

**Re-focusing the Lens:**  
**Assessing the Challenge of Youth Involvement in Public Policy**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *Introduction*

*Re-focusing the Lens: Assessing the Challenge of Youth Involvement in Public Policy* is about the ability of young people to influence public policy in Canada and the barriers to their greater involvement. Despite the importance that most governments place on youth, young people are not normally associated with policy decision-making. Rather, they are treated as the “next generation” and imbued with all the rhetoric associated with being the “leaders of tomorrow.” This lens requires a “re-focusing” when one begins to examine the type of activism taking place within youth organisations today, and consider the value that youth participation could bring to the policy-making process.

This report argues that policy-makers need to re-focus the way in which they look at youth participation. There are a variety of youth organisations and groups attempting to influence public policy at the local, provincial, national and international levels that have something important and unique to contribute. This need to re-focus, however, does not only apply to those who are currently in a position to shape policy. It also applies to youth themselves, whose lack of strategic thinking and political awareness has been a barrier to their own participation.

*Re-focusing the Lens* is part one of a two-part project developed by the Ontario Secondary School Students’ Association (OSSSA) and the Institute On Governance (IOG). The project explores how youth succeed at influencing public policy and the type of barriers that stand in their way. This document will expose some of the reasons for success and failure, reveal the rich tapestry of youth involvement and innovation, and provide some important lessons about youth involvement in public policy.

## *Methodology*

This study was designed to evaluate selected models in which youth have both succeeded and failed to influence public policy. We began with a literature<sup>1</sup> and web review to assess the level and range of youth activity within the policy realm. In the process, we compiled a list of youth organisations, groups, institutions, and departments, which are actively engaged at various political levels. In compiling this annotated list, we selected eight case studies to evaluate.<sup>2</sup> Seven of the cases represent youth activity at the local, provincial and national levels, while one international case was selected as a basis of comparison. Each case involved background research, interviews, and sharing the draft case study with the organisation in question.

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that we did not find much literature on youth influencing public policy. Instead, the focus tends to be on aspects of youth crime, sexual behaviour, drug use, unemployment, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The annotated list is available as a separate document, entitled *Taking Notice: A Sampling of Youth Organisations*.

For the purposes of this study, we have defined youth between the ages of 16 and 26. We recognise, however, that there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to defining young people and the 16-26 parameter is simply a working definition. We sometimes included those who fell within a few years outside these parameters.

### ***Why Involve Youth in Public Policy?***

There are four main reasons why government should involve youth and citizens more generally in the policy-making process:

- **Combat cynicism**  
Within North American society there is currently a general decline in the trust of politicians and political institutions, and in the confidence which people demonstrate towards hierarchical institutions of all kinds. This decline can be explained in part by the public's belief that its institutions are failing to serve its needs. In order to re-build trust, co-operation and responsibility between governments and the people, citizens must be included in the decision-making process.
- **Improve decision-making.** Involving diverse groups of citizens within the policy-making process provides government with various perspectives, opportunities for new solutions, greater citizen buy-in at the policy implementation stage, and is cost effective.
- **Promote learning.** Including citizens in the policy-making realm necessitates greater public awareness and understanding and therefore promotes practical civic education. As Robert Dahl points out, "If democracy is to work, it would seem to require a certain level of political competence on the part of its citizens...."<sup>3</sup>
- **Help strengthen civil society.** Increasing the capacity of citizens and government to interact and develop policy in greater collaboration serves to strengthen democracy and provide avenues for civil society organisations to become more involved.

As a relatively large segment of society, youth are potentially a key ingredient in combating public mistrust of government, promoting better policy-making, and a strengthened democracy. Although young people are not traditionally considered players within the policy realm, there are four additional reasons for promoting their involvement:

- **What young people lack in experience, they make up for in creativity, energy, and fresh perspectives.** Youth possess unique ideas that relate specifically to that stage of their lives. Unlike other groups within society, there is a continual turnover among the people who make up the youth category. If government is interested in making policy that resonates with the younger generation, it must work to bridge the generation gap by including youth in the policy-making process.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Dahl, "The Problem of Civic Competence," as quoted in Kathy O'Hara's "Citizen Engagement in the Social Union," (Citizen Practice Research Networks, 1998), p. 11.

- **Involving young people more actively in the political process will help to combat the current culture of mistrust and apprehension exhibited toward youth.** A recent public opinion study produced by Public Agenda<sup>4</sup> reflects this sense of mistrust. The study identifies a high level of public concern about the moral and ethical development of young people, stating that over 70% of those polled described youth negatively, using such words as lazy, disrespectful and wild. Therefore, involving young people more actively in the policy process will help to demonstrate their capabilities and combat these negative perceptions.
- **Involving youth in decision-making provides them with opportunities to assume leadership roles and develop valuable skills.** Their participation helps them to develop critical thinking, leadership and organisational skills, while giving them a better understanding of the workings of government and civil society. These experiences equip young people with the tools they need to be active members of their communities.
- **Youth are turning away from careers in the public sector.** In order to foster their return, government must become more responsive to the needs of young people and at the same time demonstrate that public policy development has vital implications for the quality of life of citizens.<sup>5</sup>

### *Youth and Governance Typology*

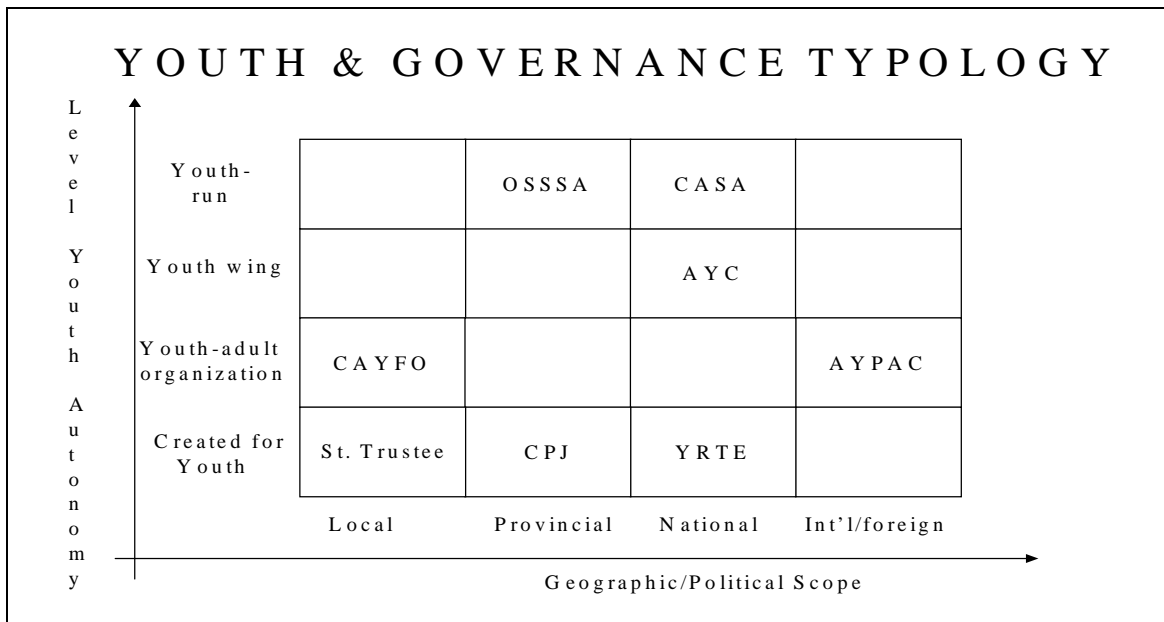
Despite their apparent lack of influence on policy, youth continue to generate a high level of organisational activity throughout the country. The annotated list of youth groups, organisations and initiatives developed for this report signalled to us that there is a hive of activity in all corners of Canada and abroad. From student unions and youth wings of political parties to youth championing the environment, human rights and educational reform, young people are actively seeking a role in the policy-making process.

In order to help simplify the range of youth models, initiatives and activities that exist at the local, provincial, national and international level, we have created a youth and governance typology. The diagram on the following page is divided along a vertical and horizontal axis to represent the autonomy exercised by various youth groups and at which political level the activity occurs.

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<sup>4</sup> Public Agenda Online, “Kids These Days 1999: What Americans Really Think About the Next Generation” (Internet: Public Agenda, <http://www.publicagenda.org>, 1999). Public Agenda is an American public opinion research and education organisation.

<sup>5</sup> See Jennifer L. Smith and Susan Snider, *Facing the Challenge: Recruiting the Next Generation of University Graduates to the Public Service*, (Ottawa: Public Policy Forum/Public Service Commission, 1998).



In examining the variety of youth organisations and initiatives involved with policy issues, we found that there are four basic types of models: *Created for Youth*, *Youth-adult*, *Youth wing*, and *Youth-run*. Each model reflects a different level of youth autonomy within the organisation or initiative. While no one model is better than another, each represents different opportunities and challenges for youth. Some of our findings include:

- Government created initiatives like the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) and the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ) offer a direct feed into the policy-making process. The difficulty, however, lies in the constraints (policy options, degree of openness within the bureaucracy) which the system places upon youth empowerment.
- Youth-adult organisations like Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO) offer an important mentoring role for young people interested in policy issues. The challenge is for the youth to avoid deferring to experienced adults all of the time and for the adults to allow young people to learn through their mistakes.
- The youth wing model, as illustrated in the Aboriginal Youth Council (AYC) case study, provides young people with a strong support system in which to establish policy relevant initiatives. Much of the AYC's strength comes from the support of its parent organisation, which has given it guidance and opportunities to develop policy, both independently and with youth-adult collaboration.
- Youth-run organisations like the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA) provide youth with the most autonomous means of achieving their objectives and speaking out on issues of concern. Although they represent very empowering models, they also have the potential to promote extreme positions, leaving decision-makers uninterested and resulting in groups looking from the outside in.

By outlining the various models of youth governance, we hope to provide some insight into how young people have been successful in influencing public policy and which existing gaps still stand in their way. It is our goal to provide youth with some lessons learned that will enhance their capacity to contribute more effectively to the formulation and implementation of public policy.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Youth are not a category normally associated with political decision-making. This is partly because our culture views youth as belonging to “the future,” and partly because the generation gap breeds mistrust and apprehension. Therefore, when youth attempt to have an impact on policy-making, there is a sense by many of those in power that they do not belong. If society is going to overcome this ‘culture of apprehension’ efforts have to be made by the older generation to be more inclusive, and for the younger generation to become more strategic and combat many of the perceptions and stereotypes which stand in their way. What we offer in the following pages are a number of ideas to help youth succeed in influencing public policy.

### **1. Understand the political processes and the art of influence.**

Youth groups which are successful in influencing public policy, like the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, tend to understand how government works, and conduct themselves more like an interest group, rather than identifying themselves as part of a youth movement. While there is a certain poetry associated with belonging to a movement, it lacks focus when trying to influence policy-makers. Youth cannot expect to become more influential in the policy realm until they begin to play within the political boundaries of the political process. This does not mean sacrificing principles, but rather, learning how the system works, and the importance of timing, compromise and lobbying.

### **2. Develop a clear mandate and focus, and know who your constituency is.**

Many of the youth groups we surveyed demonstrated a lack of focus about their activities and their constituency. To be effective, groups must recognise that they cannot be all things to all youth, but rather need to target their efforts and energies. First, a youth group must determine whether its mandate relates to advocacy, service provision, or both. Second, it must outline its priorities and determine which activities best serve its mandate. Third, it must address the question of representation by determining its constituency and ensuring that its structure is responsive to its membership. The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations is a good example of a group that has gone through this process, since its mission and constituent base is very clear: it lobbies the federal government on post-secondary issues on behalf of its Association members.

### **3. Develop strategies to manage the loss of organisational capital.**

The loss of organisational capital (leadership, institutional memory), particularly aggravated by the short leadership cycles in most youth groups, is a failure of strategic planning which youth need to address. With leadership changes, which often occur every year, organisations tend to duplicate past projects, encounter similar problems, and face similar issues, without the benefit of experience. As most youth groups are unable to maintain a paid staff person, they need to maintain an adequate record system as well as look at how to incorporate the experience of past members into the organisation's governance structure. Successful methods to provide for greater continuity and a more coherent focus include:

- An electronic archive to capture the work and knowledge gained from year to year
- A mechanism for alumni input
- A full-time or part-time paid staff member
- Creating partnerships with organisations and institutions
- A staggered election process, such as the one adopted by the Aboriginal Youth Council, in which only half of the executive is replaced in any given year.

### **4. Create an effective communications strategy.**

Many youth organisations suffer from the lack of a targeted strategy to communicate their message and activities. To secure long-term funding and maintain credibility with its constituency and with policy-makers, youth groups must be prepared to devote time and energy to publicising the work that they do. The Conseil permanent de la jeunesse in Quebec and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations are both well known to the Quebec and federal governments respectively, but tend to have low visibility among young people. Therefore, although they tend to have influence with policy-makers, the youth for whom they advocate have little awareness of who they are or what they do. On the other hand, there are many organisations at the local level that are well known within their respective communities, but are not even on the radar screen of those they are trying to influence.

### **5. Balance the inherent tension between safeguarding complete autonomy and successfully influencing policy.**

As we examined the barriers to greater youth influence in public policy, we found that most youth relish the ability to be autonomous and speak their minds without constraint. Balancing the tension means determining how autonomous an organisation can or should be in order to reach its goals. Groups with limited autonomy may have less say in setting their policy direction, but can nevertheless have a lot of influence on policy. For example, The Youth Round Table on the Environment's activities are constrained in their scope by the group's governmental status, but its structure allows members to provide policy recommendations directly to the Minister.

Moderation is also part of this tension because the more extreme a position an organisation

adopts, the less likely it is to be listened to or funded. The Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition lost its government funding due to the perception that its views were too radical. Autonomy allows youth organisations the freedom to argue for free tuition or bemoan the evils of government, but it does not meet the objective of influencing policy. The question is how much autonomy has to be given up in order to influence decision-making. There are no easy answers, but it is important for youth to recognise the tension between the two and make decisions based on how to best achieve their goals.

**6. To gain legitimacy, produce policy-relevant work and be responsive to the needs and views of your membership.**

It has become clear from the various case studies that young people who produce policy relevant work gain credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of government. The Conseil permanent de la jeunesse is a case in point, having produced numerous think pieces on issues relating to youth suicide, poverty and labour issues. Similarly, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations has had a major impact on the Canadian student loans program because its policy proposals give it credibility. Governments listen to what groups like these have to say, because they have established a track record of producing good work.

Legitimacy is also derived from organisational structures that reflect the needs and views of the membership. If young people feel that the leadership is unresponsive to their views and ideas, they will lose interest and cease to identify with the group.

**7. Learn how to seek out diverse funding sources and implement sound financial management practices.**

The search for funding is an ongoing process in the non-profit sector and one that is rendered more difficult for youth groups. Long term sustainability of youth organisations is undermined by the lack of training available for their members to learn how to look for funding, write proposals, build contacts and manage their funds. Many of the groups we looked at either did not know how to access funds or had problems managing the funds they were able to secure. In order to overcome this barrier, youth groups must put energy into building their skill capacity in this area and demonstrate that they are capable of handling projects which involve substantial sums of money. Some groups, like the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association, have created guidelines and mechanisms to help ensure sound financial management, but the challenge is to ensure that those guidelines are put into practice.

**8. Build partnerships with like-minded individuals and groups, including intergenerational collaboration.**

Despite the fact that many youth organisations share common goals, ideas and purpose, there is an overall lack of networking and collaboration between them. In order for youth

to become more strategic in their ability to influence policy, they must begin to recognise the advantage of identifying other groups with similar interests or compatible activities, and forging partnerships with those groups. Duplication of efforts due to a lack of inter-organisational awareness or communication not only places youth in competition for funding, but also lessens their ability to influence policymakers. The Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition is a good example of why networking and collaboration is so important, as it was able to survive government funding cuts precisely because it had built up a network of organisations that were able to provide support in a time of financial crisis.

It is important for youth to remember, when collaborating or partnering with adults, to establish a clear set of objectives, expectations and parameters to the working relationship. A failure to do so can lead to “experience taking over,” pushing young people to the side and forcing them to play a much smaller role in the decision-making process. This is especially critical in cases where adults have decided to create opportunities for youth involvement. As seen in the case of the Youth Round Table on the Environment and Ontario student trustees, a lack of clarity about roles and expectations can lead to some unfulfilled expectations and disillusionment with the process.

#### **9. Empower all members of the organisation rather than just those at the top.**

Part of the success of organisations like the Aboriginal Youth Council and the Ontario Secondary School Students’ Association is that the leadership feels empowered to get involved with policy issues and attempt to influence decision-makers. The opportunity to dialogue with and make recommendations to policy-makers is an exciting experience for youth, unless they feel they are not being listened to or that there is little potential for meaningful results. Many student trustees pointed out that while they may have a position on a School Board, it is not enough if their voices are not heard. Within the leadership of many youth organisations, however, this same lesson tends to be forgotten when it comes to their own members.

Leadership holds specific importance in youth groups because of the relative lack of experience and the amount of turnover that these organisations face. Therefore, if the leader or leadership is especially strong, the tendency is for everything to be handled and executed by a small number of people. Consequently, members of the organisation do not feel empowered and lose interest because all of the interesting work is controlled by a select few, and each change in leadership tends to leave a vacuum at the top. The end result is a weakening of an organisation’s capacity to sustain itself and contribute to policy-making in an ongoing way. Therefore, if youth groups are to avoid this predicament, efforts have to be made to involve and be responsive to all of their members.

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## A. INTRODUCTION<sup>6</sup>

### Purpose

*Re-focusing the Lens: Assessing the Challenge of Youth Involvement in Public Policy* is about the ability of young people to influence public policy in Canada and the barriers to their greater involvement. Despite the importance that most governments place on youth, young people are not normally associated with policy decision-making.<sup>7</sup> Rather, they are treated as the “next generation” and imbued with all the rhetoric associated with being the “leaders of tomorrow.” This lens requires a “re-focusing” when one begins to examine the type of activism taking place within youth organisations today and consider the value that youth participation could bring to the policy-making process.

This report argues that policy-makers need to re-focus the way in which they look at youth participation. There are a variety of youth organisations and groups attempting to influence public policy at the local, provincial, national and international levels that have something important and unique to contribute. The need to re-focus, however, does not only apply to those who are currently in a position to shape policy. It also applies to youth themselves, whose lack of strategic thinking and political awareness has been a barrier to their own participation.

In part, this study is a response to the lack of research found in the area of youth and governance.<sup>8</sup> A review of the literature revealed that little work has been done to look at youth participation in policy development. There is a strong focus on aspects of youth with regard to criminal activity, sexual behaviour, drug use, health issues and unemployment. While some literature has looked at youth participation in the political process,<sup>9</sup> very little has focused on the attempts of youth to influence public policy, or on the benefits of increased youth participation. Even recent literature about the need for increased civic participation by traditionally marginalised groups does not place any emphasis on the need to engage youth.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support of Human Resources Development Canada.

<sup>7</sup> The exception to this rule can be found in some Aboriginal organisations where there has been an ongoing attempt to include youth in their decision-making processes. See the Aboriginal Youth Council case study on pages 34-39. The recent election campaign in New Brunswick is another interesting exception, where there has been a strong youth focus and promises for increased youth input into government policy. See Kevin Cox, “New Brunswick Liberals Try Hard to Look Hip,” *Globe and Mail*, May 20, 1999, p. A1.

