

CANADA 25

www.canada25.com

National

WHO THEY ARE

Canada 25 exists to create a more active Canadian citizenry through public policy education and development. Each year they pick a theme, select national delegates, discuss the issue and write out final policy reports. They bring young people together to hold informal discussions and to hear from public policy leaders, their experiences and to ask them questions and learn about what they do.

SO WHY DO THEY WANT YOUTH TO DISCUSS NATIONAL POLICY?

“If we don’t have young people participate, we risk losing that next generation of people who are going to have new ideas, enthusiasm, passion and a strong drive to change and improve things.”

Andrew Medd, Executive Director

OK WHAT’S THE APPEAL?

Canada 25 gives youth a chance to write and speak their own ideas. They also give training and connect them with people in government who are working on the things that they care about. Canada 25 provides youth with opportunities to really connect with the elements of their issue of interest.

Canada 25 keeps their youth up-to-date with their monthly “Policy Watch”, an electronic communication of outlines and resources on issues that interest them.

WHAT THE YOUTH FRIENDLY GUIDE SAYS

The Youth Friendly Guide places an emphasis on providing training and keeping youth up-to-date on the key issues of the organization, and Canada 25 does this quite well.

STRATEGIES

Canada 25 has a unique way of involving youth on issues of high importance such as foreign aid, trade, defence and diplomacy. They realize that these topics can be quite intimidating for youth and they have devised a method for better dealing with these subjects. By breaking the issues down into sub-issues that hit closer to home for youth, they are better able to discuss policy and initiate relevant projects. Some sub-issues: governance, health care, environment, security; these are all things a combination of young people are likely to have experienced in one way or another. Maybe they volunteer for an environmental organization, maybe they go to med-school, or maybe they’ve traveled; all these things will give youth ammunition for policy discussion on important issues.

Canada 25’s youth wing maintains its attractiveness by allowing youth to call the shots, particularly concerning the issues they decide to address.

“We allow our membership to drive the issues we talk about. We want to be as responsive as we can to their interests.”

Andrew Medd, Executive Director

Canada 25 consistently gives youth the opportunities to decide in which direction they're heading to next. Thus, the people who organize their projects are young people rather than adults creating a project that they THINK young people will show interest in.

ADVICE

“Not everybody is immediately interested in a round table policy discussion. This is why it’s important to let the future participants know that their input will be valued and that there will be room for a diversity of views.”

Andrew Medd, Executive Director

Relating to the Youth Friendly Guide, this is an example of the second of the five principles for forming intergenerational partnerships: to encourage creativity and to not stifle difference. The atmosphere needs to accept the diversity which is the reality of youth cultures and lifestyles.

If you want to engage youth in some sort of discussion on important issues, it always helps to hold a pre-discussion get together to help youth familiarize themselves with the topic and ask any questions they may be too shy to ask during the actual forum. This will allow youth to become more confident when speaking and will also increase the quality of the discussion, as more ideas are likely to be put forward.

Obviously for the partnership with youth to be successful, you have to have adults who genuinely believe in the potential youth have to offer and who are willing to provide support and guidance for them.