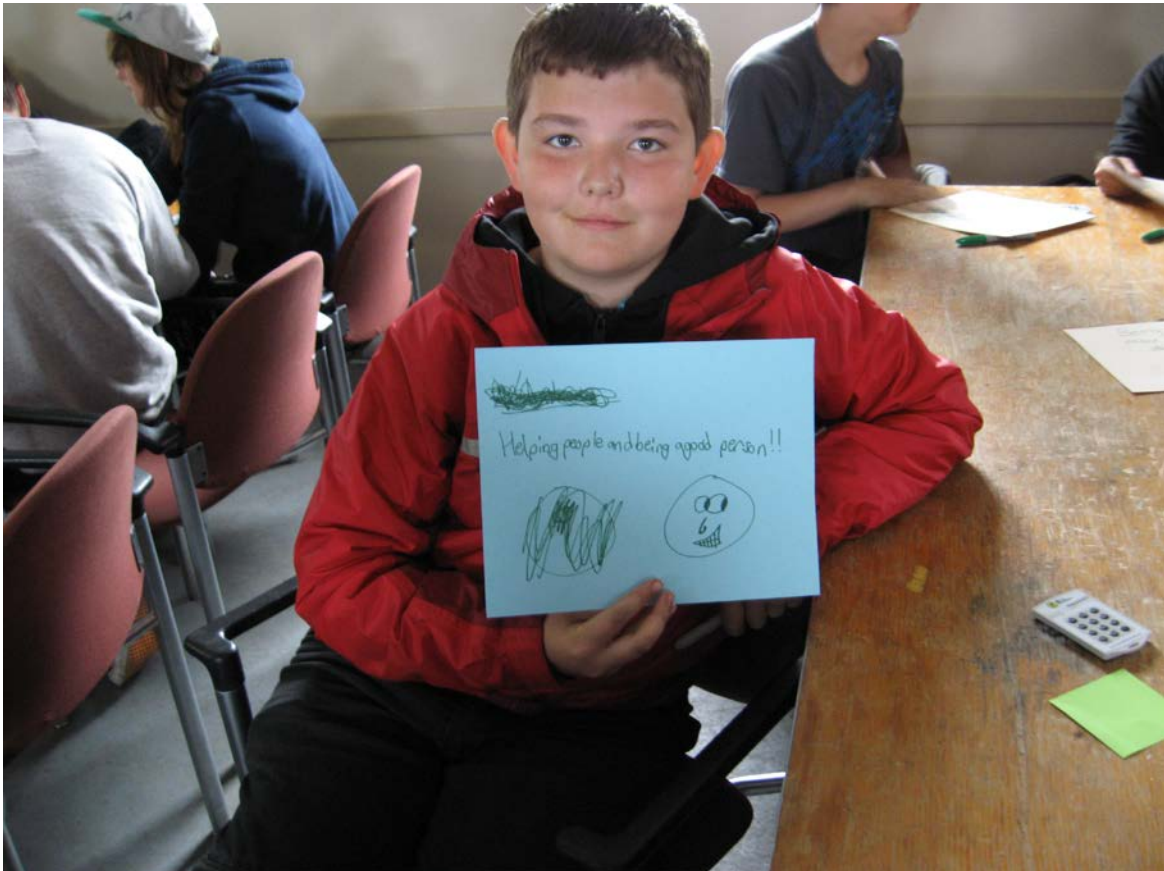


# What We Heard: Results from a Series of Youth Engagement Forums Held May – October, 2013



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# 1. Youth Engagement Forums

May-September, 2013

## 1.1 Background

With the creation of the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) in the fall of 2012, the Office of Youth Engagement and the Rural Secretariat sought to combine their existing mandates to engage young people and to support and create meaningful opportunities for strong public dialogue. A planning team was struck consisting of regional partnership planners from each of the regions in Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador, the Youth Engagement Team (including Community Youth Network (CYN) and Getting the Message Out (GMO) representatives) of the OPE, the Web Services Specialist and the Director of Regional Partnership Development.

The team created a session design to be used for a 2-3 hour dialogue session. It focused on three key themes but also allowed for some local adaptation as appropriate (for age, venue, size of the group, time available, etc.) Each session covered three common themes: Careers, Civic Engagement/Community Involvement and Youth Engagement by the Provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The purpose of the forums was to engage with school-age young people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and seek their ideas and opinion on various topics. The information and data gathered through these forums will be used to inform the work of the OPE, in particular the Youth Engagement Team, to inform other departments across Provincial Government of the perspectives of youth on issues and topics related to their specific mandates and to inform future policies, programs and strategies.