<sup>8</sup> We define governance as the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how citizens are given a voice, and how decisions are made on issues of public concern. Defining youth is more difficult as we have found no one set of parameters that encompasses this group. Some define youth as those between the ages of 16-24, while others include those up to 30 years of age. For the purposes of this study we generally define youth as being between the ages of 16-26, but sometimes include those who fall slightly outside of these parameters.

<sup>9</sup> See Claire Hackett, “Young People and Political Participation,” in *Youth in Society: Contemporary Theory, Policy and Practice* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997) and Kathy Megyery, *Youth in Canadian Politics: Participation and Involvement* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> See for example Benjamin R. Barber, *A Place For Us: How to Make Society Civil and Democracy Strong* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, *Caring For the Future: Making the Next Decades Provide a Life Worth Living* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Literature about youth and the media looks at how media impacts on young people and their perception of the world, rather than how the media portrays youth, or how youth can use it to advance their own agendas.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, most studies that look at youth participation in organisational activity focus on the socialising effect of institutions on children and youth rather than the effect of that participation on public policy or society as a whole.<sup>12</sup> There has been little examination of how youth have helped to shape political debates and trends, or how youth could be involved in politics in more meaningful ways. An important exception can be found in Quebec literature, where there is a long-established view of youth as a separate social and political class.<sup>13</sup>

The study also highlights the important role we believe young people can play in the formulation and implementation of public policy. Incorporating more youth perspectives into the policy process will improve the quality of decision-making (greater variety of perspectives, commitment to implement), and enhance the quality of our democratic system by promoting a more informed and involved civil society.

*Re-focusing the Lens* is part one of a two-part project developed by the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA) and the Institute On Governance (IOG). It is a youth-adult partnership that explores how youth succeed in influencing public policy, and the type of barriers which stand in their way. While we do not offer any definitive answers, we hope to expose the reasons for success and failure, the rich tapestry of youth involvement and innovation, and some important lessons.

## Methodology

This study was designed to evaluate selected models in which youth have both succeeded and failed to influence public policy. We began with a literature and web review to assess the level and range of youth activity within the policy realm. In the process, we compiled a list of youth organisations, groups, institutions and departments that are actively engaged at various political levels.<sup>14</sup> In compiling this annotated list, we selected eight case studies to evaluate. Seven of the cases represent youth activity at the local, provincial and national levels, while one international case was selected as a basis of comparison.

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<sup>11</sup> Kevin G. Barnhurst, "Politics in the Fine Meshes: Young Citizens, Power and Media," *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 20, n. 2, 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Michael H. Banks and Debra Roker, "The Political Socialization of Youth: Exploring the Influence of School Experience," *Journal of Adolescence*, vol. 17, n. 1, 1994; Donna Emler and David A. Kinney, "Childhood Origins of Beliefs About Institutional Authority," *Directions for Child Development*, n. 56, Summer 1992; Richard H. Price, Madalyn Cioci, Wendy Penner, and Barbara Trautlein, "Webs of Influence: School and Community Programs That Enhance Adolescent Health and Education," *Teachers College Record*, vol. 94, n. 3, Spring 1993.

<sup>13</sup> See Léon Dion, "La jeunesse: continuité dans le changement," *L'Action nationale*, vol. 80, n. 4, April 1990; Madeleine Gauthier, *Une Société sans les jeunes?* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1994); Pierre Noreau, "Le militantisme des jeunes Québécois dans les années quatre-vingt," in Raymond Hudon and Bernard Fournier, eds. *Jeunesses et politique* (Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> The annotated list is available as a separate document, entitled *Taking Notice: A Sampling of Youth Organisations*.

Two youth were hired by the OSSSA and the IOG to research and write the eight case studies, in conjunction with Institute staff. Each case involved background research, conducting a series of interviews, and sharing the draft case study with the organisation in question. By working as a team of young people, this final report reflects the type of youth initiatives we want to promote through this project.

## **Organisation**

The report begins by examining the importance of youth participation in public policy. Section B explains the reasons for youth involvement and describes the range of activity taking place among young people through the creation of a youth and governance typology. Following this section, the report is organised into a series of case studies, starting at the local level and finishing with an international example. Each case looks at the background, structure, strengths, and existing gaps within the organisation, and concludes with an analysis of the lessons learned.

Section C looks at two cases where youth attempt to influence public policy at the local level. School board student trustees are one example in which an adult organisation has created a space for youth to give input into education policies. Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO) represents an interesting model in which youth and adults work together. Section D of the report looks at two cases from the provincial level. The Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA) is a completely youth-run organisation, whereas the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ) was created by the Quebec government to act as a mechanism for youth input.

Section E looks at three national examples, each of which represents a different level of youth autonomy. The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) is a youth-created organisation, whereas the Aboriginal Youth Council is an example of an autonomous youth wing of a national organisation (the National Association of Friendship Centres). The Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) is an initiative developed by Environment Canada to seek input from young people on Canadian environmental policies.

Section F looks at an international case, the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC), which offers an interesting example of how to sustain an organisation which is faced with significant financial cutbacks. The report concludes, in Section G, with some overall lessons learned from the cases we have examined.

## B. Youth Involvement in Public Policy

### Why involve citizens in public policy?

In recent years, government, civil society organisations and academics have begun to identify changing attitudes about our democratic system. Literature in this area points to the decline in deference to the political system and decreased respect for its institutions. Neil Nevitte argues that this trend reflects a more general decline in the confidence people demonstrate towards hierarchical institutions of all kinds.<sup>15</sup> One explanation for these trends is the lack of involvement that the average citizen has in the policy-making process. Generally excluded from how decisions are made, people tend to become apathetic and distrustful of those in positions of power.

Daniel Yankelovich argues that this distrust also stems from the public's belief that its institutions are failing to serve its needs. The perception that government is more interested in serving its own interests than those of the public leads to what Yankelovich calls a "crisis of legitimacy." Confidence in public institutions is difficult to preserve if people feel disconnected from the decisions that are taken. As Yankelovich points out:

If the leaders do all of the hard work by weighing and balancing conflicting priorities among themselves and simply expect the public to accept their conclusions, then people's narrow self interest will prevail. If, on the other hand, leaders share the task of weighing and balancing resource allocation with the public (with leaders vigorously advancing their own point of view), then the quality of public opinion will improve immeasurably.<sup>16</sup>

The reasons government should involve citizens in policy-making include:

- **Combating cynicism** by building trust, co-operation and responsibility between government and the people.
- **Improving decision-making** by providing government with various perspectives, new solutions, a commitment to implementation, and cost effectiveness.
- **Promoting learning** by including citizens in the policy-making realm which, by its very nature, necessitates public awareness and understanding. As Robert Dahl points out, "If democracy is to work, it would seem to require a certain level of political competence on the part of its citizens . . ."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective*, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, *Public Judgment on Development Aid*, (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, October, 1994), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from Robert Dahl, "The Problem of Civic Competence," in Kathy O'Hara's "Citizen Engagement in the Social Union," *Citizen Practice Research Networks* (1998), p. 11.

- **Helping to strengthen civil society** by increasing the capacity of citizens and government to interact and develop policy more collaboratively.

### **Why involve youth in particular?**

As a relatively large segment of society, youth are potentially a key ingredient in combating public misgivings about government, promoting better policy-making, and a strengthened democracy. Although young people are not traditionally considered players within the policy realm, there are four additional reasons for promoting their involvement:

- **What young people lack in experience, they make up for in creativity, energy, and fresh perspectives.** Youth possess unique ideas that relate specifically to that stage of their lives. Unlike other groups within society, there is continual turnover among the people who make up the youth category. If government is interested in making policy that resonates with a broader range of citizens, it must begin to include youth in the policy-making process.
- **Involving young people more actively in the political process will help to combat the current culture of mistrust and apprehension exhibited toward youth.** A recent public opinion study produced by Public Agenda, an American public opinion research and education organisation, reflects this sense of mistrust. *Kids These Days 1999: What Americans Really Think About the Next Generation* identifies a high level of public concern about the moral and ethical development of young people.<sup>18</sup> The study found that over 70% of people polled described youth negatively, using such words as lazy, disrespectful and wild.
- **Involving youth in decision-making provides them with opportunities to assume leadership roles and develop valuable skills.** Their participation helps them to develop critical thinking, leadership and organisational skills, while giving them a better understanding of the workings of government and civil society. These experiences equip young people with the tools they need to be active members of their communities.
- **Youth are turning away from careers in the public sector.** In order to foster their return, government must become more responsive to the needs of young people and at the same time demonstrate that public policy development has vital implications for the quality of life of citizens.<sup>19</sup>

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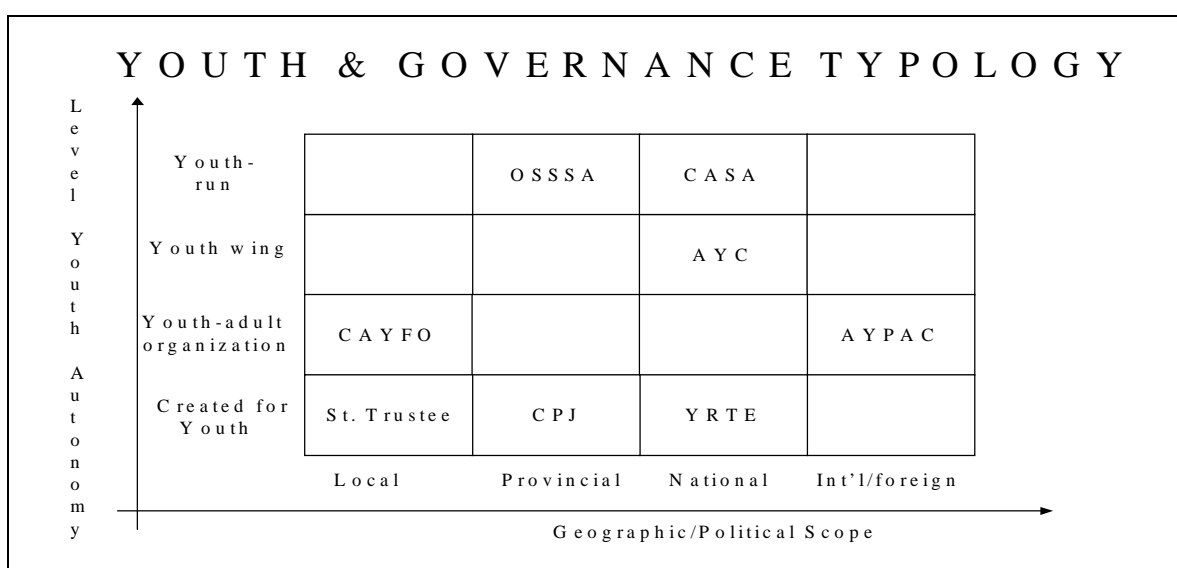
<sup>18</sup> Public Agenda Online, “Kids These Days 1999: What Americans Really Think About the Next Generation” (Internet: Public Agenda, <http://www.publicagenda.org>, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> See Jennifer L. Smith and Susan Snider, *Facing the Challenge: Recruiting the Next Generation of University Graduates to the Public Service*, (Ottawa: Public Policy Forum/Public Service Commission, 1998).

## Youth involvement in public policy

Despite their apparent lack of influence on policy, youth continue to generate a high level of organisational activity throughout the country. The annotated list of youth groups, organisations and initiatives developed for this report signalled to us that there is a hive of activity in all corners of Canada and abroad. From student unions and youth wings of political parties to youth championing the environment, human rights and educational reform, young people are actively seeking a role in the policy-making process.

In order to help illustrate the range of youth models, initiatives and activities that exist at the local, provincial, national and international level, we have created a youth and governance typology. The diagram on the following page is divided along a vertical and horizontal axis to represent the autonomy exercised by various youth groups and at which political level the activity occurs.



In examining the variety of youth organisations or initiatives involved with policy issues, we found that there were four general types of models. Each of the models we outline on the vertical axis represents a different level of youth autonomy. The Student Trustee, Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ) and Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) are all examples of initiatives that were created for youth. In each case, young people have been given a direct line into the policy-making process. The trade-off, however, is that their autonomy is limited by the structure (usually government) that has defined it.

Further along the axis are two examples of a youth-adult collaborative model where the organisations have built a partnership within the organisation itself. Both Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO) and the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC) reflect a philosophy that youth and adults must work together to help address issues of concern to young people. While young people within the organisation have the

potential to lead their own initiatives, they tend to be constrained by the experience of the older members.

The youth wing model illustrated by the Aboriginal Youth Council reflects greater autonomy than the youth-adult model because such groups tend to be treated as an autonomous entity. Although they belong to a larger adult organisation, there is significant room to set their own agenda and behave more or less independently, so long as they do not stray too far from the overall goals of the organisation. Political youth wings would fit in this category.

Finally, there is the youth-run model, which is the most autonomous of the four because young people have free reign to set their agenda and learn through experience. Both the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA) and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) represent the type of organisation that empowers young people by the very nature of the way in which they have been created and organised. There are many organisations of this variety at the local, provincial and even national levels.

The Youth and Governance typology was helpful in selecting the eight case studies for this report, as it provided a map of how young people tend to organise themselves. Our selection criteria included cases that:

- ❑ Reflect different levels of youth autonomy and political scope
- ❑ Demonstrate a unique structure or initiative
- ❑ Incorporate different perspectives: Aboriginal, francophone, local, rural, etc.
- ❑ Have access to written information on the organisation, group, initiative
- ❑ Have people within the organisation willing to participate

By outlining various models of youth governance, we hope to provide some insight as to how young people have successfully influenced public policy and some of the existing gaps that stand in their way. It is our goal to provide youth with some lessons learned that will enhance their capacity to contribute more effectively to the formulation and implementation of public policy.

## C. LOCAL LEVEL CASE STUDIES

### I. Student Trustees in Ontario

#### Introduction

The report of the Royal Commission on Learning released in 1995 recommended the creation of one or more student trustees on all school boards, with full voting rights on “all board matters.”<sup>20</sup> At the time, few boards in the province had any formal student representation, although the Kenora Board of Education had developed and implemented a student trustee model in 1989 and some boards had already followed that example. The Education Quality Improvement Act of 1997 included provisions for regulations dealing with the creation of student trustees, but denied students the right to vote and excluded them from in-camera meetings. The province subsequently released Regulation 461/97 which forces boards to implement some form of student trusteeship, but leaves it up to individual school boards to determine important details about the selection process and the level of participation of student trustees. Not all boards have implemented this regulatory policy.

#### Methodology

As there has been very little follow-up by the Ministry of Education and Training with regards to the implementation of student trustee policies, information was gathered on a board-by-board basis. All school boards with high school students in Ontario were contacted and asked to provide a copy of their student representation policies. Staff members were also asked certain questions about how well the policy has worked. Almost all boards had a student trustee in place for 1998-99, although at least four did not. Of these, three had drawn up policies for student representation on their respective boards in 1999, although at least one had neither a student trustee nor a policy. Of the boards that did have student trustees, many of them had just completed or were in the process of completing a formal policy.

Research was also conducted through an interview format that targeted school board administration, student trustees, and former student trustees. The different perspectives were helpful in the identification of common problems and successes. Efforts were also made to target boards that had developed student trustee policies prior to the provincial regulation, in an attempt to identify trends in the evolution of the student trusteeship.

#### Different Models

Provincial Regulation 461/97 represents the only guidance that school boards received for the establishment of formal student representation. Boards must develop and implement

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<sup>20</sup> Recommendation 143, Royal Commission on Learning, *For the Love of Learning*, (Toronto, 1994).

student representation policies that set up a procedure for electing or appointing one or more pupil representatives. School boards can determine the selection procedure, the term of office, the extent of participation, and the provision of expense accounts or any kind of financial remuneration. Under the Education Quality Improvement Act, student representatives cannot be given voting privileges or participate in any board sessions that are closed to the public. As a result of these broad guidelines, school boards have developed vastly different policies regarding student representation.

**Selection**

Most school boards limit nominations for the position of student representative(s) to one per secondary school in their respective jurisdictions. These nominees can either be elected by the student body, selected by the student council of that school, or nominated by the principal, or a combination of these last two methods. Regardless of which method is adopted, a letter of reference from the principal is usually required.

The selection process at the board level can be undertaken in one of four broad ways:

<b>STUDENT ELECTION MODEL</b>	<b>BOARD SELECTION MODEL</b>
<p>Student representatives from each school select the student trustee from among individual candidates from each school, who may or may have been elected. The selection group can either be formed of student council presidents from each school or by a special group of student electors. In some boards with multiple student trustees, the board area is divided into two or more districts where the selection takes place. Models in which elected student council presidents become student trustees are included in this category.</p>	<p>A board-driven process wherein candidates are interviewed by the board or a board committee which then selects the winner(s), often with input from administration and in some cases the participation of some student leaders. In boards with only one secondary school, school administration often adopted the role of school board.</p>
<b>ROTATION MODELS</b>	<b>COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION</b>
<p>In the School Rotation Model, individual schools are allotted certain years in which their candidate will become the student trustee. In the Rotating Participation Model, individual school candidates each become “student trustees,” but only one student at a time acts as student trustee on behalf of his or her school. The group either selects one spokesperson who sits at the board table or students alternate on a regular basis, usually between one and six months. Neither rotation model requires any selection at the board level.</p>	<p>As in the Rotating Participation Model, there is no selection at the board level. Individual school candidates are all student trustees, but they each have the same opportunities for participation throughout the year. Found in only two boards, this model can either provide for more representation at the board level, with more student seats, or for a dilution of representation. In one board that used Collective Representation, the seven “student trustees” did not have any seats at the board table and did not attend meetings, and instead met separately once a semester with administration and some trustees.</p>

While some boards used mixed models that incorporated features of more than one of the above, generally speaking it was easy to categorise boards as one of the four models. The numbers below also include boards that do not have a student trustee this year, but have adopted a policy for next year.<sup>21</sup> For a breakdown of these models on an individual school board basis, see Appendix A.

	<b>Student Election</b>	<b>Board Selection</b>	<b>Rotating Schools</b>	<b>Rotating Participation</b>	<b>Collective Represent'n</b>
Eng.-Lang. Public	12	6	5	4	1
Fr.-Lang. Public	3	1	-	-	-
Eng.-Lang. Catholic	9	9	6	-	1
Fr.-Lang. Catholic	5	2	1	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

### ***Representation***

Different models have also been adopted for the manner in which student trustees seek out input from students while informing them of current issues before the board. In most cases, the student trustee meets on a regular basis with a student consultation group composed of student leaders from each school's student council. In some models, this council is formed of high school presidents (Joint Student Council Model) while in others the group may include other student council members who have an interest in board affairs (Student Senate Model). These meetings tend to be irregular and relatively infrequent over the course of the year, and may or may not include principals, trustees, or members of school board administration. In boards where student trustees are selected by a group of students, this process often involves this council. In rare cases, the student trustee is also involved in consultation with the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA), although this is unusual and not reflected in either the role of the student trustee or OSSSA activities. On the other hand, the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO) has actively worked with boards to ensure that policies include adequate consultation mechanisms and that student trustees can develop relationships with student leaders in the schools they represent.

