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PRESS RELEASE For Immediate Distribution

FRANCOPHONE YOUTH WANT THE VOTING AGE LOWERED TO 16 YEARS OF AGE

Ottawa, October 11th, 2016 — The Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française (FJCF) — *French Canadian Youth Federation* - believes that the minimum age to be considered a qualified elector should be set to 16 in order to be fair towards youth, to allow federal politics to better represent Canadian society, and, furthermore, because there exists no reason to rationally justify the current legislation.

The FJCF has written a brief on the matter, entitled **Establishing the Right to Vote From the Age of 16, a Priority in Order to Improve our Electoral System**, which was recently submitted to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE). The brief can be found at the following address: <http://fjcf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Vote-16-Brief.pdf>.

Two recommendations emanate from this brief:

1. **That Article 3 of the Canada Elections Act, which sets the minimum age to be a qualified elector at 18 years of age, be modified to set the minimum age to be a qualified elector at 16 years of age;**
2. **That the Government of Canada collaborate with its provincial and territorial partners to establish measures developing civic education among high school students in order to provide a framework for their first federal voting experience.**

Though the FJCF has received a mandate from its members to defend the right to vote at 16, it is important to remind everyone that it is far from the only one to speak up on this important issue which concerns society as a whole. The Fédération des jeunes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick (*New Brunswick Francophone Youth Federation*), for example, has been championing the initiative at a provincial level for many years. In 2004, Liberal MP Mark Holland introduced a bill in the House of Commons which namely aimed to set the voting age to 16 years of age. In 2014, New Brunswick Green Party Leader David Coon introduced a similar bill to that effect. In January of this year, NDP MP Don Davies took the lead by introducing Bill C-213 to the House of Commons, requesting that the voting age in the federal election be lowered to 16. In the past, the matter has also been discussed by the Liberals in Newfoundland and

Labrador, as well as within the Parti Québécois. Other known institutions, such as the Institut du Nouveau-Monde and Samara Canada also regularly express their support for the right to vote at 16.

The FJCF has set up an electronic petition asking the Government of Canada to adopt these two recommendations. The petition can be viewed and signed at the following address: <https://petitions.parl.gc.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-600>.

“The right to vote is a fundamental value in a democracy. Through civic engagement and a will to ensure that our representatives address the major of issues of today and tomorrow, Canadians choose to exercise their right to vote. They do so to improve our communities and see them thrive. Youth are an integral part of our communities: they must not be pushed aside. They play an essential role in the development of our communities, and have ideas to improve them. To give youth the right to vote from the age of 16 is to confirm that they have a true potential to take an active part in Canadian democracy and to act for the common good,” believes FJCF president, Justin Johnson.

The FJCF has also devoted a section of its website to the Vote 16 issue, where information, articles and template letters, in both French and English, can be found to send to your MP to encourage them to push this important issue. Everything can be found at <http://fjcf.ca/ressources/vote16/>.

The Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française is a national organization founded in 1974, managed BY youth and FOR youth, made up of 11 youth organization members from 9 provinces and 2 territories. It contributes to the sociocultural development and identity of French-speaking young Canadians aged 14 to 25 through activities and events held across Canada, as well as youth employment programs.

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For more information:

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