



## Creating opportunities for youth employment

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Written Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skill and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities: **Canada Summer Jobs**

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## **Recommendations:**

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

## **Introduction**

The National Alliance for Children and Youth is (NACY) is a network of diverse organizations within the children and youth serving and supporting sector from across Canada. A member-driven organization, NACY works to ensure the voice of the sector is present on the national stage. It is through our collective actions that we strive to build a strong, more connected, informed, coordinated, respected sector, and a Canada in which all young people thrive.

NACY thanks the Government of Canada for its ongoing commitment to the Canada Summer Jobs program and the investment in exploring opportunities to adapt the program to better meet the needs of today's youth.

## **Consult directly with the youth sector on reimagining Canada Summer Jobs to meet the needs of today's youth.**

NACY members have a long history with the Canada Summer Jobs project, with many organizations having accessed this program for decades. While the topic of Canada Summer Jobs has been at the forefront of many of our conversations, the limited time frame allotted for interested parties to provide to submit a meaningful and robust brief meant that we were unable to consult broadly with our members and collect appropriate data to truly understand it's impact. This is particularly true when looking to engage young people in safe and supported conversations on the impact of this program on their lives.

*"The warm environment made it easy to settle in, and I am sad to see it end so fast. It has been an incredible learning experience and I feel lucky to have been chosen for this amazing team. I wish to keep learning and growing in the meantime so that when I come back, I will be able to bring more assets to this wonderful organization." – CSJ Participant*

For this reason, we recommend that reasonable efforts are made to meaningfully consult with the children and youth sector when collecting feedback and making changing to any part of the Canada Summer Jobs program. This includes space for consultation not only with the organizations who receive funding, but more importantly providing opportunity to safely engage young people in the conversation.

**Increase program flexibility and stability by allowing multi-year agreements, earlier funding decisions, part-time, year-round, and extended placement opportunities.**

With a growing affordability crisis and record high rental costs, youth are looking for long-term, stable employment opportunities. Creating efficient application and reporting processes for employers and allowing greater flexibility will ensure that youth are able to access meaningful employment opportunities that fit their schedules and their needs. Flexible start and end-dates with opportunities to work part-time, year-round, will allow youth to have stable employment through the year without fear of lost income and allowing for increased financial stability.

*“The program helped me with some of my expenses at university like tuition and transportation” – CSJ Participant*

We have heard repeatedly from organization regarding the onerous application and reporting process of the Canada Summer Jobs program, in addition to ongoing frustrations regarding short program deadlines for both applications and hiring. Most students begin the search for summer employment in later winter and early spring. With funding confirmations not arriving until later spring organizations are forced to delay hiring and shift program timelines, by which time, many young people have had to seek employment elsewhere. For young people this may mean finding employment outside of their field and without access to the same mentorship support provided through the CSJ program. Multi-year funding agreements will also guarantee positions for future years, ensuring youth are able to return to their job while they complete their study's. This means they can build on existing skills, gain seniority, and ensure continuity across the organization.

**Inclusion of paid sick time, benefits, and administrative expenses in funding agreements**

Youth organizations continue to see the impacts of the pandemic on young people both in the young people that are served, as well as their staff. In addition to an increase in sick days, organizations are seeing their team members struggle with mental health in increasing numbers. The CSJ program has the opportunity to take a wholistic approach to youth

employment by ensuring young people have access to paid days off and benefits with specific emphasis on mental health supports.

CSJ in itself is a program within an organization separate from their day-to-day activities and requires significant administration and supervision. Supporting young workers to have a meaningful and engaging work experience requires care and attention through mentorship. Our goal is to ensure all those working in the children and youth sector are supported, which is why additional funds are required to cover the administrative and supervisory responsibility of organizations. Staff supervisors are an integral part of the CSJ program and as such should be included in funding.

*“Everyone here is really invested in the summer associates and want you to have the best time” – CSJ Participants*

### **Increase funding annually to reflect inflation and Canada’s growing youth population.**

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 increase costs associated with housing, food, health services and education and more youth than ever are struggling with affordability. At a time when youth employment is declining is increasing it is critical to expand employment opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

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.

### **Conclusion**

NACY Members have been active participants in the Canada Summer Jobs programs since its infancy and have seen first-hand the incredible impact it has on young people. It means that a small child will see their older siblings working in their community, that a young person can save for post-secondary education or a deposit on their first apartment, it stimulates the economy at the community level and builds a sense of pride for program participants.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230609/dq230609a-eng.htm>

Non-profit organizations provide safe and supportive places for young people to have their first employment opportunity. They have safety nets when young people stumble and open doors to come back to. The experts in this program are the organizations and the young people they employ through the CSJ program, and ensuring they are part of the conversation is essential to build a program that meets the needs of young people, organizations and or government partners.

NACY looks forward to the opportunity to bring together its membership and CSJ program participants to share more on the impacts this program has had on a generation of young people.

*“I had a great time working at CSJ funded summer camp. It truly was a life changing experience. I met so many wonderful people (counselors and campers alike). I made so many lifelong friendships and connections” – CSJ Participant*

**NACY Members**

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| BGC Canada                         | Society for Queer Momentum    | Kids Help Phone                      |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada | Experiences Canada            | Live Different                       |
| Children’s Aid Foundation          | Students Commission of Canada | Pathways to Education                |
| Shad Canada                        | Junior Achievement            | Muslim Association of Canada         |
| United for Literacy                | UNICEF Canada                 | Plan international Canada            |
| YMCA Canada                        | Children First Canada         | FRAYME                               |
| Starlings Community                | TakingItGlobal                | United Nations Association in Canada |
| Voices Manitoba                    | YWCA Canada                   | Young Canadians Roundtable on Health |