### ***Orientation***

The issue of student trustee orientation is closely tied to term length and time of election or appointment. In one board in particular (the York Region District School Board), the student trustee serves six months as "student trustee designate" prior to serving six months

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<sup>21</sup> All boards with high schools in Ontario were asked to participate, and the table is based on the 66 out of 70 that did. Of those that participated, only one had neither a student trustee this year nor a policy for 1999 and is therefore not included on the table.

as student trustee. This allows for a period of training where the designate “shadows” the current student trustee and becomes familiar with the position. In most boards, however, student trustees serve one-year terms. The provincial regulation states that trustee selection must take place no later than June 30 of the year in which the student trustee will begin his or her term. Most boards elect or appoint their student trustees in May or June, which does not allow for any significant amount of peer orientation or training from board administration.

In terms of direct orientation or training from the board administration or the Board of Trustees itself, each school board has adopted its own procedure. Some board policies explicitly call for a mentor, either a trustee or administrator, to be appointed to help the student trustee. In other boards, the extent of orientation often depends on the goodwill of members of the board or its administration. A FESFO conference in 1999 brought student trustees together with other students and provided valuable training.

## **STRENGTHS**

### ***Direct Participation in a Decision-Making Body***

Unlike other student representatives, the student trustee is in the unique position of being able to speak to any issue brought before the board in a public, and often highly publicised, environment. Despite not having a vote, the trustee can raise awareness of youth concerns, ask pointed questions and attempt to influence board decisions. In at least one board (the Bluewater District School Board), the minutes of meetings indicate how the student trustee would have voted, a policy which recognises the importance of student opinion.

### ***Legitimacy***

The position of student trustee is arguably seen as the most serious policy voice for high school students in Ontario, both by board members and by outside organisations, including the media. The fact that most are elected and are granted unique special status on the board (in some boards aboriginal representatives also have special status) puts them in a position to be respected and listened to. No other elected student can realistically claim to directly represent as many students.

### ***Relationships with Non-Student Groups***

Since student trustees are often in adult-only environments, they tend to develop good relationships with parent associations, lobby groups, and in some cases teachers unions. Part of this can be attributed to attempts by these groups to get their issues and concerns dealt with at board meetings through the student trustee, but these relationships allow the student trustee the opportunity to get a better appreciation of the complexities of many of the issues before the board.

### ***Awareness of Board Issues at Student Council Level***

Consultations held by the student trustee provide an opportunity for students to have their opinions transmitted to the board, while increasing their awareness and appreciation of the role of school boards in the management of their affairs. Without the position of student trustees, the average student – or even student council leader - would probably have very

little understanding about board policies and practices.

## **EXISTING GAPS**

### ***Non-Voting Status***

Across the province, student trustees hold non-voting status on school boards. This restriction, outlined in the Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997, limits the ability of the student to have an impact on decisions by not allowing him or her to speak from a position of equal strength. It also detracts from the perceived legitimacy of the position and reflects a lack of faith in students to exercise decision-making power responsibly. Without a vote, those who are most affected by decisions of any school board, the students, lose the opportunity to have a direct impact.

### ***Selection***

While most boards included some form of student election or selection of the student trustee, in a significant number of the surveyed cases there was no student involvement in the selection process at the board level. In some cases, there was no student input at either the school or the board level. These models reinforce the gap between established and well-known student governance models, like student councils and student organisations, and the new position of student trustee. Without a role in the selection process, awareness of the position and its effective use by interested or concerned students is threatened, as is the legitimacy of the representation a student trustee can provide. Adult-driven selection models, implemented despite the serious limitations already imposed by legislation, seem to reflect an apprehension towards youth in decision-making roles. Boards that adopted a democratic selection process, at both school and board levels, demonstrate a higher level of awareness of the position, higher quality candidate competition, and an easier student consultation process once the student trustee has been elected.

### ***Rotating Models***

School Rotation Models that allot one year terms to one particular school are designed to guarantee diversity of representation. In practice, they tend to do the opposite by localising representation at the school level. Instead of putting student trustee candidates through a process within which they must build relationships with student representatives from other schools, the rotation system encourages students to concern themselves primarily with their own school until the others “have their turn.” Some of the student trustees in school rotation systems felt that there was little promotion of board-wide discussion or a recognition of the bigger picture.

Rotating Participation Models, where numerous student trustees alternate and only serve for a part of the year, usually between one and six months, are also problematic. While they superficially provide equal representation, a brief term on the board can realistically have little impact and the process only accentuates the difficulty that short-term student trustees have in participating in long-term boards. Under this model, none of the students are able to gain a full appreciation of the operation of the school board. Most student trustees who had full-year terms complained that by the time they were comfortable with procedure and policy and felt they could make a difference, their term was over. Shorter

terms make the process even more difficult for the student and deprives the board of confident representation of student interests.

### ***Lack of Awareness of Position at School Level***

The relative novelty of the position in most school boards means that many students are unaware of the role, or in some cases the existence, of the student trustee as their official representative on the school board. This is often translated into low candidate interest at election times, general misconceptions about the position, and ineffective use of the position by students. Many students who need to deal with school boards are unaware that they have a representative.

### ***Lack of Co-ordination with Other Student Trustees and Student Groups***

In most cases, there is little collaboration or communication between the student trustee and other groups that try to represent student interests, namely the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA), the Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne (FESFO), and the Ontario Catholic Student Council Federation (OCSCF). In cases where there is co-operation, it is the result of personal relationships rather than a structure that ensures communication. Some student trustees are unaware of the policy role of provincial student groups and their relationship with the Ministry of Education and Training. FESFO has been more successful in its attempts to co-ordinate student trustee activity in francophone school boards, including a conference of student trustees held in 1999. In most cases, however, student trustees operate within their own board with little communication between them and other student trustees or other student groups across the province.

### ***Reliance on Student Council Leadership***

Most student trustees are the official link between joint student council groups (comprised of school co-presidents) and the school board. While this consultation mechanism allows student trustees to be kept aware of issues at the local school level, it often means that they may not be dealing with students who have a good understanding of issues affecting the board or an interest in debating them. Very often, student council leaders may be more interested in dealing with activities within their schools than with controversial political issues. These de-politicised leaders may not be the best people to provide input to the student trustee, yet they are often the only official student consultative body that the trustee deals with.

### ***Interference of School Board Administration***

This issue is one that varies in importance in different school boards. In many cases, the consultation mechanisms that the trustee relies on, especially the joint student council groups, are attended by or in some cases chaired by school board administration. This allows student council leaders to be briefed about issues and policies at the board and for the expertise of board personnel to be present at these meetings. However, it also makes honest dialogue between students more difficult. Many students may feel intimidated by the presence of adult authority and may be uncomfortable expressing their concerns and feelings, particularly if school principals are included.

### ***The Role of In-Camera Meetings***

Under the Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997, student trustees cannot attend meetings that are closed to the public. At numerous boards, there is concern that the real debate can take place at these meetings where the students have no opportunity to present their concerns. Many student trustees feel that it is during in-camera discussions that arrangements are made and deals are struck. This may not be true in all boards, but closing these meetings to the student representatives reflects a lack of trust in their ability to distinguish public from confidential information. There are legitimate personnel questions that could justify the exclusion of a student from the board discussion, but there do not seem to be good reasons for excluding student trustees from many of the private sessions.

### ***One-Year Terms vs. the Three Year Cycle***

While at least one board has adopted a two-year term, in most cases student trustees serve for one year, with most of their participation taking place during the school year. As discussed above, in some models these terms can be even shorter. In some cases where rotating participation takes place, an individual student trustee can take his or her seat on the board for as little as one month. The problem is that school boards operate on three-year cycles that correspond to the terms of the elected trustees. Student trustees are faced with a difficult learning curve early in the year that forces them to try to learn about many issues quickly, without the benefit of past experience. Often, many aspects of an issue have been debated previously, yet the student trustee is unfamiliar with past discussions or decisions. A student trustee may want to introduce issues that are incompatible with the policy windows currently available to them.

### ***Lack of Orientation and Role Definition***

In many school boards, little is provided in terms of orientation for student trustees when they enter their position. They are faced with a complex alien environment in which they are unclear about their own role as well as the roles of those they will be working with. They are often unfamiliar with procedural and jurisdictional questions and are not given proper guidance. In many cases, there is also little communication between student trustees and their predecessors, often because the former student trustee has moved on to post-secondary studies.

There is also a sense at the local level that boards are developing principles as they make policy because the provincial legislation and subsequent regulation has left so many important details up to school boards. Part of this problem is normal in any new position, but the lack of clear policies in many boards, and the lack of province-wide standards, aggravate this uncertainty. This means that the student trustees themselves often have to determine what their role should be rather than having a better understanding of the best way to perform their duties. Stronger student trustees seem to emerge because of strong personalities rather than because of a well-defined and understood role.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

- Adult run boards tend to demonstrate apprehension and a lack of trust towards youth when it comes to decision-making (i.e. non-voting status, barred from in-camera

meetings, not including youth in the selection process). Treating youth representatives as equals would be a relatively simple move (granting them the same voting and access privileges as the adult trustees except in cases involving sensitive personnel issues or a conflict of interest) and would help foster greater youth involvement.

- ❑ Student representation on adult boards is an important step forward for youth to have an impact on education policy. However, the uneven approach by the boards in selecting student trustees (some include students in the process, some do not), the lack of orientation to help explain the rules, procedures and background on various issues, and the lack of a formal process to promote continuity between the incoming and outgoing student trustee, hinders his/her ability to contribute to policy in a cycle that revolves around a three year term versus their one year term.
- ❑ The position of student trustee is an asset that needs to be better exploited by youth. There is a lack of awareness as to the leverage such a position offers, wasting the opportunity to utilise the trustee as a spokesperson to speak out on issues of concern and collaborate with related youth groups like the Ontario Secondary School Students Association. This lack of awareness also extends to teachers, who do not promote the student trustee position as well as they could.
- ❑ Youth involvement in adult boards and organisations has proven to work well. This is due to the keen interest and desire to participate that youth have demonstrated, and also to how well many boards have adapted to working with youth by providing useful orientation and taking their views seriously. In the case of student trustees, their presence at the board level democratises the process by bringing an important voice into decision-making that has not been heard in the past.
- ❑ Direct involvement in the decision-making process gives student trustees an appreciation of the complexity of policy-making and in most cases an increased respect for democratic institutions. Participation helps produce better citizens, who in turn should contribute to the development of better policy and the enhancement of democratic structures.

## **II. Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO)**

### **Introduction**

Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO) was started in 1996 as a joint effort between youth, concerned citizens, members of the media, politicians, business leaders, educators, government employees and professionals in the child welfare sector. This group wanted to create an organisation that would embody a philosophy about children and youth that at the time was not being reflected or discussed in the Ottawa region. The main idea behind CAYFO was that there was a need for more inclusive policies towards children and youth, a better understanding of their needs and abilities, the promotion of their interests, and new opportunities for young people to participate in their communities politically, socially, culturally, and economically. Since its creation, the group has expanded dramatically and continues to operate in a variety of sectors.

Initial funding for the group came from the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa-Carleton (CAS) which provided substantial in-kind support, including a staff person and office space for its first two years. At the time, the group also received some funding from the Kahanoff Foundation. The Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board funded two salaries and absorbed significant administrative costs when CAS funding was discontinued. In 1998, CAYFO left the CAS and was given some free space in the basement of a downtown shopping centre. At the end of the year the group moved into a new office thanks to a grant package from HRDC provided to support the group's youth employment millennium project. The group has also received funding from the Trillium Foundation, the McDonald's Corporation, other corporate sponsors and its own fundraising activities.

### **Mission**

Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa seeks to develop partnerships between youth and voluntary, business, and governmental sectors. Its mission is to "enrich the community in partnership with children and youth." It attempts to accomplish this objective by recognising youth efforts, promoting opportunities for young people to take leadership positions in well-established organisations, allowing them to develop organisations and projects of their own, and encourage youth involvement and participation in all kinds of community activities. CAYFO promotes an inclusive understanding of community that recognises the importance of developing leadership skills amongst youth, showcasing their abilities, and being more responsive to their needs.

### **Structure**

CAYFO is governed by a Board of Directors whose membership can be comprised of up to one third youth. The Board operates through a series of committees which have been more or less active at different times. The group originally had four main branches of activity

and added a fifth in 1999. Each branch is represented on the Board and may or may not have a board committee to assist its activities. The branches are:

1. Regional Youth Advocacy Council (RYAC)

An entirely youth-led group that seeks to influence decision-makers, raise awareness about youth issues, and promote more youth involvement in the community. It has met with local politicians and government officials and held events that bring young people together with decision-makers to discuss youth issues.

2. Youth Volunteer Corps of Ottawa-Carleton (YVC)

Based on the national YVC model, the group seeks to provide volunteer experiences for young people in the community. The youth perform the work in small groups, led by “team leaders” who are trained to ensure that they realise the value of community participation and the work that they have performed. After each volunteer project, the group goes through a reflection process about the impact of their contribution. YVC projects have been co-ordinated with the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), the Ottawa Humane Society, the Shepherds of Good Hope soup kitchen, and United Generations of Ontario.

3. Tourism, Accreditation and Hospitality

This group works with hotels, restaurants, and festivals to ensure that their facilities and activities are accessible to children and to young people. Teams of young people evaluate these facilities for their “child and youth friendliness” and provide suggestions for improvement. If the facility in question meets certain criteria, it receives a CAYFO certification. This group also plays a role in other projects, like the Ottawa International Airport renovation, to ensure that the ideas of youth can be incorporated into both design and construction.

4. The Young Expressionists

The Young Expressionists group looks for opportunities to showcase youth talent in a wide variety of artistic areas. It has held the largest exhibition of youth artwork in the city, and has secured locations for the permanent display of the creative ability of youth.

5. Youth 2000 Jobs

The Youth 2000 Jobs project is a partnership between local businesses, CAYFO, and the federal government that seeks to match unemployed or under-employed youth with potential employers. The group provides counselling and resume/interview help for youth and aims to encourage businesses to hire 2000 local youth for new positions leading up to the year 2000.

## **STRENGTHS**

### ***Youth-Adult Interaction***

The involvement and commitment of the adults who have supported CAYFO, as well as a governance structure that includes both youth and adults, has created a situation where the CAYFO youth feel that their input is taken seriously within the organisation. Some groups

within CAYFO are entirely managed by youth and every part of the organisation's governance structure reflects a commitment to youth-adult collaboration. Unlike organisations that are entirely made up of youth, CAYFO promotes a sense of intergenerational solidarity that puts commitment to a philosophy – the idea that children and youth should be given opportunities to be active members of their community – ahead of a confrontational “us versus them” mentality. This has provided opportunities for adult-youth mentorship in the organisation and the creation of long-lasting relationships. CAYFO's focus on children as well as on youth has also provided opportunities for older youth to build relationships with younger members while developing leadership skills and a sense of ownership of ideas, programs, and activities.

### ***Awareness of Child and Youth Issues***

CAYFO has succeeded in provoking discussion of key issues relating to children and youth that often receive little public attention. Through its awareness-raising and advocacy efforts, the group has held events about intergenerational barriers, racial discrimination, employment issues, mental health, and youth participation in decision-making. CAYFO town hall meetings and forums are organised by and for youth, although efforts are made to try to bring key decision-makers to the table to discuss issues. An important success of these efforts has been the raising of awareness of youth issues among political and business leaders who normally are not given input from young people. These initiatives have also resulted in groups coming to the organisation to ask for advice on how to become more responsive to youth concerns and incorporating mechanisms for youth input into their organisations.

### ***Interaction with Decision-Makers***

The youth from CAYFO have also been able to gain access to decision-makers and increase awareness of their message among those involved in the policy-making process. Among others, the youth have met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Senators and Members of Parliament, the Regional Medical Officer of Health, the Chief of Police, the Regional Chairperson and other local politicians. Youth have evaluated the city's “friendliness” to children and themselves by accrediting local businesses and festivals, participating in focus groups and consultations in different sectors, and making recommendations about the kinds of services that are available to youth in everything from programs and activities of the Ottawa-Carleton Police to the quality of transit service.

### ***Staff Commitment and Continuity***

The commitment of the Executive Director, which has remained constant since the founding of the organisation, has provided the group with a sense of continuity that is remarkable given the financial context of its operations. The staff, which has ranged from one to three people at different times, has always been made up of a group of individuals prepared to make a personal commitment to the organisation beyond what is normally expected of employees. Employees of CAYFO have expressed a belief in the “cause” of children and youth, rather than simply the organisation itself. As a result, they have been willing to devote the time and energy that has been an invaluable asset to the organisation.

### ***Board of Directors***

CAYFO has benefited from a Board of Directors that is made up of prominent, well-

connected people in the community who have a strong commitment to the objectives of the organisation and believe in the legitimacy and importance of its mandate. The organisation has been able to convince public officials, politicians, and community and business leaders in the Ottawa-Carleton area that CAYFO projects are worthwhile and will have a lasting impact on the youth that are involved in them. Youth have been able to rely on adult Board members for their advice, their time, and the contacts that they have in the community. The prominence of Board members provides CAYFO with legitimacy in its dealings with government, community groups and business and their commitment to monthly meetings has ensured a significant level of continuity and accountability. In recent times, however, the Board has become increasingly disconnected from the organisation's activities. Also, while youth membership on the Board reflects the CAYFO philosophy, their level of activity at the Board level has not always been adequate.

### ***Wide Recruitment Base***

As a result of the wide range of programs and activities offered by CAYFO, the group has been able to draw youth from different sectors and varied areas of interest. The youth who are involved in CAYFO may be drawn to the organisation because of a political inclination, an artistic talent, or a desire to engage in community volunteer work. The tendency to attract "high achievers" in these fields remains strong, but CAYFO has generally been able to draw young people together who would not normally be involved in similar activities. This provides the group with a youth base that is socially, economically, and culturally diverse.

### ***Partnerships***

CAYFO's broad mandate has allowed it to develop a variety of partnerships with different organisations in the community. Interaction with other groups has been especially valuable in an era of scarce funding sources for non-profit organisations. Partnerships result not only in interesting funding possibilities, but also provide opportunities for those involved with CAYFO to make comparisons, learn about best practices employed by other groups, and allow outsiders to provide critical comments and suggestions. Internships, like the annual Moorhead Scholarship partnership, and co-op positions, have allowed the group to enjoy the benefits of "new blood" without the financial costs.

### ***Distinctive Philosophy***

An important strength of CAYFO is the group's acceptance of non-traditional approaches to community problems. The group is not a traditional voluntary organisation, but rather one that is open to new kinds of relationships with other community groups, businesses, and government. For this reason, CAYFO is able to market itself as a unique organisation that reflects fresh thinking about the way that communities can involve young people, and about society's perception of youth. Youth are often attracted to the group because there are few other organisations like it, and politicians and the business community are similarly drawn to what they see as its innovative philosophy.

