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Why Canada Needs A National Youth Service Program

An Open Letter To

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada

Prime Minister,

As Canadians, we honour the country we inherited. The question now is whether we are doing enough to prepare young Canadians for the country they will inherit.

Engage Canada, a diverse and non-partisan group of Canadians from across the country, is calling on the federal government to support a modern, voluntary and paid national youth service program.

Your plan for Canada to build again, strengthen the economy, our North and our defence, and national security requires more than capital, permits and projects. We need skilled, resilient, service-minded young Canadians who are ready to help build, protect and strengthen the country.

Each year, nearly 400,000 young Canadians turn 18. Too many are entering adulthood struggling to find their first job and searching for a sense of purpose. Paid, structured and meaningful service to Canada would offer young Canadians employment, skills, mentorship, credentials and a chance to contribute to something larger than themselves.

Canada can learn from the more than 60 countries, including Finland, whose national service programs successfully build skills, resilience and civic responsibility. Canada's model would reflect our own needs, values and priorities. Young Canadians, 18 to 25, would apply for a period of paid national service. Participants would be selected based on merit, motivation and readiness to serve in areas of urgent national need: emergency preparedness and climate resilience; security-related pathways; Arctic and Indigenous community service; skilled trades; emerging technologies; conservation; and community and seniors support.

The program would be coordinated nationally, delivered locally and designed to produce measurable public value. It would be developed through consultation with governments, young Canadians, Indigenous leaders, municipalities, employers, educators and service organizations.

Engage Canada has submitted a proposal to the Finance Committee requesting federal support to design the model, test key assumptions, consult widely, assess partners, determine costs and create an implementation-ready blueprint for Canada.

> Prime Minister, as your government advances its nation-building agenda, young Canadians must have a meaningful role in shaping the country they will inherit. We ask your government to support the development of a national youth service program that prepares them to serve, lead and strengthen Canada.

To learn more and find out how you can support this work, visit:

EngageCanada.ca

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Chair, Engage Canada

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Professor, Dalhousie University; former Vice-President, Research and Innovation, Dalhousie University

Casey Antolak
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Dayna Spiring
Corporate Director; Chair, CancerCare Manitoba Foundation

Jennifer Stewart
Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Syntax

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Pourquoi le Canada a besoin d'un programme national de service pour la jeunesse

Lettre ouverte

Au très honorable Mark Carney, C.P., député, Premier ministre du Canada

Monsieur le Premier Ministre,

En tant que Canadiens et Canadiennes, nous rendons hommage au pays dont nous avons hérité. La question est désormais de savoir si nous en faisons assez pour préparer la jeunesse canadienne au pays dont elle héritera.

Engage Canada, un groupe diversifié et non partisan composé de Canadiens et Canadiennes de partout au pays, lance un appel au gouvernement fédéral pour qu'il soutienne un programme national moderne, volontaire et rémunéré de service civique pour les jeunes.

Votre projet de relance pour le Canada, pour renforcer notre économie, notre Nord, notre défense et notre sécurité nationale, nécessite bien plus que des capitaux, des permis et des projets. Nous avons besoin d'une jeunesse canadienne qualifiée, résiliente, animée d'un esprit de service et prête à contribuer à la construction, à la protection et au renforcement du pays.

Chaque année au Canada, près de 400 000 jeunes atteignent l'âge de 18 ans. Trop nombreux sont ceux et celles qui entament leur vie adulte en peine à trouver leur premier emploi et cherchant un sens à leur vie. Un service rémunéré, structuré, porteur de sens et au bénéfice du Canada offrirait à nos jeunes des emplois, des compétences, un accompagnement, des qualifications et la possibilité de contribuer à une cause qui les transcende.

Le Canada peut s'inspirer de plus de 60 pays, notamment la Finlande, dont les programmes de service national contribuent avec succès au développement des compétences, de la résilience et du sens des responsabilités civiques. Le modèle canadien refléterait nos propres besoins, valeurs et priorités. Les jeunes Canadiens et Canadiennes de 18 à 25 ans pourraient postuler pour une période de service national rémunéré. La sélection des participants et participantes serait axée sur leur mérite, leur motivation et leur disposition à servir dans des domaines où le pays a des besoins urgents: préparation aux situations d'urgence et résilience climatique; parcours liés à la sécurité; service dans l'Arctique et au sein des communautés autochtones; métiers spécialisés; technologies émergentes; conservation; et soutien aux communautés et aux personnes âgées.

Coordonné à l'échelle nationale, ce programme serait mis en œuvre localement et conçu pour générer une valeur sociale quantifiable. Il serait élaboré en concertation avec les gouvernements, la jeunesse canadienne, les leaders autochtones, les municipalités, les employeurs, les éducateurs et éducatrices ainsi que les organismes de services.

Engage Canada a soumis une proposition au Comité des finances afin de solliciter un soutien fédéral pour concevoir le modèle, tester les principales hypothèses, procéder à de vastes consultations, évaluer les partenariats, établir les coûts et élaborer un plan directeur prêt à être mis en œuvre au Canada.

> Monsieur le Premier Ministre, alors que votre gouvernement accélère son programme de projets d'intérêt national, la jeunesse canadienne doit jouer un rôle significatif dans l'évolution du pays dont elle héritera. Nous demandons à votre gouvernement de soutenir la mise en place d'un programme national de service civique destiné aux jeunes, qui les prépare à servir, à diriger et à renforcer le Canada.

Pour en savoir plus et découvrir comment vous pouvez soutenir cette initiative, rendez-vous sur

EngageCanada.ca

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