

# CASE FOR SUPPORT

## FOSTERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS



# THE FOUNDING VISION



## Our History

Recognizing the importance of debate for a healthy democracy, Tom Lawson, a teacher at Trinity College School in Port Hope, founded a debate club at the school in 1963. By 1967, he hosted a national debate event for high school students through a government grant for Canada's centennial anniversary. The event sparked widespread interest, leading to flourishing debate programs across Canada. This success prompted Tom to establish the Canadian Student Debating Federation in 1971, and with a Ford Foundation Grant, he traveled across Canada to initiate new programs.

Realizing the importance of a benefactor to sustain his vision, Tom invited prominent Ontario businessman Willis S. McLeese to one of his seminars in 1972. Willis attended, witnessing firsthand the transformative power of debate education. Deeply moved, Willis and his family committed to supporting debate in Canada with unwavering generosity, making significant contributions over the decades. To continue their legacy, his son, Robert S. McLeese incorporated the Speech & Debate Canada Foundation in 2019, culminating 50 years of dedicated work by various organizations, with Willis and Tom at the center.

## Our Sponsors

Many thanks to some of our sponsors for their support and partnership over the years. We hope to add to this list!





# SPREADING DEBATE LITERACY



**S&DCF is a national charitable foundation that brings debate and speech to schools and communities across Canada.**

## Our Mission

To spread debate literacy across Canada so every Canadian child has the means to advocate for themselves and their community.

## Our Values

### *Inclusive Education*

Every child should have the opportunity to acquire critical thinking and self-advocacy skills, regardless of their geographic or socioeconomic background.

### *Respectful Discourse*

Our democracy thrives when Canadians can articulate and defend their views while maintaining respect for opposing perspectives.

### *Future Preparedness*

The global challenges of tomorrow can only be addressed by a community of problem-solvers who work together with open-mindedness and resilience.



## Decreasing Quality of Civil Discourse

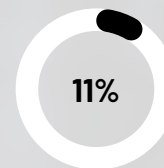
The simultaneous rise in polarization and decline in civil discourse are undermining our ability to achieve consensus-based problem-solving, which is fundamental to Canadian democracy. Teaching debate will help the next generation engage in discussions with curiosity and empathy, revitalizing the art of civilized disagreement.



## Increasing Need for Soft Skills

With increased automation, indispensable soft skills like public speaking, active listening, critical thinking, and teamwork are in high demand for the worker of the future. Debate equips young people with these skills, especially benefiting those with learning challenges.

## Lacking Opportunities for Debate



Out of ~4,700 public secondary schools, only ~500 have any debate clubs or lessons, most of which tend to be extracurricular offerings. Debate largely remains a private school privilege, far from accessible to most public and rural schools.

# CREATING DEBATE SPACES

## School Debate Clubs



S&DCF's focus is to **establish and operate school debate clubs**.

A club often runs from September to May and serves 10 - 30 students in grades 6 - 12. We source instructors with extensive debate experience and train school teachers and community leaders to become coaches. Our instructors use resources designed in-house and our 4-week introductory course on debate literacy. The meetings are held both in person and online using one of many platforms available.



**3000**  
STUDENTS  
REACHED  
2019-2024



**100**  
PARTNER  
SCHOOLS  
2019-2024

## Safe Spaces for Youth Debate

This program provides underprivileged and at-risk youth with access to debate literacy, helping them acquire the skills needed to advocate for themselves. In 2024, we partnered with Covenant House Toronto, and we will continue to expand the SSYD program.

## Indigenous Debate Program

In the spirit of reconciliation, S&DCF is building bridges with several organizations as part of call to action items 63 (building student capacity for mutual respect) and 92 (ensuring equitable access to education opportunities) of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada. S&DCF is developing a new style of debate specifically designed to fit with the unique heritage of Indigenous populations and the Consensus Government System in the Territories. We hope to pilot our work with one Band Operated School in 2024-2025, and then expand from there.



