

# Engaging Youth:

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW



In 2015, Canada agreed on a new global agenda to address poverty and promote development, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are underscored by the principles of interconnectedness and universality. They embody the shared responsibility of all countries to address these issues both within their own borders and around the world and call for an alignment between domestic and international policy through a cross-sectoral, inter-governmental approach.

2015 also saw the election of Canada's new Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. As one of his first acts in office, Trudeau appointed himself Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Youth, marking the first time in Canadian history that youth has been a part of a prime minister's portfolio. Trudeau also called for a review of Global Affairs Canada's international assistance policy, providing an opportunity to create a meaningful role for the next generation of Canadian leaders to engage in global issues.

**The following 5 key policy recommendations will support a meaningful agenda to better engage youth in Canada's international development efforts.** These recommendations emerged from an extensive series of 29 roundtable consultations held by the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC). The consultations were conducted over a 9-month period across 5 regions in BC and engaged over 400 civil society members around the themes of sustainable development and global development cooperation. The recommendations are also drawn from the Inter-Council Network (ICN) consultation process, wherein over 750 individuals were consulted across Canada through inclusive consultation processes that made use of official consultations in partnership with Global Affairs Canada, unofficial consultations, surveys and webinars.



## 1 Whole-of-Government Approach

Generally, youth-related issues such as education, employment and civic participation are managed at the provincial or municipal levels rather than at the federal level. However, Canada should look to **coordinate across governmental departments and geographical jurisdictions** in order to encourage developing a generation of leaders who represent Canadian ideals and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to address the world's biggest issues. There must be coordination between Canada's long-term global development priorities and our provincially run educational systems and volunteer or employment opportunities. There must also be programs that encourage young Canadians to create a deeper sense

of global understanding and connection between the local and the global.



## 2 Equitable Representation of Youth

Until now, there really has not been an opportunity for youth to engage in intelligent policy dialogue with Canada's international development community. The Prime Minister's Youth Council is a great first step and is a visionary way to engage youth on national issues such as employment, access to education, building stronger communities, and climate change. But the Prime Minister's Youth Council cannot stand alone. At least **two members of the Prime Minister's Youth Council should**

**represent Canadian youth on an Interministerial Sustainable Development Advisory Council** that should be established to ensure collaborative management and monitoring of the SDGs across government. The youth delegates should **include at least one aboriginal or diaspora youth**, should make up at least 2 of the 12 standing Advisory Council seats, and should operate on a rotating basis with overlapping terms in order to ensure the transfer of institutional knowledge.



### 3 Public Education and Engagement

There is a need for greater and immediate commitment to support transformational public education and engagement on international cooperation, including through volunteerism, if the Canadian government aims to engage more Canadians in international cooperation. Working through a whole-of-government approach, Canada should prepare a comprehensive public engagement policy and strategy on topics that are broader than any one organization's mandate, such as the SDGs. Underpinning the public engagement strategy should be an **emphasis on supporting cultural and knowledge exchanges between Canadians and individuals in other countries, in particular youth, Indigenous, marginalized and diaspora communities** to underline the concept of universality.



### 4 International Youth Internship Program (IYIP) Expansion

The International Youth Internship Program (IYIP) is a valuable mechanism to offer Canadian youth to become better global citizens

through international development employment opportunities. The program is a powerful tool for youth to act on global issues, but it needs to be updated to reflect Canada's growing leadership in the international arena. **Funding for interns under IYIP should be increased from \$15,000 to \$25,000 per intern** as a reflection of the value of the Canada's dollar and rising global costs. The program allocation for **aboriginal internships** should also be doubled from \$2 million to \$4 million, with a new window opened for **diaspora youth**.



### 5 The Maple Berets

As one of the most respected countries in the world given its history of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, Canada has the opportunity to **establish a program for youth to learn to be mediators of peace and peacekeeping in non-violent environments**. Dubbed the "Maple Berets," youth could be highly trained in crisis and conflict resolution with a view to eventually working alongside their civilian counterparts. Collaborating within the Department of National Defence's (DND) structure and training could help Canada's youth learn to work more effectively in different global hotspots. Intense training programs could take place on Canadian soil, to take advantage of DND's infrastructure in Canada's regional and northern constituencies. Whether learning to assist in social media campaigns that endeavour to fight terror using non-violent means, or assisting civilian efforts to promote peaceful resolution to otherwise intractable problems, the newly-formed Maple Berets could train young Canadians to make the world a better place.

*The British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC) is a coalition of international development and civil society organizations that has engaged in sustainable development and social justice issues for over a quarter century. BCCIC is one of the leading voices for civil society organizations in the province and acts as a liaison among different provincial and national governments on matters related to Canada's sustainable development policy.*

*The Inter-Council Network (ICN) is a coalition of eight provincial and regional Councils for International Cooperation. These member-based Councils represent over 400 diverse organizations from across Canada that are committed to global social justice. The ICN provides a forum in which the Councils collaborate for improved effectiveness and identify common priorities for collective action.*

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