **PLAY AND EXPRESSION**
- **ONLINE ENGAGEMENT**
- **SOCIAL ACTIVISM**
- **PHILANTHROPY**

Canada25 and Elections Canada also co-operated to host an additional roundtable on youth voter turnout. Roundtable summaries are included in Appendix B. Full reports can be downloaded from the Canada25 website (www.canada25.com).

From the participants and organizers of the roundtables, thirty-four people were selected to attend Canada25's national forum in Calgary in early 2006. In preparation for the forum, delegates were divided into issue groups, each focussing on a particular area of engagement. Within these groups, delegates interviewed experts, conducted independent research, and refined the ideas compiled from the roundtables to develop their policy proposals. At the forum, delegates discussed their ideas and searched for the common themes that would form the basis for this report.

The themes and ideas put forth in this report are the result of this process. However, as with studies of all complex topics, the thinking and researching did not stop with the national forum. New ideas that emerged in discussions in the months following the forum have helped to contribute to the writing of this report. These ideas have also been reflected in these pages.

APPENDIX B

ROUNDTABLE SUMMARIES

Local roundtables are a crucial component of each Canada25 national policy project. Our civic engagement roundtables attracted hundreds of young Canadians to discuss the many different strands of civic engagement. Canada25 would like to thank all of the organizers and volunteers who worked tirelessly to put together these events. Your thoughtful ideas and passion for your country are inspiring and form the basis for this report.

Roundtables took place in the following cities:

Washington DC	June 29, 2005
* Toronto	July 16-17, 2005
New York City	August 13, 2005
Halifax	August 19-20, 2005
* Boston	August 27, 2005
* Edmonton	September 30 – October 1, 2005
* Calgary	September 30 – October 1, 2005
* St. John's	October 1, 2005
* Montreal	October 14-15, 2005
* Fredericton	October 24, 2005
* Ottawa	November 5, 2005
* San Francisco	November 12, 2005
Vancouver	December 10, 2005
* Elections Canada forum	February 11, 2006

* *indicates that a summary is included in this Appendix*

TORONTO
JULY 16-17, 2005
MCKINSEY & COMPANY

Participants sought to expand discussion on civic engagement beyond formal yardsticks such as voting, noting that civic engagement was a broad term that encompassed a variety of activities, whether political, social, artistic, or otherwise.

Participants identified various barriers that inhibited engagement among young people, including the expense of education, difficulties in securing adequate funding to access appropriate facilities, urban design (especially in the suburbs) that impeded engagement, and a general restriction in the availability of public spaces that were maintained at high standards. In particular, participants voiced strong opposition to the barriers faced by new immigrant groups, with particular attention being paid to the gap between their anticipation about life in Canada with the reality about life here (e.g., little recognition of their skills and qualifications).

Policy recommendations included the following:

- **PROMOTE THE PERSONAL BENEFITS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.** Participants recognized that people had many demands on their time and would want to understand the benefit to them of becoming involved with their communities. Ideas for promoting personal benefits included more favourable tax benefits (e.g., student loan repayment discounts) on the basis of community involvement, a stronger focus on co-operating with employers, and a greater emphasis on the social aspects of becoming involved (e.g., a media campaign promoting engagement as a way of meeting people).
- **EDUCATE YOUNG PEOPLE TO PREPARE THEM FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.** Participants praised programs such as Student Vote, an organization run by young people, which has partnered with schools across the country and designed a curriculum to be taught in the weeks leading up to municipal, provincial and federal elections.
- **RECOGNIZE ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY SPACES.** Public spaces such as community centres, schools, churches, and parks are important conduits for civic

engagement. Sadly, many of these spaces are neglected due to lack of funding. The vitality of these spaces is crucial to civic engagement, especially in suburbs where the loss of public space can leave residents with very few options. Participants urged a stronger focus and dedication to public spaces.

BOSTON, UNITED STATES
AUGUST 27, 2005
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Participants focused on two aspects of civic engagement. First, they discussed the relationship between engagement and the workplace. They noted that commute times have a drastic effect on civic engagement. They recalled Robert Putnam's finding that a ten-minute increase in a person's commute time decreases her/his involvement in community affairs by ten percent. Suburbs have the effect not only of sequestering people within their homes but also reducing the time that people have to participate in civic endeavours outside their homes. Participants suggested that companies could do more to promote a sense of involvement within their communities. They should facilitate opportunities for their employees to act as better citizens, whether through matching charitable donations or increasing flexibility in payroll deductions.

Second, participants discussed the manner by which technology could facilitate greater interest in civic. They noted Putnam's targeting of the television as inhibiting civic engagement, but they also noted that television could be powerful: Canadian history minute spots, certain forms of quality broadcasting, and even shows that featured political issues (e.g., "The West Wing") could all contribute to engagement. Participants also focussed on the internet, and suggested that it was generally a more positive force than television for promoting engagement. They recognized the capacity of the internet in fundraising and grassroots organizing. They also distinguished between internet-only campaigns and campaigns that used the internet for broader purposes, including organizing meet-ups. Participants observed that social capital would be self-sustaining and constant only if there were levels of trust and reciprocity that endured beyond the initial interaction, and that internet-only communication was not conducive to this. Participants concluded that online engagement was most promising

as a method for uniting people who have similar interests and giving them a means of contacting each other to meet in person to discuss such interests.

