

# Are There Limits to Diversity?

## *An Examination of the Policies of Multiculturalism in Canada*

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### 1. Introduction

Ever since the government of Canada adopted the ideology of multiculturalism as a cornerstone of Canadian social agenda and dedicated significant resources and political capital to the promotion and implementation of this decision nationwide, the policy has generated intense debates among political scientists, policy-makers, and Canadian intelligentsia, more broadly. The two camps - proponents and critics - of this social experiment have argued for the past four decades about the effect of multiculturalism on the success of socio-economic integration of “new Canadians”, the degree of contribution of multiculturalism to the building of a cohesive national identity, and the success of this model in overcoming racism and other forms of discrimination vis-a-vis minority groups. The rhetoric tends to become especially charged whenever new evidence emerges as has happened in the past several years as a result of a number of quantitative studies carried out by Statistics Canada, Environics and other research groups. The increased scrutiny of Canada’s experience by domestic stakeholders and international observers has been also the by-product of the global retreat from multiculturalism amid claims that this policy has been responsible for a host of social ills, including the ghettoization (and alienation) of immigrants (Cantle report, 2001); political

extremism among Muslim youth, and the perpetuation of gender inequality (Wikan, 2002). This widespread global backlash against the notion that multiculturalism is a socially effective and feasible tool to manage diversity has raised the level of ‘navel gazing’ among pundits in Canada to a new level. This paper seeks to examine the current state of multiculturalism in Canada by presenting recent statistical findings and key arguments of the leading authorities on Canada’s multicultural framework. The historical background of this controversial policy is reviewed and areas to be addressed form the conclusion of this article.

## **2. Background of Multiculturalism in Canada**

### **2.1 What is multiculturalism in the Canadian context?**

One of the roots of disagreement in the interpretation of data on Canadian multiculturalism is the lack of consensus about the often unintended impacts of this social ideology. Multiculturalism is admittedly a nebulous notion which can be framed in many different ways depending on one’s political agenda, role in the process and the understanding of real, as opposed to hypothetical, societal drivers.

The rationale behind this policy is quite laudatory. It is designed to eliminate inequalities among the many ethnic groups which constitute the social fabric of Canada; dismantle, or at least minimize, various barriers which hamper their entry into the mainstream of Canadian society, and ultimately create a “mosaic nation” where the rights and values of all ethnic groups are recognized and protected at par with the rights and traditions of the two founding groups, those of British and French extraction. Thus, at the ideological level, multiculturalism was conceived as an attempt to manage a polyethnic society within an overriding, non-negotiable constraint: a bilingual framework.

While the explicit objectives of a multicultural approach are valid and commonplace in any diverse democratic society, the theoretical principles which

underpin this policy and the empirical outcomes constitute the core of the controversy. As with any well-intended social initiative, “the devil is in the details”: how does the country translate the principle of an “ethnic mosaic” into a cohesive national identity? At a more fundamental level, does the acceptance of the axiom that all people are born equal mean that all cultural practices are equal as well? And most importantly, would the mainstream Canadian public be willing to make sufficient concessions to accommodate ethno-cultural and religious conventions which may be perceived as incompatible with the established values?

## **2.2 Brief historical overview**

Canada has been a multicultural society since the beginning of the colonization period in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. British and French settlers co-existed relatively peacefully with occasional conflicts largely orchestrated by the governments in London and Paris. Relations between the settlers and the aboriginal communities were considerably more confrontational. With the establishment of Canada as a federal state in 1867 immigration became an integral part of national priorities. The government in Ottawa began to recruit a labor force to populate the Canadian West, focusing primarily on northwestern Europe and the U.S. As a result of these efforts, by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ratio of non-British and non-French minorities represented about 14% of the Canadian population (Paquet, 2009). This contrasts sharply with the census of 1986, which revealed that this segment represented close to 40% (Cardozo, 1988).

