Dear fellow Canadians,

We are writing to you today, on International Youth Day, to talk about the impact COVID-19 is having on young Canadians and how we can help. The COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the way in which young people are being educated around the world. According to UNESCO, the global scale of education disruption is unprecedented, with more than 1.5 billion learners affected by school closures. Schools and parents are seeking digital solutions to support young people remotely. We surveyed young Canadians to learn how quarantine has impacted them and found that:

- 88% of young people have had their lives significantly impacted by COVID-19
- 59% of young people feel lonelier than ever during quarantine
- 64% are concerned about the impact quarantine will have on their mental health and well-being
- 72% are concerned about their academic knowledge and skills

The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award has been working in Canada for nearly 60 years to offer young people the opportunity to enhance learning both inside and outside the classroom. We believe that some of life’s biggest lessons can happen in the least likely locations.

By offering the Award as a non-formal education and learning tool alongside provincial academic programs, schools can give students a more holistic education. In particular, the Award helps to foster resilience and adaptability in participants; attributes that are vital in the current climate. The Award works best when it is properly used by adults who already work with young people. We want Canadians to be aware of how valuable a program like the Award can be in these times. We have spent these past six months developing digital tools and enhancing our approach to providing a service that can help ensure Canada’s youth have the skills and support to succeed in our “new normal”.

We believe we have a framework that can benefit young Canadians in ways which the academic curriculum cannot achieve alone. We encourage you to watch a personal message from HRH The Earl of Wessex on our website about how the Award can help ensure that young people have the skills and support to succeed in our “new normal”.

The Award encourages young people to develop their
capabilities; their Award shows grit and character, and we want to see them
ready for the future.

Today’s young people are strong, inspired and dedicated. They can — and will — create new opportunities from our current challenges. The Award framework can help, by building the “soft”, “core” or “universal” skills and characteristics needed to navigate change and build positive habits for the rest of their lives. They are ready for life, work, and to play a constructive role in society.

Ready for now

The Award encourages young people to do the

- Embrace structure and purpose
- Give back to their communities
- Connect (safely) with others
- Goal setting and planning
- Readjust to formal education

Ready for the future

The Award encourages young people to develop the

- Essential life skills
- Employability
- Proven tutoring and planning
- Increased community engagement
- The ability to thrive in a changing world

We hope you will be able to support young people and their teachers in the important work they are doing. We will soon be publishing research backed by PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) that demonstrates the social value of the Award in Canada, but Canada as a whole. We will soon be publishing research backed by PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) that demonstrates the social value of the Award in Canada, but Canada as a whole. We will soon be publishing research backed by PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) that demonstrates the social value of the Award in Canada, but Canada as a whole.

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