

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the 2025 Federal Budget**

By:

The National Alliance for Children and Youth



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Recommendations for the 2025 Federal Budget:

- **Recommendation # 1:** The creation of sustained mechanisms for consultation and engagement with the children and youth sector.
- **Recommendation # 2:** Provide permanent and secure funding for youth employment and skills development.
- **Recommendation #3:** Provide NACY with \$500,000 over 3 years to launch a pilot program to map the children and youth sector

Background

The National Alliance for Children and Youth (NACY) is a network of children and youth serving and supporting organizations from across Canada. As a member-driven organization, we work to ensure the voice of the children and youth sector is represented nationally. It is through our collective actions that we will build a stronger, more connected, informed, coordinated and respected sector that fosters an environment in which all children and youth in Canada can thrive.

NACY has a long history in the children and youth sector and the young people it serves. In 2014, with over 200 organizations, NACY released the results of a research project ([Taking Stock, 2014](#)). This report was instrumental in outlining the role of the sector in the lives of young people and what would be needed in order to continue meeting the changing needs of young people in Canada. At the conclusion of the Taking Stock study, NACY experienced a gap in funding and temporarily closed. Sector leaders soon felt it's absence and in 2018, work began to reimagine NACY in a modern context. In 2020, NACY officially began to welcome organizations back, led by champion members such as UNICEF, The Students Commission of Canada, BGC, Experiences Canada, Big Brothers Big Sisters Canada, Wisdom2Action, Pathways to Education and Kids Help Phone.

Since 2020, our efforts have focused on rebuilding a strong network of organizations, ensuring that NACY represents a range of services and regions with expertise that spans disciplines. Efforts have focused on reuniting a siloed sector, developing national policy priorities and providing convening opportunities. Our priorities have now expanded to focus on promoting awareness and understanding on issues that matter to our members and the young people they serve and to strengthen sustainability through policy, advocacy, and research.

Recommendation # 1 - The creation of sustained mechanisms for consultation and engagement with the children and youth sector.

In 2019, the Government of Canada released its first ever Youth Policy¹. This policy recognizes that our young people are in crisis, and highlights the need for a collaborative approach to addressing the complex issues they face each day. It also makes a commitment to working with youth-serving organizations to ensure that young Canadians have the necessary support, tools and opportunities to reach their full potential.

We recognize the federal government's important contributions to the sector over the past several years, including the State of Youth Report, the addition of charities and non-profits as part of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) program, and the announcement of the Community Services Recovery Fund in Budget 2021. These investments show us that this government understands the role young people play in our society and the importance of the children and youth-serving sector in supporting them. While the Prime Minister's Youth

¹ <https://www.canada.ca/en/youth/programs/policy.html>

Council is an important tool for ensuring there is a strong youth voice guiding the decision-making process at a federal level, there is a lack of consistent and coordinated consultation with those with the hands-on experience and responsibility of service delivery.

This sector is full of creative and innovative minds, with knowledge and expertise on the needs of children and youth in their communities, as well as the challenges and constraints in meeting them. The relationships that are built every day on the frontlines give service providers unique insights into the changing faces of the children and youth in our communities. It is for that reason that we ask the Government of Canada to continue to strengthen its relationships with front-line organizations by involving them more fully in policy-making decisions that impact the health and wellbeing of the children and youth sector by creating sustained mechanisms for engagement.

As a sector, we acknowledge the role we play in ensuring a meaningful relationship with government and are calling on you to uphold your commitment in the 2019 Youth Policy to work with us, and to create a framework for dialogue that would provide an ongoing opportunity for policy development to meet the evolving needs of children and youth.

Recommendation # 2 - Provide permanent and secure funding for youth employment and skills development.

As youth employment rates continue to drop, urgent investment is needed to create meaningful job opportunities for young people.² The jobs created by the children and youth sector, and the non-profit sector broadly, are well positioned to support young people as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. A recent report from BGC Canada shows that young people who access their services have fewer interactions with the justice system, improved mental health and face fewer academic struggles³.

Expansion of the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy

The Youth Employment and Skills Strategy continues to be a vital programming in supporting young people to gain access to skills, employment experiences and opportunities that lead to a successful transition into the workforce. While NACY applauds the expansion of the strategy in 2019, it is clear that more is needed. From surveying NACY members, we heard of significant funding decreases, delays in delivery and in some cases long-term subscribers were declined forthright. The impacts of which have been detrimental to the sustainability of organizations and their capacity to create opportunities for young people.