EDMONTON

SEPTEMBER 30 – OCTOBER 1, 2005

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

The Edmonton roundtable focused on five areas:

- **POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT.** The participants considered strategies to engage more Canadians, particularly those aged 20-35, in the political process. One strategy suggested that education earlier in a student's life about the Canadian political process and history that specifically includes the impact that government at all three levels can have on the daily lives of Canadians would lead to greater political engagement. Another suggestion was the need for more opportunities for youth to have exposure to the political process at all levels, such as the City of Edmonton's recently formed Edmonton Next Generation Task Force. Related to this, there was a concern that information about these types of opportunities are not reaching a wide variety of youth, and a more targeted approach needs to be taken by the levels of government initiating such groups. Other suggestions included finding ways to make it possible for young families to participate, socializing children at a younger age into the political processes, and providing more opportunities for young people to be mentored in the political system.
- **SOCIAL ACTIVISM.** Participants acknowledged that social activism had a negative reputation among government and people in general. A main observation was that there is a tendency to lump everyone involved in social activism into a particular political philosophy (usually towards the left of the political spectrum). However, participants noted that there are people actively engaged in social causes on all sides of the spectrum, and that some people who are engaged in social activism do not recognize that they are engaged in activities that would fall under that title. A minority of extremists give all social activists a bad name, and the media presentation of

social activism in a violent format is partly to blame. Media also tends to use social activism in a limited sense, rather than the broad sense used in the introduction to this topic. Questions were raised about the need to educate Canadians about the broad-nature of social activism and how to see it separately from the right-left political spectrum.

- **RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT.** Participants discussed how the idea of Canada as a multicultural society could be used to strengthen the civic engagement of Canadians. It was felt that religious or cultural engagement could result in more participation in our society in general, and that the connection felt by many Canadians to their cultural roots could be used as a gateway of getting them more engaged in other civic matters. One suggested way of making this work is by talking of a ‘Mosaic of Civic Engagement’, with the various forms of engagement working together and separately to improve our society.
- **PLAY AND EXPRESSION.** Participants looked at what needs to be done to support arts and culture and sport organizations to ensure that they are sustainable in Canada. The consensus was that the single most important issue for most sports and arts organizations was the need for more accessible and sustainable funding to a wide variety of organizations. From there, it was discussed that there is a distinct need to advocate for a more holistic approach to one’s lifestyle that includes arts and sports. If society recognizes the importance of this kind of engagement, then it would have a number of spin-off benefits to other aspects of society, such as health care.
- **INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT.** Given Canada25’s recent examination of Canada’s role in the world, roundtable participants were keen to look at ways to ensure that Canadians remained engaged in the international arena, and move from a “Middle Power to a Model Power.” It was felt that the key to doing this was providing exposure to the value of being a “citizen of the world.” There needs to be more education early in life about our current role in the international world and our potential over other countries. It must be a goal or vision that our nation as a whole inspires to become. As well, more effort needs to be placed on educating Canadians about where Canada stands on the international stage.

CALGARY

SEPTEMBER 30 – OCTOBER 1, 2005

CALGARY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Delegates considered various forms of engagement, including political engagement, international engagement, and social activism. They defined political engagement as being a broad continuum of activities that included voting, volunteering for a political campaign, running for office, participating in forums and discussions, and educating oneself and others on issues. They defined international engagement as having a global perspective, a sense of global community, accountability, and a belief that it was possible to make a positive difference, a set of traits that stand in contrast to a widespread tendency to focus exclusively on local issues, an inadequate personal connection, and a sense of a problem being “not my role/responsibility”. Delegates also defined social activism as being involvement in a particular cause, often typified by an intense personal belief, a strong emotional connection, a sense of urgency, and a desire to be proactive.

Ideas for improving engagement included structured forms of conversation, mock votes, simulation exercises, videogames focussed on politics or social activism, making individual choices that support your values, mobilizing your community, educating oneself about relevant issues, and working toward the removal of barriers to civic engagement that others faced.

ST. JOHN'S

OCTOBER 1, 2005

BATTERY HOTEL & SUITES

Participants considered a series of questions regarding different modes of engagement. These questions included:

- What are personal examples of engagement within this area?
- Why did you become involved within this activity/particular mode?
- Did you encounter any barriers prior to becoming involved within the organization and/or activity?
- What kept you involved?
- Conversely, did anything push you away from the activity?
- What do you think has been the greatest benefit of involvement

within this activity?

- How do you think youth can remain involved in such activities (if barriers exist?)
- How do you think other youth can become involved within this activity/organization?

Participants suggested that there were various reasons why people would contribute to an organization. Some reasons related to opportunities for personal growth: networking connections, developing people skills, or influencing decisions that had public importance. Other reasons related to a sense of responsibility as learned from parents, siblings, or other family members. Other reasons related more to what organizations should (or should not) do to attract and retain volunteers: opportunities for flexible commitments (e.g., part-time), and proper methods of volunteer appreciation. Examples of engagement that participants praised were their work in an anti-defamation league, the Association for New Canadians, and the Native Friendship Centre (which also houses a shelter).

Participants also discussed the concept of barriers to engagement. One participant noted that barriers existed not only between communities but also within individual communities. Another participant suggested that the media should focus less on negative portrayals of issues and more on positive ones. Another participant felt that organizations should regard young people as being capable of more than simple tasks and should instead give them greater responsibility and respect. In general, participants thought that the best way of overcoming barriers was through a greater emphasis on civic education knowledge at a young age.

Participants also offered some thoughts about online engagement. They praised online engagement as being simple, easy, and affordable, and most young people were very comfortable with it. Participants added that online engagement could be anonymous, which enabled the frank discussion of sensitive topics, and which also could reduce socioeconomic barriers.

MONTREAL
OCTOBER 14-15, 2005
SCHOOL OF COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS,
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

The event opened with remarks from Nathalie Rochefort, a former Liberal MP from Mercier region. With respect to civic engagement, she spoke about the need to consult widely with people, to listen to them and to discover their needs. She also spoke about the need to form alliances and mobilize groups of people to pursue ideas.