Canada’s immigration policy in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was characterized by the preferential treatment of applicants from western Europe. Race continued to be an important factor in the selection process with hopefuls from Asia facing tough restrictions or outright exclusion. (Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP, 2008). Immigration from China was outlawed in 1923, and immigration from Japan dwindled as a result of successive

“gentlemen’s agreements” negotiated between London, on behalf of Canada, and Tokyo.

The 1960s ushered a new era in Canada’s immigration policy. Selection on the basis of race and nationality criteria was abandoned in favor of individual characteristics. In 1967, a point system was created to facilitate and encourage the inflow of skilled immigrants. To implement these changes, additional immigration posts were opened in third world regions. These developments produced a significant shift in region of immigrant origin. Whereas in the 1950s a vast majority of immigrants (84.6%) were European by birth, this segment declined to 28.6% by the mid-1980s and to 15.6% by 2005 (IRPP, 2008). Conversely, arrivals from Asia who represented 12%-13% of all immigrants before 1970s, by 2005 became the largest region of origin with more than half of immigrants in 2005 coming from the Asia-Pacific region (see Appendix 2)

The “Canada as a mosaic” model did not become government policy until 1971 – the year of the official announcement of multiculturalism as state policy. The objectives of the policy were fourfold:

1. to provide support for ethno-cultural diversity of communities
2. to provide assistance to persons seeking to overcome cultural barriers, i.e. assisting immigrants to integrate into their new milieu
3. to promote social interactions among the various ethnic groups, and
4. to provide support for the immigrants in acquiring one of Canada’s official languages

The announcement of this policy was met with cautious optimism. While many social commentators believed the promotion of ethnic identities and recognition of heritage had intrinsic value (Burnet, 1976), others expressed concern that a patchwork of cultural groups vying for political and societal acknowledgment would turn Canada into an “ethnic zoo” (Brotz, 1980).

Little progress was made to implement this policy until the 1980s. Some

resources were made available to provinces and municipalities to set up language programs and organize cultural activities but no centralized architecture was erected until the enactment of Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988.

The process of institutionalization of the policy began with the consecration of multiculturalism in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. Three years later a government Standing Committee was created and following deliberations in the House of Commons, recommended the establishment of a full-fledged ministry dedicated to the promotion and delivery of the policy of multiculturalism.

### **2.3 The Multiculturalism Act**

This legislation and the creation of Heritage Canada, the government department responsible for dealing with the issues of cultural diversity in the country, officially transformed multiculturalism from an ideology into state policy. In a nutshell, this instrument committed the federal government to:

- a. recognize the rights of all ethnic groups to preserve and strengthen their cultural heritage
- b. promote the full participation of Canadians of all origins in the social and political fabric of Canadian society
- c. eliminate any barriers (racial discrimination, etc.) that would prevent equitable economic integration of immigrants and new Canadians, including employment and professional advancement
- d. preserve and enhance the use of heritage languages; i.e. languages other than English and French
- e. provide assistance to the business community and other organizations in ensuring that all individuals in Canada, regardless of origin, can have full access to the opportunities in the respective spheres (see the full text of the Multiculturalism Act in Appendix 1)

The language of this document underscores the link between the identity of

Canada and immigration, making a public commitment to provide immigrants (whether Canadian citizens or landed immigrants) with access to national resources and opportunities. The outcomes of this Act, both desired and unintended, have led to a plethora of increasingly partisan commentary and a national-scale debate of whether this epoch-making legislation has been indeed a success.