## **EXISTING GAPS**

### ***Financial Sustainability***

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the organisation has been its inability to secure sources of long-term funding. The Board of Directors has committed itself to ensuring that CAYFO not become a government-funded agency, yet the most significant support received has been through the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa-Carleton, the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board, the provincial Trillium Foundation, and Human Resources Development Canada. Other than a renewable grant from the McDonald's Corporation, private sector support has been obtained on a project basis and has been unable to support administrative costs. Specific initiatives – like the Spirit of the Capital Youth Awards, the Regional Chair's Round Table on Youth, and the Cranked Up summer event – were able to obtain sufficient funding, but grants for staffing and office costs have been very difficult to secure from private donations. Part of the problem is that CAYFO's advocacy activities have disqualified it from charitable status under current Revenue Canada guidelines.

### ***Public Relations***

Part of the failure of sustainable fundraising has been the inability of Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa to communicate effectively to the general public about its mandate and past activities. The broad-based objectives of the group provide it with flexibility and openness to new partnerships, but they have also made it difficult to communicate the CAYFO philosophy to potential sources of funding and to the public at large. The lack of a coherent strategy to raise public awareness of the group means that different people have very different ideas about the group's focus. Particularly because CAYFO's activities range from artistic initiatives to advocacy to the promotion of volunteerism, it is important that the underlying message of CAYFO be brought to the fore in every event and program.

Partly as a result of this lack of coherent media strategy, the group has been unable to raise awareness of its activities among many students and school administrators. Good relationships have been developed with some schools, but the success of these partnerships has been the result of individual efforts on the part of staff rather than broader public awareness. While youth recruitment has been from a wide variety of sectors, it has not resulted in large-scale numbers. The result is that the co-operation of school administrations and student council groups for activities and events is not assured.

### ***Youth Reliance on Staff***

While the opportunities for youth to interact with adults have been very beneficial, the reliance on staff has meant that the youth who are involved in some areas of CAYFO need not make a full commitment. The role of staff takes pressure off of the youth to participate in all parts of a specific project. Despite the fact that many CAYFO initiatives are entirely driven by youth volunteers, other projects often need to rely on the work of the staff to be completed. The help of staff, in these cases, actually becomes the source of a reduced commitment level from volunteers who in the past accepted greater levels of ownership of projects and ideas. Unlike an entirely volunteer-based and youth-driven organisation, CAYFO staff will at times continue a project that has been abandoned by the youth who were the originators of the initiative. Reliance on staff means that youth volunteers are not personally accountable for specific projects they had undertaken.

### ***Outdated Governance Structure***

In the first two years of CAYFO operation, the organisation was well-served by a series of committees that would report monthly to the Board of Directors. While the spirit of accountability remains strong, the old committees do not reflect the way that CAYFO projects are undertaken and completed. Membership on these committees is too loosely organised and encourages poor attendance and lack of individual accountability. As a result of this loose structure, it becomes difficult for committee chairs to delegate responsibilities. In fact, in most cases the committees have stopped their operations altogether and board members have become increasingly less familiar with CAYFO activities. The governance structure has not kept up with the growth of the organisation and has not adapted to having full-time staff who work on different projects. The success of the organisation, and its ability to hire staff, means that the Board is still readjusting to its faster pace and increased activity. New staff means that CAYFO can afford, at least in the short-term, to be less reliant on its Board and, to a certain degree, on its volunteers.

### ***Attracting Disadvantaged Youth***

The organisation has been very successful at reaching out to a diverse group of youth who have interests in many different areas, but it has had mixed results in attempts to draw those who may be “disadvantaged” or “at-risk.” Many of the activities of the group have focused on issues relating to marginalised youth, but most CAYFO volunteers tend to be middle-class “high achievers.” Involvement from more marginalised youth has generally been on a one-time basis, with certain important exceptions. Early on, part of the CAYFO ideal was the partnering of young people from middle-class backgrounds with those from the child welfare sector, but gradually this has become less of a focus. It is inherently difficult to attract those who are marginalised to a mainstream organisation, but one of the key objectives of the Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa philosophy has been to develop a sense of inclusive community spirit among all kinds of young people.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

- ❑ A mixed youth-adult organisation is an innovative model for other groups to look at because it forces youth to deal and interact with adults in a collaborative manner. In a mixed organisation youth have the opportunity to confront some of the “realities” of an adult driven world and develop the confidence to voice their opinions and points of view. However, such a model can also be a double-edged sword due to the potential for adult control.
- ❑ Partnerships and collaborative initiatives with like-minded organisations are very important for youth-adult organisations who struggle financially, since they provide possibilities for joint proposals and access to larger pools of information while avoiding duplication of resources.
- ❑ The difficulty in reaching out to disadvantaged youth (hard to locate, lack of opportunities) reflects in part the lack of diversity amongst the type of youth who tend to get involved. Most organisations tend to be comprised of achievers, who only

reflect a small percentage of youth.

- ❑ Attracting an active and high profile board of directors can be very effective in terms of gaining credibility as an organisation and access to decision-makers and funding sources.
- ❑ CAYFO demonstrates that there is a youth angle to most issues and that youth perspective(s) should be considered to make policies more inclusive. While there is no single set of youth opinion and attitudes, providing opportunities for young people to participate brings different approaches to the decision-making process and promotes a more active understanding of citizenship.
- ❑ No matter how interesting the organisation is or how good the quality of its work, the lack of an effective communication strategy limits its ability to influence decision-makers, raise funds, and involve youth.
- ❑ Youth organisations cannot afford to maintain static governance structures due to the continuous change in their leadership and membership. Part of what attracts young people to youth organisations is the ability to be involved and contribute to making change. Therefore, the mission and objectives of youth organisations, as well as the structures implemented to achieve those goals, need to be revisited on a regular basis.

## **D. PROVINCIAL LEVEL CASE STUDIES**

### **III. The Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA)**

#### **Introduction**

The Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA) is a completely student-run organisation founded by a group of students in the summer of 1975. It was modelled in part on a more loosely-structured group called the Ontario Secondary School Students' Union (OSSSU) which had operated sporadically since its founding in 1969.<sup>22</sup> The OSSSU was mobilised in 1972 by a government proposal to lengthen the school year and was given \$3000 by the Minister of Education to gather student opinion. When this proposal was passed into law before students could have their say, it underscored the need for a stronger provincial association to provide student input into education policy. This realisation set the stage for the founding of the OSSSA by five students in London, Ontario who set the initial direction for the organisation.

#### **Objectives**

The objectives of the OSSSA consist of:

1. Acting on issues and matters of concern to secondary school students.
2. Determining and representing the best interests of the secondary school students of Ontario and representing them to the provincial government and all other appropriate organisations in all matters of concern to students.
3. Providing resources and leadership training, as able, to Ontario students in order to help them achieve their own objectives.
4. Promoting communication and co-operation amongst secondary school students in Ontario.

#### **Structure**

The OSSSA is divided into twelve regions across the province, each of which is led by an elected president, executive, and cabinet. The role of the president is to represent his/her jurisdiction at the provincial level while also co-ordinating the activities of the region. At the provincial level, the Association is led by its cabinet, made up of the twelve regional presidents and a five member provincial executive that includes the Premier, Deputy Premier, Provincial Affairs Minister, Provincial Public Relations Minister, and the Provincial Finance Minister. The portfolio positions of both the regional executives and provincial cabinet have specific roles defined in the constitution of the OSSSA.<sup>23</sup> The Association is considering the introduction of a Board of Directors composed of the sitting

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<sup>22</sup> The OSSSU was founded in 1969 as the Ontario Secondary School Students' Committee (OSSSC) by a group of students who felt alienated from their student council.

<sup>23</sup> The OSSSA constitution can be found on its website at [www.ossaa.org](http://www.ossaa.org).

Premier and a certain number of past cabinet members. This group would administer a separate fund, which would be used for special initiatives that individual regions could access.

## **Activities**

The Association's principal activities consist of providing leadership training to students and representing student interests at the provincial level. Each year, close to two thousand students participate in leadership training activities of the OSSSA, mainly through regional conferences held on an annual basis. Delegates receive training on communication, situational leadership, time management, and conflict resolution. On the policy side, the Association's work consists of regular meetings with staff at the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) as well as initiatives to seek out student opinion such as issue-oriented forums, opinion surveys, and some consultation with other student groups or leaders at the local level. The Association holds two issue-oriented forums per year on a topic determined by the Ministry.

The elimination of the OAC year in Ontario in 2003 represents a threat to both of these areas of activity, as the Association has traditionally relied on these older students to devote time and assume leadership roles within the organisation.<sup>24</sup> This "2003 problem" has increased pressure on the Association's leadership to address structural concerns that may be aggravated by the smaller recruitment base that will be created under the new system. The partnership with the Institute On Governance is in part a response to those concerns, as the Association seeks to improve its capacity to operate within the new shorter secondary school program.

The OSSSA's activities are largely self-financed through delegate fees at leadership conferences and are supported by a \$6100 annual grant from the Ontario government. Regions forward a \$10/delegate fee to the provincial association, but are eligible for provincial support in case of a financial crisis. In 1998, the Association received a \$100,000 grant from the McConnell Foundation for special initiatives and studies. The largest expenses for the provincial association are its own annual events, media relations, office costs, the publication of its newspaper, *The Channel*, travel costs for meetings and special initiatives like a recent anti-violence campaign. The group is considering hiring a university co-op student as a full-time fundraiser for the group in the fall of 1999.

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<sup>24</sup> Students in Ontario have had to complete an additional year of secondary school studies in order to pursue their studies at university. This "Grade Thirteen" year allowed them to complete the necessary Ontario Academic Credits (OACs) required for admission to university. The Ontario government has decided to eliminate the OAC year to synchronise the education system with most other jurisdictions in the Western world. Starting in 2003, students will be able to graduate after the completion of the Grade Twelve programme, which will create a "double cohort" of graduates who are seeking university and college placements or work experience at the same time.

## **STRENGTHS**

### ***Student-run organisation***

The student-run nature of the organisation is its fundamental strength. As youth within the OSSSA are given significant positions of responsibility, they feel empowered and are motivated to increase their participation and commitment levels. As an organisation that is completely directed and managed by youth, the Association gives young people the opportunity to learn and develop important skills like media relations, lobbying, and general organisational skills while developing a sense of ownership of the OSSSA and its initiatives.

### ***Relationship with Government and Unions***

The OSSSA has been successful at obtaining recognition by government and union organisations at the provincial level as a representative voice of students and maintains an ongoing relationship with the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. The Association meets with the Minister of Education on a semi-regular basis to discuss current education issues and participated in the recent curriculum review process. The OSSSA also conducts a provincial forum based on a topic determined by the Minister of Education, which results in a report that reflects the views of student participants from across the province. The Association has historically been supported by a grant from the Ontario government and while this funding has been drastically reduced in recent years, the OSSSA remains one of few student organisations in the country to hold some kind of official status at the governmental level.

### ***Strategic Thinking***

While the OSSSA has not addressed all of its weaknesses in terms of long-term sustainability, important work has taken place that recognises the Association's internal and external weaknesses and attempts to find concrete ways to address them. In the fall of 1998, the OSSSA hired the lobbying firm Capital Hill Group to help enhance its access to provincial decision-makers. The group has also demonstrated its recognition of future structural problems that threaten the organisation's viability by directly addressing the 2003 problem. In 1998, the OSSSA started to study the ability of the organisation to survive following the elimination of the OAC year in Ontario high schools and looked at potential solutions.

### ***Leadership Training***

The OSSSA has been very successful at encouraging and attracting youth to become involved within the organisation, particularly through the promotion of leadership conferences across the province. Each region hosts a four-day leadership conference that is dedicated to providing leadership training for student delegates from high schools throughout the region. Conferences are important for the Association because they provide valuable training to over fifteen hundred high school students each year and they also allow the Association to draw on delegates to fill positions within its own leadership structure. Students are given additional leadership development opportunities by becoming involved in the OSSSA as it provides a strong training program for its trainers.

On a yearly basis the OSSSA continues to incorporate new material into its leadership

development curriculum and has just recently developed a standardised package to be used throughout the province. This curriculum has become a highly valuable resource for leadership training that is now being used as the basis for several other programs both inside and outside the organisation. As a result of the strength of the curriculum, the OSSSA is well placed to act as a resource base on leadership training questions and can provide schools and other youth organisations with leadership training resources.

### ***Structure of the Organisation***

The OSSSA has succeeded at developing two very different levels of the Association – regional and provincial – while maintaining generally effective communication between the two. The OSSSA constitution clearly defines the role and responsibilities of elected members of the Association, as well as distinguishing between the role of the regions and that of the provincial cabinet. The firm structure of the portfolio positions outlined in the constitution allows the OSSSA to designate certain tasks to certain members. It has succeeded in developing a mechanism to bring its provincial members together from their respective regions for at least five provincial meetings throughout the year. This is done despite the difficulties caused by geographical distance and limited funding. The structure of the OSSSA represents an effective means of organising a student group over a large geographical area.

### ***Reaction to Policy***

The OSSSA has become an organisation that is capable of reacting to policy issues in education. The Association has mobilised itself to deal with issues such as changes to the secondary school curriculum, restrictions on classroom size, teacher certification requirements, standardised report cards, school closures, and student rights. The broad range of tools used to react to policy include press releases articulating student opinion, student petitions, surveys outlining student concerns, and media appearances by leaders of the OSSSA. Strategies such as direct communication with the Ministry and teacher unions have also been successfully used in the past to rapidly articulate a “student response” to pressing political issues.

### ***Longevity***

Despite the yearly turnover in OSSSA membership, the Association has been in existence for twenty-four years. As a result of its student-run nature, its relationship with government, its ability to train leaders, and its internal structure, the Association has been able to become a strong student organisation with few counterparts in North America.

## **EXISTING GAPS**

### ***Financial Sustainability***

Without substantial and regular funding it remains very difficult for the OSSSA to achieve its objectives in more effective ways. While donations from grant-giving organisations like the McConnell Foundation are useful in exploring new avenues to meet the objectives of the Association, they are inadequate without more stable core funding. The OSSSA needs to develop strategies to secure sustainable revenue to ensure that it can remain viable over the long-term.

### ***Management of Funds***

The second major issue pertaining to the financial health of the Association is the way in which it manages its funds. As a result of a lack of financial skill development training and a financial orientation package, there have been numerous examples in the past where poor budgeting and financial management have led to significant financial losses, unequal levels of wealth among regions, and emergency loans.

### ***Lack of Institutional Memory***

One of the unavoidable gaps that the OSSSA is forced to deal with is its immense turnover rate. Due to the fact that the majority of the central leaders within the organisation are in their final year of high school there is bound to be a continual loss of experienced members. While the annual turnover is unavoidable, the loss of knowledge is not. The OSSSA needs to address the issue of how it maintains communication with both alumni and advisors and develop a formal means of incorporating the knowledge of past members into the organisation in order to provide continuity and reduce repetition of past mistakes.

As a direct result of its high turnover rate, the OSSSA is in a situation where year after year very similar documents are produced to deal with previously dealt with issues. The lack of an adequate archive of past documentation and record of past events has led to unnecessary duplication and lack of awareness about past activities and initiatives.

### ***Legitimacy***

A persistent problem facing the OSSSA is that while it has enjoyed a certain degree of respect at the provincial level, it continues to struggle to be a legitimate and effective representative of the student voice of Ontario. This is a result of numerous factors, including a lack of francophone representation, very small representation from Catholic schools, and a generally uneven distribution of involvement across different regions of the province. This perceived lack of legitimacy was aggravated in the past by an electoral structure that did not reflect democratic principles and left many students feeling alienated. The Association has adopted a model that has elected school representatives act as the electorate for the OSSSA leadership positions in order to ensure equal distribution on a school basis. The mixed success of the plan due to unbalanced implementation, however, has left many schools and students without representation of any kind.

### ***Inability to Collaborate Effectively***

The failure of the OSSSA to build co-operative relationships with FESFO, student councils, student trustees, and other youth groups has threatened its image among students. The perception of the OSSSA as a competitor to other structures rather than a partner has hindered the Association's ability to be seen as a legitimate representative organisation. Currently, many students feel that they must either be in or out of the OSSSA, rather than enjoy a mutually supportive relationship with it while participating in other activities and groups.

This inability to collaborate is also reflected in the hostility that has developed in some cases between the Association and education officials at the school and board level. While the OSSSA is uniquely placed to act as a link between education governance structures and the student population, it has failed to adequately develop relationships with school board officials

and individual school personnel. As a result, the promotion of OSSSA activities and lobbying efforts is greatly hindered. The value of good relationships with school and board personnel is evident in the success of the OSSSA's French-language counterpart. FESFO has been able to develop good working partnerships with numerous francophone school boards in the province, which has allowed them to work with boards to develop student trustee selection and orientation procedures as well as enjoy the support of individual schools for special initiatives.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Lack of Focus***

While the four main objectives of the OSSSA are valuable, the shorter term goals that the organisation sets for itself are too numerous, too varied, and lack a coherent focus. As a result, there is no process to assign the implementation of those goals to specific individuals or ministries. Without strong personal accountability, there lacks an adequate means of evaluating accomplishments and failures, and no one takes responsibility for inaction. As a result, the OSSSA lacks a means of gauging how well it is meeting its objectives. While the broad mandate of the OSSSA provides it with flexibility to act on a variety of issues, it can also lead to a lack of priority setting to accomplish certain specific goals.

### ***Narrow Recruitment Base***

The success of the Association's leadership conferences has provided the OSSSA with a core group of committed members who are anxious to get involved. While this has proven to be an effective tool for recruitment, it is one that limits the ability of the organisation to go beyond its traditional student base. As a result, the OSSSA is not able to recruit those students who may have a keen interest in many of the issues that the group works with, but have little interest in the leadership conferences. There is no recruitment method for politically inclined students who may have much to offer to the OSSSA. With the elimination of the OAC year in Ontario, the ability of the organisation to recruit the students that can best work within the OSSSA structure is of vital importance. Presentations made to students at the grade eight level reflect a positive forward-thinking approach, but the Association needs to also look at bringing different kinds of youth into the organisation.

### ***Ineffective Communications Strategy***

The OSSSA's inability to reach beyond its traditional recruitment base and improve its image is directly tied to its lack of a coherent communications strategy directed at students that could communicate a more accurate portrait of the Association's goals and activities. Many students do not recognise the OSSSA's relationship with the Ministry of Education and Training and do not see it as an appropriate forum for their ideas on education policy. While the Association has been able to release public responses to current events in education policy, it has been unable to communicate these positions to students across the province. A strategy that also targeted potential funding sources could also help address some of the OSSSA's financial sustainability questions.