Participants discussed many concepts of civic engagement. They opened with a recognition that more efforts needed to be made in moving engagement from the private sphere to the public one, perhaps involving explicit efforts to point out what needs existed within society – including the local community – and how people could help to take action about them.

They acknowledged the importance of families and peer groups, noting that many people were civically engaged as a result of these influences. They also commented on the support networks that form through families and peer groups.

Participants concluded their discussion by discussing the importance of community spaces where young people could come together to discuss issues informally, socialize, and interact with each other in safe and respectful ways. They also spoke of the need for facilitators who were trained in leadership and who could serve as mentors for the skills to these young people.

FREDERICTON
OCTOBER 24, 2005
OLD GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Following remarks from His Honour, Herménégilde Chiasson, Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, the roundtable opened with a panel discussion on the question, “What Engages Me?” Participants heard different perspectives on engagement from a group of panellists that included, Dr. Margaret Conrad, Canada Research Chair in Atlantic Canada Studies, Donald Dennison,

Director of Next NB, Brian Murphy, Former Mayor of the City of Moncton, and Lisa Hrabluk, a journalist from the Telegraph-Journal.

Participants formed breakout groups to debate certain components of civic engagement. On democratic reform, participants voiced concern about declining political and civic engagement. They advocated a greater focus on civics education and a need for more people to discuss politics and policy at home. Participants applauded the efforts of provinces like British Columbia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec, which have established commissions to study democratic, electoral and legislative reform and opened the door to the consideration of new voting systems that increase proportional representation. Other ideas suggested included fixed election dates, limits to campaign spending, and development of accountability models for elected representatives.

Participants also debated the concept of a non-partisan “Politician School.” This institution could provide newly elected MPs, MPPs and MLAs with a base of knowledge that would lead to healthier government. The school curriculum could encompass such subject matter as methods to deal with constant pressure, political theories, public policy formulation, ethics, and leadership. Attending the school would equip politicians with a set of tools to better serve society. The teachers would be experts in their fields, guiding new politicians toward a better understanding of the challenges they face representing their constituents.

The roundtable concluded with an address by Christian Couturier, Director General of the National Research Council’s Institute for Information Technology, on the theme “Engagement Can Foster a Good Leadership Ethic.”

OTTAWA

NOVEMBER 5, 2005

LANGEVIN BLOCK

Participants – perhaps understandably, given the location – focussed primarily on political engagement. They recognized that this form of engagement encompassed everything from voting

to lobbying to running for elected office. Participants identified various barriers that inhibited political engagement, including:

- **A FALSE SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT.** Participants thought that many Canadians felt a false sense of entitlement to a certain quality of life without having to contribute to that quality themselves. In past generations, political engagement may have been higher because Canadians viewed it as their duty to play a role in crafting a society that would help them achieve a certain quality of life. At the present, people view the “finer things in life” as their right.
- **SCRUTINY.** In the past half decade, Canadian public figures have been under an unprecedented level of scrutiny. Participants all agreed on the need for appropriate checks on political power and appropriate accountability mechanisms, but they also agreed that in many circumstances things had gone too far. Fewer individuals were interested in becoming public figures because their lives would be open to the world. Living under a microscope is no incentive to engage politically.
- **POLITICAL NOMINATIONS.** Linked to the perceived bias in the electoral system is the view that the political nomination system is inherently biased and easily manipulated by party elite. Many participants suggested they would be interested in engaging in the political process with a view to running for office but one of the largest barriers was having their own party manipulate the riding nomination process in order to field the preferred candidates of the party elite.
- **LACK OF CIVIC EDUCATION.** Participants believed that one of the reasons young Canadians were less interested in being politically engaged was that they have little civics education. Participants felt that if there was more education on why being politically engaged is important.

Participants also discussed ways to increase political engagement:

- **INCENTIVES.** Participants suggested that one way of getting people engaged in a basic manner would be to provide a number of incentives. One incentive discussed was a tax credit

for voting/volunteering in a manner similar to allowances for military or jury duty. Another incentive was improved corporate social responsibility schemes that recognized and rewarded employers and employees who contributed to their communities.

- **SIMPLIFY SCRUTINY.** Participants thought that, in order for Canadians to be interested in involving themselves in politics, reasonable limits to the intrusion in to their personal lives must be ensured as much as accountability and checks on those in power. The most important aspect is to ensure that accountability rules are simplified and independently enforced.
- **POLITICAL NOMINATIONS.** Participants suggested that a key reason preventing Canadians from running for office was the malleable nature of the political nomination system. Each party has its own rules for nominating candidates, and this process has caused much consternation. Participants suggested that this system would be less of a barrier if it were taken out of the hands of political parties and given to Elections Canada.
- **INCREASE CIVICS EDUCATION.** Participants stressed the need for governments at all levels to cooperate to ensure that funding was available to increase the level of civics education provided in Canadian schools. Allocating funding across the country in order to design a modern, comprehensive, innovative, interesting and ongoing civics curriculum in Canada's schools is essential to fostering the long term political engagement of young Canadians.

SAN FRANCISCO, UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 12, 2005

CANADIAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Following a keynote address by Consul Tristan Landry, participants formed breakout groups, each dealing with a specific mode of civic engagement. Participants discussed ideas arising from these groups in a plenary session that followed.

Three common themes emerged from the plenary discussion:

- **ENGAGEMENT BY CANADIANS LIVING ABROAD.** Ideas included increasing the availability of Canadian news and political issues available to non-resident Canadians, and creating stronger formalized ties between such Canadians and institutions back in Canada that could benefit from the knowledge and positions of these expatriates, particularly in the fields of business and academia.
- **EXPANDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN CANADA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM.** Participants strongly favoured a formalized, nationwide, practical community experience program, and an expanded classroom curriculum, as being the best long-term approaches to developing a more civically engaged Canadian population.
- **ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES.** Ideas included volunteer-driven rating systems for non-profit organizations to help would-be volunteers evaluate potential opportunities.

