

How does it feel not to be listened to or asked for help/opinions?

- Frustrated
- Angry
- If I know I can do great work and someone shrugs me off, I don't want to help them if they ignore me
- Adults are missing out because we could do something awesome
- They ask and don't hear what they want to hear, or don't care what I have to say, or don't listen – it's even more frustrating.



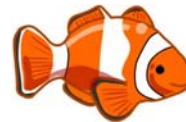
How do I stay in touch with you when we aren't face-to-face?

- Facebook
- Phone
- "It's a two-way street, too—we can stay in touch"
- Through my school, student council
- Our respective organizations
- Call LOT!
- Big e-mails are not working – e-mail me about calling you, and keep it short. Do the bulk of the information over the phone. Make the effort to call.
- Sometimes we work a lot or don't have access to a phone/computer. Ask our adult supporter to keep in touch with us. Sometimes it's a big of leg work to track youth down



How could the school system make it easier to help?

- Doing Presentations
- Poll students on new programs. Ask students what they want, directly, ask them to help create it.
- "If they ask us, like LOT did, we could help plan it. Opposed to just being told" – if you do something and it works it pushes you to do more.
- Ask our student councils, or committees, and we know those groups were approached.
- Knowing younger students are dealing with mature or serious issues, and trusting their opinions. "Look at us as a person, instead of just a kid"
- Listen to what students are passionate about
- Students look at government as higher-up (intimidating), but meeting them makes them people. Be real people.
- Smaller, face-to-face meetings.



What things in your life have made a positive difference?

- A person who took the time and interest in me and helped me
- Telling me that you're going through tough times, too
- If you see someone in power doing something, and it works, you want to do it too
- Going to conferences where I meet people. It's hard for teens to do things, do they cause trouble.
- If there were easy things out there they could volunteer for, knowing they could do it, it would be better.
- A safe space.
- No peer pressure or bullying.

Adult Supporters

How can we as youth show we are capable of participating in our society?

- Taking a chance on youth for help. Letting them show themselves.
- Showing that you care, however that is expressed.
- Want to. A peer influence, a positive one.
- Promoting what you're doing, but also adapting. Changing mandates.
- Work with what you have, even if it's a group of 3 youth.
- You are a part of our society.
- Focusing a team effort on what we want to do
- Your service program isn't the right one if youth won't come.
- A learned hearing. You have to dig for an answer from youth who've been shut down.

What is the biggest challenge that makes doing your work so difficult? What could help?

- Recruiting people with skills, available space. Not getting doors shut in our face (would help).
- Funding structure change. Grants do not accurately reflect organizations' mandates or programming, or an understanding in what youth really need (when it comes to just showing numbers).
- Waiting times for actual help while youth are in crisis. Nothing available for an immediate response. I'm always saying "I'm so sorry I can't find anything to help you right now".
- Services put in place aren't working.
- I feel I have to lie in order to get funding, I have to tell them what they want to hear. I can deliver programs that work, but that's not what I can apply for.
- Funders are concerned with numbers, or not concerned with qualitative reports, or ineffectual bodies to whom we report to.



Why is it so hard to listen to youth?

- It isn't
- Should I be one step ahead of the conversation out of fear that I'm fostering something negative, or put up an adult "filter" to look for specific elements I should address?
- Sometimes we need to be honest about our own struggles and attention issues, that we can listen and if we don't know, we can find out
- When I tackle risky issues, people tell me to stop because even though I'm effective it can be seen as dangerous
- Cultural context around how we express our love, affection and support.



Government

Give me an example of when youth voice impacted policy in Nova Scotia.

- LOT and 4H are great examples.
- It seems the higher up in government you go, the slower the pace to act. Government comes back to LOT for input.
- Tiny steps – the challenge remains to expand it, not relegate it to “youth issues”.

How do you plan to address the issue of minority groups?

- Listening to the issues that affect them
- We don't evaluate things in the best way
- Training for understanding minority groups, to understand what it is they are facing.
- Entering into conversations about identities can be controversial, because of ugly history around it. People in power who have no experience or are not part of the minority either cannot or feel they cannot (or should not) speak or make decisions.
- Government doesn't understand the communities enough to fund or address the issues, they have to enter the discussion about it, learn about it, build those connections and relationships.
- People are afraid to be open and it gets in the way of things they're passionate about.
- If my boss doesn't believe in what I believe in, it may not go far. It wears you down to defend yourself to the top of the hierarchy/people in power.
- We don't think about how to engage before programs roll out. We shouldn't be afraid to open up our committees for input.

