



What does it mean to be an informed and participating citizen in a democratic society? How many times each day do you hear and see things around you that prompt you to say (or think) “that’s not fair”? Well, now you have the chance to do something about it!

Can you identify a school rule that protects some students but limits the rights of others? Do you take issue with a law that restricts the rights of teenagers? Are you frustrated with the policy of a store, restaurant or corporation because it discriminates against a certain group of people? Do you think that the conduct of certain people (peers, politicians, police etc.) has the effect of marginalizing an individual or group of people? These are the types of questions you should be asking yourself as you embark on this challenge.



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# TAKE ACTION. IT'S YOUR RIGHT!

## **YOUR MISSION:**

If you accept this challenge, you will be promoting the values of democracy such as civic participation, critical thinking, free expression and civil liberties.

Your mission is to identify a political or social issue that you find concerning, and create an action plan that uses **lawful and peaceful** means to address the problem.

### ***What does it mean to take lawful and peaceful action?***

We can all identify something we think is unfair and would like to change. But no matter how strongly we feel about the issue, it is important that we abide by the law and use peaceful tactics to effect that change.

One of the best things about democracy is that we are given the necessary tools to make our individual voices heard and challenge injustice without having to break the law or resort to violent acts. These tools are the fundamental freedoms guaranteed to us by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and they will empower you to advocate for your cause as you take on this challenge.



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## YOUR TOOLS:

In your action plans be sure to exercise one or more of your fundamental freedoms:

- 1) **Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication:**  
e.g. contact your MP, city counselor, principal, or local newspaper/TV station; raise awareness for your cause by composing a song, creating a work of art, or producing a video
- 2) **Freedom of peaceful assembly:**  
e.g. organize a school rally, assembly or event; practice a day of silence with others who believe in your cause
- 3) **Freedom of association:**  
e.g. create a facebook group; start a youth advocacy club or association; join or start a political party

Visit [www.ccla.org/whatsnotfair](http://www.ccla.org/whatsnotfair) to read inspirational stories from other youth advocates and see what they have done to address problems they faced.

## YOUR GOAL:

As history has shown us, change doesn't come easily. Success is rarely immediate and certainly never guaranteed. So don't be discouraged if you don't see immediate results from your actions. Even if the outcome is not what you'd hoped or expected, your advocacy efforts enhance the visibility of your cause and teach others the importance of standing up for our rights. The goal of this assignment is to encourage you to develop the habits of a democratic citizen and to help you to find the knowledge, skills and experience to identify and challenge injustice whenever you see it.

**BE VIGILANT. ALWAYS ASK  
QUESTIONS. KNOW YOUR  
RIGHTS AND EMPOWER  
YOURSELF TO BE YOUR OWN  
ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE!**



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## Components of the Youth Democracy Challenge

### 1) Issue Selection and Rationale \_\_\_\_\_%

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: Select a social or political issue that you would like to address. Possible issues can range from an unfair measure (e.g. law, policy, rule etc.) to unfair conduct that you have observed or experienced (e.g. bullying, discriminatory hiring practices etc.). The issues can come from your school, community, province, country or abroad. They can be based on personal experiences or on information you have learned about in school, on the news, from friends, etc.

Write a paragraph describing your issue and the reason you selected it.

A: If your issue identifies an unfair measure, describe why you think it is unfair. You may wish to consider the following questions to guide your rationale:

- 1) Why is this measure, rule or law in place? Does it have a valid purpose?
- 2) Is the measure effective in achieving its intended purpose?
- 3) What are the side-effects or consequences (intended or unintended) of the measure that must be considered? Does it go too far?

B: If your issue is something other than a measure, for example, unfair conduct, describe what you have observed or experienced, who is negatively impacted by the conduct and how they are impacted.



**TIP:** When identifying your issue, try to be as specific as possible and choose a topic that you care about and/or can relate to. The more specific your problem, the more easily you can identify what you may be able to do to address it.



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## Possible Advocacy Topics:

You may wish to tackle one of the following issues or come up with one of your own:

- 1) Permanent residents (i.e. non-citizens) do not have the right to vote in municipal, provincial or federal elections.
- 2) I am not allowed to vote in municipal, provincial or federal elections because I am under the age of 18.
- 3) Minimum wage for students under the age of 18 in Ontario is lower than the general adult minimum wage.
- 4) Some municipalities in Canada impose youth curfews, which prohibit anyone under a certain age to be in a public space or a place of public entertainment without an adult during certain hours of the night (usually after midnight).
- 5) Hundreds of peaceful protesters and innocent bystanders were unlawfully searched, detained and arrested by the police during the Toronto G20.
- 6) My school's dress code prohibits me from wearing a certain article of clothing or a religious artifact.
- 7) Bullies are harassing and intimidating students at my school.
- 8) The school cafeteria doesn't serve healthy food options.
- 9) A store in my community will not allow more than a few students to enter the store at one time.
- 10) My local recreational facilities and parks are not well maintained and are not safe for the public.
- 11) There are not enough after-school programs for youth in my community.