ELECTIONS CANADA SESSION ON YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT FEBRUARY 11, 2006 MOUNT ROYAL COLLEGE, CALGARY

As part of its mandate to reach out to relevant stakeholders, Elections Canada invited delegates to Canada25's national forum to participate in a consultation session on the subject of youth voter turnout. Participants discussed four topics:

HOW AND WHEN DID YOU BECOME ENGAGED IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS?

Almost all participants stated that they were exposed to electoral issues at an early age within their families. These participants stated that their parents or older siblings helped to teach them the value that voting was a fundamental component of good citizenship. This suggests that helping families to share information about the Canadian political process may be an effective way of reaching many Canadian youth.

The remaining participants stated that they were first exposed to issues of voting when in school. These participants stated that they recalled lessons, mock elections, and other forms of political education from an early age. This suggests that children of any age are receptive to learning about the Canadian political process, and that such learning does not need to wait until children are 18 or close to that age.

WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO “TUNE IN” TO POLITICS AND ELECTIONS? HOW CAN PARTICIPATION AMONG NON-VOTING AND DIFFICULT-TO-REACH YOUTH BE ENCOURAGED?

Participants believed that “self-interest” was not a sufficient factor to encourage people to vote. Using an economic model, they noted that a person’s required input (the time and effort that it takes to cast a ballot) was generally far greater than the person’s return (the marginal difference that a single vote makes in an election). If electors were rational beings who sought to maximize their self-interest, no one would vote. Therefore, the explanation for why people vote must take other factors into account.

Most participants cited “civic duty” as the crucial factor in helping young people to “tune in” to politics. From their perspective, a campaign to develop the theme, “voting is a civic duty,” would be most likely to encourage turnout among non-voting and difficult-to-reach youth. Other participants cited administrative factors that would make it easier for young people to vote. However, many participants felt that voting was already quite straightforward, and that the real problem was with people not understanding why they should vote.

All of the participants had voted in at least one federal or provincial election since becoming eligible to do so. However, several participants stated that they had not voted in certain elections. They listed the following reasons:

- Out of the country. (This was the most commonly cited reason.)
- Not interested in the issues.
- Considered themselves to have insufficient knowledge about the issues.
- Belief that voting did not make a difference.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? DESCRIBE AN ACTION-ABLE ITEM THAT YOU THINK WOULD HELP TO INCREASE YOUTH VOTER TURNOUT IN CANADA.

Participants described two types of actionable items: those that could be implemented in the short term under current legislation, and those that required long-term implementation including possible statutory or regulatory amendments.

Short-term implementation:

- Run an advertising campaign based on the concept of voting as a civic duty. This might include highlighting the voting conditions for people in other countries, or showing the history by which the right to vote was achieved and extended in Canada.
- Reach out to student associations. Elections Canada should view student associations as potential partners to register young people and to encourage them to vote. This may involve targeted registration campaigns in university residences and areas where students are known to live.
- Allow voting at any polling station. Computerized technology should allow any elector to go to any polling station and cast a ballot “in” their home riding. This would help people who were temporarily away from their places of permanent residence, such as students.
- Conduct mock elections in all schools. All students should be exposed to mock elections at regular intervals throughout primary and secondary school.
- Work more closely with organizations other than schools that deal with young people, including employers and community agencies.
- Provide more information to students about in-person, same-day registration. Participants remarked that many young people were unaware that they could do this, and that voter turnout would likely increase if this information were more widely available.
- Provide more information about advance voting.
- Place polling stations in places that young people frequent, such as shopping centres.
- Give “I voted” buttons or stickers to people who vote so that they can show them to friends or family members.

Long-term implementation:

- Make greater use of online technology. This could begin by allowing people to confirm and change their voter registration details online. At a later date, it could include voter registration and online voting.
- Regulate the political parties. Participants thought that many political parties suffered from democratic deficits, particularly with enforcement of party constitutions and improperly conducted nomination contests, and that this dissatisfaction translated into staying away at the polls.

SINCE THE GOAL OF THE ROUNDTABLE AND FOCUS GROUP IS TO TRANSLATE DIALOGUE INTO ACTION, CONSIDER WHAT CANADA25 COULD PROPOSE TO DO AFTER THIS EVENT TO “SPREAD THE MESSAGE.” WHAT TYPE OF “CALL TO ACTION” COULD CANADA25 MAKE? HOW COULD CANADA25 WORK WITH ELECTIONS CANADA?

Participants believed that Canada25 should work with Elections Canada to publicize the results of its special report on youth voter turnout. Participants also believed that Canada25 should contact and meet with the groups listed in the report’s “call to action.”

Participants believed that the most actionable items for Canada25 itself to undertake were twofold. First, Canada25 members could serve on a focus group for Elections Canada to test its advertisements. Second, Canada25 members could take the lead on a campaign to distribute “I voted” buttons or stickers to electors.

For complete details of Canada25’s partnership with Elections Canada, please consult www.canada25.com.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

NATIONAL FORUM DELEGATES:

FODÉ BEAUDET is at home overseas as much as in Canada, occasionally confused as to which one is which. He has recently explored the African ways of doing and learning through an innovative project with the Berkana Institute and Pioneers of Change, a global learning network of people, in their 20s and 30s, committed to systemic change. At university he was involved with AIESEC, participated in exchange programs, and joined the international executive body in The Netherlands as a vice president of corporate relations. Fodé continues to write, exploring reality and absurdity through short stories. He is currently the cooperation program representative (Africa) for CUSO.

