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Conference Report: Get Out the Vote Conference August 8 – 9 2019

What is the Get Out the Vote Conference?

The Get out the Vote Conference is a conference hosted by the Canadian Alliance of Students Associations in Calgary Alberta. The conference brings together many of the main Western schools taking part in the country-wide campaign that saw great success with the provincial election just a few months ago. The idea with the campaign is that the more students and schools involved, the stronger the collective voice of students is and the better positioned schools are to advocate student needs to all levels of government. This idea is supported by the conference as connectivity can be better understood and realized through in-person contact and discussion.

Thursday, August 8th

The first day of the event was kicked off with an icebreaker activity which allowed us to meet many different members across different institutions and Western provinces. Following this we had an overview of pledges. Pledges are the main support of the GOTV campaign and they represent a student's individual commitment to vote and understanding of the importance of the campaign. For the federal election, there are new tools that are being implemented to better support what is hopefully a larger database of students. NationBuilder, CASA's digital campaign infrastructure, is being implemented to better organize the collective information gathered by each school. This includes events put on by each school so that each school can promote their own events, help other schools out with events, and provide a place that students can access to attend the various amounts of events. We also walked through a few scenarios acting out some of the issues that often come up when reaching out to students and how to best approach them when they arise in the future. After lunch, we were lucky enough to be visited by John Beebe, the leader of the democratic exchange at Ryerson University. He spoke on an engagement tool available to us, Vote PopUp. This tool helps to facilitate the first step in voting for people who haven't done so before, mainly young people. It does this by simulating the process of voting in order to reflect how easy this process ultimately is in Canada. This helps to materialize why people want to vote, why the process is important, and de-mystify a lot of the stigma around the difficulty of the voting procedure. We were lucky enough to take part in this simulation and see first-hand how easy it is to vote.



Friday, August 9th

The second and final day started with the premier of our GOTV video that will be spread across the country in an attempt to inspire younger people to vote. The video has been in the works for a while and I am happy with the outcome and looking forward to seeing the video across social media in the coming weeks. We then had a presentation from Jonathan Rix, the acting Executive Director of CASA, about how to avoid partisan activities while running the GOTV campaign. This is extremely important as non-partisanship is one of the biggest keys to strong advocacy. Because of how democracy changes in Canada, supporting political engagement and not specific political party engagement is critical to maintaining a strong voice and representing students. Lindsay Boyd then proceeded to give a presentation on effective social media usage during our campaign. This is critical as social media is the main channel of communication for the campaign. Learning how to effectively use social media in a way that promotes student action while staying non-partisan was insightful and promises viability in the near future. In the afternoon we were able to participate in media training. Given the likelihood of media coverage for this federal campaign, this acted as a useful first-step in how to interact with the media. The day ended after this session and concluded what was a short but very useful conference.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this report of the conference, please feel free to contact me.

Best Regards,

Andrew Gammack
President