



Platform **BY** Youth, **FOR** Youth

April 2025

PREPARED FOR THE
Federal Elections

01 Context



For 50 years now, the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française (FJCF) has been representing the interests of French-speaking youth in Canada and helping them reach their full potential. Embodying the philosophy “By youth, For youth”, the FJCF operates with a governance made up entirely of elected young people aged 14 to 25 who represent the interests of young people across the country. “By youth, For youth” means ensuring that we reflect young people and their real needs.

Over the years, the FJCF has developed a wealth of expertise that enables it to carry out many large-scale projects “By youth, For youth”. Being a national federation also means offering young people unique opportunities to open up their horizons to the vastness and diversity of our country. We give young people the chance to get out of their communities, take part in dynamic initiatives outside school, learn more about each other’s realities and return home with their minds filled with new ideas. These young people often become a source of inspiration for others and an example of leadership to follow.

The FJCF believes that the voice of youth is crucial to Canada’s future. That’s why our activities also provide opportunities for young people to reflect on the country’s future and participate - in a non-partisan way - in efforts to inform public policy in Canada, including the development of this platform “BY youth FOR youth”.

Canada’s Francophone youth take Canada’s future to heart. Over the past year, FJCF members have identified a series of priority issues that they have grouped under three main headings: ethical leadership, the economy and education. For each of these themes, young people have formulated a series of proposals. They hope that these issues and proposals will be at the forefront of public debate during the federal election, and that they will feed into the proposals and commitments of each of the political parties and all the candidates who aspire to form the next government.

Summary of Proposals



Canada's Francophone youth proposes

01

Ethical Leadership

1.1

THAT the next Government of Canada immediately create a full-fledged Department of Youth and appoint a minister of Youth, who will have a full seat in the federal Cabinet.

1.2

THAT the Government of Canada ensure freedom of the press and access to quality, verifiable information in French throughout the country by:

- Increased, stable and public funding for Société Radio-Canada.
- Free access to all Société Radio-Canada platforms for all Canadians.
- Stable and adequate funding for French-language community media in the Canadian Francophonie.

1.3

THAT the Government of Canada undertake systemic reform to update and strengthen Canada's social safety net for the next century.

1.4

THAT the Government of Canada increase its investment support of sustainable development research.

02

Economy

2.1

THAT the Government of Canada promote access to housing for all Canadians by:

- Creating incentives to encourage access to shared housing, condos and co-ownerships;

Summary of Proposals (cont).



- Ensuring that rental expenses are now recognized as a determining factor in the credit rating of Canadians;
- Enhancing the Tax-Free Savings Account for First-Time Home Buyers (TFSA) by adding a government incentive that would double the total value of individual savings.

2.2

THAT the Government of Canada improve the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YES) by reducing the administrative burden of YES and introducing a Francophone lens in all its programs.

03

Education

3.1

THAT the Government of Canada promote increased access to post-secondary education in French across Canada by:

- Permanently abolishing interest on student loans for post-secondary education;
- Creating an incentive for post-secondary studies in French. This incentive could take the form of a tax credit for those who complete their post-secondary studies in French (e.g.: a deduction of an amount totalling up to 75% of the cost of studies that would apply for four [4] years following the completion of studies);
- Reviewing the eligibility conditions for the Canada Education Savings Grant for young people wishing to pursue their post-secondary studies in French.

3.2

THAT the Government of Canada provide free mental health services and supports to all Canadians, with special consideration for the needs of youth.

The confidence Canadians have in their governments and elected representatives has been gradually eroded, and a feeling of political apathy has spread through Canadian society. Young people are not immune to this growing sentiment, especially as the global political situation casts a shadow over international political integrity.

Yet Canada has had certain standards in place to ensure the integrity and transparency of the federal government for several years now. Federal institutions such as the Office of the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner of Canada, the Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada and the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada now serve to prevent and mitigate conflicts of interest within the government.

But existing standards and procedures are no longer enough. Faced with the insidious undermining of government integrity and democracy around the world, Canada's Francophone youth expects more and better from the federal government. They are calling for ethical leadership in Canada.