JASON BLACKSTOCK grew up in Edmonton and holds a BA in English from Queen’s University, a master’s degree in physics from the University of Edinburgh, and a PhD in physics from the University of Alberta. He is a research associate in the quantum science research group of Hewlett-Packard Labs, incorporating fundamental science research and technology development in molecular electronics, nanoscale sensors and atomic-scale surface engineering. He has authored or co-authored over three dozen scientific/technical publications and presentations, received over two dozen awards, and led several partnerships between HP and scientific institutions. Jason serves as a senior fellow of the Trudeau Centre, a member of the Academic Council of the United Nations System, and a director of the Child and Adolescent Services Association in Edmonton.

SAMIR CHHABRA is a policy analyst with the Privy Council Office of the Government of Canada. He previously worked in the field of public management research, focusing on international cooperation and capacity-building. An active writer and student leader from a young age, Samir has contributed to several seminars and conferences on leadership development as an organizer, facilitator and speaker. Samir currently volunteers as the chapter coordinator for Canada25 in Ottawa. Samir graduated with an Honours BSc from Queen’s University and an MBA from the University of Ottawa.

ERIN CHRUSCH grew up in Macklin, Saskatchewan, and graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with degrees in political science and law. She is a lawyer at The Estate House in Edmonton, a firm dedicated to wills and estates. Since 2004, Erin has been the coordinator for the Edmonton chapter of Canada25, where she oversaw “Investing in the Next Alberta,” a regional policy project of the Calgary and Edmonton chapters regarding Alberta’s future as a debt-free province. Erin is a founding member of InterVivos, a group dedicated to increasing dialogue and leadership skills among young people, and is on the board of PLAN – Edmonton, which supports people with developmental disabilities and their families. Erin has been active in Edmonton’s volunteer sector and is an alumna of Leadership Edmonton. In her spare time, Erin enjoys reading and hanging out with her husband, Murray, and their dog, Bohdi.

MICHAEL CROOK lives in Vancouver and is an avid blogger (www.michaelcrook.ca).

SALIMA EBRAHIM received her MSc in public policy and administration at the London School of Economics and Political Science and recently completed a fellowship at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. She now works with Western Economic Diversification Canada as a policy analyst responsible for international trade and investment and Canada-US relations. Salima is the co-author of “In My Own Skin: Canadian Muslim Women Creating Our Own Identity,” a publication discussing identity, relationships and family dynamics, racism and discrimination, gender issues, and violence against women, and was invited to speak at the UN Conference on Racism and Discrimination in 2001 and at OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. She speaks English, French, and Gujrati, and is learning Arabic.

OWEN EVERTS-LIND was born and raised in Middle LaHave on Nova Scotia’s South Shore. He completed his BA in political science at Mount Allison University, and after working for the YMCA of Halifax/Dartmouth for a year, completed his MA in political science at Dalhousie University with a focus in international relations and Canadian foreign policy. He recently moved to Ottawa after accepting a position in the federal government’s Accelerated Economist Training Program. He is currently working for the Privy Council Office.

EMMALINE HILL works as a policy analyst with the Government of Saskatchewan specializing in youth engagement in government decision-making, particularly through facilitating the work of the Provincial Youth Advisory Committee. She is a host and programmer with Regina Community Radio and a board member with the Al Ritchie Community Association. Emmaline has a degree in Music Performance and has spent time working as a musician, an arts administrator, and as an intern with an NGO in Paris.

AL-KARIM KHIMJI is enrolled in the Queen’s University accelerated MBA program and is a graduate of McGill University with a BComm in accounting and strategic management. He works for an Albertan hotel group in a management position covering both operations and new developments. Through his international work, volunteer experience and travels, he has a global perspective and a great appreciation of diversity and the freedoms that we enjoy as Canadians. Al-Karim continues to be extensively involved with various community and volunteer organizations and has an active lifestyle. He loves to ski, travel and spend time with friends and family.

ANUJ KHOSLA holds a BA and BComm from the University of Saskatchewan, where he was heavily involved with AIESEC, working one-year terms in Costa Rica, Sweden and France. Anuj was born in Nairobi and raised in Canada. Active in arts, youth development, culture, and business with a strong interest in international co-operation, Anuj defines himself as a pacifist social-activist. He now works in Montreal with EyeSteelFilm, an independent social documentary company developing www.homelessnation.org, an interactive website presenting the voices and testimonials of homeless individuals from across Canada. He volunteers with Junior Achievement of Quebec, Canada25’s Montreal chapter, and the Montreal Fringe Festival.

KATHRYN KINLEY, born and raised in Manitoba, is completing her BA in environmental studies, international development, and political science at Trinity College, University of Toronto. She serves as co-leader of Canada25's Toronto chapter, conducts research for the Sustainability Office at the University of Toronto, and is an analyst for the G8 Research Group at the Munk Centre. She has volunteered in India on HIV/AIDS prevention, twice volunteered in Kenya teaching elementary school children and helping to build a school, attended the UN Conference on Climate Change and the 14th Session on Sustainable Development as a youth delegate, served on the editorial boards of two journals (*Mindful and Attaché*), and received senior-level conflict resolution training at the UNESCO Center for Pluralism, Human Rights and Democracy in Northern Ireland.

ELAINE K. LAM is a lecturer of education studies in global and international education at Bath Spa University, England, having previously taught English and mathematics in Canada, England, and Hong Kong. She is a trustee for a homeless shelter in Bristol, England, a member of Soroptimist International, and the former co-leader of Canada25's Toronto chapter. Elaine obtained her BA (honours) and BEd from Queen's concurrent education program, where she helped with the coordination of a national post-secondary leadership conference, and holds a master's degree in comparative and international education from the University of Oxford. She is currently pursuing doctoral studies in the area of education and development.