Why can't we change policies if we know they aren't working?

- Policies are huge things. They evolve over time, to even get to a policy is a huge journey. To change it is sometimes legislation.
- People in government have invested in these political stuff, and changes come because there's enough will to change them, or no risk in doing so. The people invested are interested in no negative press or messy debate.
- We're caught up so much in our processes and our power structures that it has the potential to crush us if we make a misstep.
- There are political pieces to power. People who vote say they want change, youth have the ability to use their voter status.



Talking Circle Debriefing

“How do you feel about LOT and all the issues we’ve talked about?”

“I’m realizing government moves really slow”

“Are we fighting a losing battle here?”



“It is tough to bring change”

“It was like everyone came as themselves and didn’t bring a job title.”

“It gives me hope”

“We all walked in as human beings, and we will be there for you.”

“I’ve entered into a commitment and a journey. I’m not sure I can do it all, but I promise I will do my best for you.”

“I’m down for the fight, I’m a soldier.”



Connecting Through Our Regions

Youth and adults from the various regions gathered together to consider if there were things they wanted to go “back home” as a result of LOT.

Region: Shilton (Northern)

Who came? John, Jay, Jon, Morgan, Chrissy, Johna, Erica, Lynda, James, Tim, Sheena, Kris

What did this weekend mean to you?

- Not about making a differences globally but for any kid’s individually
- Gained awareness of other people’s issues.
- Better equipped to deal
- Awareness about government
- I go to school and don’t see much of government
- I have no links
- Different way of thinking, away from the norm
- Media doesn’t show the true teen life
- Gave a sense of belonging
- Collected Power
- Youth aren’t broken, no need to fix
- Voice had meaning
- Gives us strength – equal footing with adults and youth
- Help finding their own way instead of telling.

What tangible things can we work on locally?

- Connect Health Centers! Talk about ways to handle situations
- Fishbowl with committees and mayor, MLA, like a mini-LOT
- Present about LOT together , pull groups together in one area
- Do it with youth, not FOR youth
- Support, don’t give solutions
- Computer / Facebook
- Instead of boring lectures, actually speak about LOT, make it interesting.



Region: Western

Who came: Nick, Lisa, Gina, Linda, Kris, Holly, Paula, James

What did this weekend mean to you?

- Personal Fuel
- Inspirational,
- Not alone in the struggle
- Connections
- Grounding
- Working as ONE

What are things can we work on locally?

- Getting 4-H involved in other youth organizations
- Student council involving The Youth Project, inviting them for a presentation
- Suggest new community services involving local youth for 4-H
- Get more powerful forces together.



Region: Hellafactz (Central)

Who came: ADAM, EDBGC, Youth Project, LOVE, DNCC, LOT, IMOV

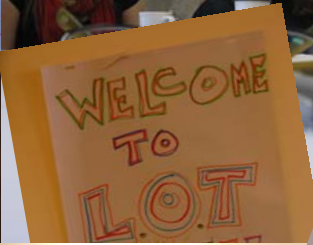
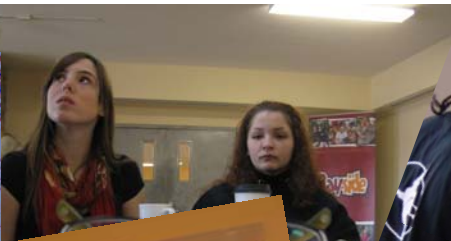
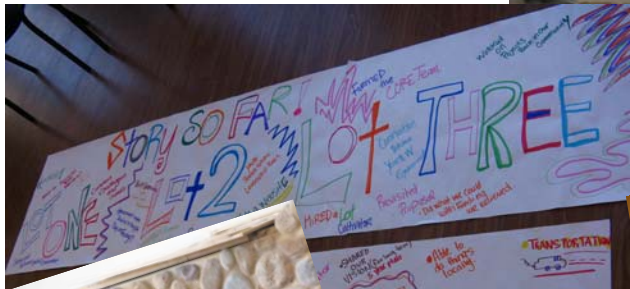
What did this weekend mean to you?

- a lot
- Unity – community organizations and government
- Youth stepping out of their comfort zone, very specific recommendations about policy and programmes.
- Networking with others in youth work. New people coming to the movement – the movement progressing.
- Youth Engagement in action.