While we welcomed Budget 2024 committed \$351.2 million in the YESS through to 2026⁴. This funding has met less than 20% of the overall demand for youth employment support across

² <https://www.hiringlab.org/en-ca/2024/07/31/canadian-labour-market-q2-remains-in-a-rut/>

³ <https://www.bgccan.com/en/learning-impact/>

⁴ <https://www.budget.canada.ca/2024/report-rapport/chap2-en.html#s2-3>

Canada and will sunset. In the context of the troubling decline in youth employment and overall attachment to the workforce, the YESS is essential to create opportunities for bridging this gap long-term. **It is for this reason, that NACY would like to replicate the recommendation of BGC Canada to establish the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS) as a permanent program and consolidate it to ensure adequate funding for the Supports for Student Learning Program, Canada Summer Jobs, and the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy Program.**

A reimagining of Canada Summer Jobs

While organizations were grateful for the increase in placement opportunities through the pandemic, the return to pre-pandemic numbers has had a significant impact on placement opportunities broadly. Youth employment is no longer a luxury for young people, it has become a necessity. Youth are facing increased costs associated with housing, food, health services and education and more youth than ever are struggling with affordability. At a time when youth employment continues to decline, it is critical to expand employment opportunities⁵

When young people have access to meaningful employment at a young age, they are increasingly likely to stay in the labour market into adulthood. Investment in youth today is an investment in their future. CSJ funding should continue to increase annually based on inflation, with special consideration for youth population rates and increased cost of living.

To meet the changing needs of Canada's young people, the Canada Summer Jobs program should:

- Consult directly with the youth sector on reimagining Canada Summer Jobs to meet the needs of today's youth.
- Increase program flexibility and stability by allowing multi-year agreements, earlier funding decisions, part-time, year-round, and extended placement opportunities.
- Include paid sick time, benefits, and administrative expenses in funding agreements.
- Increase funding annually to reflect inflation and Canada's growing youth population.

Recommendation #3: Provide NACY with \$500,000 over 3 years to launch a pilot program to map the children and youth sector.

Over the past several years, youth serving organizations from across Canada have been investing their time, money and expertise into building a better, stronger and more informed sector to address the growing needs of children and youth in Canada. Both the Youth Policy and the commitments to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals⁶ (SDGs) clearly outline where we want Canada's children and youth to be. What is not clear is the aggregate of how Canada's children and youth organizations are currently contributing to these goals. To create

⁵ <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/o1/en/plus/6351-snapshot-employment-among-youth-canada>

⁶ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

benchmarks for success, an initial investment of \$500,000 over three years is recommended to pilot a mapping of the sector, beginning with the mapping of the NACY network. This may include, how many resources are being invested; where exemplary projects and centres of expertise may already exist; how many young people are employed in the sector, how many young people are being served nationally, and where the greatest gaps might be in meeting the Canadian targets, are just a few questions to be answered.

The project would first create a survey of the NACY Network, determining how it currently contributes to the UNSDGs and Canada's Youth Policy. The Canadian Index of Child and Youth Wellbeing cites 125 key performance indicators to measure progress on 9 dimensions of child wellness (related to the 17 SDGS.) The collection of quantitative and qualitative data regarding the relative progress of initiatives mapped, could then inform best practices and identify potential sources of expertise. The final stage of the project would be to explore the creation of a central online resource so other children and youth organizations seeking to establish or build upon similar programs and services in other areas of the country can benefit without reinventing the wheel.

Most importantly, the project will lead to a more responsive, less siloed and more accountable sector, while underscoring the important role each organization plays in helping Canada to move forward with its targets for 2030, infusing a challenged sector with much needed recognition and purpose.

NACY would also like to amplify the follow calls:

- Include child budget reporting in the budget impacts statement and require Child Rights Impact Assessment in Memoranda to Cabinet (MC), Budget requests and Treasury Board (TB) submissions. - UNICEF Canada
- Renew funding for the Canada Service Corps at a minimum of \$90 million annually. - BGC Canada
- We recommend the federal government provide \$2 million in 2025-26 and \$1 million ongoing for creating and maintaining a Canadian Nonprofit Data Lab. - Federal Nonprofit Data Coalition.
- That the Government of Canada expand the mandate of Employment and Skills Development Canada's Office of Skills for Success to research, develop and support the implementation of a National Literacy Strategy to address literacy, numeracy, digital and other foundational skills gaps impacting the prosperity of diverse communities across Canada. - United for Literacy

NACY Members

BGC Canada	United for Literacy	Kids Help Phone
Students Commission of Canada	Seton Community Complex	YMCA Canada
Experiences Canada	Society of Queer Momentum	YWCA Canada
UNICEF Canada	Children's Aid Foundation of Canada	Starlings Community
Plan International Canada	LiveDifferent	TakingItGlobal
Girl Guides Canada	SHAD Canada	United Nations Association in Canada
Voices: Manitoba's Youth in Care Network	Pathways to Education	Young Canadians Roundtable on Health
Muslim Association of Canada	Junior Achievement	Jack.org
Canadian Literacy Foundation	FRAYME	Children First Canada
Scouts Canada	Duke of Edinburgh Awards	Girls in Science