## 1.2 Methodology

This summary presents an analysis of the information collected through twenty-four Youth Engagement Forums held in various locations across the Newfoundland and Labrador from May 2013 to September 2013. These forums were organized in two phases by the Office of Public Engagement Regional Planners in collaboration with local youth organizations such as Community Youth Network Centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, and high schools.

### Phase 1

Regional Planners were requested to identify locations for the Youth Engagement Forums in four Rural Secretariat regions: Avalon; Burin; Clarenville-Bonavista and Labrador.

### Phase 2

Based on the feedback from the sessions held in Phase 1, youth forums were held in the remaining five Rural Secretariat regions with supplementary sessions also held in the Avalon and Burin regions. One additional provincial forum was held in Corner Brook.

Information at these forums has been collected through polling technology and round table discussions, and then recorded and themed. There were on average 21 polling questions and 4 discussion questions at each forum. Participants used anonymous voting keypads to select their responses. The detailed polling results from the Forums can be found in the Appendix A. Responses submitted by each table during the discussions were grouped together by patterns (themes). The most popular themes were then presented

***Note: the information collected is a snapshot of youth opinion and should not be treated as statistical data. Regional samples of participants are too small to be representative of their regions.***

back to participants, who were asked to select their top three. The full list of the themes can be found in the Appendix B.

### 1.3 Overview of Participants

In total, 530 youth participated in these forums. Youth from all nine OPE regions were engaged in the forums. The number of participants per forum varied from 6 to 87, with the average of 23 youth participating per session. The majority of youth who participated in the forums (45%) attended high school, one third were in junior high school, and a small portion (roughly 10%) were either not in the education system or were in post-secondary. Approximately 40% of participants were female and 60% were male (a small number of participants identified themselves as “other”).

*Table 1 Distribution of participants by the OPE regions*

<b>OPE Region</b>	<b>Number of Youth Engagement Forums</b>	<b>Total Number of Participants</b>
Avalon Peninsula	4	56
Burin Peninsula	2	50
Clarenville - Bonavista	2	51
Gander-New Wes Valley	2	38
Grand Falls-Windsor- Baie Verte - Hr. Breton	4	84
St. Anthony-Port-aux-Choix	2	32
Corner Brook - Rocky Harbour Region	3	82
Stephenville -Port aux Basques	2	15
Labrador	2	62
Provincial	1	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>557</b>

There were 10 forums where the majority of participants were from junior high schools, 11 forums where the majority of youth were from high schools and 3 forums where the majority of participants were either in post-secondary education or not in school (see Table 2).

*Table 2 Youth Engagement Forums by Level of Schooling*

<b>Junior High Schools:</b>	Labrador Cadets, Grand Bank CYN, Branch, Splash Center, Buckmaster Circle Youth Centre, Labrador CYN, Gander CYN, Centerville/Wareham/Trinity High School, Burgeo CYN, Corner Brook CYN
<b>High Schools:</b>	CYN Clarenville, Clarenville High School, P4 CYN, St. Lawrence CYN, Botwood CYN, Baie Verte CYN, West Rock Youth Centre, St. Alban’s CYN, Plum Point CYN, Corner Brook Regional High, Springdale CYN
<b>Post-Secondary Education or not in School:</b>	Conservation Corps Corner Brook, Stephenville CYN, St. Anthony CYN

## 1.4 Career Choices

Nearly all of the participating youth indicated that they are planning to finish high school. Half of the youth participants said that they knew what they want to do when they finished or left high school and one-third were unsure. The majority of youth indicated knowing what career choices were available to them, slightly over half of the participants stated they knew where to go for information about careers and about one-fifth indicated that they did not know (see Table 3).

*Table 3 Questions about Education and Career*

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Junior High</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>Not in School or in Post-Secondary Education</b>	<b>Average</b>
Plan to finish high school	89%	96%	97%	90%
Know what they want to do when they finish or leave high school	60%	49%	65%	53%
Unsure	23%	38%	32%	30%
Know what high school courses they need to do for the job they want in the future	48%	52%	59%	49%
Not sure	30%	32%	18%	28%
Know what career choices are available to them	62%	61%	71%	60%
Do not know	10%	11%	17%	12%
Know where to go for information about careers	62%	58%	52%	56%
Do not know where to go for information about careers	12%	19%	33%	21%

When asked about what questions youth felt they needed answered to help them choose a career that is right for them, some of the most common questions were:

- How much money will I make?
- How do I match my interests with suitable career choices for me?
- What education is needed?
- How much will post-secondary cost? How do I apply for scholarships?
- How long will I be in post-secondary?
- Where to go for school? / Which school is the best?
- What are the different choices? What jobs are in demand?
- Where are the jobs? / Where are good places to raise a family?
- How do I get a job? What do I put on my resume and how do I write one?
- What are the entry requirements for the job? (Grades, volunteer work)
- What are the benefits of this career? (Flexibility, vacation, hours of work, employers, family friendly policies)
- What if the career I choose doesn't work out?  
What is the level of job security and safety (chances of being laid-off/ outsourced?)

Participants also felt the following resources would be beneficial to assist in career planning:

- More resources/supports from guidance counselors

- Career fairs, presentations, provide all information about the job, i.e schooling, lifestyle and salary
- Program to give you experience/practice in field (shadowing)

When asked what location they would choose if they were offered a job and had the option of working in Fort McMurray, St. John's, Vancouver, Toronto, New York, Europe or their hometown/community, the most popular responses were their hometown/community (19%) and Europe (18%), followed by New York (15%), Toronto and St. John's (14% each). Fort McMurray and Vancouver were the least popular responses with only 9% of youth selecting each.

When asked why they made their choice, the most common reasons were:

- I want to stay home with family and friends
- More opportunities in bigger cities (jobs, money, more amenities and activities, education, volunteering, business)
- New places, different cultures and experiences
- Because it is small, safe and familiar
- Want to get out of my local community, family, Newfoundland and Labrador
- More entertainment in bigger cities

## **1.5 Community Involvement**

Nearly all of the participants indicated that they were currently involved in their communities, however, the degree of this involvement varied. The relative majority of participating youth (36%) had some involvement with their communities, followed by a slightly smaller group of those who were very involved in their community (26%). Only 10% of the participants indicated having no involvement at all.

The majority of the Youth Forum participants (67%) expressed a strong interest to be more involved in their community. On average, nearly two thirds (57%) of the respondents were aware of opportunities to become involved in their community.

When asked what being involved in their community meant to them, the following responses were provided:

- Having a positive impact on my community
  - Being generous, positive and friendly; lending a helping hand; and being a good person
  - Making a positive change in the town and the well-being of people in it
- Volunteering in the community
  - Examples of volunteer activities including working with the SPCA, church, school, with kids, and community clean-ups
- Helping people in the community
  - Participants said that helping people in the community makes them feel good
  - Examples of people they sought to help were seniors and neighbours
- Being a good steward of the environment

Participating youth also listed direct benefits from community involvement, these included:

- Experience to be included on a resume / provides experience for a future career
  - Develops skills
  - Helps make better informed career decisions
- Opportunity to make connections
- Helps build character
- Helps build and active lifestyle

## **1.6 Engagement**

A small portion of the participating youth (19%) agreed that they have a say in decisions that affect their community. In contrast, more than half (56%) disagreed. When asked if they had a say in decisions that affect the province, the proportion of youth who disagreed was even higher. Most of the participants (81%) disagreed, with the majority (63%) strongly disagreeing with that statement. Approximately three quarters of the participating youth expressed a strong interest to be more involved in decisions that affect their communities and the province.

When asked for the best ways for the Provincial Government to engage youth, the most popular suggestions from the participants were:

- Social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, website)/ networking
- Presentations (for example: at school)/ conferences
- Engagement sessions like these forums, with responses being provided back to youth
- Youth surveys/ on-line forums/on-line polls – phone apps/keypads
- Get involved more with youth/political youth groups (gov't members speak to youth directly)
  - Regular, province wide youth rallies
  - Town hall meetings/visit CYNs
  - Speaking at community events (heritage night, community day)
  - Visit schools/presentations
  - Regional groups to discuss issues with government
- TV /commercials /radio (open line)/ posters/newspapers
- Lower the age to vote

## **1.7 Evaluation**

Participants at the session were asked to reflect on the engagement approach used for the Youth Engagement Forums. Nearly all of the participating youth liked the engagement process, such as the table discussions used at the forums, and the majority of the participants agreed that they were provided with an opportunity to have their say, with two-thirds in strong agreement.



## 2. Provincial Student Leadership Conference

Gander, NL

October 15-16, 2013

### 2.1 Methodology

Analysis of the information gathered at the Youth Engagement Forums pointed to a need to probe further on some of the findings which emerged at the forums. In particular, youth said that they are interested to find more information about their future careers and to be more engaged in decisions that affect their communities and their province. To follow up on these themes, the OPE team designed a process focused on sources of career information and ways to engage youth in decisions related to their communities and the province.