What tangible things can we work on locally?

- Work with Youth Navigators to work better, Immigrant youth orgs, other youth orgs.
- Be nice and approach situations with compassion
- Work in greater collaboration with other orgs, so my youth get access to others and we can share our resources.
- Spreading the word about LOT
- LOT markets “youth voice” to agencies and gov’t, so that youth get paid for their time.
- Bring the fish bowl youth voice exercise to other settings.





Marketplace

Four sessions were hosted by various government people asking for youth input on issues or programs. Topics included: reaching high risk youth, youth addictions, youth and alcohol and the Youth Navigators Program.

Reaching High-Risk Youth

Conversation in this group included the importance of being in a relationship with a caring adult, service continuity with one person, and bringing services to where the youth and family are at. The group considered whether there were lessons to be learned in supporting high-risk youth from models created to support abused women.

Youth Orientated Website on Addictions

Nova Scotia Addiction Services, Department of Health Promotion and Protection made a presentation to Leaders of Today to obtain their advice and wisdom in the development of a youth oriented website. The website was aimed at increasing the capacity and building knowledge about commonly used substances like alcohol and cannabis, other drugs and gambling behaviors. It is important that materials and information developed for young people have support from the communities of youth who will be using the site. Leaders of Today was made up of a diverse cross-section of youth who were able to provide practical input on what information youth are seeking when wanting to learn more about commonly used substances, addictive substances and behaviors and how to seek out additional support when needed.

Alcohol

Nova Scotia Addiction Services, Department of Health Promotion and Protection asked youth about access to alcohol and industry marketing practices.

Youth Navigator Service Project

The Youth Navigation Service is a pilot project of the Child and Youth Strategy and is open to youth living in Nova Scotia who are experiencing challenges in one or more areas of their lives. The program is focused on young people ages 16 to 18 who are not already connected to a service provider. Advice was sought on the development of a communication/outreach plan for this service.

Feedback

Government was not only informed about their programs but reported they learned lessons in engaging directly with young people. Some of the comments received from government officials in this sessions were:

- Seeing the value of accessibility to government by youth - they do want to be included - there are lots of barriers to overcome but there's a greater commitment to overcome.
- That youth are able to clearly articulate their wants, desires and expectations.
- Youth culture: it is strong and viable, needs to be supported in various ways.
- Renewed confidence in youth's ability to learn the realities of government limitations, voice frustration yet remain positive and motivated to change systems.
- Youth voice can be specific, relevant and timely to government issues; their input is essential in the development of youth-related programs, policies, etc. ...of all kinds, not just youth related.
- This weekend absolutely helped me learn about youth culture and getting connected. Understanding (and seeing) the complexities and gulf between cultures was enlightening to my approach to youth engagement within government.

Evaluation

**An Evaluation of the Leaders of Today
(LOT 4) Weekend
October 23-25, 2010
Bayside Camp
Sambro, NS**

Introduction

Leaders of Today (a.k.a. LOT) is a network of youth networks constructed to inform government, to strengthen youth voice and build connections between youth and government. One of the main tools it uses to do this is a 2-day youth gathering, now in its fourth year. The event is known as the LOT Summit.

LOT 4 continued with the work completed at last year's LOT Summit which gathered groups of youth leaders to unite their voices as a network and make an impact on the province of Nova Scotia. The goals of LOT 4 are:

- to strengthen our network of youth networks,
- to provide an opportunity for youth to inform government programs
- to connect youth to government systems and their regional government supporters
- to provide youth with leadership development opportunities,
- to develop and commit to actions for the upcoming year.

LOT is held in partnership by Envision Halifax and the Nova Scotia Child and Youth Strategy, with facilitation by youth hosts and adult supporters.

LOT 4 Network and Planning

As mentioned, the Leaders of Today weekend is an annual event utilized by government to provide a place for youth input. As LOT is an opportunity for interaction between youth and government, it is imperative that our gathering be as diverse as possible in order to reflect a diversity of perspectives. With this in mind, the LOT Core Planning Team continually seeks to expand its Network membership .

The following youth groups, agencies and government offices provided feedback and/or were represented at LOT 4.