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<sup>25</sup> In more than one board, FESFO was given the responsibility of conducting the selection process for student trustees, which it conducted according to its own guidelines.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- ❑ A student-led organisation like the OSSSA offers perhaps the most important vehicle for youth to voice their concerns and views. It provides youth with a sense of ownership (to the organisation, cause, issue) and opportunities to be creative and contribute to issues of concern in a meaningful way.
- ❑ Youth groups can achieve credibility and legitimacy within government regardless of the age of those in charge. The OSSSA is a legitimate ‘youth voice’ worthy of being consulted by the Ontario government due to its strong representation throughout the province and its ability to generate valid policy positions and initiatives that involve youth.
- ❑ If youth organisations want to be noticed and heard, they need to become much more media and lobby savvy (i.e. developing a succinct focus with targeted messages). This can be accomplished by either developing a strategy or seeking out professional help, as the OSSSA did in 1998.
- ❑ Long-term planning is necessary for any organisation to ensure sustainability, yet this is an area that many youth groups neglect. The OSSSA’s attempt to deal with its 2003 problem demonstrates its awareness that the changes the organisation will be forced to confront could potentially threaten its existence.
- ❑ Youth organisations tend to lack financial acumen, as less energy is put into strong financial management than other areas of the organisation. The lack of attention placed in this area can also lead to a loss of credibility and potential for future funding, as donors will be unlikely to support an organisation that mismanages its funds.
- ❑ There tends to be a great deal of duplication within youth organisations due to the annual loss of institutional memory that is aggravated by high rates of leadership turnover. Without a mechanism to ensure sustainability, such as an archival system or a staggered electoral process, groups like the OSSSA will continue to waste a great deal of energy every year.
- ❑ Youth organisations like the OSSSA tend to put too much emphasis on its leadership, creating an immense amount of work for a limited number of people. In order to foster greater participation and involvement throughout the organisation, efforts have to be made both personally and through structural changes to involve more youth at the local and regional levels. Partnerships with other organisations can also help re-distribute responsibility within an organisation by reducing pressure on the leadership.
- ❑ Recruitment strategies need to recognise that a single recruitment mechanism will not attract a diverse group of youth. Events designed for recruitment need to strategically target different markets of youth. In the case of the OSSSA, leadership conferences are not able to attract the different kinds of youth that could benefit from involvement in the organisation while giving it different perspectives that it does not currently have access to.

## **IV. Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ)**

### **Introduction**

Provincial legislation creating the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ) was passed unanimously by the Quebec National Assembly in 1987 as a response to demands from youth that more attention be given to their issues at the governmental level. The idea was first proposed in 1983 during a series of regional and provincial youth summits. During the International Youth Year in 1985, the issue was brought up again at different symposium events around the province, and in the fall it became a campaign promise of the Bourassa Liberals. While other provinces have introduced similar initiatives, notably the Nova Scotia Youth Advisory Council and the Youth Council of New Brunswick, these groups have not received the kind of financial and staff resources that the Conseil has been able to benefit from, and as a result have been less influential.

### **Mandate**

The official mandate of the CPJ is to offer advice to the provincial cabinet about any youth issue, with particular emphasis on seeking to create solidarity between generations and promoting diversity. To accomplish this objective, the group maintains regular contact with regional and local youth groups, undertakes research projects, and has developed an extensive series of publications that provide concrete recommendations on a variety of issues. The council advises the minister responsible for youth on any issue it deems relevant and also deals with issues brought forward by the minister. The CPJ budget, which totalled \$752,645 in 1996-97, allows it to fund research projects while paying the salary of the President and Vice-President, as well as an additional staff of five.

### **Structure**

The CPJ is made up of fifteen youth members, two of which occupy the paid positions of President and Vice-President. Nominations for the council are open to any Canadian citizen aged 15 to 30 who is a resident of Quebec. Candidates must be sponsored by three different youth organisations operating in at least two different sectors. These nominations are then reduced to forty by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, who then presents the candidates to the outgoing council, which evaluates the candidates and makes the final decision by secret ballot. The President is a cabinet appointment chosen from among the fifteen new members, while the council members elect the Vice President themselves. Originally members served two-year terms, but this was expanded to three years in 1992 at the request of the CPJ. The above selection process reflects some changes that were introduced for cost-cutting reasons. In the initial legislation, the new Conseil members were self-selected after a weekend retreat was held. Also to curtail spending, a second paid Vice President position was eliminated in 1997.

## **Activities**

The CPJ meets at least six times a year for one or two-day sessions. Members establish the goals and direction of the activities of the staff, approve all documentation that carries the CPJ name, and discuss any emerging issues. Decision-making operates on a majority basis, although there is a tradition of consensus building that has remained relatively consistent. The members also form committees that deal with specific issues that are of interest to certain members; these committees ensure that staff work remains consistent with the direction given by the council while providing recommendations for other research or initiatives. The CPJ also holds special consultation events with youth and youth organisations on different issues. In between meetings, members are asked to maintain connections with youth organisations in their communities as well as keep up with the CPJ documentation that is sent to them.

## **STRENGTHS**

### ***Proximity to Policy Development***

With almost no counterpart groups in Canada, the Conseil is a government agency that deals exclusively with youth and is administered by young people. Its proximity to the policy development process, and the government mandate it was given to provide recommendations as well as respond to government enquiries and initiatives, puts the group in a strong position to influence policy-makers. It can choose to be aggressive and promote certain issues that it feels require lobbying, or simply respond to government proposals and provide feedback. Its position in government and direct link to cabinet means that the CPJ is in an unusually strong lobbying position.

### ***Quality of Work***

The Conseil has produced thoughtful and well researched documents since its creation. These include research papers on issues such as poverty, labour issues, social assistance and cultural issues, as well as specific policy recommendations, responses to government proposals, and a directory of youth organisations. A regular paid staff, and the full-time paid positions of President and Vice President help provide the direction, continuity and stability needed to undertake these kinds of projects and produce quality work.

### ***Stability***

While the Conseil has had to deal with doubts about its long-term sustainability in an era of budget cutbacks, it has been able to operate in an atmosphere of relative stability that few non-governmental groups can enjoy. The Conseil has been able to demonstrate to the provincial government that it is a valuable organisation that provides important feedback on government initiatives and deserves continued funding. The group's consistency is accentuated by the three-year terms and institutional background of its members. This image of stability attracts better candidates for both staff and youth positions, and allows the group to develop long-term goals and a more coherent vision for the Conseil.

### ***Recruitment***

Despite having a relatively low profile amongst the general youth population, the CPJ has

been able to recruit experienced and politically astute members. Because members of the council typically emerge from large youth organisations, they are often familiar with organisational issues, the intricacies of political lobbying, and understand the commitment level needed for success in a voluntary organisational setting.

### ***Credibility***

As a government agency, the CPJ is able to work with youth organisations and project an image that reflects its policy-related mandate. As youth groups themselves are involved in the nomination process, the members are seen as legitimate youth advocates by the general public and by youth organisations. The high standards of quality demonstrated in its research and policy proposals also help the group to project an image of legitimacy, policy relevance, and credibility.

## **EXISTING GAPS**

### ***Public Awareness***

Despite quality publications and a good relationship with many youth organisations, the Conseil has been less successful at raising awareness about its activities amongst the general public, and especially among the young people that it represents. As a result, few young people are aware that there is a government-sponsored youth group that deals exclusively with youth issues and that is in a strong lobbying position. The youth summit planned for the year 2000 may help to raise this kind of awareness, but it remains difficult for the CPJ activities to reach beyond youth who are already involved in organisations.

### ***Lack of Independence***

While the youth members of the Conseil determine the activities and directions of the group, the CPJ's status as a government agency can at times put the group in delicate situations. The group's ability to develop links with other groups can at times be compromised by its status. For example, the Conseil would be unable to make a presentation to a federal government parliamentary committee on issues relating to youth because it is considered a representative of the provincial government.

### ***Diversity of Membership***

It is not easy to represent such a large and diverse territory as the province of Quebec with a group of fifteen youth. In the case of the CPJ, the heavy reliance on well-established youth organisations means that most of the youth on the council tend to be politically active high-achievers. While this is an advantage in many respects, it also means that other more marginalised socio-economic groups, as well as cultural and linguistic minorities, may be significantly under-represented. The Conseil must ensure that it does not alienate youth in Quebec by relying solely on traditional youth organisations for recruitment and consultation.

### ***Measuring Success***

With a mandate based on attempting to influence government policy, there is no real way of measuring successes and failures. The effect of the Conseil is difficult to measure because it is impossible to know how government would act without it. The successes and

failures of some activities are obvious, but most can only be measured subjectively. For example, the CPJ's past recommendations on the issues surrounding youth suicide were recently adopted in new government policies, yet even in this case it is difficult to adequately gauge the group's level of influence. Without an adequate way to measure success, such as short and long-term goal setting, it is difficult for the group to communicate its impact to the youth that it represents or to the taxpayers who fund it.

### ***Relationship with Youth Groups Outside of Quebec***

While the CPJ has worked hard to maintain communication with youth organisations in Quebec, there has been little contact with other groups outside of the province. In cases where there has been contact, the relationships are irregular and do not reflect a conscious need to develop links with other groups. Both the Conseil's government status and its lack of counterpart groups in other provinces make this process more difficult, but efforts could be made to work more closely with other youth groups that deal with similar issues in other parts of the country. While the group's focus is directed at policy-making in Quebec, these efforts could be enhanced through contact with other groups that could provide insights on lobbying tactics, co-operative political stances, or collaboration on particular events and projects.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

- ❑ Government-created entities have perhaps the greatest ability to affect public policy in a sustained way, as they have been created to provide advice and recommendations to decision-makers. The other side of the coin is that such organisations lack autonomy to say and do as they see fit.
- ❑ With sufficient resources, youth organisations like the CPJ demonstrate that youth can produce top quality work, contribute to policy-making, and develop an effective recruitment process to sustain their activities.
- ❑ The CPJ has achieved credibility as an organisation through a number of factors which could help other groups: producing policy-relevant work, developing a mechanism for the involvement of other organisations, and undertaking initiatives on a regular basis that seek out youth opinion on various issues.
- ❑ As there is no homogeneous youth voice or position, groups need to ensure that they have an adequate consultative mechanism that allows them to gather a broad range of views, attitudes, and experiences to better advocate for young people.
- ❑ The lack of a formal communication and marketing strategy undermines the ability of the CPJ to be known and heard. This failure can threaten its sustainability by not allowing it to raise funds effectively or build public support for its programs. It also hurts its credibility because many youth are unaware of its existence.

- Most successful youth organisations like the CPJ tend to be elite-driven, in so far as they attract “involved” and “interested” youth. The selection process to sit on the CPJ board attracts highly educated, career driven people, who reflect only a small percentage of young people in Canada.

## **E. NATIONAL LEVEL CASE STUDIES**

### **V. Aboriginal Youth Council**

#### **Introduction**

The Aboriginal Youth Council (AYC) is a youth body established in 1994 under the umbrella of the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), a national, non-profit, non-partisan Aboriginal organisation. The NAFC mandate is to “improve the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples in an urban environment by supporting self-determined activities which encourage equal access to, and participation in, Canadian society; and which respect and strengthen the increasing emphasis on Aboriginal cultural distinctiveness.” Incorporated in 1972, the NAFC provides a variety of services relating to employment, housing, education, and health to Aboriginal people residing in urban areas through 115 community based Friendship Centres across the country and seven Provincial/Territorial Associations (PTAs). The NAFC is responsible for facilitating the opportunities of youth to participate at all levels of the Friendship Centre movement, a commitment which over the past five years has allowed the AYC to enjoy a strong voice in the governance structure of the NAFC.

#### **Background**

The history of the AYC dates back to the first National Friendship Centre Youth Conference in July 1985, which was organised by the NAFC as part of its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM). The youth conference dealt with issues of particular concern to Aboriginal youth, such as poverty, suicide, gang violence, and lack of education. The success of the conference led to similar events on an annual basis. It also led to the creation of the National Youth Network of Friendship Centres (NYNFC), which became recognised as the voice of youth within the Friendship Centre movement. In 1992, the participants of the National Youth Conference elected a National Youth Representative to sit on the NAFC Board of Directors in an “ex-officio” position. The following year voting privileges were given to the National Youth Representative and the Aboriginal Youth Board was established. This led to the official creation of the AYC in September 1994 and full voting privileges within the NAFC in 1995, following a constitutional amendment that gave youth delegates one third of the total votes at the AGM.

#### **Mission**

The mission of the AYC is to facilitate, encourage and support Aboriginal youth initiatives and to increase the participation, involvement and development of Aboriginal youth leaders. The Council seeks to accomplish these goals by information sharing, training and development for youth at all levels of the Friendship Centre movement, and a series of initiatives for the preservation and promotion of Aboriginal culture and heritage. The AYC encourages youth participation at the local level through a network of youth

councils/groups in all Friendship Centres across the country. The membership of the AYC consists of youth aged 14 to 24 and other individuals with a special interest in youth issues. It is estimated that there are between 4,000 and 10,000 members across the country.

## **Structure**

As a component of the NAFC, the Aboriginal Youth Council was incorporated under the Association's Constitution and By-laws and adheres to the NAFC's Code of Ethics and Policy & Procedures. In addition, the AYC has developed its own Policy & Procedures guide to help direct its actions. The organisation is led by an Executive Committee, consisting of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer; as well as a representative from the Northwest Territories (including the Yukon), British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and the East (Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Labrador and Newfoundland). Quarterly meetings are held in Ottawa to discuss issues affecting Aboriginal youth and the Friendship Centre movement and there is an ongoing flow of information to and from members via e-mail, Internet, phone and fax.

The Executive Committee members collectively represent the views and concerns of urban Aboriginal youth within the Friendship Centre movement and are all national spokespersons for the AYC. They are elected to serve two-year terms by their peers at staggered intervals at the National Youth Forums. The President of the AYC also holds the voting position of National Youth Representative to the NAFC Board of Directors to ensure that youth issues and concerns are included at the national board level. In addition, there exists a Youth Executive Committee Representative who is elected for a two-year term by the entire membership at the AGM. This Executive Committee member shares the decision-making authority of the NAFC Executive Committee and is able to ensure a strong youth voice at the Executive level. The Youth Executive Committee member is also mandated to attend all AYC meetings to provide a second direct link between the NAFC Executive Committee and the AYC.

The structure of the AYC also includes Youth Representative positions on the PTA Board of Directors (with the exception of Quebec). These Provincial Youth Representatives are either elected or appointed by Aboriginal youth for a one-year term to the AYC within their respective provinces or by the Provincial Boards. In the case of the Eastern provinces (including Quebec) where there are no provincial representatives, an Eastern Representative to the AYC is elected at the National Youth Forum for a one year term.

## **Activities**

In addition to the Annual Youth Forums, the AYC carries out a variety of activities that promote the objectives of the Council. Many of its activities involve working with and developing NAFC national projects, such as Youth Peer Counselling (YPC), Race Relations, Aboriginal Employment Services Network (AESN), the Aboriginal Strategic Initiative (ASI) and the Aboriginal Urban Youth Summer Outreach Program (AUYSOP). The AUYSOP provides Aboriginal students and unemployed youth the opportunity to gain

work experience within Friendship Centres throughout the summer months.

In particular, the AYC has played a lead development role in three initiatives: the Youth Intervenor initiative; the creation of Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres (UMAYC); and the Youth Leadership Development Initiative. The Youth Intervenor, as the sole staff member of the AYC, co-ordinates youth meetings and initiatives and promotes Aboriginal youth participation at the local level. The UMAC initiative seeks to develop programs around career planning, employment opportunities and recreational activities in a supportive, culturally relevant environment. The Leadership Development Initiative provides Aboriginal youth with the opportunity to gain skills and encourage community development in order to respond to their needs. The AYC hopes to enhance its youth leadership training initiatives with the creation of an Aboriginal Youth Resource Library.

The Aboriginal Youth Council strives to create partnerships and linkages with youth-serving agencies, government departments, national voluntary organisations, businesses and foundations. It also lobbies various levels of government on Aboriginal youth issues. The majority of funding for AYC activities comes from a Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) grant of \$100,000 through the Youth Intervenor initiative. This funding, provided since January 1995, pays for the salary of one full-time co-ordinator, the Youth Intervenor, as well as financial assistance for various activities, including AYC meetings.

## **STRENGTHS**

### ***NAFC – AYC Linkage***

Through the support of the NAFC, the AYC has allowed youth to become an increasingly important component of the Friendship Centre movement. This has been demonstrated by formal youth participation at the Board of Directors level, as well as by the one third guaranteed youth vote at the NAFC AGMs. The relationship has developed to the point where the AYC affects policy decisions within the NAFC, while still maintaining its identity as an autonomous youth organisation. The strong links between the two have also provided a training ground for youth who wish to become involved in Aboriginal governance. It is a relationship that reflects meaningful involvement rather than token representation.

### ***Leadership Continuity***

The Aboriginal Youth Council's staggered electoral structure has been an effective means of ensuring continuity within the Executive. Each year two of the four executive members, either the President and Secretary or the Vice President and Treasurer, finish their two-year term and are replaced by two new youth. By staggering its election process, the AYC maintains its organisational capital from year to year and provided assistance and mentoring to each new set of executive members.

### ***Internal Communication***

The AYC has developed an effective means of conveying regional and local concerns to the national division of the Council with the use of the full time, paid staff member who

acts as a hub in the flow and organisation of information. The Youth Intervenor disseminates information to all Friendship Centres and PTAs on youth-specific activities through mail-outs, e-mail, a youth newsletter entitled “the y-files ... ” and through the AYC website (<http://www.auysop.com/AYC.html>). The Youth Intervenor is also responsible for regularly communicating with AYC members to ensure that they are aware of all youth developments at the national office. This ensures that the AYC is able to make informed decisions on numerous youth programs and policies.

At the local level, individual youth councils/groups bring forth their recommendations and perspectives on numerous issues to their provincial youth bodies and/or provincial youth representatives. These provincial youth representatives, in turn, present those issues and concerns directly to the AYC, which can bring them to the NAFC board level. Decisions reached based on information brought to the national level are then communicated to the local levels through the provincial youth representatives. This ensures that decisions are based upon the needs of local youth councils/groups.

### ***Leadership Training***

The AYC, as well as the PTAs and local youth councils, provides valuable leadership training for Aboriginal youth. At the national level leadership development includes training relating to board governance, race relations, proposal development, youth peer counselling, conflict resolution, Internet software, group facilitation, public speaking, and program and policy development.

At the provincial level there are similar type of activities. For example, the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association (ANFCA) administers the Silver Feather Youth Leadership Development initiative, which focuses on mentoring Aboriginal Youth within individual Friendship Centres. Participants learn about the history and operation of their individual Friendship Centre and are mentored by a senior staff person.

National projects administered by the NAFC, such as the AUYSOP and the UMAC also create leadership development opportunities. The AUYSOP initiative, which provides employment opportunities for youth, and the newly developed UMAC project, which facilitates youth involvement in the creation and maintenance of urban youth centres, both provide opportunities for Aboriginal youth to assume leadership positions in their communities.

### ***Networking***

The AYC is making progress in its networking and collaboration efforts with other organisations. Since its inception, the AYC has built partnerships with other local Aboriginal youth councils/groups, government departments, businesses, foundations, youth-serving agencies, national voluntary organisations, and other large national Aboriginal organisations. These partnerships broaden the opportunity for the AYC to access funding, and have a larger impact on policy, while raising awareness of the Friendship Centre movement and the AYC. Focusing AYC energies on networking has already led to joint initiatives and information sharing.

## **EXISTING GAPS**

### ***Source of Funding***

One of the largest existing gaps affecting the AYC is the lack of financial resources independent of government funding. It continually struggles to obtain a greater funding base from which to run the organisation. Funded entirely by HRDC, the AYC is heavily dependent on the government to stay afloat. Having recognised the need to strengthen its financial situation, the AYC is currently exploring additional funding possibilities to sustain the Council by developing a business plan and applying for funding through private foundations, including the NAFC foundation.