The processes included three identical sessions and one plenary which took place during the Provincial Student Leadership Conference (PSLC) held in Gander on October 15-16, 2013. PSLC is one of the largest gatherings of the school-aged youth in the province. It brought together about 350 junior high and high school students from all the regions. On the first day of the Conference three identical sessions were arranged to collect input from as many participants as possible. Youth were asked to sign up for these sessions in advance to avoid any duplication. Each session included a combination of some discussion and polling questions based directly on the findings from the Youth Engagement Forums. On the second day of the Conference, the OPE held a large plenary session with nearly 400 participants including students and teachers. During this plenary the OPE staff reported back to the conference's participants on the key themes emerging during the session on day one and polled them for feedback.

The sections of the Summary below present an analysis of the data collected at the PSLC's three sessions and the plenary. The information and data gathered through the Conference will be used to inform the work of the OPE, and in particular the Youth Engagement Team of the OPE, to inform other departments across Provincial Government of the perspectives of youth on issues and topics related to their specific mandates and to inform future policies, programs and strategies.

### 2.2 Overview of Participants

In total, about 350 youth participated in the PSLC. Youth from all nine OPE regions attended the conference (see Table 4). Approximately 30 youth participated in each of the three engagement sessions on day one with nearly 400 participants at the day two plenary.

*Table 4 Geographical Representation:*

<b>OPE regions</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>
Northeast Avalon Region	2%
Other Avalon Region	8%
Clarenville - Bonavista Region	%
Burin Peninsula Region	9%
Gander – New-Wes-Valley Region	7%
Grand Falls-Windsor-Baie Verte-Harbour Breton Region	15%
Stephenville-Port aux Basques Region	3%

Corner Brook-Rocky Harbour Region	32%
St. Anthony-Port au Choix Region	6%
Labrador Region	11%

Most of the participants (55%) attended high school, followed by 28% in junior high school, and teachers (17%).

*Table 5 Representation by Grades:*

<b>Grade/Category</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>
7	1%
8	10%
9	17%
Level I	14%
Level II	15%
Level III	26%
Teachers	17%

## 2.3 Career Information

As found through the Youth Engagement Forums process, just over a fifth of the youth participants did not know where to go for career related information. Youth said they are interested in information regarding job salaries, how suitable a job would be for them, cost and length of a required education, job locations, etc. At the PSLC, participants were tasked to indicate which of the three career-related Provincial Government’s websites they are aware of (see Table 6). Audience polling indicated that “Jobs in NL” and Provincial Government’s youth website were the ones most of the youth said they knew about. However, nearly half of the 110 youth participants around the province were not aware of either of the websites.

*Table 6 Which of the Following Websites you are Aware of?<sup>1</sup>*

<b>Websites</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>
None	41%
Jobs in NL	30%
Government of NL Youth website	21%
LMI Works	8%

Youth also suggested that the best ways to provide them with career information would be career fairs, lunch-time guest speakers in schools, better communication and awareness of career resources and career counselors (see Table 7).

*Table 7 What needs to be done to ensure you get the career information you need?*

<b>Options</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>
Career Fairs (talking to post-secondary)	19%
Lunchtime guest speakers in schools (post-secondary, professionals)	14%
Better communication and awareness of career resources (TV, social media, posters, using websites in curriculum)	13%
Have career counselor	13%
All teachers informed of the resources and info out there	11%
Link to websites with career info on school website	11%
Connecting facebook/twitter of career info to school facebook/twitter	10%
More career development/info into school curriculum	9%

## 2.4 Engagement

Youth Engagement Forums pointed to a strong interest amongst youth to be more involved in their communities and to have more say in decisions that affect their community. At the PSLC youth suggested that the best way to ensure they have a say in decisions related to their communities are group discussions and voting in schools, followed by awareness of a need for their input and opportunity to vote on decisions impacting them (see table 8).

*Table 8 How could the Community Ensure that you have a say in these Types of Decisions?*

<sup>1</sup> Since the youth forums, a new youth website has been launched by the Office of Public Engagement.