### **3. Evidence in Support of Multiculturalism**

A number of studies examining specific dimensions of the policy, both commissioned by various government agencies and undertaken by independent research groups and academics, have been published in the past 7 – 8 years. The new evidence, presented below, can be summarized as follows:

1. by and large, immigrant integration into the socio-economic fabric of Canadian society is more successful than in other advanced nations, including European countries which have also adopted a model of multiculturalism (as opposed to assimilation) to manage their increasingly diverse populations
2. the multiculturalism framework is, to a significant degree, responsible for this success
3. there is no concrete evidence to suggest that Canada is likely to experience the same social malaise which has forced many western European governments to discard multiculturalism as an ineffective policy alternative

#### **3.1 Social integration**

One of the primary objectives of the policy was to ensure a greater degree of integration of immigrants into mainstream society and to promote a sense of acceptance and tolerance towards the newcomers. The evidence from various sources points to a very positive view of multiculturalism and of the role of immigrants in the society. A majority of Canadians agree that immigrants contribute to the evolution of Canadian society and play a positive role in the

community. Support for multiculturalism among Canadians increased from 74% in 1997 to 85% in 2003 (Focus Canada, 2006). The level of identification with their host country among immigrants is also high. A significant majority expresses pride in being Canadians or living in Canada and values the inherent principles of Canadian society: freedom, democracy, and multiculturalism itself. (Adams, 2007).

One of the concerns of the critics of multiculturalism was that this policy would encourage the ethnic communities to focus more on their own culture rather than embrace the opportunities to interact with other groups and establish closer links with the mainstream segments of the Canadian population. This view was bolstered by the conflicts in Europe (riots by mostly Muslim youth in the suburbs of Paris in 2005, etc.) which reinforced the notion that the promotion of ethnic cultures and traditions results in social alienation and psychological disenfranchisement. In the Canadian context, however, the results suggest that ghettoization, whether ethnic or religious, has not been occurring on the same scale as in major urban centers in Europe or the United States. Obviously, for practical reasons, immigrants, and particularly new arrivals to Canada, tend to reside in neighborhoods where they can have easy access to linguistic support and thus end up forming ethnic clusters. This is particularly evident in cities which absorb a disproportionately large ratio of immigrants, such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Yet, with few exceptions, these clusters are not characterized by an above-average crime rate, poverty or lack of upward mobility, and serve as a step in the integration process, rather than an exclusion zone psychologically apart from the communities which surround them. (Qadeer and Kumar, 2006)

Finally, in terms of educational outcomes, second-generation Canadian children outperform their non-immigrant peers on PISA tests conducted among countries with significant immigrant student populations (OECD, 2006). This

applies to children from both higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds, and is unique to Canada. In no other participating county did children of immigrants demonstrate such academic achievement vis-à-vis the native population.

### **3.2 Political integration**

The evidence in this aspect of integration is twofold: a high level of interest in obtaining Canadian citizenship and outright participation in the political processes of the country.

Over 80% of immigrants hold Canadian citizenship. (Citizenship is given to applicants who, after a three-year residency in the country, show a demonstrated proficiency in one of the official languages, French or English, and pass a ‘Canada knowledge test’.) (Bloenraad, 2006).

Perhaps more importantly, more immigrants are interested in being involved in the political life of the country. Canada has more foreign-born *elected* Members of Parliament, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of population, than other countries with significant immigration inflows (Adams, 2007). In this regard it is worthwhile to point out that these elected officials do not necessarily represent predominantly ethnic ridings. Political parties in Canada have demonstrated a willingness to run foreign-born candidates in mainly English / French – dominated ridings and the Canadian electorate has shown no aversion to being represented by them at the federal level (Adams, 2007). This shows reciprocity in the relationship between immigrants and native-born populations in the critical area of political representation.

### **3.3 Economic integration**

One of the common drivers of anti-immigrant sentiment is a belief that newcomers undermine the economy by taking away jobs from the native-born population and abusing the generous assistance programs. The proponents of

this view generally advocate a reduction in immigration flows. This tendency, compounded by the economic downturn, has resulted in the emergence and increased popularity of political parties in Europe which appeal to the electorate on the anti-immigration platform (Yoffe, 2009). There is, however, no evidence of this phenomenon in Canada. As of 2006, 67% of Canadians believe that the present immigration level (approx. 0.7% of the total of Canada's population per year) should be maintained or even raised (Adams, 2009). Additionally, according to the survey conducted in 2007, 82% believe that immigrants have a positive effect on the Canadian economy, while only 20% claim that "immigrants are taking away jobs from Canadians" (Adams, 2009).

