

Appendix A – Vision Statement

The central goal of the Youth Parliament of Manitoba (YPM) is expressed in the corporation's mission statement. All the activities of the corporation should be undertaken with regard to the mission statement and in a manner consistent with the principles contained therein.

The purpose of the vision statement is to detail in a more specific way the principles that should guide the operation of YPM, elaborate an interpretive structure that will serve to help implement the mission statement, and provide a more comprehensive conceptual vision of the manner in which YPM should go about pursuing its mission.

The mission statement outlines one central goal for YPM, three overriding principles that must guide the pursuit of this goal, and one necessary but not necessarily sufficient method for the achievement of this goal.

The Central Goal

The goal of the Youth Parliament of Manitoba (YPM) is to foster amongst the youth of Manitoba an understanding of, interest in, and engagement with the Canadian democratic parliamentary process that would enable their active participation in society as responsible citizens.

Today's youth are tomorrow's voters, leaders, and citizens and fostering their engagement with the democratic process is essential to the flourishing of our society. In order to achieve this goal, youth need to understand the democratic process at a level that allows them to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens. YPM must seek to provide youth with an opportunity to learn about the processes which constitute our democracy such as the passage of a bill through debate, refinement through committee work, and finally into law, as well as the political process more generally. Additionally, YPM should seek to give these processes a human face and provide access for youth to the individuals, groups, and ideas that give politics and public service life in everyday practice. Moreover, an understanding of the important issues confronting decision-makers is an essential prerequisite to successful and rewarding political participation and YPM must seek to assist its members in acquiring sufficient knowledge and understanding of current and public affairs to enable their responsible participation in the important debates of the day.

Knowledge of the democratic process is essential to effective democratic engagement, but equally important is empowerment and a sense of meaningful ownership of said process. Without a belief that one can meaningfully effect change through the democratic process, there is little chance that youth will see democratic engagement as a worthwhile use of their time. Thus, YPM must seek to provide youth with the fora and tools that they need to empower themselves and their peers to participate in the democratic process. Similarly, this fostering of self-empowerment must be matched by a fostering of a sense of social responsibility and civic duty so that youth will be motivated to apply their talents and energies in the service of their communities and fulfill, to the best of their abilities, their responsibilities as citizens.

The Three Principles

In so doing, YPM strives to encourage the growth of the individual and their abilities through their exposure to a diversity of ideas and perspectives and the fellowship of their peers.

The mission statement sets out three principles which are meant to govern the pursuit of its central goal and the implementation of its primary method, namely the importance of the growth of the individual and their abilities, the positive effect on youth of the exposure to a diversity of ideas and perspectives, and beneficial influence of an environment characterized by the fellowship of their peers. While each of these principles is distinct, it should be noted that none can be pursued successfully in isolation and that true progress can only be made holistically.

The Growth of the Individual and Their Abilities

The successful achievement of YPM's central goal is dependent on providing youth with opportunities to grow as individuals and develop their abilities. A vital part of any individual growth is the development of one's own beliefs and the abilities to articulate and express those beliefs. However, individual growth also comes in the form of the development of an individual's capacity to organize, administer, and accomplish other more technical and functional tasks. Moreover, offering youth an environment which is challenging and invigorating intellectually while still being supportive and encouraging of learning and exploration is essential to the intellectual development of youth. Finally, providing youth with the space to explore their abilities as leaders is a critical aspect of helping youth to discover and realize their potential as future leaders of their communities. All these aspects of growth are essential to the maximization of an individual's potential and must be priorities for YPM in its work.

Of all the different forms of learning, experiential learning is likely the most successful and rewarding. YPM, as an organization run "For Youth, By Youth", is in a unique position to offer youth an unparalleled opportunity to engage in experiential learning by doing. Preserving this unique and empowering attribute must remain a foundational characteristic of YPM in the future. However, this focus on experiential learning for youth need not inhibit the formation of partnerships between other organizations, youth or non-youth in composition, that, through collaboration, might provide youth with greater opportunities to learn and grow in a manner consistent with YPM's mission. Other members of the YPM community such as former members, friends, and benefactors, possess many skills and resources that should be accessed in order to provide as positive and extensive an opportunity for youth to grow and develop through YPM.

The Exposure to a Diversity of Ideas and Perspectives

Successful democratic societies are premised and depend on a healthy level of public discourse, debate, and even disagreement from as many different parts of society as possible, as to what constitutes the best policies and decisions for said society. It is understood that through this process of dialogue between different perspectives, and the concomitant exchange of ideas it entails, the best possible solution will gradually and

synthetically be assembled and adopted. YPM is also premised on this same conceptualization. Individuals are best able to grow, develop their intellect and their critical thinking abilities, and come to a better understanding of what it is they believe by being exposed to as diverse and varied an assortment of perspectives as is reasonably possible. Thus, providing fora for the sharing of different opinions and perspectives and the exchanging and consideration of ideas and proposals is an indispensable part of what YPM does. The process whereby an individual listens to another's opinion, considers it with respect to their own beliefs, formulates and adopts their own position, and then articulates this view is an instance of learning by doing that is of primary importance to the achievement of YPM's central goal.