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## 2) Action Plan

\_\_\_\_\_ %

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: Write two paragraphs describing how you intend to address the issue you have chosen. You may wish to use the Action Plan Outline on pages 7-8 to help you brainstorm and organize your ideas.

The following questions should be answered in your action plan description:

- 1) What actions will you take to address your issue and/or initiate change?
- 2) Why have you chosen this approach?

Some questions you may wish to consider in developing your action plan:

- What resources and contacts might be helpful in developing your action plan?
- What are organizations or other individuals already doing to address your issue?
- How can you make your individual voice more powerful in effecting change? (e.g. find strength in numbers, get a celebrity to endorse your cause, work in partnership with a community group etc.)
- Who is your target audience? Be specific – if it is an individual in authority (e.g. a cabinet minister, a store manager, a school trustee), research and include that person’s name and title. How will you reach your audience?
- What materials and/or contacts will you need in order to implement your action plan (e.g. if you are planning a school event, what materials do you need, what type of permissions are required beforehand, are there any teachers or guest speakers who can help you?)
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- What challenges do you think you will meet?
- What will you need to overcome these challenges?



**TIP:** Visit [www.ccla.org/whatsnotfair](http://www.ccla.org/whatsnotfair) to read inspirational stories from other youth advocates and see what they have done to address problems they faced.



**TIP:** Ask the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, which has been a leader in protecting fundamental freedoms in Canada since 1964. Visit [www.ccla.org](http://www.ccla.org) or become a fan of our facebook page and post your questions. Find us by searching facebook for “What’s Not Fair to You?”



**TIP:** Read “Additional Tips and Guidelines” found on pages 10-11 for tips on writing a letter or petition, or making a phone call to a community agency, NGO, political party etc.



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## Action Plan Outline

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

My chosen issue is:

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I will address this issue by:

- Starting a facebook page/making a webpage
- Starting a youth advocacy club
- Joining/starting a political party
- Creating song/video/radio broadcast/poster to raise awareness etc.
- Writing a letter to \_\_\_\_\_ and asking him/her to:

a)

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b)

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c)

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- Organizing an event/school rally/assembly/guest speaker  
who:  
what:  
where:  
when:

- Other:

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**Action Plan Outline (continued)**

I have chosen this approach because:

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I will need the following supplies:

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Useful contacts for research, permissions, publicity/media coverage, assistance, call to action etc.

Name/Organization:	e-mail/address	phone



### 3) Implementation \_\_\_\_\_%

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: Don't just talk the talk. Now it's time to take the first steps in implementing your action plan. If your plan involves sending a letter to the CEO of a corporation, mail the letter to the appropriate recipient (but don't forget to keep a copy!). If your action plan involves using Facebook as a means of getting your message out, set up your Facebook page and invite your friends to join your group.

You will be responsible for producing some evidence that you have taken the first steps in implementing your action plan. E.g. proof that you sent your email/letter, or if you conduct a phone interview, document the date/time of your call and the interviewee's answers to your questions.

### 4) Presentation \_\_\_\_\_%

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: Congratulations! You are now officially a youth advocate! Now it's time to share with others what you've learned about actively participating in a democracy. Be creative and brief. Present your action plan to your fellow classmates.

During your presentation, you will be expected to provide your peers with descriptions of the following:

- 1) The problem you tackled and what you believed was unfair;
- 2) How your action plan addresses your issue;
- 3) Why you chose your approach;
- 4) The steps you have taken to implement your action plan;
- 5) What happened -- include any responses you may have received and/or what you hope to achieve or possible next steps;



**TIP:** Be creative in your presentation. You don't have to stand in front of the class and just talk the whole time if you don't want to. Use any medium you feel tells your advocacy story best: an audio recording of a radio broadcast or public service announcement; poster/flyer; video; song; poem; photographs; story board; comic strips; drawings; text etc. Tap into your strengths and express yourself in the presentation. Make it your own!