<b>Options</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>
Hold group discussion and voting in schools (ex. Assembly)	19%
Awareness that your input is wanted (posters, newspapers, school announcements, media)	17%
Allowing youth to vote on decisions impacting them	16%
Youth reps on council/planning committee	14%
Online survey and polling	10%
Having a youth committee to take the lead	9%
Hold group discussion and voting with youth organizations	8%
Hold town meetings	7%

Youth Engagement Forums also found youth were interested in being more involved in decisions that affect the entire province. At the PSLC, when asked how Provincial Government can ensure their participation, youth suggested using incentives and prizes, creating awareness in schools and online polling through social media (see Table 9).

**Table 9 How Provincial Government can Ensure that you Participate?**

<b>Options</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>
Incentive and prizes (need to get something in return)	18%
Awareness and Promotion in school (announcements, ads on smart boards, posters)	15%
Online polls through social media (should be anonymous)	15%
Ensure youth voice will be heard, and communicate how their voice/input has impact	14%
Ability to post comments anonymously	14%
Create hashtag (twitter used more than facebook by young people)	10%
Connected to school twitter	8%
Ads on Facebook	6%

To assess potential level of participation in a Provincial Government’s social media engagement campaign, youth participants were presented with a hypothetical scenario:

*Provincial Government is putting together a huge social media campaign including Facebook page, Twitter, Youtube, etc. to find out what are the key issues in the province. The top two issues with the most “likes”, re-tweets, and trends will get addressed.*

When asked to what extent they would participate in such engagement campaign, youth participants demonstrated a high level of participation with over 60% saying that they would do both: raise an issue and vote (see Table 10).

**Table 10 Level of Participation in Social Media Engagement Campaign**

<b>Options</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>
Raise issues and vote (like, re-tweet, trend)	61%
Only vote (like, re-tweet, trend)	21%
Raise issues but not vote	16%
Do nothing	2%

## **2.5 Evaluation**

Participants’ feedback on the engagement approach used at the PSLC engagement sessions was highly positive. Nearly all of the participants liked the table discussion process used at these sessions and agreed that they were provided an opportunity to have their say.

## **Conclusion**

During the five-month period from May to October of 2013, the OPE engaged nearly 900 junior high and high school age youth from all over the province. About 30 youth engagement sessions were conducted with the number of participants ranging from under ten to 350 per session. Youth were invited to discuss their needs related to education and career planning, community involvement and engagement on a community and provincial level. This process

found a strong interest amongst the participants to be more involved in decisions affecting them on both community and provincial levels.

Youth participated in the sessions suggested that the best ways to engage them would be through social media, including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, or a website; presentations at schools or conferences; and youth engagement sessions similar to the ones presented in this summary. However, youth stressed that it is important for them to see how their feedback will be used and what actual impact it will make. Therefore, planning for future use of their input, and being able to articulate these plans would be critical for the success of any youth engagement processes in the future. Addressing this strong level of interest from youth to be involved in decisions affecting them will take multiple forms – from supporting municipalities to engage with youth to ‘twitter town halls’ on topics of interest to youth – young people are asking for meaningful ways in which to participate, and interested in seeing the results of that participation.

The OPE will inform other relevant departments across Provincial Government of the perspectives of youth on issues and topics discussed through this youth engagement process.

## Appendix A. Polling questions average results<sup>2</sup>

	I am in grade
4%	Six and under
12%	Seven
14%	Eight
15%	Nine
11%	/10/Level I
15%	/11/Level II
11%	/12/Level III
18%	not in school/Other

	I plan to finish high school
90%	Yes
3%	No
3%	Unsure

	I know what I want to do when I finish or leave high school
53%	Yes
13%	No
30%	Unsure

	I know what high school courses I need to do for the job I want in the future
49%	Yes
19%	No
28%	Unsure

	I know what career choices are available to me
21%	Strongly Agree
39%	Agree
25%	Neutral
6%	Disagree
6%	Strongly Disagree

	I know where to go for information about careers
56%	Yes
17%	No
20%	Unsure

<sup>2</sup> Percentages may not total 100, due to rounding.