While the competition for economic opportunities does not lead to ethnic polarization in the Canadian context, the record of the actual economic integration of immigrants remains mixed at best. Skills of immigrants remain underutilized despite the efforts of the government to select better qualified and better educated applicants. In 1980 and 2000 the income of male immigrants represented 89% and 77%, respectively, of the income of Canadian-born workers. The decline can be attributed to the non-recognition of foreign credentials and of the overseas professional experience by Canadian employers, particularly in the case of the knowledge industry (IRPP, 2008). The unemployment rate data also indicates that immigrants still face formidable barriers to economic advancement in Canada. In 1981, 7.1% of immigrants were unemployed vs. 7.9% of native-born population. This gap widened considerably 20 years later: 12.7% of immigrants were jobless vs. only 7.4% of those born in Canada (IRPP, 2009).

### **3.4 Personal "comfort zone"**

Successful integration is clearly contingent upon how prepared the general populace is to accommodate, on a daily basis, practices and values different from the established norms. Is the burden on immigrants to make the necessary cultural adjustment, or should this responsibility be shared equally

between the immigrant and the native-born populations? The results of a survey conducted by the Association for Canadian Studies (ACS, 2011) point to a sense of ambiguity among non-immigrant Canadians on this question. While an overwhelming majority (85%) liked interacting with people from other cultures, when asked if immigrants should give up some of their traditions and become more like the mainstream population, the reactions were much more evenly divided. A slight majority (51%) agreed that immigrants should make a greater effort to adapt, however, at the same time, 80% of respondents strongly believed that young immigrant children should maintain their cultural and ethnic traditions. This paradoxical, even contradictory, data underscores the uneasiness of many in a polyethnic society, even 40 years after the promulgation of the policy of multiculturalism. One interpretation is that the majority population enjoys ready access to different (exotic) practices and conventions. Yet, they are much more reluctant to embrace them as a constituent part of their personal and professional routine.

### **3.5 Multiculturalism as a causal factor**

Several critics question the causal relationship between the policy of multiculturalism and a record of the relatively successful integration of immigrants, claiming that the latter can be explained by other factors such as the selectivity of Canada's immigration procedure. Recent research findings, however, suggest that the presence of multiculturalism as an integration instrument does play a pivotal role at the individual and institutional levels.

At the individual level, the results of studies confirm that by making immigrants an integral element of Canadian evolution, as stipulated in the Multiculturalism Act, the government strengthened mutual identification among the majority population and immigrants to Canada. Immigrants are not perceived as a threat to national identity, but as part of the Canadian social fabric (Sides and Citron, 2007). The immigrant – non-immigrant identification facilitates linkages between the two groups, though building a sense of

solidarity is an ongoing challenge, as the results of the ACS study mentioned above suggest.

International studies also bear out the hypothesis that immigrants can adapt more successfully, and achieve better socio-cultural outcomes when their home cultures are nurtured, allowing them to identify with the host societies without abandoning their ethnic / national identities (which the assimilation model of integration demands) (Berry, 2006).

At the institutional level, comparative studies of groups of immigrants with similar characteristics in Toronto and Boston demonstrate (albeit not conclusively) that multiculturalism does promote participation of immigrants in the political processes of the country by facilitating ethnic community organization under the leadership of individuals familiar with the structures of Canadian institutions. The leaders provide a necessary link to mainstream society and serve as a conduit of knowledge and information in both directions (Bloenraad, 2008).

An OECD study (2006) also confirmed that the implementation of specific educational policies addressing the linguistic diversity in Canadian classrooms, such as providing systematic language support, is responsible for the superior performance of second-generation immigrant children. The study concludes that the educational achievements of immigrant students tend to be linked to “well-established language support programmes with relatively clearly defined goals and standards.” Provision of language support is, of course, one of the principal elements of the Multiculturalism Act.

