

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.