ANN LOCKHART received a BPhil in Interdisciplinary Leadership and a BA in Multimedia Studies as well as a Film Production Certificate from the University of New Brunswick. She completed a three month internship in Bhutan teaching math. She volunteers with various independent media organizations including the New Brunswick Filmmakers Co-operative where she is currently working on a short film. She is also a lieutenant in the Canadian Forces infantry reserves.

BEN MADGETT is pursuing his MPA at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, where he also serves as president of the student council. He holds a BA in political science and history from McGill University. Prior to his graduate studies, Ben worked as an Election Coordinator for the City of Toronto, and was involved in the management and observation of elections in Canada and abroad. He has also taught ESL in Canada, the United States, and Asia. Ben served on the organizing committee of the Toronto roundtable, and is currently a member of Canada25 in New York City.

ROGY MASRI spent part of his childhood herding livestock in a village in the Middle East, and is the first member of his extended family to graduate from high school. He graduated from the University of Calgary with a BSc in biological sciences, after which he spent two years participating in cancer research. He recently graduated from medical school, completed an intensive course in health and human rights, and is in the process of obtaining a residency position. He has travelled and volunteered extensively within Canada and abroad. Rogy ultimately wants to help people, ideally dedicating his life to aiding populations in dire need on a global scale while pointing out the inadequacies of the current status quo.

KAREN MOORES, from St. John's, studied political science, business and public administration at Memorial University and studied French language and culture at Collège Bois du Bologne in Montreal. She complemented her studies with work experiences in marketing, communications, research, and event planning in the not-for-profit, public, and private sector. From 2001 to 2003, she was a page in the Newfoundland & Labrador legislature, an ideal environment for a student of politics to watch policy and politics unfold live. A member of the online engagement team for this year's National Forum, Karen's interest in technology was heightened by her experiences as a member of the twelve-person Aliant Mobility Youth Advisory Panel in 2004-2005.

MARGI MOSCOE holds a BComm (honours) from Queen's University and won the Commerce '74 Award for extracurricular and community contributions. She spent a term studying international business and marketing at Uppsala University, Sweden, and completed an internship with Nike in 2002. After graduating, Margi joined Unilever Canada, where she has worked as a retail representative in Toronto, and a business analyst and then a category insight manager in Calgary. Margi participated in the "Calgary Youth, Canada's Future" 2005 conference, volunteers as a crisis line counsellor for the Distress Centre, serves as an advocate for the Canadian Arthritis Society, and is a member of the Leadership Calgary 2006 Class.

DEBBIE PACHECO works for the Portuguese-Canadian National Congress on two community capacity building projects, one involving youth and civic engagement. An MA graduate in sociology and equity studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Debbie is interested in the role of creative expression as a tool for social change. She has addressed social justice issues through the Wench Radio Collective and Quinas Magazine. Debbie tutored for eight years and helped to design and facilitate workshops for social service agencies, community groups, and public schools across Toronto with the Anti-Racism Media Education Collective. She is currently involved with the Maytree Foundation's "Leaders for Change" program.

ANDREW PLETT grew up in Oak Lake, Manitoba. He received his Bachelor of Business degree with a major in marketing and a minor in English from Brandon University. He is the Manitoba Representative for the National Rural Youth Network, as well as a member of Emerging Leaders of Manitoba. His experience with youth work has led Andrew to become more involved in helping to encourage youth engagement in rural areas. He has recently been working on economic and social development projects in Bolivia as the communications director for a group of investors. His focus is to ensure that foreign investment provides sustainability and social development that is sensitive to the local culture. He plays hockey and enjoys backpacking and all types of travel.

MARION SENRA has lived in Montreal all her life. She speaks English, French, and Portuguese. She has worked as an employment counsellor for five years, facilitating group workshops and providing individual counselling. Marion has an academic training in public relations and behavioural and skill development. She has worked and volunteered on many organizational levels in the non-profit, private, and public sectors, where she has organized events for the needy,

acted as an intermediary for individuals and governmental agencies, provided crisis intervention, and assisted in designing programs to serve the more marginalized members of our society. Marion is currently an activist for environmental awareness & sustainable living and a mentor to youth.

GAVIN STANLEY is a PhD student at the University of Cambridge and a SSHRC Doctoral Fellow. His research on British-French relations has taken him to Paris, where he served as a reporter at the Franco-British Student Summit on corporate responsibility in the developing world. He served as a governor for Victoria College at the University of Toronto and worked part-time as a residence don. He served as the coordinator of the World University Service of Canada and has volunteered with support groups for the homeless and for gay and lesbian youth. He holds a BA in international relations from the University of Toronto and an MPhil in history from Cambridge.

NORM TASEVSKI lives in Toronto and is currently a senior policy analyst for the Ministry of Community and Social Services in Ontario, where he focuses on social services and social housing policy. He has a BAH in Political Studies from Queen's University, and has a postgraduate diploma in International Project Management. Norm has been involved in helping increase youth engagement in the community. As the National Youth Coordinator with the Atlantic Council of Canada, he helped design a number of initiatives to help increase volunteerism among students. For the past two years, Norm has worked with and led the development and implementation of the Isuma Fellowship Program, Canada25's first action initiative.

MILICA UZELAC works as a Policy Analyst at the Canadian International Development Agency. She's currently on an assignment in New York City at the Canadian Permanent Mission to the United Nations working on development policy issues and multilateral effectiveness. Armed with an arts administration degree with a focus on fine art history from the University of Toronto, Milica headed to Queen's University to pursue an MPA, where her research focused on immigration and integration. While in Toronto, she spent two years working at the Royal Ontario Museum, while also volunteering with various arts festivals across the city and the Girl Guides of Canada.