What exactly is ethical leadership? It is leadership that is rooted in principles that transcend partisan ideology, and that is of the order of a fundamental commitment. Young people aspire to a government that will not only ensure that its actions are addressed, but will also protect human rights, preserve the rule of law in Canada, defend Canadian sovereignty and build on solidarity in its international relations. Young people imagine and want a government that cares about and helps less fortunate Canadians, and that constantly acts as a standard-bearer for human rights around the world.

It therefore goes without saying that one of young people's expectations of Canada's next government is that it should guarantee the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined in the Canadian Charter, including the equality of the official languages. But young people don't just expect the next government to preserve historic gains. The actions of an ethical leadership should be consistent with its ambitions and intentions, and aimed at advancing rights. In terms of official languages, this would translate into measures to ensure the real vitality and strengthen the identity and cultural security of official language minority communities.

Furthermore, young people hope that the next government will facilitate the recognition of qualifications for newcomers to Canada's Francophonie. Too often, the lack of recognition of the training, skills and work experience of newcomers means that they are unable to pursue their careers once they



have settled in Canada, despite a shortage of skilled labour in our communities. Such barriers often hinder the economic prospects of newcomers, and often result in them leaving Francophone communities in search of new professional opportunities.

Also, among existing rights dear to young people's hearts, let's highlight freedom of the press. Young people are concerned about the erosion of traditional media and the rise of false information. An ethical government must ensure access to quality, verifiable information for all Canadians, across the country, in both official languages. This should be done through a strong, well-supported public broadcaster and a dynamic network of French-language community media across Canada.

In order to preserve fairness and ensure human dignity for all, young people also expect the next federal government to take action to strengthen Canada's social safety net. Whether it's through employment insurance reform, the introduction of new tax credits, the creation of more accessible spaces in Francophone daycare centres, measures to encourage greater retention of newcomers in Francophone communities, or the continuation of food programs in schools, expansion of the Canadian dental program, or investments to improve universal public health care in Canada, youth believe that the next government must act and invest with vision so that Canada's supports can meet the needs of future generations.

It is important to point out that a truly ethical government will not confine itself to the rights and freedoms already set out in the Charter. It will affirm and protect all human rights, including certain other rights that are just as essential in the eyes of young people. In particular, young people expect the environment to be a Canadian priority for generations to come. This means that the government must constantly act in an eco-responsible manner, and be a leader in climate action on a global scale, so that we can preserve and bequeath a viable planet to future generations.

Youth also expect the federal government to ensure that these approaches, policies and programs are aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the “Calls to Action” of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and that genuine and sincere collaboration with Indigenous partners guides the development of federal regulations.



Finally, youth believe that the highest levels of government must be inclusive and representative of Canadian society. In a context where the mobilization of young people is crucial to building a more inclusive and dynamic society, the establishment of a Department of Youth represents a strategic opportunity and a concrete demonstration of ethical leadership by the next federal government. It is time to give young people the place they deserve in the decisions that shape their future.

Canada's Francophone youth proposes

1.1 THAT the next Government of Canada immediately create a full-fledged Department of Youth and appoint a minister of Youth, who will have a full seat in the federal Cabinet.

1.2 THAT the Government of Canada ensure freedom of the press and access to quality, verifiable information in French throughout the country by:

- Increased, stable and public funding for Société Radio-Canada.
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1.3 THAT the Government of Canada undertake systemic reform to update and strengthen Canada's social safety net for the next century.

1.4 THAT the Government of Canada increase its investment support of sustainable development research.

From the outset, it should be noted that young people expect the government to strengthen the Canadian economy while respecting the principles of ethical leadership (integrity, commitment to human rights, environmental responsibility, etc.). A government that compromises or renounces these principles for economic reasons would not be worthy of young people or Canadians.

Canada is facing a tariff crisis that is disrupting and slowing down its already fragile economy. While uncertainty looms on the horizon, the federal government has a number of levers at its disposal that could strengthen the resilience of the Canadian economy and boost productivity across the country. Among the possible ways of countering the crisis, some point to improving the flow of Canadian products and skilled labour from one province to another across the country.¹ Others point to the attractiveness of diversifying international markets and strengthening the dynamism of small and medium-sized Canadian businesses.²

In fact, several sources confirm that Canada's young people have been suffering the consequences of the faltering economy for some time now. As a recent report pointed out, between the disruption caused by the pandemic and high inflation and interest rates, young people are having to:

"deal with obstacles that affect their quality of life in a disproportionately higher fashion than that of other age groups. (...) their level of satisfaction with life has decreased, and they are less optimistic about the future."³

Worryingly, according to the latest public data available, youth unemployment reached 14.2% in August - the highest rate since 2012 - and could cost \$18.5 billion in terms of real GDP growth.⁴ To remedy this problematic situation and boost Canadian productivity as a whole, young people want the government to step up its youth employability programs across the country.

