

2025: Canadian Values & Canada's Foreign Policy



Submitted to the Government of Canada's Dialogue on Foreign Policy as *Canada25's* contribution to the discussion about the values that should underpin Canada's foreign policy

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Our “Canada and the World” Research

As part of its mission, *Canada25* brings together young Canadians, living in Canada and around the world, to discuss critical issues of public importance. Over the past two years, we have produced policy ideas on several issues, including talent attraction and retention, innovation and the state of Canadian cities.

Canada25 recently launched a one-year effort to focus the attention, talent, and creativity of young people on Canada’s role in the world. This project will proceed in four phases:

Phase One: Values Discussion (March-April 2003)

Phase One of this project featured a national series of policy discussions about the values that should inform Canada’s interactions with the world. This report is a summary of the results of our process and serves as our submission to the Federal Government’s *Dialogue on Foreign Policy*.

Phase Two: Knowledge-Building (May-August 2003)

Phase Two of this initiative will examine policy prescriptions in four areas:

- Security
- Aid & Diplomacy
- International Trade
- Canadians Abroad

The first three of these fields mirror Canada’s ministerial arrangements, a structure designed to enable the potential incorporation of our recommendations into Canada’s foreign policy debate. “Canadians Abroad” will examine the way our country’s foreign policy affects those who live, study and work outside of Canada in this era of international mobility.

Phase Three: Regional Roundtables (September-November 2003)

Canada25 will host a series of roundtables across all of our chapters in order to develop a series of vision statements for Canada’s foreign policy, and to outline the concrete actions Canada needs to take over the next twenty years to make our vision a reality. Following a rigorous delegate selection process, roundtables will take place in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Atlantic Canada, London (UK), Boston, Washington DC, Paris, New York City and San Francisco.

Phase Four: National Forum (January-February 2004)

The final step in the process will be a National Forum. Delegates will undertake significant research in preparation for the event. The vision statements created during the roundtables will serve as the basis for much of the discussion at the Forum and delegates will ultimately agree upon a long-term vision for Canada’s foreign policy as well as near-term policy recommendations consistent with this vision. The final output from the Forum will be a detailed, bilingual report reflecting the research, perspectives and recommendations of *Canada25*’s membership.

2025: Canada’s Role in a World of Increasing Global Mobility

Canada25 initiated its membership consultation about values through an investigation of the following two questions, as found in Minister Graham’s *Dialogue* paper:

- Are values such as human rights, democracy, respect for diversity and gender ones that Canada should continue to advocate in all parts of the world? If so, what are the best ways of doing this?
- Overall, what values and interests bear most fundamentally on Canada’s foreign policy?

The following summarizes some of the high-level points raised most strongly by *Canada25*’s membership in “Phase One” of our research. It will no doubt be informative to compare the values discussed at these initial stages against the values underlying the eventual policy recommendations in our final report. Recognizing that we will be conducting many more sessions and significant additional research, early consensus was forged around the following points:

Broad Support for Four Values

In our discussions with *Canada25* members across the country and around the world, we found broad support for the four values articulated in the 1995 policy statement: human rights, democracy, respect for diversity and gender equality. However, we also recognize these values as being *social* in nature. Our membership questioned whether *social* values are the only types of values that should drive our foreign policy, and whether they have become our panacea through nature or nurture. In other words: are these social values Canada’s best assets to contribute to the world, or is it the case that we have been encouraged to believe these are our strongest assets by decades of foreign policy shaped around them?

Canada Should Not be Limited to Social Values

By focusing on *social* values, Canada is choosing not to emphasize *environmental, economic, cultural, spiritual* and other values that are also components of our national fabric. Notwithstanding the strength of the four values mentioned in the *Dialogue*, the general belief of *Canada25*’s membership is that Canada can credibly espouse other types of values and should strive to do so in the long term. For example, one of our chapters suggested a framework in which human development, governance and economic development form three pillars in the pursuit of over-arching global stability. Another chapter suggested that the values of human security, participation (of individuals and groups), governance, environmental sustainability and prosperity are critical values, along with “traditional” social values of human rights and respect for diversity.

Complexity Requires More Robust Set of Values

Our members also noted that it is insufficient to believe that tough foreign policy decisions can be taken on the basis of *social* values alone. Although these values are critical for shaping and creating foreign policies, “harder” considerations influence many important decisions on the international stage. As recent events have shown, decisions to support or oppose preventive war or to restrict liberties of visitors from disease-afflicted regions can have a significant impact on national security, the economy and public health. We believe that current geopolitical issues are burdened with real complexity and today’s decisions — and those in the foreseeable future — require a more robust set of values.

Explicit Articulation of Canadian Foreign Policy is Needed

A dominant theme emerging from *Canada25*’s membership concerning foreign policy, as well as other policy areas our organization has examined, is that the messaging from Federal Government is not always well understood. Governments must be clear, decisive and confident in stating and explaining a foreign policy. The need for the explicit recognition of “Canadian values” and the use thereof as a driving principle of foreign policy has clearly emerged across the membership.

By focusing on social values alone, the Government runs the risk of ambiguity by trying to be “all things to all people.” This is simply not feasible for a country of our size. Clear, effective communication requires political foresight, policy leadership, and — importantly — civic participation from private industry, the non-profit sector, and the public at large.

Summary

Canada is known internationally for many of its social and political successes. Indeed, Canada is built upon a multicultural society and has historically been regarded as a leader in peacekeeping, governance, human rights, and dispute settlement. However, we must seek to improve our foreign policy record as it applies to human security, international development support, environmental protection, and international trade. Canada must once again be known the world over as a just nation, as a fair nation, and as a nation committed to maintaining the best of human values.

Canada25 is excited to continue contributing to this important process, and welcomes any questions, feedback or comments about both our submission and our organization.

Appendix – What Is *Canada25*?

Canada25 is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that brings together young Canadians, aged 20 – 35, to contribute to public policy dialogue and take action on issues of local and national significance. Created in 2000 by six recent university graduates, we have reached over 1000 members and continue to grow.

Our mission is to bring together Canadians, aged 20-35, to deliberate public policy and take action on issues of local and national significance. In doing so, *Canada25* is working to develop, articulate and implement policy proposals, to act as a resource for policy makers looking to engage and involve young people, to build an international network of people who share an interest in public affairs and civic engagement in Canada and to provide exciting opportunities for Canadians, aged 20-35, to build policy analysis and civic leadership skills.

Canada25 has created a forum to bring together young Canadians to discuss the public policy challenges facing this country including talent attraction and retention, the fate and future of Canada's cities, and, beginning with this document, the issue of Canada's foreign policy.

We look forward to working with all levels of government, private industry, and the non-profit sector to make Canada a dynamic, inclusive, and prosperous country that people from around the world are proud to call home.