### ***Representation***

Within the AYC, not all Friendship Centres and PTAs have established formal youth representation. This makes it difficult to receive input and direction from those local Centres with no youth representative and/or youth councils/groups. Those PTAs that have not established provincial youth bodies also have difficulties gathering input from the local Friendship Centre youth within their respective regions. As the AYC works to represent youth on a national level, it recognises the need for consistent, strong and equal representation from all areas of the country. This can most effectively be achieved through the establishment of local and provincial youth representation.

### ***External Communication***

A gap that several youth organisations face is the issue of recognition. The AYC is no exception as many Aboriginal youth are not aware of the Council and its work. This lack of awareness affects the AYC's efforts to recruit and represent urban Aboriginal youth within the Friendship Centre movement. The inability of the organisation to attract media attention has also hindered its ability to inform the public of AYC activities. The organisation has begun to address this gap through the use of a web site, newsletters and promotion at local Friendship Centres and within federal government departments.

### ***Lobbying***

The AYC is also faced with the challenge of developing a dialogue with government and being consulted by decision-makers on issues that directly concern Aboriginal youth. Although the organisation receives core funding from the federal government, it has had minimal success at representing Aboriginal youth concerns to them. The gap can be explained partly by the lack of AYC resources, partly as a result of the government's reluctance to involve youth in decision-making, and partly due to the political arena the NAFC and the AYC must operate within. The federal government only recognises five national political Aboriginal organisations and does not deal with the NAFC/AYC as a political body.<sup>26</sup> Despite attempts to address this gap through the use of letter campaigns and other NAFC initiatives, much work still remains.

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<sup>26</sup> The five national Aboriginal organisations are as follows: Assembly of First Nations, The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, The Native Women's Association of Canada, The Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, and the Métis National Council.

### ***Collaboration***

Although strides have been made to reach out to government agencies, foundations and other Aboriginal groups like the Assembly of First Nations, the AYC needs to be more strategic in its collaborative efforts. More attempts need to be made to develop partnerships with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations on common projects that would help sustain the programmatic and financial needs of the organisation. Collaboration would also allow the group to raise awareness of its own activities, identify best practices in other groups, and develop more effective lobbying efforts by working with groups that have compatible interests.

### **LESSONS LEARNED**

- ❑ An autonomous youth wing within an adult organisation is a very effective model for youth empowerment and influencing policy because it provides stability and support to newly emerging youth groups, provides instant credibility, and offers leadership training and guidance. The key to such a model is to link with an adult organisation that sincerely believes in the importance of youth participation. In the case of the National Association of Friendship Centres, the youth positions on the executive and the youth participation at the AGMs represent substantial efforts to include youth in the decision-making process.
- ❑ A staggered election system, particularly at the executive level, is an effective way of ensuring that an organisation does not lose its organisational memory and capital from year to year, while providing enhanced orientation and leadership training opportunities for incoming youth.
- ❑ Due to the challenge of co-ordinating a national youth group (overcoming obstacles of distance, time, resources), a paid staff position is key to helping co-ordinate activities and communication while ensuring a greater level of continuity.
- ❑ Achieving equal representation among members within a provincially- or nationally-based organisation is an extremely difficult task and is a constant challenge, particularly when resources are scarce. Youth organisations need to develop a mechanism within their respective structures to address this problem or risk losing credibility as representative bodies.
- ❑ Many youth groups like the AYC tend to lack a focused strategy when it comes to lobbying government and communicating its programs and activities to youth, private sector and civil society organisations. The lack of know-how, strategic thinking, time and resources makes it difficult for the AYC to increase awareness of its activities among the general public.
- ❑ The AYC tends to place less emphasis on collaboration and co-ordination with other youth groups that may have similar goals and mandates, leading to a duplication of resources and less effective lobbying efforts. The lack of inter-organisational communication and collaboration is an issue that affects many youth groups.

## **VI. Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)**

### **Introduction**

The impetus to develop the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE) emerged after the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) when various environmental youth organisations were calling for Environment Canada to establish a mechanism for youth involvement. This outside push coincided with a growing interest within the department to engage youth. Environment Canada worked with youth representatives to develop a mission, structure, terms of reference and list of potential members. In 1997, the first Youth Round Table on the Environment meeting took place, thanks in part to the energy and commitment of the Minister at the time, Sergio Marchi.

### **Structure**

The YRTE is modelled after the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE), an independent agency of the federal government established to provide decision-makers with information and suggested courses of action on issues related to the environment and the economy. Its activities are organised into a series of programs, which are overseen by a task force or committee. The YRTE uses a similar model, forming one committee (Round Table) of twenty youth from across the country who come together four times a year to discuss current environmental issues and present a youth perspective to the Minister. Between meetings, members of the Youth Round Table communicate with the Department and each other via e-mail and phone.

### **Mission**

The Round Table works to give youth the opportunity to interact with government and participate in program and policy development. It provides direct access to the Minister as well as opportunities for networking between youth and their organisations. The YRTE provides Environment Canada with a consultation mechanism to gain input on issues of concern to youth and direct feedback on current projects and policy. In the past year the Round Table has addressed climate change, endangered species, and the Department's youth-oriented publications.

### **Selection Process**

A maximum of twenty members, aged 16 to 24, are selected annually. All interested candidates must fill out an application form along with a statement of interest and three references, which are then reviewed by a selection committee. Criteria for selection include previous work on team projects, demonstrated creativity and enthusiasm, a willingness to work in partnership with government, a time commitment of up to four weekends per year and e-mail correspondence, a demonstrated commitment to the

preservation and conservation of the environment for future generations, and proven leadership qualities. One of the goals in the selection of members is representation from all provinces and territories, as well as youth from both the francophone and Aboriginal communities. A group of four to six members remain on the Round Table for up to six months after their term is completed to promote continuity and provide some peer orientation for new members.

### **Role of the Department**

Environment Canada is responsible for the facilitation and co-ordination of meetings as well as the selection of youth members. Between meetings the Department acts as a resource base by providing the YRTE members with information about current environmental issues and providing specific information that they request. Environment Canada is also responsible for both taking into consideration recommendations put forward by the YRTE and providing feedback about what action has been taken. The Minister provides the Round Table with specific topics on which she wishes to receive youth input and attempts to be present at all the meetings (in the last year the Minister attended three out of the four). Contact with youth is maintained between meetings through the use of e-mail, although no formal work is assigned during this time. Funding for this project comes entirely from Environment Canada.

### **STRENGTHS**

#### ***Interaction with Government***

The Youth Round Table has proven to be an effective means for youth to have direct input into the Departmental policy-making process. It allows for youth to have direct interaction with the Minister, make regular written submissions to her, and help set the agenda for consultation meetings. At the same time, members also benefit from the information provided to them by the Department, learning a great deal about environmental issues, the process of government, and politics more generally. The initiative has also provided the youth involved with many opportunities to participate in other domestic and internationally related events and fora.

#### ***Influencing Policy***

Although some members of the Round Table<sup>7</sup> feel there is much work to be done in this area, most recognise the unique opportunity they have to influence environmental policy. Of particular note is the work of the Round Table on Action 21, a funding program of Environment Canada that provides support to local groups working on environmental projects. Members of the Round Table consulted with youth from their communities and presented their findings to the Minister and the Department. They suggested how the program could be made more accessible, how to simplify the application process, and how a mentoring system could be established. These recommendations led to changes to Action 21 that made it a more accessible and youth-friendly program. The group was also involved in helping shape some of the ideas for the Climate Change Public Education and Outreach Strategy, an initiative that was created by the federal government after the 1998

UN Summit in Kyoto.

### ***Continuity***

The YRTE ensures continuity by choosing six past members to work with the new members for a designated period of time. By having alumni play an active role, the Round Table is able to maintain its intellectual capital from the previous year, benefit from the experience of past members, and provide opportunities for guidance and orientation for the incoming members.

### ***Simplicity***

A notable strength of the Youth Round Table is its simplicity. The Round Table does not require an overwhelming time commitment by either government or its members. Nor does it require a complicated or expensive bureaucratic structure for communicating or taking action. The YRTE structure provides for meaningful consultation within the constraints of time and workload capability. It is a notable example of how youth can be realistically involved in policy creation, and is unique at the federal level.

### ***Representation***

Due to a thorough selection process that ensures diverse recruitment, the YRTE members come from a wide range of backgrounds, ideological viewpoints, cultures and regions. Although they are not elected by their peers, this diversity helps ensure that members of the group reflect the wide variety of concerns and values that make up youth opinion in Canada. When discussing issues, members have found that a range of opinions and views are expressed, contributing to more creative suggestions and solutions to difficult environmental policy problems. By consulting regularly with their respective communities, they have found that they are able to bring fresh thinking to those communities and organisations that they represent.

### ***Model for Other Departments***

Being the only example of direct and ongoing youth input into a federal government department, the YRTE serves as a good model for other Canadian ministries at both the federal and provincial level. While it is still relatively young, the overall assessment by those involved is that it has been a good mechanism for youth input into policy development.

## **EXISTING GAPS**

### ***Too Closely Tied to Government***

The access the YRTE has to the Minister and the Department is both one of its major strengths and one of its major weaknesses. The strength, as already identified, is the ability to directly interact with those who make and implement policy. The weakness is that the group is heavily tied into the government process. As a result, some youth feel that they have had their wings clipped by the cumbersome process of the bureaucracy and the limited range of issues that can be discussed. Issues that fall outside the jurisdictional purview of the Department, or those that are out of line with the current policy options available, cannot be discussed. For instance, some members were disappointed that they

could not address the issue of nuclear disarmament.

### ***Departmental Receptivity to Youth***

Although Environment Canada has made great strides in establishing the YRTE, many of its members still feel that the Department remains somewhat closed to their ideas and recommendations. Because the process is relatively new and is not part of any formal structure within the policy-making process, the trust and receptivity within the bureaucracy towards the YRTE remains somewhat stilted. Some members feel that Environment Canada does not take the Round Table seriously enough and fails to address many of their recommendations.

### ***Unclear Expectations***

Most of the YRTE members point out that their expectations going into the meetings varied according to their individual perceptions of what they felt the group could accomplish. The YRTE co-ordinator explains that because the Round Table is so new, many of the members did not know what they could and could not do. Thus, despite the establishment of terms of reference, only now is the group beginning to have a better sense both of the potential and the limits of what it can and should expect. Some members feel that the discrepancy in expectations could have been avoided through increased communication and co-ordination by Environment Canada and clarity about the Department's expectations.

### ***Staffing Resources***

Although there are only four meetings per year, there is a great deal of communication that takes place in between. In order to properly co-ordinate meetings, respond to requests for information, and keep abreast of the contact information of YRTE members (as they tend to be somewhat transient), more staffing is needed. While there is one person assigned to help co-ordinate the YRTE, an additional staff member could facilitate the process and act as a greater resource to the youth.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

- ❑ Government-created youth organisations or entities represent the double-edged sword of youth involvement. While they offer direct input into policy and opportunities to learn about how government works, they also limit youth autonomy and empowerment. Meaningful youth input into the policy-making process that is reflective of the diversity of youth opinions must rely on efforts both within governmental structures and those from independent youth organisations.
- ❑ Being a representative group is a large asset to bodies like the YRTE because its diversity fosters more creative and innovative results by encompassing more than one point of view. Selecting youth from a wide range of regional and institutional backgrounds allows the group to be more representative of marginalised youth and provides for more valuable networking opportunities.
- ❑ A simple governance structure that has a limited hierarchy, like the one established by

the YRTE, is a good model for youth groups to explore because it fosters greater involvement by its members, counters the tendency to rely on strong personalities, and avoids spending large amounts of time on process-related issues.

- ❑ Developing roles for past members is an effective way of ensuring continuity and avoiding duplication of time, ideas, and mistakes.
- ❑ A stringent selection process (i.e. criteria that promotes diversity of people, opinions, experiences, etc.) is key to building a strong group. The limitation of this strength is that it tends to favour “achievers” who are already involved within their communities, as opposed to disenfranchised and marginalised youth.
- ❑ Government initiatives like the YRTE do not ensure overall departmental receptivity, as there still appears to be a culture of “youth apprehension” when it comes to input into policy-making.
- ❑ Any new youth initiative or organisation where there are high levels of interaction with adults needs a clearly defined set of objectives, expectations and parameters to avoid disappointment and discontentment in the process and results. This is partly explained by the very different sets of experiences and expectations that adults and young people bring to the table.
- ❑ As the only one of its kind at the federal level, the YRTE is an important model for other government departments to examine. It has been instrumental in providing a forum for sharing information, listening to concerns, and incorporating youth ideas into Environment Canada’s policy-making process at relatively low cost.

## **VII. Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)**

### **Introduction**

Within a few years of the establishment of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) in 1981, efforts had begun to develop stronger co-ordination between university associations that were not participating in the new Federation. After failed attempts at regrouping these associations under the Canadian Union of Student Executive Councils (CUSEC) banner, a series of annual conferences in the early 1990s at the University of Alberta attempted to form an alternative lobbying group for student interests at the federal level. For some of these student associations, the CFS response to the October 1994 Axworthy green paper *Improving Social Security in Canada*, both in terms of philosophy and strategy, seemed to demonstrate an increasing radicalisation that they felt was an inadequate tactical response to the government's proposals.

With the release of the Axworthy green paper, the important role of the federal government in the field of post-secondary education became apparent. The questions that were placed on the table for debate, which included student loan repayment options, taxation reforms, and a potential shift from federal post-secondary education provincial transfers to transfers directly to individuals, would impact on both students who were currently reliant on financial assistance and those who were not. It was amidst this climate of uncertainty, and the hostile response of the CFS, that the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) was formed in early 1995. A series of university student referenda approved the withdrawal of some student associations from the CFS and this group, along with other associations that had not been affiliated, formed the new federal lobbying body.

### **Mission**

The CASA mission is to promote the highest levels of quality and accessibility in the Canadian post-secondary education system. To accomplish this objective, the organisation seeks to present the views of its member associations to the federal government and other relevant agencies, liaise with other organisations, provide a forum for addressing student-related issues, and act as a repository of information and research on student issues, primarily at the undergraduate post-secondary level. The focus on federal jurisdiction and the emphasis on lobbying rather than student mobilisation are significantly different from the activities of the Canadian Federation of Students.

### **Structure**

The new structure that emerged from the 1995 referenda and the subsequent formalisation of the Alliance was in many ways marked by a reaction to the CFS in both philosophical outlook and proposed strategy. The five founding student associations sought to create a low-cost alternative to CFS that would act primarily as a lobby group for student

associations rather than as the embodiment of a student “movement.”<sup>27</sup> As a result, CASA would operate with limited staff at the Ottawa head office and rely in large part on the goodwill of member universities to contribute research ideas and policy proposals. Structurally, CASA was envisioned as a group that would have its policy positions developed at the member association level and sent to the staff, rather than the other way around. The member-driven spirit of the group would be reflected in its low membership dues, its low level of bureaucratisation, the absence of extensive service provision, and even its name, which emphasises the centrality of member associations.

CASA is divided into five regions: Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario, Prairie (Saskatchewan and Manitoba), and Northwest (British Columbia, Alberta, and the territories). Each region meets in regional caucus at the Annual General Meeting and selects a Regional Director, who sits on the CASA Board of Directors along with the National Director and the other representatives from each region. This six-member Board meets at least ten times a year, one meeting of which must be in person. The National Director’s one-year term, which can be extended by re-election at the AGM, runs from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. During this time, the National Director is responsible for chairing all Board meetings, acting as the official spokesperson of the organisation, co-ordinating all federal lobbying activities, developing relationships with other organisations, and ensuring effective communication within the Alliance. The National Director must maintain a working knowledge of both official languages and ensure that all CASA documentation is available in bilingual format.

Regional Directors, who serve CASA on a volunteer basis, are each responsible for maintaining communication with their respective members, chairing regional meetings, providing written monthly reports to their member associations, and ensuring regular two-way communication with the associations in their jurisdiction. Regional Directors are also responsible for a six-month evaluation of the performance of the National Director and for assisting him or her in a six-month review of all CASA staff. The Board elects a Treasurer from among the Regional Directors who sits as an unpaid, ex-officio member of the Board.

Membership in CASA can be obtained on three different levels. Full Members are those associations that pay full dues and enjoy full speaking and voting rights. Provisional Members are those which have expressed, by letter of intent, the desire to secure full membership but have not yet been approved. Associate Members are those associations which are operating under a three-year phase-in procedure, in which they pay a gradually increasing fee to the Alliance and enjoy speaking rights but no vote. Membership dues for CASA associations are calculated according to each individual association’s Full Time Equivalency (FTE) tabulation and its gross revenues. While CASA explicitly works towards consensus decision-making, voting is conducted on a one vote per school basis, although for resolutions to receive final approval they must pass through a rigorous triple majority system. Each resolution must receive support from two-thirds of voting member associations and majorities in at least three of the five regions. Finally, the member

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<sup>27</sup> The five original members were the Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia, the University of Alberta Students’ Union, the University of Saskatchewan Students’ Union, the Federation of Students at the University of Waterloo, and the Student Society of McGill University.

associations that voted in favour of the resolution must represent a simple majority of the entire student population represented by CASA member organisations.

## **Lobbying**

CASA's lobbying efforts have tended to focus heavily on the issues surrounding student loans and other financial assistance, although the group has also worked for initiatives to increase the inter-provincial mobility of students. In the latter half of 1997 and early 1998, CASA lobbied key decision-makers in Ottawa to ensure that the spring budget included interest-relief and debt remission provisions as well as a fifteen-year ceiling on repayment of loans.<sup>28</sup> The 1998 "education budget" reflected many of these proposals and represented a significant success for the group, as did the signing of the Social Union Framework this year which included important provisions about student mobility. CASA's most recent efforts reflect the incremental approach that it has taken towards lobbying. CASA's *A Second Declaration of Real Solutions* proposes a re-evaluation of the needs-assessment criteria currently used in the administration of the Canada Student Loans Program (CSLP) and a commitment to national standards and a needs-based approach to student assistance.

## **STRENGTHS**

### ***Understanding the Political Process***

By understanding how decisions are made at the federal government level, and targeting its efforts at key pressure points in the policy development process, CASA has been able to influence government policy. The organisation's leadership has developed close relationships with key decision-makers and has been able to present its policy proposals and concerns in a credible way. The success of lobbying efforts is inherently difficult to measure, but extensive lobbying conducted by student organisations in the fall of 1997 seems to have had a direct impact on the significant changes announced by the government in the 1998 budget. The nature of many of the changes reflects CASA proposals, particularly with regard to student loan issues. The Alliance's success in this regard reflects an understanding of the nature of the political process and an awareness of the kinds of policy proposals and lobbying techniques that can have an actual impact on policy outcomes rather than those that are simply political statements.

### ***Credibility***

Since its inception, the Alliance has been able to convey an image that has given it a high level of respectability among policy-making circles and the mainstream media. This credibility is a result of CASA's exclusive focus on policy and its reputation for political moderation. CASA proposals tend to represent achievable objectives that are not at odds

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<sup>28</sup> See CASA's 1997 document *Real Solutions* for more details of its proposals. On CASA's pre-budget lobbying during this time, see Ann Dowsett Johnston, "A Player Named Hoops," *Maclean's*, February 23, 1998, p. 65.

with the political climate and policy options.<sup>29</sup> Its lean structure, explicit emphasis on lobbying, and serious policy proposals reflect what is interpreted as a level of political astuteness not usually associated with “youth” organisations.