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## ADDITIONAL TIPS AND GUIDELINES: LETTERS, PETITIONS & PHONE CALLS

### Writing an Effective Advocacy Letter:

Your letter should include the following:

- full name and title of the recipient
- correct and complete address of the recipient
- return address to your school
- current date
- a salutation to the recipient
- an explanation of your objective in the first paragraph, followed by a brief introduction outlining your concerns and why you think action/change is necessary
- two or three specific actions you would like the recipient to take to address the issue and rationale for your request
- a concluding paragraph thanking your contact for any help they may be able to offer and a request for a response to your letter
- a closing (e.g. Sincerely, Best regards, etc.) followed by your name and a space for you to sign
- Your letter should be formatted as a formal business letter. Visit [www.ccla.org/whatsnotfair](http://www.ccla.org/whatsnotfair) to read student samples

**Don't forget to keep a copy of the letter so you can refer to it when you receive a response or re-send a copy if necessary.**



**TIP:** Use some of these techniques to make your letter more persuasive and effective:

- Try to make your letter personal by including some of your own experiences. Describe how you are personally affected by your chosen issue.
- Highlight any relevant expertise or credentials you have that may add credibility to your position.
- Try to keep your letter to one page.
- Ask questions that provoke a response.
- Do some research on the recipient beforehand. Find out their position on your chosen issue and what action, if any, he/she has taken to address it in the past. You may wish to question or recognize their position and/or actions (or lack of action) in your letter.



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### **Writing a Petition:**

A petition is a good way to demonstrate that a lot of people support a particular cause or call to action. The House of Commons allots 15 minutes each day to the reading of public petitions. Public petitions must meet certain form and content requirements in order to be presented to the House. Check out the current guidelines for public petitions at the House of Commons Procedure and Practice website:

<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/MarleauMontpetit/DocumentViewer.aspx?DocId=1001&Sec=C&Seq=3&Lang=E&Print=2>

### **Making a Phone Call:**

- Plan your phone call before you make it. Write down in advance all the topics/questions you want to cover.
- Do some research on the individual or group you are contacting before you make the call. Your conversation/interview will likely be more successful if you demonstrate you are knowledgeable about the organization and the causes they support.
- Community agencies and organizations are generally very busy, so be sure to respect their time.  
Be as brief as possible while still covering all your concerns.
- State the purpose of your call up front and try to stick to your main points throughout the conversation.
- If possible, try to arrange a face to face meeting which is always more memorable to both parties.
- Take notes to remind yourself of the important points of your conversation.
- Be friendly, speak clearly and avoid using slang.



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Checklist:

Task	Date Completed	Due Date
I have chosen an issue		
I have written a paragraph describing my issue and my rationale for choosing it (i.e. why I think it is unfair)		
My teacher has approved my choice		
I have designed an action plan and requested feedback from my teacher, my peers and/or the CCLET/CCLA		
I have made changes to my action plan according to the feedback I received		
I have taken the first steps to implement my action plan		
I have presented my action plan to my class		
<u>Optional:</u> I have submitted my <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> cover sheet</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> action plan</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> multi-media files</li> </ul> to the CCLET as part of the “What’s Not Fair to You” democracy challenge		<b>March 31</b>





The CCLET’s Annual Bernard Chernos Youth Democracy Challenge is open to high school students across Canada. In memory of the late Bernard Chernos, a civil libertarian, lawyer, and a lover of lively debate, a **prize of \$500** and a copy of *Uncivil Obedience* by A. Alan Borovoy will be awarded to the student whose action plan demonstrates a true understanding of informed and active citizenship by using peaceful and lawful tactics to address an important issue.

An additional contribution of \$250 and a copy of *Uncivil Obedience* will go to the department of the teacher submitting the entry. This challenge will be of special interest to teachers and students in such courses as Civics, History, Law, Politics, World Issues, and other social studies subjects.

### COMPETITION RULES


This competition is open to students currently enrolled in a secondary school in Canada. Tell us about why you chose your issue, what you did to address it, and any responses or results of your actions. Be sure to also send us any accompanying multi-media files (your songs, videos, websites, presentations, drawings, artwork etc.)


Submissions must be post-marked or e-mailed no later than **March 31**. The submissions will be judged by a panel of three, chosen by the CCLET. The winner will be notified by the end of **June**.


Create a cover sheet with the following information and include it with your submission:

- 1) Your name
- 2) Age
- 3) Home Address
- 4) Telephone Number
- 5) School Name
- 6) School Address

Send your cover sheet and work to the CCLET by:

 e-mail: [education@ccla.org](mailto:education@ccla.org)

 fax: 416-861-1291

 mail: 360 Bloor Street W, Suite 506, Toronto, ON M5S 1X1



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**BECAUSE THE FREEDOM  
OF NO ONE IS SAFE  
UNLESS THE FREEDOM  
OF EVERYONE IS SAFE**



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