Youth Organizations

African Diaspora Association of the Maritimes (ADAM)
Heartwood
Youth Project

Leave Out Violence
The Shire and the Split Rock Leaning Centre
Springhill Teen Health Centre
Trenton Youth Centre
4-H Club
Boys and Girls Clubs of Nova Scotia

Government Agencies

Department of Community Services - Child & Youth Strategy
Department of Community Services- Family and Youth Services
Department of Education
Department of Health
Department of Health Promotion & Protection
Department of Justice

Organizations that are part of our Network but could not send participants this year

Alliance of Nova Scotia Student Association
Bam (Body and Mind)
Conseil jeunesse provincial de la Nouvelle-Ecosse
IWK Health Project
Envision Halifax
Earth Keepers
IMOV
Kitpu Youth Centre
Mi'kmaq Maliseet Atlantic Youth Council
Students For Teaching Peace
VOICE - Youth in Care Newsletter Project
YMCA Centre for Immigrant Programs
Youth Advisory Council of the IWK
Halifax Youth Attendance Centre
Phoenix Youth Programs
Provincial Student Education Council (VOX)
Teens Now Talk
YMCA Newcomer Program
Youth Advisory Council (VOX)
Youth Employability Project
YouthScape

Evaluation Method

The work of LOT4 was evaluated using both the observations of an evaluator present throughout the planning stages of the weekend and the weekend itself, and through the feedback of the participants. Participant feedback was gathered through a questionnaire and through a collection of photos from the weekend. Responses to the questionnaire were anonymous.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was made up of nine questions and included both open and close ended questions. Each question was designed to assess how well participants felt LOT4 was able to achieve its predetermined outcomes during the weekend. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the appendix of this report.

Lot 4 Weekend Attendance

There were 37 participants for the LOT weekend, (20 youth and 17 adults). Thirty-five of the attendees completed our survey which provided a 95% response rate. Given the high response rate to the questionnaire, it is clear that the topic of youth engagement is important to our attendees. It is interesting to note that the response rate to our questionnaire has always been high, but in 2009 the rate was the highest at 95%. In 2008, the response rate was 84% and in 2007 it was 76%.

Diversity

Looking at the list of organizations involved with LOT is one indicator of the diversity of people involved. As LOT is continually looking at ways to expand our membership, we felt it was important to check in with the participants themselves to see if they felt that our gathering represented the “diverse perspectives of Nova Scotian youth?” We are pleased to report that a large percentage (86%) said “yes” and believed that LOT did well in having a large range of perspective present as demonstrated by the following quotes:

- I think everything was great and there were a very large range of perspectives of youth represented here.
- I think everything or at least the most important things were talked about very well.
- There are always perspectives missing, what’s important is awareness of this, an openness to the missing voices and renewed effort to connect with them.

As LOT strives to be as inclusive as possible, some suggestions for the planning of next year’s weekend includes specific outreach to:

- the educational sector
- physically challenged and/or disabled community
- rural regions, especially the Eastern region
- Aboriginal and First Nation Youth
- French Acadians
- Newcomer Groups

Results of Questionnaire

A questionnaire was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and was administered at the end of the weekend. Participants were asked a number of questions regarding the

weekend such as: knowledge of other youth organizations, their thoughts on government and youth culture (intercultural learning) and how well their voice and input were captured in the process. A likert scale was also introduced which registered opinions and comfort levels on various questions. This scale consisted of scores of 1 (not at all) to 5 (high degree).

Objectives 1 - To strengthen our network of youth networks

One of the goals of LOT and the Youth Network is to strengthen the collective voice of youth in the province. We asked the question, “Do you think your organization will have a stronger voice by being part of this Network? Ninety-four (94%) percent stated they believed their organization would have a stronger voice. Further, all respondents noted that they were more aware of other youth organizations as a result of their participation in the LOT weekend.

Objective 2 - To provide an opportunity for youth to inform government programs

The second objective for LOT was to build understanding between government and youth. The LOT planning team wanted this objective flowed throughout the weekend and much thought on this was built into structured sessions and in social time. For example, social and mealtimes provided as much opportunity for youth to inform government as did structured sessions like the Fish Bowl and the Market Place (see pages 8 and 17). Structured session provided government reps with the opportunity to hear from youth on proposed programs and services or just wonder aloud about questions held by government. Topics included: reaching high risk youth, youth addiction, alcohol marketing and youth and the feedback on the communication plan for the Youth Navigator program.