	I am involved in my community now
26%	A lot
36%	Some
24%	A bit
11%	Not at all
	I would if I were asked

	I would like to be more involved in my community
28%	Strongly Agree
39%	Agree
20%	Neutral
4%	Disagree
8%	Strongly Disagree

	I am aware of opportunities to get involved in my community
23%	Strongly Agree
34%	Agree
27%	Neutral
8%	Disagree
6%	Strongly Disagree

	You've been offered a job with a company and have the option of working in either Fort McMurray, St. John's, Vancouver, Toronto, New York, Europe or Clarenville. What location would you choose?
9%	Fort McMurray
14%	St. John's
9%	Vancouver
14%	Toronto
15%	New York
18%	Europe
19%	your home town

	I feel I have a say in decisions that affect my community
6%	Strongly Agree
13%	Agree
24%	Neutral
28%	Disagree
28%	Strongly Disagree

	I feel I have a say in decisions that affect my province
3%	Strongly Agree
5%	Agree
11%	Neutral
18%	Disagree
63%	Strongly Disagree



	I want to have more say in decisions that affect my community
42%	Strongly Agree
30%	Agree
16%	Neutral
3%	Disagree
9%	Strongly Disagree

	I want to have more say in decisions that affect my province
40%	Strongly Agree
28%	Agree
19%	Neutral
3%	Disagree
9%	Strongly Disagree

	I was provided with an opportunity to have my say.
60%	Strongly Agree
22%	Agree
4%	Disagree
3%	Strongly Disagree
7%	Do not know
2%	Other

	I liked the engagement (table discussion) process used here today.
70%	Strongly Agree
20%	Agree
5%	Neutral
2%	Strongly Disagree

## **Appendix B. Discussion questions themes and responses from table discussion**

### ***Q.1: Questions you feel you need answered to help you choose a career right for you are:***

#### **Career Information**

1. Will there be job openings (in NL and elsewhere)? How can I find out?
2. Where can I get advice on career choices? How do I match career choices with my interests?
3. How do I get a job? What do I put on my resume and how do I write one? Do I need to move to find a job? What are the entry requirements for the job? (grades, volunteer work)
4. What will the salary be? How much money will I make? How much money will I need?
5. What are the risks/working conditions of this career? What dress is required? Is there travel?
6. What are the benefits of this career? (flexibility, vacation, hours of work, employers, family friendly)
7. What are the job responsibilities and activities.
8. What if the career I choose doesn't work out
9. Job security and safety (chances of being laid-off/ outsourced?)
10. More resources/ supports from guidance counselors, career fairs, presentations (Provide all information about the job (schooling, lifestyle and salary), research

#### **Education**

11. Education (what school, what courses- HS and PS, length of study, costs)
12. How do I get funding?
13. How will I get there?
14. How do I apply for scholarships?
15. Is there residence available?
16. Program to give you experience/Practice in field (shadowing)

### ***Q.2: What being involved in my community means to me:***

- Positive impact on community
- Volunteering
- Helping people
- Looks good on a resume / furthers career
- Meeting people and businesses
- Helps build who you / character
- Stewardship of the environment
- Keeps you active
- To me it shows that you are respectful towards others in your community and you have a positive attitude.
- Becoming a member of a team or organization that works well together
- Something to do
- Leading by example
- Fundraising
- Giving back to my community
- It means being involved in my community
- Not much – I'm not interested.
- Being active and involved with groups (cadets, church youth groups, hockey)
- Sense of belonging and pride in my community
- Good Will

***Q 3: Why you made the choice of where you would live?***

1. More opportunities
  - a. Business
  - b. Jobs
  - c. Money
  - d. More amenities and activities
  - e. Education
  - f. Volunteering
2. To get out
3. Family and Friends
  - a. Are here or not too far away from them
4. New experiences
  - a. Meeting other people
  - b. Culture
  - c. Adventurous
5. Safe and Familiar
  - a. It's Home – no place like Home
  - b. Raise a family
  - c. Low crime rate
6. Scenery (ocean)
7. Cost of living
8. Doesn't matter where because can always come home when you want by car, boat, plane, etc. (world is small)
9. Services/benefits (healthcare)

***Q 4: What is the best way for Provincial Government to engage youth?***

1. Provincial Government going out and speaking with public (open discussion)
  - Regular, province wide youth rallies
  - Town hall meetings/ visit CYNs
  - Speaking at community events (heritage night, St Anthony day)
  - Visit schools/ presentations
2. A part of Provincial Government to deal with youth issues
3. Youth Councils (gov't members speak to youth directly)
  - Regional group to discuss issues with gov't
4. Social media/networking (FB, Twitter, Skype, Instagram, Xbox, website)
5. Youth surveys/ on-line forums/on-line polls – phone apps/keypads
6. More sessions like today (and show us how the results are used)
7. Don't use government-lingo/jargon: make it more youth-friendly
8. Use incentives: food/good prizes
9. TV / commercials / radio (open line)/ posters/ newspapers
10. Lower the age to vote
11. Just ask us (as we can't vote)
12. Catchy PR tools e.g. magnets
13. Pilot projects with people in the community