What's more, as documented by a recent survey conducted by the FJCF, just over one in five young people (21%) say they have financial difficulties meeting their basic needs, and 44% of respondents who live independently from their parents or grandparents say they have financial difficulties.⁵ It is therefore not surprising that 91% of respondents said that investing in programs to make life more affordable for young people was a priority for them.⁶



Young Canadians struggle to afford housing and spend a higher proportion of their income on housing than older people. Among people who support their households, 63% of those aged 15 to 29 were tenants (national average: 33%). Among people aged 15 to 24 not living with a parent, the ratio of housing costs to income was 23%, compared with 16% for all age groups.⁷ Young people are also more likely than adults aged 40 and over to say they are very worried about their ability to buy a home or pay the rent.⁸ Youth want the federal government to take action to promote access to housing for all Canadians, particularly young people, by improving its existing programs. For example, more than 739,000 Canadians have already opened a Tax-Free Savings Account for First-Time Home Buyers (TFSA).⁹ It's high time to act. The government could increase the relevance of this mechanism and increase its use among youth by adding an incentive to boost individual investments.

Canada's Francophone youth proposes

2.1 THAT the Government of Canada promote access to housing for all Canadians by:

- Creating incentives to encourage access to shared housing, condos and co-ownerships;
- Ensuring that rental expenses are now recognized as a determining factor in the credit rating of Canadians;
- Enhancing the Tax-Free Savings Account for First-Time Home Buyers (TFSA) by adding a government incentive that would double the total value of individual savings.

2.2 THAT the Government of Canada improve the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YES) by reducing the administrative burden of YES and introducing a Francophone lens in all its programs.

Education has been a top priority for Canada's Francophone youth for generations. Members of the FJCF network are either about to finish high school, or have already begun their post-secondary studies. It's therefore natural that post-secondary education in French is of particular importance to them.

Access to French-language education is particularly important because it supports the development and vitality of Francophone and Acadian communities and encourages bilingualism across the country. Schools, colleges and universities that provide education in French are essential institutions for Canada's Francophone communities. To meet the educational needs of Canada's Francophonie, and to fulfill its obligations under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the federal government works with provincial and territorial governments on minority-language education.

Researchers have confirmed the many benefits of post-secondary education in French. We know, for example, that post-secondary studies in French strengthen the sense of belonging to the community¹⁰ and also contribute to the propensity to use French predominantly at work.¹¹

Unfortunately, a number of factors have eroded access to post-secondary education in French in recent years. Some post-secondary institutions have gone through periods of crisis, namely financial crises, which have resulted in the abolition of certain courses and programmes and a reduction in the range of opportunities to study in French in a given region or province.

In addition, the cost of education and the cost of moving to a new region of the province or to another province, depending on an individual's program of study, are among the main barriers to accessing post-secondary education in French in Canada. In a recent survey conducted by the FJCF, 88% of respondents indicated that offering bursaries to encourage post-secondary studies in French and improving access to post-secondary studies in French were among the priority actions for improving post-secondary education in French in Canada.¹²



On the other hand, the burden of student debt has never weighed so heavily on the shoulders of young people wishing to pursue their post-secondary education in French. In recent years, the combination of skyrocketing tuition fees and loan-based financial aid has pushed student debt to record levels. Today, total student debt to the federal government exceeds \$22.3 billion, more than the debt of some provinces.¹³ There is also a growing aversion to debt among many young Canadians. Of the 70% of high school graduates who cited financial reasons for not continuing their studies, one in four (25%) cited debt aversion as the main deterrent.¹⁴

At the same time, mental health is a critical issue for young people, who have the highest rate of mental health problems of any population in Canada - problems that often manifest themselves just as young people are embarking on their post-secondary education or entering the job market.¹⁵ Mental health issues and lack of access to mental health care hamper access to post-secondary education and disrupt young people's success in their studies.

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05 Sources



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