In order to gauge if participants believed LOT created a place of intercultural learning between one another, the following questions were asked:

If you are a YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE or an ADULT SUPPORT PERSON, did this weekend help you learn more about government and government culture? Ninety-three (93%) percent of respondents responded ‘yes.’ We then asked what was the most useful thing that you learned; the following responses were received:

- Government are on our side and are committed to fighting for youth voice.
- Government actually wants input from youth and are willing to listen and hear what we have to say.
- Coming here and hearing about the government culture and how youth must take a stand and speak up.
- That government adults are roped in and frustrated by systemic order and procedure as youth organizations are.
- The most useful thing I learned is that some policies government put in place sometimes take a considerable amount of time change.

We then wanted to ask government representatives if they found the weekend to be useful and if they learned something new about youth and youth culture.

All government respondents stated they expanded their knowledge about youth and youth culture as a result of being involved with the LOT weekend. The following quotes further demonstrate this point:

- That youth are able to clearly articulate their wants, desires and expectations.
- They need our support, they have their own plan
- Youth culture: it is strong and viable, needs to be supported in various ways. Also has a lot to learn about everyone in the culture, just as government and culture does.
- The power of the fish bowl conversation. Renewed confidence in youth's ability to learn the realities of government limitations, voice frustration yet remain positive and motivated to change systems.
- Youth voice can be specific, relevant and timely to government issues; their input is essential in the development of youth-related programs, policies, etc. ...of all kinds, not just youth related.
- This weekend absolutely helped me learn about youth culture and getting connected. Understanding (and seeing) the complexities and gulf between cultures was enlightening to my approach to youth engagement within government.
- How to connect with youth better.

Objective 3 - to connect youth to government systems and their regional government supporters

A question was asked to youth and their adult supporters if they believed they knew more about government systems, programs and services as a result of the weekend. A large majority of the respondents (85%) said they did.

In terms of connecting youth in their own communities to their regional government supporters, structured time was designed to explore this (please see pages 13-14 for more detail). Participants were grouped according to their geographical regional area (for example, Northern, Central, Eastern and Western). Participants were not only introduced to government representatives in their area but also had the opportunity to talk about issues that may be relevant in their community.

Objective 4 - to provide youth with leadership development opportunities

One of the unique aspect of LOT and the LOT Network is that youth are heavily involved in the design and delivery of the program. We wanted to check in with the attendees of LOT to see if they felt their voice was heard and valued. Question 6 in the questionnaire asked participants, "How well do you feel your voice and input were captured in the processes used this weekend?" The purpose of the question was to gauge how well attendees felt they had been able to provide input in the continuing development of the weekend as a mechanism designed to help inform government. Respondents were asked to use a 5 point scale to rate how much input and voice they felt they had in the process. Their responses are in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Participants rating of their input
N=34

	Not at all		Somewhat		Very Well
Score	1	2	3	4	5
Result (%)	0	0	12% (4)	53% (18)	35% (12)

Average: 4.2

Note: One (1) respondent did not rate their input but stated they felt their voice was heard (i.e. in the planning phase)

According to the results of the survey, respondents rated their voice and input as being heard (well to very well). Young people have reported that being involved in LOT can be a great place to learn and practice leadership skill, provide opportunities to meet diverse people, attend workshops and get skills that may help them in their personal life or at a job.

Objective 5 - To develop and commit to actions for the upcoming year

At the end of the weekend, youth and adults had an opportunity to commit to upcoming activity throughout the year. Plans for next year include:

- bringing the Core team together to scope out future activity as a result of LOT 4,
- presenting at a Lunch and Learn to educate provincial civil servants on Leader of Today,
- looking at possible LOT activity at a regional level,
- using skills and talents learned or shared at LOT to inform the work of youth serving agencies,
- planning LOT 5 which will take place October 22-24, 2011 at the Tim Horton’s Camp in Tatamagouche, NS

Conclusion

This report provides an evaluation of the Leaders of Today (LOT4) weekend. LOT4 is the result of four years of work by youth, youth organizations and government to develop a Provincial Youth Network that will help youth organizations coordinate and work better with each other and government. The success of the weekend was evaluated by its ability to deliver on five specific objectives. LOT was successful in meeting these objectives and was evaluated through feedback from the participants and the observations of an evaluator present during the weekend and its planning.

Once again, the weekend brought together a diverse group of representatives and delivered an action plan that built on the previous work done by LOT which included mechanisms through

which the Network can engage with government and in particular with the Child and Youth Strategy.