The recent evidence presented above seems to indicate that the policy of multiculturalism does indeed have a positive effect on the civic integration of immigrants in Canadian society, both at the individual and the institutional levels. While these findings have been acknowledged by the critics of multi-

culturalism, if not by the general public, they did not prove convincing enough to sway the debate rhetoric. If anything, the skeptics were much more influenced by the retreat from multiculturalism in Europe and speculated whether the same fate awaits the Canadian model.

#### **4. Retreat from Multiculturalism in Europe**

Canada does not exist in a vacuum, and the experiences of the international communities in managing their ethnic diversity have had a profound effect on the views of Canada-based commentators. Those opposed to the principles of multiculturalism on ideological grounds have sought to fortify their arguments with the evidence of the failure of variants of this policy abroad (primarily in Europe). Generally, the critics see European bitter experience as the harbinger of Canada's future and monitor the landscape for the signs of similar problematic trends with significant predictive validity.

Perhaps the example most widely cited as a warning for Canada is the withdrawal from multiculturalism in the Netherlands. While the country adopted a very ambitious multicultural agenda in the 1980s, gradually many policies were scaled back and basically abandoned in the past decade in favor of the policy of assimilation and common citizenship. Britain followed a similar path, as did Austria and Germany, where the current model is that of civic integration (Joppke, 2007). Even the Council of Europe, which once was one of the champions of multiculturalism, has since toned down its support declaring that the policy leads to segregation of ethnic communities and lack of comprehension between them and the mainstream population (Council of Europe, 2008).

Many European leaders, including the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, publicly announced that multiculturalism had failed. Such statements prompted an array of reactions, mostly from the conservative segments of society, calling for a return to the old-fashioned process of assimilation. Rec-

ognition and acceptance of multiple identities as equal – the cornerstone of multiculturalism – was blamed for the erosion of social solidarity and social cohesion, residential ghettoization and the perpetuation of practices perceived as incompatible with the basic norms of democratic societies. The latter would include coerced marriages, polygamy, genital mutilation and other illiberal traditions mainly seen as restricting the rights of women (Wikan, 2002).

The liberal political views of western European societies, claim critics, have resulted in the segregation and marginalization of immigrant communities. The theoretical principle of equality of all identities within the territorial confines of the host nation may be appealing as an ideological framework but it is not a model which leads to the successful integration of groups which cherish values and traditions largely incompatible with the established tenets of the mainstream population.

Whether the social ills affecting many European societies are indeed the consequence of the policies of multiculturalism is still very much subject to debate. Marginalization of ethnic communities and disaffected youth exist both in the states which have previously embraced multiculturalism and nations which have pursued the policy of assimilation, such as France and Austria. There is no concrete data suggesting the existence of a causal relationship, and the political rhetoric is, in most cases, seeking to appeal to the sensitivities of the dissatisfied electorate.

It is outside the scope of this paper to analyze the realities of the integration processes in the European context. It is, however, important to examine how these perceived deficiencies of multiculturalism in Europe have been used in the critical narrative of the Canadian model.

## **5. Alternative Models**

A number of influential social scientists (Paquet, Bliss, and others) believe

that multiculturalism is inherently flawed and therefore cannot offer an effective social alternative. The case of the Netherlands is presented as an illustrative example of what awaits Canada if this experiment is allowed to run its course. To prevent potentially destructive ethnic animosities and divisive politics, three replacement models – with a focus on the hierarchy of cultures - have been suggested.

