



## **CANADA25 2005 NATIONAL POLICY PROJECT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ISSUE FRAMEWORK**

*Canada25* is harnessing the ideas and energy of young Canadians to create policy solutions that will enhance civic engagement across the country and strengthen Canada's position as a model for the promotion of vibrant and inclusive democracy.

In a series of regional and national roundtables, participants will share their diverse perspectives and experiences to answer the following question:

### **How can Canada develop the most civically engaged citizens in the world?**

Through their participation in a series of regional roundtables, *Canada25* members will develop an understanding of this topic in the Canadian context, and then shape prescriptions for enhancing civic engagement.

Civic engagement comes in countless forms, and participants will be encouraged to share their unique perspectives on a broad spectrum of modes of civic engagement. By combining research and experience, participants will explore the factors that prompt people to become and stay engaged in their communities. They will also carefully examine reasons people do not become engaged, and tailor incentives to address these obstacles.

Above all, our goal is to make concrete, well-researched recommendations concerning how to enhance civic engagement in Canada.

Through *Canada25's* Civic Engagement National Policy Project, young Canadians will address these issues and add fresh perspectives to a critical issue, helping ensure that the future of Canada is one that includes the most engaged citizens in the world.

## **AN INITIAL ISSUES FRAMEWORK**

The following categories and questions are provided to stimulate your thinking on civic engagement, not to restrict it. We encourage all Regional Roundtables and delegates to look at the issue of civic engagement in the context of their own experiences. Go deeper and broader into the issue. If this breakdown of the issue fails to capture your ideas and experiences, tell us how it can be expanded.

While agendas for the individual roundtables will differ, we encourage all chapters to start their planning by thinking about the issue of civic engagement in the context of some or all of the following eight modes of engagement. Participants in the roundtables are encouraged to apply their individual experiences to their examination of these modes of engagement. By sharing common experiences and research, we hope to tap into individual experiences and uncover common themes relating to the barriers, motivators and definitions of civic engagement.

## Modes of Engagement:

1. Community Volunteerism: Community volunteering is generally characterised by involvement in formalized 'helping' activities, for which no recompense is sought.
  - Examples of volunteerism abound, from serving meals at a soup kitchen to helping in neighbourhood clean-ups.
2. Political: One of the best-known forms of civic engagement, we consider political engagement to include activities undertaken by individuals to influence the political process – including both policy and electoral outcomes.
  - Examples include voting, political party membership, and government lobbying activities.
3. Cultural: One of the most widespread means of engagement is through religious or cultural institutions.
  - Examples include membership in a church, synagogue or mosque, participation in religion-based voluntary organizations, and ecumenical activities.
4. Online: More and more, Canadians are engaging in virtual communities.
  - Examples include virtual volunteerism, blogging, and chatting.
5. Philanthropic: By funding noble or charitable causes, Canadians engage through a transfer of wealth.
  - Philanthropy can take place through charitable donation, establishment of foundations, and funding of non-profit endeavours.
6. Play and Expression: Many Canadians engage collectively to provide and take advantage of avenues for self-expression and improvement.
  - Examples include membership in recreational sports leagues, and arts and cultural activities.
7. International: Canadians are increasingly global. Many apply their skills to enhance international civil society. Meanwhile, expatriate Canadians are developing ways to maintain a connection to civil society back home.
  - Examples include membership in an international Chapter of *Canada25!*
8. Social Activism: Canadians engage in cause-based activities seeking social change and social justice.
  - Examples include involvement with environmental groups, community planning forums and other non-governmental organizations.

Discussions on each mode of engagement should focus on some key questions:

- Why do we become engaged?
- Does the engagement meet our expectations?
- How easy is it to become involved?
- How can we encourage greater involvement?

In each, the goal is to identify similarities and dissimilarities between the modes of engagement. Through the identification of crosscutting themes, we hope to arrive at the fundamentals of civic engagement in Canada today, including:

- A realistic definition of civic engagement,
- An understanding of the incentives and obstacles to engagement today,
- Elements unique to the Canadian context,
- Good examples, upon which we can build