

YOUTH SPEAK UP - Will the candidates listen?

OTTAWA, October 2nd, 2008 - **YOUTH COUNT**, an alliance of not for profit organizations that promote youth engagement, today announced the launch of its official website meant to bring youth issues to the forefront of the 2008 federal election. The coalition's goal is the adoption of a National Youth Policy that would serve as the framework for future youth development initiatives in Canada.

WWW.YOUTHCOUNT.CA allows users to quickly and easily send emails to the candidates in their home ridings asking them to position themselves on this issue.

"Over 30 governments from countries around the world have adopted comprehensive youth policies," declared Youri Cormier from the Sierra Youth Coalition. "It is unimaginable that a nation such as Canada, which prides itself on being a progressive and inclusive world leader, does not have a coherent national strategy for engaging its youth."

The survey results of a recently released Ekos poll indicated that 70 % of Canadians feel it is important for the government of Canada to adopt a national youth service policy which would stabilize funding for youth service programs¹.

"An overwhelming majority of Canadians firmly believe that national youth service provides young Canadians with a myriad of benefits," stated Al Hatton, president of United Way of Canada - Centraide Canada. "A common youth strategy is crucial if we are to actively engage our country's young people in Canada's economic, social and cultural development," concluded Mr. Hatton.

"We feel that Canadian youth are not being considered in this campaign," stated Jean-Guy Bigeau, executive director of Katimavik, also a member of the alliance. "So far, no party has stepped up with a clear and concise vision on how to maximize the talents and potential of our country's young people. Our next federal government must take the lead and adopt a national strategy that will serve as the framework for future youth initiatives in this country," concluded Bigeau.

ABOUT YOUTH COUNT

YOUTH COUNT is a non-partisan alliance of not for profit organizations that promote youth engagement and participation in Canada's civil society. The alliance is a vehicle for Canada's youth and youth service organizations to create a forum for candidates in Canada's 2008 federal election to clearly communicate their party's stance on youth service programs as well as on National Youth Policy.

The alliance includes:

- AFS Interculture Canada
- Association des Scouts du Canada
- DesÉquilibres
- Environmental Youth Alliance
- Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française
- Katimavik OPCAN
- Motivate Canada
- The Canadian CED Network
- The Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa
- QFHSA – Québec Federation of Home and Schools
- Sierra Youth Coalition
- United Way of Canada - Centraide Canada
- Youth Challenge International

¹ The EKOS survey was conducted among 1200 Canadians between February 13 and 22, 2008. The margin of error is ±2.8%, 19 times out of 20.