### **5.1 A “negotiated moral contract” model**

The proponents of this model claim that multiculturalism policy as it has been implemented in the past 20 years in Canada has ultimately failed. Their set of approaches calls for a major readjustment to the existing formula which is seen as putting the burden of accommodation on the dominant groups. This model advocates a “moral contract” of sorts between the mainstream population and newly arrived groups about the respective adjustments each party should be prepared to make for the benefit of the society as a whole. While the terms of this “contract” would be continually negotiated, in principle the values and practices of the founding groups (the English and the French) would predominate, and those wishing to come to Canada would have to make the necessary changes in their behavior and way of life (Gagnon-Tremblay, 1990).

### **5.2 “Interculturalism” model**

This model was inspired by the perception that immigrants in Quebec do not integrate into the French socio-linguistic fabric of Quebec society. The model advocated in the 1990s by Mariette (1991) and others, emphasizes the integrative capacity of the dominant cultures and in its spirit is closer to the process of acculturation in which immigrants are expected to gravitate eventually towards the Francophone culture and become part of it.

### **5.3 “Fusion of cultures” model**

This model of transculturalism seeks to move the debate away from the

focus on identities and envisages an integrative structure which would be more based on linguistic commonalities. The immigrant identity then would evolve through a process of fusion with other groups. While this concept is admittedly vague, it presupposes the gravitational pull of the host country or community, since the immigrants will need to communicate in the language of the majority to accomplish their daily tasks. This concept is overly optimistic, gambling on the assumption that immigrants possess sufficient professional and educational ambition to leave the safety of their ethnic enclave and abandon some of their traditional ways in order to avail themselves of the opportunities present in the mainstream society.

## **6. Is Canada following in Europe's footsteps? Evidence against Multiculturalism**

### **6.1 Presence of ethnic ghettos in Canada**

A number of commentators refer to Statistics Canada data showing a growing number of "ethnic communities (enclaves)", particularly in major cities. Critics interpret this information as evidence that immigrants in Canada, rather than integrating into the life of the country, are living in segregated areas apart from the mainstream population. While immigrants do tend to reside in proximity to their compatriots as described earlier, these neighborhoods do not have the same negative features as the images evoked by the *banlieues* of Paris. An "immigrant cluster" denotes a concentration of a particular ethnic group in a certain area, whereas a "ghetto" carries with it a set of negative connotations which generally do not apply to the immigrant settlement patterns in Canada.

### **6.2 Muslim extremism**

In 2006 an Islamic terrorist cell was apprehended in Canada. In all, 14 adults and four youths were arrested and charged with intent to commit carnage in Toronto and Ottawa in a misguided effort to force the government of Canada to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. Examples of Muslim extremist and of

terrorist threats more broadly, are rare in Canada, likely because Canada did not join the U.S.-led coalition of nations against Iraq in 2003, so this case attracted immediate attention. Commentators and the public engaged in collective soul-searching to understand how these individuals, all raised in Canada, could conceive of such a heinous act against their home country. Multiculturalism policy was identified by many pundits as one possible culprit.

Muslim extremism is indeed a very serious problem in the West fuelled by a number of factors, including the social alienation of disaffected Muslim youth and lack of economic opportunities for those susceptible to jihadist messages. Many cases of Islamic radicalism directed against governments and institutions have also occurred in democracies which did not adopt policies of multiculturalism, so linking the two phenomena is premature at best. Moreover, the results of a survey conducted among the Muslim community in Canada showed that Muslim immigrants have an even higher degree of pride in their host country than non-Muslim native-born Canadians. (Adams, 2007). When confronted with an extreme example of deviant behavior, we should strive to determine whether it is an isolated incident or an element in a pattern. In the case of “Toronto 18”, as this case came to be called, there is no evidence to suggest it is the latter, though it does raise questions about what can be done to counter the influence of radical Islamic ideas most effectively.