The Leaders of Today weekend was held with youth, youth support workers and government workers across the province to share learning, expand networks and explore collaboration for capacity-building in youth engagement.

Feedback received both written and verbally indicated that we did well with making people feel comfortable and in creating a safe space to provide feedback and learn from one another.

Suggestions for next year's (2010) planning includes:

- specific outreach to the educational sector, rural regions (in particular the Eastern region), disabled community, French Acadian, Aboriginal, and Newcomer groups.
- design suggestion to schedule an activity whereby everyone gets to personally meet everyone else.
- request for earlier direction for government attendees. A suggestion for the Planning Team to consider for next year when designing is to consider that if government is going to participate fully, parameters need to be clearly defined and articulated to 'justify' their attendance. Engagement needs to be cultivated between both (or all) cultures. Furthermore, on site participation being part of the expectation of attendance is good but it would have been helpful if there was some earlier direction provided.
- a suggestion for the LOT weekend and its training to switch regions each year.

Some closing thought from our attendees regarding the most valuable lesson they learned from the weekend?

- I was encouraged and inspired and even when I started to feel a little discouraged, my hope was restored hearing from other people.
- being able to get out of your comfort zone
- I learned that I can hold a lot of power being a youth and I can achieve almost anything if I get out there. Can't wait till LOT 5!
- that people when brought together can form better understanding of diverse culture of government and youth.
- people have a voice, you just have to listen to all.
- no more us and them...become a body of youth and government that are one
- my eyes have been opened to the time, energy, and resources necessary to implement a youth voice and perspective between government and community.
- listening with my ears, but with my heart wide open. Thanks for allowing me to learn.
- ask the question and listen to the responses
- to support - not lead. To listen and think about what the youth say before jumping to a plan.
- discussion where we brought youth voice to particular questions produced major outcomes for me.

- Trust these youth engagement principles - they really work!
- it's good to think outside the box and challenge your assumptions
- that youth voice is the most important thing when working in the field
- passion, passion, passion. LOT re-aligns me
- you guys rock! I'm working on trusting the people I don't know.
- I'm not the only disillusioned youth worker trying to make a systemic change
- We are all dissatisfied with the status quo. I loved being able to inform government about the realities of youth work.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sonya Ferrara
Research & Policy Analyst
Child and Youth Strategy
Department of Community Services

Appendix - Participant Feedback Questionnaire

**Leaders of Today
(LOT)
October 23-25, 2009
Bayside Camp, Sambro, NS**

Feedback - How did we do?

Thanks for sharing this exciting weekend with us. We would really appreciate your feedback on how the weekend went for you and what you feel you got out of it. Your answers will help us continue to build cooperation between youth and government and organize future sessions.

You do not need to put your name on this sheet. All responses are confidential.

To fill out this form circle your answer or add your comments in the space provided.

1. Which category below best describes your role this weekend:

Youth Representative

Government Representative

Adult Support

2. One of the goals of this Youth Network is to strengthen the collective voice of youth in the province. Do you think your organization will have a stronger voice by being part of this network?

Yes/No

3. Another of the Network's goals is to build understanding between government and youth.

- a. If you are a YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE or an ADULT SUPPORT PERSON, did this weekend help you learn more about government and government culture?

Yes/No

If yes, what was the most useful thing you learned?

- b. If you are a GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE, did this weekend help you learn more about youth and youth culture?

Yes/No

If yes, what was the most useful thing you learned?

4. Are you more aware of other youth networks (organizations) as a result of your participation in LOT this weekend?

Yes/No

5a. If you are a YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE or an ADULT SUPPORT PERSON, do you feel you know more about government systems, programs and services as a result of this weekend?

Yes/No

b. If you are a GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE, do you feel you have gained new ideas about including youth input in your work as a result of this weekend?

Yes/No

6. How well do you feel your voice and input were captured in the processes used this weekend.

Not at all

Somewhat

Very Well

1

2

3

4

5

7. Do you feel that our gathering this weekend represented the diverse perspectives of Nova Scotian youth?

Yes/No

b. If you think there were any perspectives missing, please tell us what those might be.

8. Our team of youth and adult hosts played a large role in leading the weekend. Do you have any feedback on their performance or suggestions for things they can build on in the future?

9. What is the most valuable lesson you learned this weekend? Are there any other thoughts or comments you would like to share with us?

Thanks very much for taking the time to fill out this survey. Your input is really important to us.