### ***Student-Led***

CASA’s reliance on students themselves for its leadership contributes to a high degree of legitimacy. Due to its small staff, CASA operates without a deeply-ingrained bureaucratic culture that often dominates organisations. Instead, it relies on the willingness of member associations to be active and on the personality of its National Director. The staff, which under CASA by-laws cannot exceed three full-time positions, is made up of university graduates, preferably from member schools.

### ***Leadership Development***

The strong emphasis on specific policy issues and on the governmental policy development process allows CASA to provide valuable leadership training to students who become involved with the Alliance. Dealing with what are often complex issues of fiscal federalism and loan programs, active students within the CASA structure are exposed to the issues and the operation of the political processes that determine policy outcomes. Involvement by individual member associations, which varies across the country, provides an opportunity for associations at a campus level to pursue policy items on their own.

### ***Consensus Culture***

Particularly prevalent in its early years, a consensus culture has developed within CASA that seeks to make decisions after a process of debate and compromise. The triple majority system contributed to the development of a consensus-building approach, rather than the entrenchment of firm, hostile positions. The nature of internal politics, however, also depends heavily on the personality of the National Director and on the number of member associations, which has increased in recent years.

### ***Value for Money***

CASA’s very limited mandate and small staff offers potential member associations political representation at the federal level for a much lower price than any alternative. Currently, the average CASA membership fees are approximately one tenth the cost of Canadian Federation of Students membership. While the CFS provides a more comprehensive set of services, membership in CASA may be appealing to schools that want federal representation but are not interested in extensive services.

## **EXISTING GAPS**

### ***Reliance on National Director***

The relatively small budget of the organisation, combined with varying levels of activity from member associations, results in a dependence on the personality, ability, and character of the National Director. The Alliance’s principle activity, lobbying, depends

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<sup>29</sup> CASA’s moderate approach can be seen in its presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance on October 26, 1998. The group acknowledged the value of the changes announced in the 1998 budget while outlining the need for further reforms.

heavily on the development of personal relationships that can determine access to key members of the bureaucracy and political leadership. As a result of this dependence, transition in a year in which both the National Director and the Regional Directors leave their respective positions at the same time, combined with a small staff, could seriously weaken the ability of the Alliance to represent its members effectively.

### ***Reliance on Member Associations***

The leanness of the CASA organisation means that individual member associations perform work that in some organisations would be done by staff members. This decentralisation has many advantages, as described above, but also puts the Alliance in a position of reliance on the goodwill and commitment of its members. While CASA's early years were reflective of this commitment to a member-driven structure, there has been less of a focus on the active role of members in recent times.

### ***Federal Focus***

The focus on the activities and jurisdictional responsibilities of the federal government have allowed CASA to limit its mandate to specific areas and contributed to a relatively coherent policy focus. Although this emphasis may be successful during times when the federal government is taking an activist role in post-secondary education issues, it is essentially reliant on the political climate and the often-limited availability of relevant policy windows. Once certain issues have been addressed in a governmental policy cycle it is difficult to re-introduce policy proposals or present new ideas in those fields. CASA's lobbying efforts are currently limited to a narrow range of policy portfolios that are not flexible enough to allow it to adjust to changes in political priorities.

### ***Image with Students***

The Alliance's relationship with government has been described negatively by much of the Canadian student press. Often seen as being "largely in the pocket of the Liberal government," CASA has had difficulty effectively communicating its successes to the student population at large, particularly with reference to the value for money that the Alliance's lobbying activities provide.<sup>30</sup> General awareness of the group is also limited to students who are politically aware, and even in these cases there is little specific knowledge about its objectives or activities.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

- ❑ Organisations like CASA that understand the political process tend to be more effective at influencing decision-makers and attracting media attention and awareness. Knowing how, when, and where to apply pressure gives CASA the ability to most effectively achieve its goals with limited resources.
- ❑ The mission and structure of CASA (lobby focused, member-based policy development) is a model that other youth groups need to look because it demonstrates the importance of identifying a focus and a constituency. Without spending large sums

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<sup>30</sup> *The Fulcrum* (University of Ottawa), April 1, 1999, p. 5.

of money, it has achieved a significant level of policy influence while maintaining its member-driven structure.

- ❑ An organisation's credibility with government comes from producing good work and understanding the importance of moderation. CASA has been successful at influencing student loan policy because it has not made outlandish policy demands that it knows government will never implement, and has given the government credit when it has taken steps in the right direction.
- ❑ Student-led and created organisations are the key to youth involvement because they provide a direct outlet for active and interested young people to contribute, learn and stand up for what they believe in.
- ❑ Youth organisations have to be careful not to rely too heavily on their top leadership because a lack of involvement throughout an organisation will weaken its support and ultimately its best asset: the energy of its young members. An "irreplaceable" leader will create a vacuum the following year when a new person takes over.
- ❑ Youth organisations like CASA that are very active in a particular policy area need to be careful that they diversify their focus so as to remain relevant in the policy process.
- ❑ National youth organisations need a mechanism to deal with a diversified membership, since the needs of those in rural areas differ greatly from those in urban areas. In the case of CASA, this is most obvious in its attempt to represent both large urban schools and associations at smaller schools in smaller towns across the country.
- ❑ In a country the size of Canada, groups need to be aware of the potential for division along regional lines. CASA, for example, has introduced special voting provisions as a response to these concerns.
- ❑ To gain "legitimacy," a national youth organisation need not become driven by trying to represent a certain number of young people. It is more important the group address the issue of representation directly by recognising which individuals and groups make up its constituency. Due to the lack of homogeneity in the youth sector, legitimacy as a youth organisation can derive from good ideas and work that target a limited but cross section of young people throughout the country. The representation of resonant ideas is as valuable as having developed a large constituent base.

## **F. INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDY**

### **VIII. Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC)**

#### **Introduction**

The roots of the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC) date back to the 1960s with the creation of the National Youth Council of Australia (NYCA). The NYCA was composed of representatives from a variety of different national fitness and church groups, but with the development of more advocacy-focused organisations it began to expand both its membership and the types of issues that it looked at. With strong input from the Commonwealth Government Youth Bureau, AYPAC was formed in 1991 as the main youth sector representative body. Despite traditionally being less radical than other youth organisations, AYPAC has been very vocal on several controversial issues and has often spoken out against government policy. The Coalition is currently in a time of reassessment following the withdrawal of all financial support from the Australian Government.

#### **Mission**

AYPAC's mission is wide-ranging, both in the issues that it deals with and in the mechanisms it uses to try to achieve its objectives. The Coalition addresses issues facing impoverished and disenfranchised young people, develops youth policy proposals, responds to government initiatives, promotes youth leadership and works to increase co-ordination between youth Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). AYPAC also does extensive work in the research and analysis of youth issues and policy while maintaining a strong advocacy component.

#### **Structure**

AYPAC is governed by its National Representative Board (NRB), which is composed of one representative from each State and Territory Youth Council (the state equivalent of AYPAC), nine representatives from national youth organisations (organisations with branches in five out of Australia's eight states), a chairperson, a youth spokesperson and a five person executive. NRB members, one quarter of which are youth, are collectively responsible for the organisation's strategic direction. The youth spokesperson acts as a link between the Coalition and youth from outside the organisation. Between the quarterly board meetings the executive is responsible for the management of AYPAC. The organisation's governance structure, however, has been threatened by the inability to maintain five full time staff because of a significant loss of funding. In June 1998, the Australian government cut AYPAC's \$336,500 (Cdn) annual grant, which represented one third of its budget. The remaining funding comes from member organisations and projects.

## **STRENGTHS**

### ***Diversity of Member Organisations***

AYPAC has been very successful at bringing together a wide range of organisations within the youth field. In keeping with its philosophy that there is no single youth perspective, it has ensured that a diverse range of opinions is considered when developing policy proposals or responses to government actions. AYPAC's diverse membership has also helped publicise the group's existence and activities among government officials, NGOs and young people. AYPAC's membership was invaluable during the recent funding crisis, as it provided the necessary operating funds.

### ***Communication with Member Organisations***

AYPAC has been successful at attracting and maintaining a large number of member organisations that are spread out over a wide geographic area. Through the use of smaller committees and regular communication through meetings and surveys, AYPAC members have been kept well informed and given opportunities to participate. While the funding cut has made this more difficult, AYPAC hopes to make better use of the Internet and e-mail communication to maintain those links.

### ***Involvement of Youth***

Although AYPAC is not a youth-run organisation, it has maintained regular youth involvement in its structure, which gives it credibility as an advocacy group and better insight into the concerns of young people. The positions of youth spokesperson and the NRB youth representatives ensure that young people are included in the group's decision-making process. A series of consultative initiatives and committees also provide youth input into AYPAC. Prior to the funding cut, one of the AYPAC staff positions was responsible for promoting greater youth involvement and participation in the organisation.

### ***Policy Development***

AYPAC was well placed to provide well-researched responses to policy proposals and government decisions, as well as providing creative and feasible alternatives. By devoting time and resources to policy development, the Coalition was able to gain credibility among youth organisations and large segments of the public at large. As a result, it was able to gain access to decision-makers and exert direct influence on government policy. One example is the Australian government's amalgamation of the Department of Social Security with the Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. In part, this came as a result of pressure from AYPAC to address a payment inequity between the two departments in terms of financial support for youth. The Coalition also successfully lobbied the government to involve youth in an initiative aimed at promoting the sharing of cultural experiences between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

## **EXISTING GAPS**

### ***Funding***

The most obvious gap AYPAC is currently faced with is the issue of funding. Undeniably some of AYPAC's past success must be accredited to its financial resources, which

allowed it to maintain a full time staff that could devote time to policy development and research as well as increasing awareness about the organisation. Without these resources AYPAC will not be able to operate at the same level of effectiveness. State and territorial groups have already been seriously affected by the Coalition's reduced activity. The Northern Territory Youth Affairs Network (NTYAN), for example, covers a large and isolated geographical area and is reliant on AYPAC for information about current issues in youth service provision. Without its previous levels of funding, this may be one area where the group must reduce its activity. The funding situation is not entirely negative, however, since AYPAC has received increased financial support from several member organisations. These additional contributions may indicate that the Coalition will be able to find alternate funding sources to compensate for the loss of government support.

### ***Political Astuteness***

In the past, AYPAC did not devote much attention to assessing the effectiveness of its lobbying efforts. Some kind of self-evaluation process could have demonstrated that certain efforts may have been harming the group's credibility more than advancing its objectives. Ensuring that its lobbying efforts were more compatible with the policy options available to the government may have allowed the group to avoid the funding cut.

### ***Government Interest***

AYPAC has had to confront the fact that the Australian Government does not appear overly receptive to youth concerns when developing policy. In 1998, the government announced the establishment of a National Youth Roundtable as part of a new set of youth policies that replaced, among other things, the AYPAC funding. The Roundtable consists of fifty youth who will meet with government officials twice a year. Unlike AYPAC, it will neither have the resources to develop policy and conduct research nor the ability to respond to policy proposals on an ongoing basis. AYPAC believes that the government does not want to establish meaningful youth policies so that they cannot be used as instruments with which political performance could be measured.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

- ❑ Groups wishing to have a direct influence on public policy must create proposals that are compatible with the current political climate. Policy that is seen as too radical could result in loss of credibility or even funding.
- ❑ Organisations that include youth-adult collaboration in their governance structures tend to be more open to developing a broad range of partnerships with groups that share similar interests. This collaboration also increases the group's credibility with a wider audience.
- ❑ Developing a variety of different funding sources and simultaneously building good relationships with other groups can help provide financial stability in difficult financial times when the survival of the organisation is threatened.
- ❑ For large groups that represent member organisations, credibility can stem from not

only providing political representation, but also providing the tools that groups need to effectively operate in their own jurisdictions. This can mean providing statistical information or undertaking studies that are relevant to the concerns and needs of members.

- Organisations need to be able to assess and communicate their successes to both those whom they seek to represent and those sources from which they hope to receive funding.
- By creating strong links with other organisations, AYPAC has not allowed the geographic size and low population density of Australia to become a hindrance to effective networking between youth groups and youth-serving groups.

## G. CONCLUSIONS

Youth are often cited by politicians and administrators as symbols of hope and idealism, and the key to the future. This rhetoric, however, conceals a more fundamental set of closed-minded attitudes that acts as a barrier to young people who want to get involved in civic life and contribute to policy-making. Apprehension about youth in decision-making roles discourages honest input, reinforces youth anxiety about established political structures, and contributes to a sense of youth apathy and detachment from mainstream society. This cultural apprehension is reflected in the limited political space granted to young people. In a federation like Canada, where responsibility for youth does not clearly lie in any single jurisdiction, governments are able to more easily absolve themselves of an active role. Most “child and youth” initiatives focus on children, with youth policy being limited to unemployment or education issues. Across Canada, little attention is given to the promotion of youth involvement in decision-making, and there is little recognition of the value that this participation would bring to our democratic system.

The extent of the limitations placed on school board student trustees in Ontario is a concrete example of the contradictory message that youth are given: they are legitimate actors in the policy-making process, yet are incapable of assuming real responsibility or of making decisions on their own. We found that, even with the legislative and regulatory restrictions on the activity of the students, many boards found it necessary to further curtail youth involvement by introducing adult-driven selection models which deny student input into the selection of student representatives. Even when structures are explicitly set up to provide the input of youth into a process, as in the case of the Youth Round Table on the Environment, there tends to be a culture of resistance to youth ideas encouraging cynicism among young people about getting involved.

What the many successful examples of student trusteeship demonstrate is that if youth are given the proper orientation and are treated with respect, they can be very effective actors in an “adult” environment. The professionalism of meetings of the Ontario Secondary School Students’ Association (OSSSA) and of Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO) demonstrates that, even with less experienced youth, meetings do not have to be irrelevant to young people. If our political culture does not provide opportunities for them to contribute in a meaningful way, then we must collectively share the blame when young people are apathetic towards politics, uninvolved in their communities, and disenchanted with traditional values.

It is from within this cultural context that all youth efforts to influence policy-making take place. Youth groups need to be prepared to face a culture where rhetoric about the value of youth involvement in decision-making is not matched by action. The eight case studies examined point to a variety of lessons about how youth have been successful in influencing public policy, and what barriers hold them back from greater involvement. Despite the overall lack of influence by youth in decision-making processes, the cases illustrate a great deal of talent and ability within youth organisations that would have much to contribute to the policy-making process. The following lessons identify key areas where youth need to focus if they want to exert influence more forcefully.

## 1. Understand the political processes and the art of influence.

Many youth groups we looked at demonstrated a capacity to develop good ideas and creative approaches to solving problems. However, we also found that despite this creativity and energy, many young people involved in youth organisations lack a solid understanding of the political system. Part of this weakness is the result of the educational system that does not provide adequate civics curricula that teach youth the structural process of government and the political realities which shape that process. Youth need to be taught the reasons why involvement is necessary to develop a strong civil society, and the value that their input can bring. That responsibility, however, must also fall on youth themselves. If youth organisations hope to influence how decisions are made and policies implemented, they must equip themselves with the required knowledge.

As well as developing a good understanding of the political process, youth groups must become more strategic in their policy focus. Lobbying is a skill that many youth do not possess, despite the fact that it is the modus operandi of the political system. For many youth, the process of attempting to influence policy-making by lobbying decision-makers is seen as “selling out.” While we are not arguing that youth need to become lobbyists to be effective, we are suggesting that young people need to think about and sharpen the methods they use to try to influence policy-makers. It is not enough to simply understand the flow charts and diagrams that often represent the extent of civics education in Canada. Young people need to gain “democracy appreciation,” which includes an understanding of the value of debate, strategic lobbying, and compromise as part of a healthy democratic system.<sup>31</sup> Youth need to develop an understanding of how policy decisions are made, and how they can be involved in that process.

The Canadian Alliance of Students Associations (CASA) is a good example of an organisation that seems to understand how government works. CASA has been an effective lobbyist on the student loans issue precisely because it understands how to lobby and navigate itself through the political process. In the case of government-created youth bodies, like the Conseil permanent de la jeunesse (CPJ) and the Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE), the youth involved are able to get an up-close look at the machinery of government which helps them to influence policy through both their formal input and their informal lobbying efforts on a personal level.

While public displays of disobedience definitely have their place and should be part of the “youth arsenal,” they cannot be the only approach. Having influence necessitates taking a more strategic approach when dealing with government. While it is poetic to think of one’s actions as part of a “youth movement,” such thinking tends to lead youth away from strategic thinking and more towards impulsive, ill thought out plans. The AYC may in fact belong to a Friendship Centre movement, and the OSSSA might think of itself as the largest student movement in Canada, but the reality is that to influence policy-makers youth must start thinking in terms of finding and developing allies, offering workable solutions, developing relationships with decision-makers, and avoiding antagonism.

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<sup>31</sup> John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, “Civics Is Not Enough: Teaching Barbarics in K-12,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, vol. 29, n. 1, March 1996, p. 62.

## **2. Develop a clear mandate and focus, and know who your constituency is.**

Many of the youth groups we surveyed demonstrated a lack of focus about their activities and their constituency. To be effective, groups must recognise that they cannot be all things to all youth, but rather need to target their efforts and energies. First, a youth group must determine whether its mandate relates to advocacy, service provision, or both. Second, it must outline its priorities and determine which activities best serve its mandate. Third, it must address the question of representation by determining its constituency and ensuring that its structure is responsive to its membership.

The case of the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association is one that reflects both the need to recruit strategically and the need to be honest about who a group is representing. If groups fail to do this, rival organisations can with some legitimacy claim to represent certain youth, as happened in Ontario high schools. The result can be a dilution of youth lobbying pressure and contradictory or duplicated efforts among organisations. In the case of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations, one of the strengths of the organisations is its explicitness in presenting itself as a lobby group of student associations, and not the embodiment of the student movement in Canada. Addressing the question of representation, and being honest about it, is the key to maintaining a focused set of activities while developing credibility and relevance for an organisation's constituency and the policy-makers it seeks to influence.

## **3. Develop strategies to manage the loss of organisational capital.**

The loss of organisational capital (leadership, institutional memory), particularly aggravated by the short leadership cycles in most youth groups, is a failure of strategic planning which youth need to address. With leadership changes, which often occur every year, organisations tend to duplicate past projects, encounter similar problems, and face similar issues, without the benefit of experience. As most youth groups are unable to maintain a paid staff person, they need to maintain an adequate record system as well as look at how to incorporate the experience of past members into the organisation's governance structure. In the case of the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association, similar documents have been reproduced, reports about successes and failures have been lost, and old policy positions have been forgotten.

The issue of duplication refers not only to knowledge of past efforts and activities, but also to an understanding of why the organisation is structured in a particular way. Although the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations has a paid staff, there seems to be a shift away from the organisational principles that led to the creation of the group in the first place. Many members no longer understand why the current governance model was developed in response to the more comprehensive approach of the Canadian Federation of Students. A staggered electoral process, such as the one adopted by the Aboriginal Youth Council, can help to alleviate some of those concerns, and provide for greater continuity and a more coherent focus. An adequate archival system and a mechanism for alumni input are also partial solutions.