# HOSTING DEBATE EVENTS



## Online Debate Tournaments

Offered 2-3 times per year, these tournaments are a space for Canadian youth to practice debate. Instead of ranking performance, the emphasis of the competitions is to help students develop their skills and passion.

## Annual Persuasive Speech Competition

Launched in 2021 with the theme "Making Canada Stronger," this competition provides Canadian youth with an opportunity to learn and practice the foundational debate skill of writing persuasive speeches.

## Introductory Workshops

With the help of the University of Toronto's debate club, one of Canada's oldest, we run three workshops annually. These workshops offer an opportunity to learn about the various styles of debate practiced in Canada.

## Community Collaborators



Canadian Student  
Debating Federation



Canadian University  
Society for  
Intercollegiate Debate



Canadian Parents  
for French



Junior Achievement  
Canada



"Participating in competitive debate changed my life. It taught me valuable transferable skills, like teamwork, public speaking, and critical thinking. All young Canadians should have the opportunity to take part in competitive debate."

*Scott Stirrett, Founder & CEO of Venture for Canada, and S&DCF Board Member*



"Debate has truly given me a voice. It's helped me hone my public skills which I use to this very day when fundraising for my business and speaking on stage about issues I am passionate about."

*Swish Goswami, CEO at Surf, Co-Host of Track Limits, Chairman at League of Innovators, and LinkedIn Top Voice*



"I joined the Old Scona High School Debating team in Grade 10, largely to overcome my shyness. That was the single most important decision of my life. Debating led me to my career in law. It taught me the power of using one's voice to advocate for a viewpoint, and the need to see both sides of an argument."

*Justice Ranjan Agarwal, Ontario Superior Court of Justice*

# OUR REQUEST FOR SUPPORT



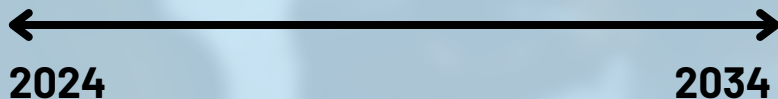
## For 2024 - 2025, S&DCF aims to:

1. Reach 4,000 students (increase of 33%) and 200 schools (increase of 100%) primarily through school debate clubs, with a specific focus on public, rural, and low-income area schools.
2. Launch our Indigenous Debate Program offerings and expand Safe Spaces for Youth Debate.
3. Increase short and online course offerings.

To support these initiatives, we will need to recruit new instructors and hire a Program Developer to create educational resources, as well as a Social Media Lead to expand our reach.

Our **annual budget target** to support this work across Canada in 2024 - 2025 is **\$300,000**.

## Our 10 Year Targets



Engage **100,000 young students** in educational or competitive debate, whether via clubs or school curriculum.

See a secondary impact of **increased youth civic engagement** and turnout at elections, returning to 2019 figures (53.9%+) from where it is now (46.7%).



### Bronze Partner – From \$1,000

*Your donation will help us start a school debate club*

- Corporate logo on our website and newsletter as Bronze Partner
- A partnership appreciation package



### Silver Partner – From \$5,000

*Your donation will help us start three school debate clubs and help deliver Indigenous and community programming*

- Bronze Partner package upgraded to Silver Partner
- Recognition of your donation in the remarks and program of our Annual Persuasive Speech Competition



### Gold Partner – From \$10,000

*Your donation will help us start six school debate clubs and help us design and deliver debate literacy courses in a further four communities*

- Silver Partner package upgraded to Gold Partner
- Recognition of your donation in the remarks and program of our Annual Golf Tournament in Toronto, and two tickets to the event
- The opportunity to address students and judge a debate



### Platinum Partner – From \$25,000

*Your donation will help us start fifteen school debate clubs and help us design and deliver debate literacy courses in a further ten communities*

- Gold Partner package upgraded to Platinum Partner
- A total of four tickets to the Annual Golf Tournament in Toronto
- Potential naming rights for one of our competitions, a keynote address, and the ability to help set debate topics

If you would like to contribute more than \$25,000, we will curate a personalized sponsorship program specifically for you.





## The Speech & Debate Canada Foundation

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