

Letters to Policymakers

International Development Week 2025



About the campaign

For this year's International Development Week, the Inter-Council Network (ICN) partnered with the councils for international cooperation to launch a special letter-writing initiative. Youth participants were invited to share their hopes, visions, and actionable ideas for achieving the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. They were asked to write letters to policymakers, offering innovative solutions and reflecting their aspirations for a better, more sustainable world. Additionally, the illustrations accompanying the letters serve as a creative reflection of the powerful words and ideas expressed by the youth, bringing their visions to life in a vibrant and impactful way.

The Alberta Council for Global Cooperation (ACGC) reached out to young changemakers across Alberta to hear what they had to say. Read their letters below.

[View the full campaign on the ICN's website](#)



Letters from Alberta

Dear Policymakers,

During International Development Week, we reflect on the shared global responsibility to create a sustainable future. As a public policy student at the University of Calgary, and advocate for equitable systems, I have centred my work on advancing SDGs 1 [No Poverty], 2 [Zero Hunger], 3 [Good Health and Well-being], and 4 [Quality Education] by addressing the intersections of food security, health, and education. These are not just policy goals—they are the foundation for a just, sustainable world.

Food security is intricately tied to health. Chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension are often exacerbated by limited access to nutritious food. As part of the Good Food Organization network, I have advocated for policies addressing systemic causes of food insecurity. Subsidizing local food systems, expanding community gardens, and increasing food waste reduction initiatives are tangible solutions. My nonprofit, Zero Food Waste, which has redistributed 150,000 meals across five cities, demonstrates how community-driven action can make an impact. Scaling similar programs nationally would reduce food deserts, improve public health, and strengthen local economies.

Education is critical to breaking the cycle of poverty. As co-founder of Stars for Scholarly Youth, I've provided free mentorship and tutoring to over 400 youth from equity-deserving groups. Policymakers must invest in scholarships, subsidized tutoring, and programs that address systemic barriers faced by racialized and underserved students. Education empowers individuals and directly contributes to better health outcomes.

My hope for the future is one where collaboration drives sustainable development. International Development Week reminds us of our collective capacity to create equitable systems. By prioritizing food security, health, and education, we can achieve the SDGs and ensure no one is left behind.

Thank you,

**Haris
Ahmad**



Dear Policymakers,

Top-down policy initiatives play an important role in tackling many of the systemic challenges Canadians face in healthcare. However, they also have significant limitations. Such policy solutions are generally developed with a lack of stakeholder engagement and therefore find it difficult to directly address what stakeholders truly need. In contrast, a more cost-effective and potentially more impactful approach is to foster and promote bottom-up, grassroots change. This approach is very commonly seen in the development of public health interventions, where researchers in the public health discipline receive funding to create interventions in partnership with community members to address a critical healthcare challenge faced by the community. These projects typically gain strong support because the community is deeply involved in their design, which makes them both more acceptable and more feasible to implement.

For example, consider an intervention aimed at supporting child cognitive development, where resources are distributed to parents in a locally produced video to teach them how to create an environment best suited for their child's mental growth. This could greatly improve children's health while reducing the burden on already overstretched healthcare workers, as parents would have convenient access to the information they need.

Unfortunately, as of now even when such initiatives gain traction and community support, there is often no funding available to scale them. This leads to even successful initiatives being underutilized, and the communities that could benefit are left without these valuable resources. This existing gap creates a pressing need for additional funding to scale proven grassroots projects, thereby protecting the health and well-being of Canadians.

Currently, grants to initiate such projects are typically distributed through nonprofits or government agencies such as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Policymakers should require these organizations to establish and expand grants specifically aimed at scaling grassroots public health initiatives so that more people can benefit. Such a policy would not only ensure communities have access to well-designed, community-supported programs, but it would also significantly reduce costs by addressing health challenges outside of the traditional, bureaucracy-heavy healthcare system.

Sincerely,

**Mirza
Beg**



Dear Policymakers,

Food waste is a growing concern within the hospitality and food industry, while millions face food insecurity. As a climate change advocate dedicated to addressing global inequalities, I aim to highlight the growing issue of food waste and hunger across Canada. I propose the following actionable steps to help mitigate food insecurity and food waste in Canada:

1 | Mandated Accountability

- Hold food industry organizations accountable by requiring them to measure and include their food waste in their ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) reports for their stakeholders.
- Establish a national food waste threshold for these organizations to follow.

2 | Encourage Ongoing Public and Private Organization Relations

- Through direct public-private relations, surplus food from the food industry can be directly sent to food banks, shelter homes, and soup kitchens. This will ensure that food is effectively used to feed those affected by food insecurity while also avoiding food waste.

3 | Re-introduce “Imperfect” Produce

- Agricultural production standards often require edible produce to be discarded due to aesthetic concerns. This “imperfect” produce can be redirected to soup kitchens, shelters, and food banks to help provide a means of sustenance to those who are facing food insecurity.