### **6.3 Illiberal practices**

The problem of differentiating an isolated incident from a pattern is also present in how the opponents of multiculturalism chose to interpret the case of Aqsa Parvez in 2007. The issue involved “honor killing” of a Muslim girl by her father for refusing to wear the *hijab*. The case horrified Canadian public and again led to debates on whether “live and let live” policies of multiculturalism are at least partially responsible for allowing this tragedy. This argument of course goes to the very core of disagreement on the societal

value of multiculturalism. If all ethnic traditions and identities are accepted as equal, then logically we should tolerate practices which run contrary to the basic norms prevalent in a liberal democracy. In the case of Canada, I have found no research showing that the majority of first- or second-generation immigrants fail to internalize, if not embrace, liberal-democratic values of gender equality, equality under law and non-violence. It is perhaps too simplistic to dismiss this incident of “honor killing” as an aberration, but at the same time it should not be misconstrued as the proof that multicultural policies are not working.

#### **6.4 Lack of sense of belonging**

A study conducted in 2007 by Reitz and Banerjee shows that second-generation visible minorities claim lower levels of “belonging” to Canada compared to their own parents. These results raised concerns that rather than integration, we were witnessing a process of polarization, and the European precedent again led many to question the validity of multiculturalism. These findings present an interesting juxtaposition. On the one hand, second-generation minorities, including visible minorities, express pride in Canadian values and institutions; yet at the same time, their sense of “belonging” is lower than that of first-generation immigrants. The notion of “belonging” is psychologically quite complex. It is inextricably tied to one’s identity and it would appear counter-intuitive that the newly arrived in Canada feel a greater sense of attachment to their host country than their children. We can speculate that the first-generation immigrants are positively overwhelmed by their new life and react strongly to emphasize their commitment to Canada. For their children, Canada is not a new experience; it is a place where they acknowledge both positive and negative elements and, as a result, react with restraint.

#### **6.5 Anti-immigrant sentiment in Quebec**

During the 2007 provincial election campaign in Quebec, the Action Democra-

tique du Québec (ADQ) party resorted to anti-immigrant planks in its campaign. The strategy seemed successful as the party captured almost one-third (31%) of the popular vote in the National Assembly of Quebec for the first time ever. It was feared that this strong showing was a harbinger of a broader political attack on multiculturalism, again mirroring what had happened in many European countries. The concerns, however, proved groundless. Anti-immigration appeals, as a way to attract voters, did not spread beyond Quebec. A more telling development is that in the following year, the political popularity of ADQ declined significantly. Immigration has become such an integral part of the collective consciousness of Canadians that attacking it seems to accrue little political currency.

## **7. Conclusion: Unresolved Issues**

The evidence we now have at our disposal suggests that multiculturalism continues to be supported by a majority of the Canadian population. It is apparent also that it is serving as a relatively effective integration policy instrument without presenting (for the time being at least) the threat of social dislocations which have forced a retreat from multiculturalism in many countries worldwide. This said, multiculturalism is certainly not a panacea. It is a policy which needs to be monitored very closely and judged dispassionately on the basis of concrete results, not accepted blindly because of political correctness, i.e. criticism of immigration equals being a racist, or because of political capital invested into this ideology. This policy still fails in several important areas which have to be addressed.

### **7.1 Improvement of immigrants' economic performance**

Reports show that economically immigrants still lag behind native-born Canadians. What is even more worrisome, the gap in earnings and in employment rate has widened, as was mentioned earlier in this paper. The main causes of this problem seem to be related to the evaluation of foreign credentials and work experience, often intransigent attitude of professional associations creat-

ing high entry barriers, and discriminatory hiring practices. To prevent immigrants from sliding into poverty and becoming a socio-economic subclass it is essential to establish a broad consultative mechanism involving all stakeholders from the immigrant communities, private sector and both federal and provincial levels of government, identify specific barriers and undertake corrective measures.

## **7.2 Combating racism and discrimination**

The issues of racism and discrimination lie at the root of most other problems immigrants face in Canada, from social acceptance to achieving economic parity. This is obviously of particular concern in the case of visible minorities. The Canadian government has put in place a sophisticated set of legal anti-racism mechanisms; however, more work needs to be done to combat entrenched forms of systemic racism which are harder to identify, and to deal with new patterns of racism and discrimination which emerge as a result of the changing demographics and of global developments.

