

## C25 OTTAWA'S DIALOGUE ON FOREIGN POLICY

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Members of the Ottawa chapter met on 8 April 2003, following their meeting with the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The purpose was to provide input to Canada25's submission to the Government of Canada's "Dialogue on Foreign Policy". The meeting began with an overview of the government's dialogue paper. Participants expressed their disappointment with the paper, suggesting that the review is not a priority for the government and that the questions posed are unprovocative and too broad.

*"I'm disappointed that the questions don't spur debate. These questions are too general and conservative to get Canadians talking and making difficult choices." - participant*

Members debated the trade-offs between investing in security (i.e. homeland security, intelligence), the military and international development. They also discussed whether or not such issues are mutually exclusive from both fiscal and political perspectives.

Some participants suggested that Canadian sovereignty may be the defining issue of our generation. It was pointed out that there is a need to define the difference between our values and our preferences. Canadians must make firm decisions on what they are willing to fight and sacrifice for, in part to distinguish such issues from those that are negotiable. It was agreed that we can no longer afford to make up policy as we go along.

Members then discussed Canada-US relations, which was also expressed as continentalism vs. internationalism. The Dobson/Gotlieb proposal that Canada must make concessions to the US on security and related issues in return for increased access to the US market was considered and rejected by most participants. There was a recognition that we need to increase our security, but a majority of members felt that many other issues are a higher priority, such as international development, trade diversification and decreasing our dependency on the US.

Participants agreed that one of Canada's strengths is its participation in, and promotion of, multilateral institutions. An example given was Canada's leadership through the "Ottawa Process" to ban landmines. Members supported the idea that we should export our expertise in good governance to countries that could benefit from it.

The Ottawa chapter of Canada25 recommends:<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Canada should make human security and soft power the primary pillar of its foreign policy.**
- 2. Canada should better debate and define its relationship with US.**
- 3. Canada should diversify its trade and decrease its dependence on the US.**
- 4. Canada should export its expertise in good governance.**
- 5. Canada should work to build and strengthen multilateral institutions.**

<sup>1</sup>Recommendations are not in order of priority