- This initiative offers an opportunity to address key concerns within the agriculture sector since it is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. By restructuring agricultural practices to be more effective and sustainable, the redirection of “imperfect” produce allows us to use farmland and its resources sustainably, reduce food waste, and create a positive impact in our community as well.

4 | Fund Soup Kitchens and Lift Hunting Bans in Northern Canada

- Northern Canada experiences one of the highest rates of food insecurity due to unaffordable food prices and anti-hunting laws that have disrupted the social and economic construct of indigenous communities.
- The establishment of soup kitchens and lifting the hunting bans is imperative for Northern Canada to help Indigenous communities sustain a proper life and combat food insecurity while honouring their traditional subsistence practices.

Through these proposed actionable steps, we can establish a meaningful, lasting change and work together to restore a sense of community. Achieving this requires collective action through effective policies, accountability, collaboration, and thoughtful integration of the rich traditional ecological knowledge of Indigenous communities. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Regards,

**Marium
Sheikh**



Dear Policymakers,

Everyone deserves a fair shot—at education, at meaningful employment, and at becoming active contributors to Canada's prosperity.

It is for that reason I am writing to propose the expansion of British Columbia's Adult Upgrading Grant (AUG) program across Canada. This initiative aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and offers a powerful tool for economic growth and social progress.

The AUG program provides non-repayable financial support to low-income learners enrolled in Adult Basic Education (to achieve a high school diploma), English as a Second Language, and Adult Special Education programs at public post-secondary institutions. It covers tuition, student fees, books, unsubsidized childcare, and transportation costs.

Implementing this program across Canada would significantly strengthen our economy. Adult education graduates can see wage increases of up to 10% for each additional year of education, and for every 160,000 adults who earn a high school diploma, we gain \$1.0 billion in tax revenue and reduced expenses³. This translates to \$6,250 per person, demonstrating substantial return on investment. The AUG program directly supports several SDGs.

- SDG 4 (Quality Education): By providing financial assistance, it ensures inclusive and equitable quality education for all.
- SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth): It enhances employability and earning potential, contributing to economic growth.

- SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities): The program targets low-income learners, helping to reduce income disparities.

To implement this program nationally, I propose the following actionable steps:

1. Conduct a feasibility study to assess the potential impact and cost of implementing the AUG program across Canada.
2. Develop a funding model that involves federal and provincial contributions.
3. Establish partnerships with public post-secondary institutions to administer the program.
4. Create a standardized application process and eligibility criteria based on the BC model.
5. Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to raise awareness among potential beneficiaries.

The benefits of this program extend beyond individual learners. It would address skills gaps in our workforce, increase tax revenues, reduce dependence on social assistance programs, and foster a more educated and productive society. By investing in adult education, we invest in Canada's future, creating a more resilient and competitive economy.

I urge you to consider this proposal as a means to advance sustainable development, reduce inequalities, and strengthen our nation's human capital. Let's work together to create a brighter, more inclusive future for all Canadians.

Sincerely,

**Chaten
Jessel**



Dear Policymakers,

As a young Canadian, I'm writing to express my vision for a future in which adolescents, particularly those from marginalized communities, have the resources and opportunities they require to succeed. To do this, I urge you to support policies that are consistent with SDGs 5 [Gender Equality], 8 [Decent Work / Economic Growth], 10 [Reduced Inequalities], 16 [Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions], and 17 [Partnerships for the Goals].

Youth have tremendous potential to shape Canada's future, yet systemic barriers often obstruct their path to success. Among these challenges, the absence of proper accommodations and equitable hiring practices for neurodivergent and marginalized individuals stands out as a critical issue. To address this, Canada must take the lead in creating inclusive workplaces and systems. The following actionable steps are proposed:

- **Prioritize Inclusive Workplaces and Hiring Practices:** Enforce national standards for accommodations like flexible work, assistive technology, and accessible hiring while incentivizing inclusive recruitment and onboarding practices to support neurodivergent and underrepresented youth.
- **Expand Digital Access and Skills:** Ensure that all youth, regardless of their location or background, have access to skills development and digital literacy training. These are critical for participation in today's economy and for unlocking opportunities in tech and innovation.

- **Enhance Education-to-Employment Pathways:** Increase investment in education and career transition programs that support youth in finding meaningful work. This includes funding scholarships, creating more co-op and internship opportunities, and partnering with industries to provide mentorship programs that prepare youth for success in high-demand fields.
- **Build Youth-Inclusive Institutions:** Actively engage youth outside traditional policy spaces - those without formal policy education or in policy-related roles - through nationwide surveys, large-scale discussions, and other inclusive platforms. Empowering diverse youth voices will build trust and ensure policies reflect the lived experiences and aspirations of Canada's next generation.
- **Strengthen Partnerships for Youth Success:** Collaborate across sectors - governments, schools, non-profits, and private organizations - to create programs that equip youth with the tools and networks they need to thrive in a connected, global economy.

By prioritizing these actions, Canada can empower its youth to lead the way toward a more inclusive and sustainable future. I am confident in your ability to take bold steps that reflect the aspirations and needs of our generation.

Sincerely,

**Eun Bee
"Jasmine"
Cha**



