



Canadian Association for  
Conservation of Cultural Property  
Association canadienne pour la  
conservation et la restauration  
des biens culturels

The Honourable Bardish Chagger  
Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth  
15 Eddy Street, 14th Floor  
Gatineau, Quebec  
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hon.bardish.chagger@canada.ca

19 February 2021

Dear Minister Bardish Chagger,

As members and strong supporters of the heritage community in Canada, President of the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property (CAC), and leaders of the Emerging Conservators Committee (ECC) of CAC, we are writing to draw your attention to issues surrounding the Young Canada Works (YCW) programme's current terms of eligibility and the resulting negative impact on both emerging heritage professionals and the cultural heritage sector.

The main goal of the YCW programme is to offer “young Canadians the opportunity to develop skills and gain experience in the workplace.” Through two delivery components, summer jobs and internships, YCW boasts the ability to help students: “acquire valuable work experience and skills; explore and discover new regions within Canada; earn an income; improve their skills through a career-related experience; establish contacts in the industry related to their field of study; and expand their career options by working in Canada or abroad.” While the YCW programme provides career support to students/emerging heritage professionals, the support provided is by no means equitable and excludes a valuable subset of emerging heritage professionals due to its very narrow definition of the word “young”.

Currently, those eligible to participate in YCW summer jobs and internships must be between 16-30 years of age at the start of employment. This prohibitive definition of “young” and the resulting restriction does not reflect the realities of modern post-secondary education, especially when considering the amount of specialized study that careers in the heritage sector require. The existing system only supports students who seamlessly transition from secondary to post-secondary education with a clear vision of their career path and the ability to execute said vision unimpeded by a myriad of factors, one of which includes highly competitive entry to a limited number of training programs in Canada. As a result, it disproportionately affects those who do not have the privilege to move succinctly through the educational system - e.g. those with financial stressors, family concerns, disabilities, health issues, or from lower socioeconomic groups. These YCW eligibility restrictions ultimately contribute to a less diverse, resilient and inclusive heritage sector by limiting the students who are actually given the opportunity to “put their skills to the test, build career equity, earn an income and get started on the right career path.”



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It is time that the age restriction as an eligibility criteria is reconsidered. Emerging heritage professionals above the age of 30 should no longer be unjustly excluded or penalized for determining their desired career path later in life. All emerging heritage professionals should be considered eligible for these positions and what YCW promises: the experience of meaningful, paid short-term employment and the opportunity to gain invaluable experience in one's desired field. Given that the YCW programme is geared towards entry-level experience for emerging heritage professionals, we recommend removing age-based eligibility parameters as they create an unnecessary barrier to access, and opening up YCW opportunities to anyone currently enrolled in school, intending to return to school, or with less than 3 years post-grad for summer internship placements and 5 years post-grad for internships.

Investing in the future of Canadian heritage means investing in a workforce where every person has been provided equal opportunity to succeed. The prohibitive nature of the YCW programme not only affects individual students at the beginning of their careers, but the strength of our institutions and the heritage community as a whole. We implore you to join us in our commitment to engaging in activities that increase diversity and equity in the cultural heritage sector by revising the age restrictions in the YCW programme eligibility criteria.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison Freake". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Alison Freake (President)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Kablys". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Victoria Kablys (Chair, ECC)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emilie Demers". The signature is a long, horizontal, wavy line.

Emilie Demers (Vice-Chair, ECC)