#### **4. Create an effective communications strategy.**

Most youth organisations suffer from the lack of a coherent strategy to communicate their message and activities. To secure long-term funding and maintain credibility with a constituency and policy-makers, a youth group must be prepared to devote time and energy to publicising its work. Youth opinion has not traditionally been seen as an important issue. As a result, there are few opportunities for youth organisations to communicate their message to the public through the media.

An effective communications strategy allows a successful youth organisation to secure its image with its constituency and with those it seeks to influence, while developing a reputation that will allow it to secure funding. The Conseil permanent de la jeunesse in Quebec has been highly successful at producing quality documents on policy questions, but it needs to publicise its activities. If it is unable to communicate to the general public that its work is important, it could easily lose its government funding without benefiting from strong public support. Similarly, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations has been able to develop an image of credibility among policy-makers. However, if Canadian students are unaware of the organisation's effectiveness, it cannot count on their support.

#### **5. Balance the inherent tension between safeguarding complete autonomy and successfully influencing policy.**

The typology described in Section B outlined the range of autonomy levels in youth organisations and groups. Some, like the OSSSA, are completely autonomous while others, like the YRTE, are organised for youth. While both have their strengths and weaknesses, the important lesson is that these different models illustrate the underlying tension between autonomy and success in influencing policy development. Autonomous organisations are empowering by their very nature because they are created and run by young people. In the case of the OSSSA, autonomy gives members of the organisation a sense of authority in that they speak for and understand the concerns of their constituents, since the group was created by and for students.

A middle range group like the AYC has a sense of that same empowerment, but has been supported and nurtured under the wing of a larger organisation. Its growing sense of autonomy emerged over time and despite maintaining the ability to chart its own course it is still situated under the banner of a parent organisation. At the same time, it has demonstrated that it has been able to make its own decisions and carry out the work that accompanies them. At the Aboriginal Governance in Urban Settings Conference in 1998, the AYC was a full participant and even co-chaired the event despite its parent organisation's decision not to adopt an active role. In the case of the YRTE and CPJ, their respective autonomy is limited by a mandate established by an outside authority. Within those established parameters, however, the youth still possess the ability to shape the agenda and help chart future courses of action.

Autonomy may be empowering, but it can also result in an organisation looking from the outside in. The OSSSA may be 700,000 students strong, but how much influence does it

have in comparison to the YRTE where the views of the young people around the table are directly fed to the Minister of the Environment? The AYC feels strong in its semi-autonomous state, but would it be better off as a consultative body of the federal government?

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations is an autonomous organisation that has directly influenced student loan policy by working from within the system. It understands how the political process works and therefore operates in a “political manner.” By this we mean, it knows when to criticise government and when to give it praise. Some may argue that this is the perfect marriage of autonomy and realism, but critics accuse the group of being Liberal sell-outs. While we do not agree with this assessment, it demonstrates the tension that youth face between always speaking their mind and adopting radical positions and wanting to successfully exert a certain degree of influence in the policy-making process.

Young people can scream that tuition should be free and feel empowered by holding rallies and bemoaning the evils of government, but they should not expect to influence policy or secure a source of long-term funding. On the other hand, offering concrete and realistic suggestions that reflect the reality of government, and/or having a direct link into decision-making circles, will tend to lead to better results. The question is how much has to be given up in order to influence decision-making? There are no easy answers, but it is important for youth to recognise the tension and begin to understand how to best achieve their goals.

#### **6. To gain legitimacy, produce policy-relevant work and be responsive to the needs and views of your membership.**

It is clear from the various case studies that young people can and do produce some excellent policy-related work. The Conseil permanent de la jeunesse is a case in point, having produced numerous think pieces on issues relating to youth suicide, poverty and labour issues. Similarly, the Aboriginal Youth Council has worked hard with the federal government to develop the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres (UMAYC) initiative and the OSSSA has taken some worthwhile policy positions on the recent teacher’s strike in Ontario. These three examples represent not only the type of policy relevant work youth can develop, but the legitimacy that is accrued from developing such positions. The governments of Quebec and Ontario listen to what the CPJ and OSSSA have to say because they have established a track record of producing good work.

Legitimacy is also derived from developing a structure that reflects the group’s philosophy and objectives. For a group like CAYFO, this means ensuring that its governance structure reflects its philosophy of youth-adult collaboration. Legitimacy can only be established and maintained if young people within an organisation feel that the leadership reflects their views and is responsive and open to different ideas. In the case of the OSSSA, the government considers them a legitimate representative of Ontario students, but many students still feel alienated because so much of the decision-making and development of ideas happens at the top. Engaging the grassroots of an organisation is key to maintaining

credibility and ensuring accountability.

## **7. Learn how to seek out diverse funding sources and implement sound financial management practices.**

The search for increased funding is an ongoing process in the non-profit sector, one that is rendered more difficult for youth groups because they need to work harder than mainstream organisations to demonstrate their legitimacy. Many youth groups with an advocacy component are considered political and are ineligible for charitable status under Revenue Canada guidelines. Dependence on a sole source of funding is always a dangerous position for any organisation since so much of its future is dependent on the goodwill of a group that is beyond its control. Developing a good network of supportive organisations, as in the case of the Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC), can help an organisation to sustain itself in times of financial crisis. The real solution, however, is to find other ways to generate revenue. This can include seeking out funding from other grant-giving bodies or corporations or developing in-house strategies to generate revenue from the group's activities.

As well as suffering from an inability to secure diverse funding sources, youth groups often fail to manage funds that they are able to secure. While assumptions about the financial irresponsibility of youth are biased, it is also true that many youth organisations do not take adequate steps to seek out financial management training, implement structural safeguards against the mismanagement of funds, and keep track of expenses. Once the credibility of an organisation has been damaged by a financial scandal, it is very difficult to rebuild that reputation. Without the luxury of a paid staff person to undertake financial management, youth organisations need to work hard to demonstrate that they are capable of managing projects that involve large sums of money.

Unlike other organisations, youth groups do not have the financial resources or access to the media that could allow them to rebuild after a serious financial blunder or the loss of a principal funding source. An inability to effectively communicate their activities to the general public has usually made access to capital for operational expenses difficult to secure. Creating an orientation package for youth in financial positions and developing a transparent financial management system are therefore necessary to demonstrate an organisation's capacity to manage itself. Unless groups are prepared to devote the time needed to develop strategies for increased financial independence, they will operate under circumstances of constant uncertainty.

## **8. Build partnerships with like-minded individuals and groups and consider intergenerational collaboration.**

The tendency of many youth organisations is to act territorially and neglect opportunities for collaborative efforts. This contributes to an overall lack of coherent lobbying strategies by youth. Strategic thinking involves looking at the bigger picture, identifying other groups with similar interests or compatible activities, and forging partnerships with those

groups. This is particularly true for youth organisations struggling to secure funding. Duplication of efforts because of a lack of inter-organisational communication lessens the impact of pressure exerted on policy-makers and weakens youth influence on public policy.

Youth groups also need to examine collaborative opportunities with adult organisations and with adults in their own organisations. Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO) is a good example of youth-adult collaboration because it recognises the need to blend various perspectives, experiences and knowledge in dealing with young people's issues. Youth in the organisation benefit from informal or formal mentoring opportunities, the experience of adults, and the contacts and credibility that they can help youth establish. AYPAC is a good example of how youth-adult collaboration has allowed young people to identify other groups in society that may share common interests and goals. This kind of collaboration also gives youth the opportunity to work in an organisational environment that is more reflective of how society really works, rather than in an "us versus them" atmosphere. The National Association of Friendship Centres-Aboriginal Youth Council relationship is perhaps one of the best examples of this type of collaboration. Aboriginal peoples have historically involved their young in decision-making. The NAFC has demonstrated this tradition by valuing the AYC and providing it with support while respecting its autonomy.

It is important for youth to remember, when collaborating or partnering with adults, to establish a clear set of objectives, expectations and parameters for the working relationship. A failure to do so can lead to "experience taking over" pushing young people to the side and forcing them to play a much smaller role in decision-making. This is especially important in cases where adults have decided to create opportunities for youth involvement. As seen in the case of the Youth Round Table on the Environment and Ontario student trustees, a lack of clarity about roles and expectations can lead to unfulfilled expectations and disillusionment with the process.

## **9. Empower all members of the organisation rather than just those at the top.**

The success of organisations like the OSSSA and CASA is that they were created, and are operated, by youth. The OSSSA has successfully maintained a steady stream of new members largely because delegates at their youth conferences are exposed to an organisation that is entirely run by and for youth. Traditionally, the Association's recruitment strategy has relied almost exclusively on the appeal of a student-run organisation. Likewise, CASA member associations pay into the organisation specifically because they want their individual concerns on post-secondary education to be heard. Youth are attracted to organisations that seem capable of channelling their energy, ideas, and enthusiasm into tangible results.

Youth-led organisations, however, are not the only model for youth empowerment. Both the CPJ and the YRTE are organisations created by government that empower those involved by providing youth with meaningful roles. The key to empowerment lies in their ability to create an outlet for young people's ideas, so that youth input can be heard and

evaluated. One of the problems that the YRTE faced in its early stages of development was that the youth members did not feel they were being heard and hence felt that their expectations were not being met. The opportunity to dialogue with and make recommendations to policy-makers will not be satisfactory for youth, unless it is clear that there is potential for meaningful results and that youth are not simply being used for political ends.

Youth organisations themselves need to address this same question in terms of their leadership structure. Many of the organisations we looked at achieved success precisely because of their leadership. Those who hold the top positions in organisations like the OSSSA, CASA, CPJ and AYPAC do so because they are competent, energetic and intelligent people. Leadership is obviously a strength in any organisation, but holds specific importance in youth groups because of the relative lack of experience that young people have, and the amount of turnover that organisations face. In terms of attempting to influence public policy, the most effective relationships that youth can develop with decision-makers often rest on the personal efforts of one individual, a fact that demonstrates the value of strong leadership.

Groups that rely on strong leadership, however, need to be aware of the potential for the development of a ‘cult of personality.’ If the leader or leadership is especially strong, the tendency is for everything to be handled and executed through him or her. Within the OSSSA, this has been a serious problem as the vast majority of the organisation’s activities are co-ordinated by a very small group at the top of the hierarchy. The effects are two-fold: members of the organisation do not feel empowered because all of the interesting work is being controlled by the leader(s); and changes in leadership, which often happen annually, tend to leave a vacuum at the top. All the intellectual capital and, in some cases, the group’s ability to exert influence, disappears when its leaders move on, forcing the incoming leadership to start over. The end result is a weakening of the organisation’s capacity to sustain itself and contribute to policy-making on an ongoing basis.

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## APPENDIX A: STUDENT TRUSTEE SELECTION MODELS

The authors would like to thank staff at the following school boards who were kind enough to provide documentation and special assistance. The following table indicates how each board selects candidates for the position of student trustee at the local school level and at the board level. For a full explanation of the different selection models, refer to Section C.

SCHOOL BOARD	SCHOOL LEVEL	BOARD LEVEL
Algoma DSB	Principal/Board	School Rotation
Algonquin and Lakeshore CDSB(*)	N/A	Student Election
Avon Maitland DSB	SC or Election	Rotating Participat'n
Bluewater DSB	Election	Rotating Participat'n
Bruce-Grey CDSB	Principal/SC	Board Selection
CDSB of Eastern Ontario (*)	Principal	Board Selection
Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario	SC Self-selection	Board Selection
CSD catholique des Aurores boréales	SC	Board Selection
CSD catholique du Centre-Est de l'Ontario	SC	Student Election
CSD catholique du Centre-Sud	Variable	Student Election
CSD catholique de l'Est Ontarien	SC or Election	Board Selection
CSD catholique Franco-Nord	Variable	School Rotation
CSD catholique des Grandes Rivières	N/A	Student Election
CSD catholique du Nouvel-Ontario	SC	Student Election
CSD du Centre Sud-Ouest	Election	Student Election
CSD des écoles catholiques du Sud-Ouest	N/A	Student Election
CSD du Grand Nord de l'Ontario	N/A	Student Election
CSD du Nord-Est de l'Ontario	SC	Student Election
DSB of Niagara	Principal	Student Election
DSB Ontario North East	Variable	Rotating Participat'n
Dufferin-Peel CDSB	SC Self-selection	Student Election
Durham CDSB	Principal/SC	Board Selection
Durham DSB	SC	Board Selection (M)
Grand Erie DSB	Principal	Board Selection
Greater Essex County DSB	N/A	Board Selection (M)
Halton CDSB	SC	Board Selection
Halton DSB	SC	Board Selection
Hamilton-Wentworth CDSB	SC Self-selection	Student Election
Hamilton-Wentworth DSB	N/A	Student Election
Hastings and Prince Edward DSB	SC	Rotating Participat'n
Huron Perth CDSB	Variable	School Rotation
Huron-Superior CDSB	SC	Board Selection
Kawartha Pine Ridge DSB	N/A	Student Election
Keewatin-Patricia DSB	Election	School Rotation
Kenora CDSB	Principal/SC	N/A (one school)
Lakehead DSB	SC	Student Election

Limestone DSB	SC Self-selection	Student Election
London District Catholic School Board (38)	SC Self-selection	Student Election
Near North DSB	SC	Student Election
Niagara CDSB	SC	School Rotation
Nipissing-Parry Sound CDSB	SC President	N/A (one school)
Northeastern CDSB	SC President	N/A (one school)
Ottawa-Carleton CDSB	Variable	Student Election
Ottawa-Carleton DSB	Election	Student Election
Peel DSB	Election	Student Election
Peterborough Victoria Nor. And Clar. CDSB	SC Self-selection	Student Election
Rainy River DSB	Election	School Rotation
Renfrew County CDSB (*)	SC	School Rotation
Renfrew County DSB	SC or Election	Collective Rep'n
St. Clair CDSB	Principal/SC	Collective Rep'n
Simcoe County DSB	N/A	Board Selection (M)
Simcoe Muskoka CDSB	No Student Trustee	No Policy for 1999
Sudbury CDSB	Variable	Board Selection
Superior-Greenstone DSB	Principal/SC	School Rotation
Thames Valley DSB (*)	Principal/SC	Student Election
Thunder Bay CDSB	SC	School Rotation
Toronto CDSB		Student Election
Toronto DSB		Student Election
Trillium Lakelands DSB	3 staff/1 student	Board Selection (Pr.)
Upper Grand DSB	Principal/staff/stud.	School Rotation
Waterloo CDSB	SC	School Rotation
Waterloo Region DSB	SC or Election	Student Election
Wellington CDSB	Principal/SC	School Rotation
Windsor-Essex CDSB	Principal	Board Selection
York CDSB	SC Self-selection	Board Selection
York Region DSB	SC	Student Election

### LEGEND

SC – Student council

\* - Student trustee policy to be implemented in Fall 1999

M – Mixed system in which there is substantial student input

Pr. – Principal

Self-selection – Student council members select candidate from among themselves

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW AND CONTACT LIST

Robert Allen, Former Trustee, Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board  
Tom Arnason, Student Trustee, Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board  
Michael Ash, Principal, Avon Maitland District School Board  
Mel Baird, Superintendent, Algoma District School Board  
Anthea Bament, Northern Territory Youth Affairs Network, Australia  
Mark Barnett, Student Trustee, Halton Catholic District School Board  
Megan Bennett, President, Eastern South Region, OSSSA  
Serge Bertin, Conseil permanent de la jeunesse  
Leah Brown, Student Trustee, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board  
Caroline Chuang, Student Trustee, Toronto Catholic District School Board  
Ray Contois, Superintendent, Huron-Perth Catholic District School Board  
Diane Cresswell, Manager, Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies  
Adam Daifallah, Former Student Trustee, Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board  
Carla Doucet, Member, Youth Round Table on the Environment  
Steve Dunning, Environment Canada  
Jessica Franklin, Student Trustee, York Region District School Board  
Claire Gilbert, Director of Educational Affairs, Carleton University Students' Association  
Rick Gilbert, Nova Scotia Youth Secretariat  
Luc Grondin, Youth Co-ordinator, Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa  
Mark Gryba, Policy Analyst, National Association of Friendship Centres  
Mary Hall, Trustee, Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board  
Fiona Heald, Member, Youth Round Table on the Environment  
Theresa Joseph, Ontario Catholic Student Council Federation (Ottawa-Carleton)  
Mackenzie Kinmond, Co-President, Nepean High School, Ottawa-Carleton  
David Matthews, Executive Officer, Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition  
Tom McCarthy, President, Eastern North Region, OSSSA  
David Millen, Executive Director, Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa  
Jarrod Miller, Former Member, Youth Round Table on the Environment  
M.B. Moore, Director of Education, Near North District School Board  
Dennis Nolan, Co-Chair, Board of Directors, Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa  
Jennifer Parker, Communications, Ministry of Youth Affairs, New Zealand  
Trudy Seri Samuel, Youth Outreach Specialist, Environment Canada  
Sandra Scarth, Former Executive Director, Child Welfare League of Canada  
Martin Simard, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations  
Georgia Simms, Student Trustee, Halton District School Board  
Melanie Slade, Student Trustee, St. Clair Catholic District School Board  
Candace Soloway, Student Trustee, Superior Greenstone District School Board  
Javeed Sukhera, Premier, OSSSA  
Alex Usher, Former National Director, Canadian Alliance of Student Associations  
Sharon Visitor, Youth Intervenor, Aboriginal Youth Council  
Teresa Welsh, Member, Board of Directors, Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa  
Julie Wonnacott, Student Trustee, Durham Catholic District School Board  
Amy Yee, Former Student Trustee, Ottawa Board of Education  
Michelle Yu, Youth Net/Réseau Ado

## APPENDIX C: CASE STUDY CONTACT INFORMATION

- I. School board contact information can be found on the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>
- II. Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa (CAYFO)  
One Nicholas Street, Suite 712  
Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7 Canada  
(613) 244-3803  
<http://www.cayfo.ca>
- III. Ontario Secondary School Students' Association (OSSSA)  
1-800-31-OSSSA (1-800-316-7772)  
<http://www.ossaa.org>
- IV. Le Conseil permanent de la jeunesse  
Édifice Marie-Guyart, 1056, rue Louis-Alexandre-Taschereau  
Aile René-Lévesque, 1er étage  
Québec (QC) G1R 5Z7 Canada  
(418) 644-9595 1-800-363-1049  
<http://www.cpj.gouv.qc.ca>
- V. Aboriginal Youth Council (AYC)  
c/o National Association of Friendship Centres  
275 MacLaren Street  
Ottawa, ON K2P 0L9 Canada  
(613) 563-4844  
<http://www.auysop.com/AYC.html>
- VI. Youth Round Table on the Environment (YRTE)  
Outreach Programs, Environment Canada  
10 Wellington Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hull, QC K1A 0H3 Canada  
1-800-668-6767  
[http://www.ec.gc.ca/youth/yrt/yrte\\_e.htm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/youth/yrt/yrte_e.htm)
- VII. Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)  
P.O. Box 3408 Station D  
Ottawa, ON K1P 6H8 Canada  
(613) 236-3457  
<http://www.casa.ca>
- VIII. Australian Youth Policy and Action Coalition (AYPAC)  
P.O. Box 204 Ainslie, ACT 2602 Australia  
(02) 6247 1666  
<http://www.aypac.org.au>