In order to ensure that YPM is able to offer its members access to a spectrum of ideas that is as diverse and varied as possible, YPM must ensure that its membership is as diverse and varied as the society which it seeks to represent. Achieving such a membership requires a genuine and continuing commitment on the part of the organization to the removal of as many barriers to active membership in the organization, whether they be financial, physical, cultural or other, as is reasonably possible. Moreover, for the exchange of ideas to operate at its highest level of effectiveness, all members must be confident that their views will be respected. Furthermore, maintaining within the environment in which these exchanges take place as high a level of respect and openness to new and different points of view as is possible is crucial to the successful operation of this dialogue; it is only by providing such an atmosphere that YPM can hope to induce and encourage in its members the confidence in themselves that will allow them to engage fully with its programme.

The Fellowship of Their Peers

Everything that YPM seeks to do is best accomplished in an environment characterized for youth by the fellowship of their peers. Not only are individuals more likely to grow, develop their abilities, and exchange ideas and perspectives in an environment of fellowship, they are also more likely to do it to a greater extent and more effectively. Moreover, without such a welcoming, accepting, friendly and fun environment, many individuals will not be as attracted to YPM or its programme. Many youth seek membership in a community as part of the process of defining themselves through which all youth pass; indeed one's membership in various communities is one of the primary aspects through which human beings define themselves. YPM must strive to offer youth an attractive and positive community in which to grow and explore themselves, discover their peers and their beliefs, and which offers them an opportunity to express themselves both as individuals and as youth. Adhering to the principles outlined in the previous sections is an essential first step towards creating such a community environment.

By bringing together youth from across Manitoba, and across Canada, YPM offers youth an important opportunity to create and become part of a larger community of active and inspiring youth. By coming together these youth are able to meet other youth from different backgrounds and with different perspectives and beliefs which will allow them to learn more about their own beliefs and grow accordingly. Meeting new people and making new friendships will allow youth to develop their social skills and form bonds with others that have the potential to last a lifetime and contribute immeasurably to an

individual's personal and professional future. Such opportunities are most likely to be successfully pursued and develop into meaningful relationships in a welcoming environment where a vigorous exchange of perspectives co-exists with an emphasis on fellowship and the underlying unity of humankind. This environment should also strive to be one that, through recognition and accommodation of the differences that exist between individuals, provides opportunities in an equitable way that further reinforces the inclusiveness on which YPM must be based. YPM must seek to realize this ideal model of interaction as fully as possible in order to successfully build a strong and cohesive YPM community, something that is essential to the achievement of its mission.

The Primary Method

The primary method by which this goal shall be pursued shall be the annual operation by the corporation of at least one model parliament open to participation by all Manitoban youth aged sixteen to twenty.

YPM was founded with a view to providing youth an opportunity to come together and learn and grow through their participation in an annual model parliamentary experience. Since its founding, YPM has expanded and contracted the scope of its activities according to the temper and conditions of the times. However, it has always maintained its annual winter session as the primary focus of its efforts and as the primary method through which it seeks to accomplish its goals. This focus should not change and the annual winter session should remain an indispensable feature of YPM's activities.

However, such a focus should not inhibit the development of other events and activities that the organization wishes to organize and administer. Should the resources, both human and material, become available for an expansion of YPM's activities, then nothing should stand in the way of such an expansion insofar as it furthers the accomplishment of the goal outlined in the mission statement, and is in accordance with the principles outlined in the mission statement and elaborated in this document. Importantly, any proposed new activities, and the responsibilities they entail for the membership, must not in any way derogate from the administration and achievement of a successful annual winter session which must remain the primary method of achieving YPM's goal.

Addendum

At all times YPM should strive to design all its activities with a view to involving, to as great an extent as is considered possible and appropriate, other members of the YPM community of members, former members, parents of members, friends of the organization, and benefactors so that members can see that they are members of a larger and historic community of individuals. Former members especially can act as important role models for youth and YPM should seek to afford youth the opportunity of meeting other members of the community as much as is possible and appropriate.

Insofar as is possible and appropriate YPM should seek to enhance its role as a voice for youth within the wider community. Such a role would serve to further empower youth and allow them, through an elaboration of their collective opinion to more effectively engage in the community and the political process. However, such a process must at all

times be consistent with the principles that govern the organization as laid out in the mission statement and elaborated in this document.

In order to fulfill its mission successfully, YPM must at all times remain an independent and non-partisan organization.