JODIE-LYNN WADDILOVE is an Anishnabe and Lenni Lenape lawyer from the Munsee-Delaware Nation in southwestern Ontario. She holds a BA from the University of Western Ontario in political science and philosophy, an MA from the University of Sheffield in international criminology and law, and an LLB from the University of Ottawa. She is now an associate lawyer with the law firm of Maurice Law Barristers & Solicitors in Calgary, which specializes in aboriginal and treaty litigation and is only one of a few firms in Western Canada that specializes in aboriginal law on behalf of First Nations. Prior to this position, Jodie-Lynn was one of five lawyers serving as Commission Counsel for the Ipperwash Inquiry in Toronto.

PROJECT ORGANIZING TEAM:

MIKE BULTHUIS grew up in Hamilton and now lives in Ottawa. He studied political science and international development at Dalhousie University before coming to Ottawa to complete an MA in political science, with an emphasis on social policy. After graduating, Mike worked as a senior analyst with the Cities and Communities Branch of Infrastructure Canada. In September 2005 he began a part-time PhD in urban and social geography at the University of Ottawa, exploring questions around the meaning of home and place. Mike has continuously sought to engage in local initiatives, currently serving as a member of the City of Ottawa's Health and Social Services Advisory Committee, and supporting a number of non-profit community coalitions addressing housing issues.

ELIZABETH CHRISTIE is a public affairs strategist in Toronto. She holds a BA in political science from the University of Toronto and an MA in Political Science with a speciality in political campaigning from the University of Florida. Over the past several years, she has worked as a political pollster for Democratic candidates in the United States from the state house to presidential levels. She played a key role in the GOTV effort in Broward County during the 2004 presidential election. Recently, in Canada, she has been focusing her efforts on studies for the media for the 2006 federal election on young voters and the general public and providing public opinion strategy for her corporate clients. Her research areas include political communication and comparative political advertising.

COURT CURRY is the executive assistant to an Ottawa City Councillor. Court graduated from Carleton University with a Bachelor of Public Affairs and Policy Management, and an MPA from Queen's University.

PAUL FAUCETTE has a BA in history from Wilfrid Laurier University and a BEd from the University of Ottawa. He is currently an MA student in human security and peacebuilding at Royal Roads University. In Canada, Paul has worked and volunteered with a number of organizations focusing on the education and skill development of Canadian youth. Internationally, he worked in Zambia focusing on life skills development and health education/advocacy with Zambian youth. Last year, he was the Mine Action Ambassador for Southern Ontario, raising awareness about landmine issue. Currently, he is the Manager of Programs and Campaigns at the Canadian Landmine Foundation/Adopt-A-Minefield.

MITCHELL GRAY is the founder and owner of The Word Merchant, a Vancouver-based writing and communications consultancy. He also writes fiction and screenplays, and won the 2003 CBC Radio Alberta Anthology non-fiction writing competition. Mitchell has worked as a reporter for the city section of the Calgary Herald and represented Canada recently in the Finland Foreign Correspondents Program. His interests include the exploration of freedom, citizenship and governance. Mitchell holds master's degrees in political science and journalism from the University of British Columbia.

SARAH MCQUARRIE is a senior consultant in KPMG Canada’s advisory services practice, where she focuses on public sector work. Prior to joining KPMG, she was involved in intergovernmental fiscal analysis for the Ontario Ministry of Finance. She is originally from Regina, Saskatchewan, and was employed by the Government of Saskatchewan for two years before moving to Ontario to pursue graduate studies. Sarah holds an MPA from Queen’s University and a BA in political science. In her spare time, Sarah is a volunteer tutor and an amateur photographer.

DAVID QUAYAT is from Calgary and is a law student at the University of Ottawa. He worked as the director of US trade policy services with White & Case LLP in Washington DC, has written numerous articles on US trade policy matters, and has appeared as a commentator on Canadian and US news outlets to discuss trade issues. Prior to joining White & Case, David earned his MA in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Upon graduation, David was presented with the William H. Foster prize, recognizing his academic achievement and community service. David also holds a BA in political science from the University of Calgary, where he founded the U of C Model UN Team.

LAUREL SHERRET is a law student at the University of Victoria, concentrating on international law and human rights. She holds a BSc in biological sciences and a BA in international relations, specializing in international institutions, governance, and Latin America, from the University of Calgary. She has served as a project coordinator and then a research associate for the International Women’s Rights Project, focussing on issues including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the gender dimensions of the Responsibility to Protect. She has interned at the Carr Center and has served as a settlement worker with immigrant and refugee women and an intake worker with the Legal Aid Society of Alberta.

JILL SYMONDS is a student in the Masters of Public Administration program at the University of Victoria, specializing in local government. She holds a BA (Hons) in French and Political Science from the University of Western Ontario. Jill has been working as a researcher in the non-profit sector for the past few years around issues of quality of life and urban governance. Jill has recently written a report for the Local Government Institute about the citizen engagement practices in local governments in British Columbia.

MICHAEL WILLMOTT is a trade commissioner with International Trade Canada in Calgary. He was a delegate to Canada25’s Calgary roundtable on “Canada and the World” in 2003, and served as Calgary coordinator for “Investing in the Next Alberta: Beyond 2005,” a joint project of the Calgary and Edmonton chapters to provide the provincial government with ideas on building its future as a debt-free province. Michael is involved in imagineCALGARY, a citizen-driven, city-led initiative to develop a strategic vision for Calgary, and Leadership Calgary, a community leadership program involving the non-profit, private, and public sectors. Born and raised in the Prairies, Michael holds a BA Economics and BA International Relations from the University of Calgary.

CANADA25 NATIONAL COMMITTEE:

ANDREW MEDD (Executive Director) is the Executive Director of Canada25 and a consultant in the Vancouver office of Deloitte Inc. Andrew has worked in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom. He holds a BComm (honours) from Queen's University.

