

**You may write to provincial government about this resolution as a private citizen; you may state you are a CWL member, but you cannot state you are writing on behalf of a CWL council, nor can you write to government using League letterhead.”**

## **Education and Health**

### **St. Boniface/Notre Dame de Lorette**

#### **Resolution 2015.01      Youth Engagement in Canadian Democracy and Governance**

- Whereas,** Engagement of youth in elections and the democratic process has steadily declined at federal, provincial and municipal levels since the 1970's; and
- Whereas,** Education of youth about civic governance and their involvement in the democratic process can contribute to their formation as citizens who are engaged in Canadian democracy; and
- Whereas,** In Manitoba, a municipal council may appoint a person with the title "youth member", who is less than 18 years of age or enrolled as a full-time student in a school, to sit with the council and to participate in its deliberations, for a term and on conditions that the council may decide; therefore, be it
- Resolved,** That Manitoba Provincial Council, in 2015 convention assembled, urge the Manitoba provincial government to implement an elective high school credit for participation:
- as a youth member in municipal governance
  - in other approved programs, courses and projects aimed at increasing education and awareness about civic governance and the democratic process; and be it further
- Resolved,** That Manitoba Provincial Council, in 2015 convention assembled, through the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, urge municipal governments to exercise their option to appoint a youth member to sit with council, as provided by Section 81 of *The Municipal Act of Manitoba*; and be it further
- Resolved,** That this resolution be forwarded through the national executive to the other ten provincial councils, encouraging them to become aware of this issue as it pertains to their province/territory, and to act on it, as deemed necessary/prudent.

#### **BRIEF      Youth Engagement in Canadian Democracy and Governance**

Engagement of youth in elections and the democratic process has steadily declined at federal, provincial and municipal levels since the 1970's. (Menard) “In the 2011 federal election, there were about 2.9 million young people between the ages of 18 and 24 who were eligible to vote.” (Elections Canada) “In the last federal election, turnout for youth aged 18 to 24 was 38.8% compared to 70% for those aged 55 and older.” (Inspire Democracy) “If young people had turned out to vote in the same numbers as the population overall in 2011, pollster Nik Nanos says his research suggests they would have changed not just the outcome of the election but the tone and content of the political debate.” (Bryden)

Education of youth about civic governance and their involvement in the democratic process can contribute to their formation as citizens who are engaged in Canadian democracy. The authors of the Gidengil study asserted that there were “striking gaps in young Canadians’ knowledge of politics.” (Menard) “Much of the

decline in (voting) turnout since 1988 can be attributed to generational replacement.” ... “the more education young people have, the more likely they are to vote. Interest in politics and political knowledge are two of the best predictors of who will vote and who will not”... “The key to encouraging young Canadians to participate in politics is to get them to "tune in". Political engagement presupposes political interest”... “If young Canadians are not interested in politics, they are not going to spend much time or energy keeping up with public affairs, and still less participating actively in the country's democratic life.” (Gidengil, et al)

The federal government funds some free stand-alone programs that offer learning about the Canadian democratic process such as the on-line sites, *Young Voters*, *Inspire Democracy*, and *Student Vote*, and the *Youth Parliament* program enables youth, ages 18 to 25, to gather annually to discuss generational issues provincially, in Canada and the world. The province of Manitoba initiative is *Legislative Classroom*.

In Manitoba, the compulsory grade 9 Social Studies course, *Democracy and Governance in Canada*, provides an introduction to Canadian parliamentary democracy, responsibilities and rights as citizens of Canada. (Education, MB) No other senior years' civics courses are offered or required for graduation. (Education, MB) However, there is provision for locally developed curricula through school-initiated courses and school-initiated projects “by volunteering for worthwhile causes or organizations.” (Education, MB) This restriction prevents a student from obtaining a credit by being engaged in the democratic process, as provided through *The Municipal Act of Manitoba*.

In Manitoba, a municipal “council may appoint a person with the title "youth member", who must be less than 18 years of age or enrolled as a full-time student in a school, to sit with the council and to participate in its deliberations, for a term and on conditions that the council may decide.” (*The Municipal Act of Manitoba*) The City of Winnipeg, which is not governed by the Municipal Act of Manitoba, “does not contain such a provision.” (Ridge)

This resolution urges the Manitoba provincial government to implement an elective high school credit for participation as a youth member in municipal governance, and in other approved programs, courses and projects aimed at increasing education and awareness about civic governance and the democratic process. Additionally, through the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, this resolution urges municipal governments to exercise their option to appoint a youth member to sit with council, as provided by Section 81 of *The Municipal Act of Manitoba*. Through a municipal council's policy and procedures manual, and in collaboration with local high schools, youth can be introduced to, and become engaged in civic, democratic and parliamentary processes, as observers or as appointed youth members. Additionally,

“Young people have a lot to contribute, but they face both access and motivational barriers that limit their ability to participate in our democracy.” (Inspire Democracy) Education remains one of the best predictors of turnout because it provides the cognitive skills needed to cope with the complexities of politics and because it seems to foster norms of civic engagement... (Gidengil) It is hoped that youth participation and observation of the democratic process at municipal, urban, or provincial levels of government, in addition to civics education, would provide the framework for their future engagement in Canadian democracy. An elective high school credit could serve as incentive for youth to become involved. At the very least, it should foster a sense of civic responsibility, encourage political dialogue and heighten interest about politics and governance. Through the national executive, the other ten provincial councils, are encouraged to become aware of this issue as it pertains to their province/territory, and to act on it, as deemed necessary/prudent.

## **WORKS CITED      Youth Engagement in Canadian Democracy and Governance**

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## **ACTION PLAN      Youth Engagement in Canadian Democracy and Governance**

1. Educate members to be aware of this issue and to write letters to municipal governments, urging them to exercise their option to appoint a youth member.
2. Encourage members to attend and observe municipal council and provincial legislative meetings for first-hand knowledge of governance.

3. Write letters to secondary schools and school boards, urging participation of youth in municipal governance as observers and/or appointed youth members.
4. Write letters to provincial premier and minister of education and MLAs requesting implementation of an elective high school credit for participation as a youth member in municipal governance and other approved programs, courses, and projects aimed at increasing education and awareness about civic governance and the democratic process.
5. Become aware of and encourage opportunities for youth participation in democracy.
6. Monitor the provincial government's response to the request contained in this resolution.