JONATHAN CRAFT (Associate Policy Director and PolicyWatch Coordinator) is from Oakville, Ontario. He graduated with a political science degree from the University of Guelph in 2004, worked at the federal government's Service Canada department as a bilingual programs officer, and now works as a legislative assistant to an Ontario MPP. In the past he worked as a consultant in the private sector and for Human Resources Development Canada. An experienced party organizer, he has also worked on several provincial and federal election campaigns. Fluently bilingual, Jonathan has debated at the national and provincial levels in both official languages and was selected as a semi-finalist in the 2004 Magna "As Prime Minister..." nationwide essay competition.

JONATHAN DUNN (Director of Communications) has served as Canada25's National Communications Director since January 2005. Previously, he aided Canada25's media relations activities for the Canada and the World project. Having worked in both online media and advertising, Jonathan is now an account manager at Marketing Magazine, Canada's leading marketing and public relations industry publication, where he works with Canada's major advertising and public relations agencies. Jonathan has a degree in philosophy from Queen's University, where he studied political philosophy extensively. He is also in the final stages of Ryerson University's public relations degree program.

TABATHA SOLTAY (Director of Membership) organized and developed a Canada and the World roundtable in London, England, in May 2003. Upon returning to Canada, Tabatha became an assistant national director, focusing on the international chapters, and in March 2004 was given full membership responsibilities. After a long trip to Hong Kong and New Zealand, she started work in Ottawa with Environment Canada in science policy. Prior to this, Tabatha lived in Toronto where she worked for the Ontario provincial government in several ministries. During her eighteen months with the Ontario government, she helped found TOPS, an internal organisation designed to promote leading, learning and linking opportunities amongst young employees.

LEAD AUTHOR:

ROBIN RIX was called to the Ontario bar in 2005 and is a lawyer with the environmental and climatic trading practice group at Clifford Chance LLP in London, England. He holds a BA and JD from the University of Toronto and an MPhil in European politics from the University of Oxford. As a student, Robin completed human rights internships in Finland, Ghana, and Nunavut, served as president of the student governments at University College and the Faculty of Law at U of T, was a junior fellow at Massey College, and won Magna International's "As Prime Minister..." nationwide essay competition in 2002. Robin can be contacted at robin.rix@gmail.com.

APPENDIX D

RESOURCES

The following list provides a general introduction to certain selected sources that were consulted in the roundtable, national forum, and report-writing process. It should serve as a good starting point for those interested in civic engagement.

BOOKS, ARTICLES, REPORTS

Axworthy, Thomas S. (2004), “Addressing the Accountability Deficit: Why Paul Martin’s Minority Government Must Pay More Attention to the Three A’s” (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy).

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Public Policy Forum (2004), “Investing in Canada: Fostering an Agenda for Citizen and Community Participation.”

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Riding, Jacqueline (2005), “St Stephen’s Chapel: From the Crown to the People,” BBC.

Saunders, Doug (February 18, 2006), “I’d rather pledge allegiance to a notion, not a nation,” *Globe & Mail*.

Scott, Katherine (2003), “Funding Matters: The Impact of Canada’s New Funding Regime on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations.”

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WEBSITES

Andrew Coyne
www.andrewcoyne.com

Code of Good Practice on Funding
www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/funding/funding_code.cfm

Consulting Canadians
www.consultingcanadians.ca

Dominion Institute
www.dominion.ca

Elections Canada
www.elections.ca

Framework Foundation
www.frameworkfoundation.ca

Imagine Canada
www.imaginecanada.ca

Meal Exchange
www.mealexchange.ca

Muttart Foundation
www.muttart.org

National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating
www.givingandvolunteering.ca

Online Consultation Centre of Expertise
www.pwgsc.gc.ca/onlineconsultation

Participatory Budgeting
www.participatorybudgeting.org

Project for Public Spaces
www.pps.org

Health Action Theatre by Seniors
www.seniorstheatre.org

Spacing
www.spacing.ca

Toronto Public Space Committee
www.publicspace.ca

Student Vote
www.studentvote.ca

United Way
www.unitedway.ca

Vartana Bank
www.vartana.org

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APPENDIX E

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***Canadians & the Common Good:
Building a Civic Nation Through Civic Engagement***
is Canada25's fourth national policy report.



Good things happen when people engage with others. This report takes this simple message and applies it to the complex case study of Canadian civic life. It argues that the process of civic engagement – defined as interacting more often and more meaningfully with others in respect of civic issues – will help to build a stronger and more unified civic nation.

For Canada's individuals, civic engagement can enrich, empower, and foster a sense of belonging. For Canada's communities, civic engagement can promote innovation, democracy, inclusiveness, and unity. Striving toward these goals is essential if Canada wishes to reverse the trend of long-term detachment that too many Canadians are increasingly feeling toward their institutions, compatriots, and country.

"Canadians & the Common Good is an impressive accomplishment. Wide-ranging in its sources and implications, it makes a coherent case in favour of a liberal, secular country populated by an active citizenry and global in outlook. Policymakers intent on cutting the little support that there is for culture – and engagement generally – should read this report."

Randall Hansen, Canada Research Chair in Immigration & Governance, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto

"The authors don't pull any punches in identifying what ails and threatens our civic health – but they also present a compelling vision for a more connected and unified Canada that reflects the perspectives and passion of young adults. It succeeds in speaking to a broad audience, spanning young people exploring what it means to be an active citizen, to policy-makers, educators, parents, community and business leaders and politicians. Bravo to Canada25 for demonstrating its commitment to building a more engaged democratic society in Canada and abroad."

Mary Pat MacKinnon, Director, Public Involvement Network, Canadian Policy Research Networks

"Few organizations have the interest, capability, and dedication to pull something like this together with the commitment and creativity of young citizens from across our country. Nice job, Canada25. It's refreshing to see ideas come from young people themselves with passion and substance. Policy people: read this."

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