## **7.3 Addressing the issues of religion within the framework of multiculturalism**

Religious diversity remains perhaps the most controversial, and hardest to manage, issue. Religious axioms have been evoked as the justification for criminal acts, illiberal practices and behavior patterns which have incited protests from the general, secular public. In most cases such conflicts have been settled by the courts at considerable expense to Canadian taxpayers. It is unrealistic and undesirable to expect the Canadian legal system to become involved in all acrimonious cases involving religious differences. Canadian society is largely secular in its orientation, whereas for a number of ethnic groups, religion governs their daily behavior, dress conventions and interpersonal relationships. To reconcile the two attitudes, it is imperative to establish an effective consultative and decision-making mechanism which would help the stakeholders identify “zones of compromise” within the private and public

spheres.

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Online source

Statistics Canada

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html>

## Appendix 1

### Canadian Multiculturalism Act (abridged)

1. This Act may be cited as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act.

#### INTERPRETATION

2. In this Act,

“federal institution” means any of the following institutions of the Government of Canada:

- (a) a department, board, commission or council, or other body or office, established to perform a governmental function by or pursuant to an Act of Parliament or by or under the authority of the Governor in Council, and
- (b) a departmental corporation or Crown corporation as defined in section 2 of the Financial Administration Act.

“Minister” means such member of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada as is designated by the Governor in Council as the Minister for the purposes of this Act.

#### MULTICULTURALISM POLICY OF CANADA

3. (1) It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to

- (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage;
- (b) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the shaping of Canada’s future;
- (c) promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation;
- (d) recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society, and enhance their development;
- (e) ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity;
- (f) encourage and assist the social, cultural, economic and political institutions of Canada to be both respectful and inclusive of Canada’s multicultural character;

- (g) promote the understanding and creativity that arise from the interaction between individuals and communities of different origins;
- (h) foster the recognition and appreciation of the diverse cultures of Canadian society and promote the reflection and the evolving expressions of those cultures;
- (i) preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada; and
- (j) advance multiculturalism throughout Canada in harmony with the national commitment to the official languages of Canada.

(2) It is further declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada that all federal institutions shall

- (a) ensure that Canadians of all origins have an equal opportunity to obtain employment and advancement in those institutions;
- (b) promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the ability of individuals and communities of all origins to contribute to the continuing evolution of Canada;
- (c) promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society;
- (d) collect statistical data in order to enable the development of policies, programs and practices that are sensitive and responsive to the multicultural reality of Canada;
- (e) make use, as appropriate, of the language skills and cultural understanding of individuals of all origins; and
- (f) generally, carry on their activities in a manner that is sensitive and responsive to the multicultural reality of Canada.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MULTICULTURALISM POLICY OF CANADA**

4. The Minister, in consultation with other ministers of the Crown, shall encourage and promote a coordinated approach to the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada and may provide advice and assistance in the development and implementation of programs and practices in support of the policy.

5. (1) The Minister shall take such measures as the Minister considers appropriate to implement the multiculturalism policy of Canada and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, may

- (a) encourage and assist individuals, organizations and institutions to project the multicultural reality of Canada in their activities in Canada and abroad;
- (b) undertake and assist research relating to Canadian multiculturalism and foster scholarship in the field;

- (c) encourage and promote exchanges and cooperation among the diverse communities of Canada;
  - (d) encourage and assist the business community, labor organizations, voluntary and other private organizations, as well as public institutions, in ensuring full participation in Canadian society, including the social and economic aspects, of individuals of all origins and their communities, and in promoting respect and appreciation for the multicultural reality of Canada;
  - (e) encourage the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada;
  - (f) facilitate the acquisition, retention and use of all languages that contribute to the multicultural heritage of Canada;
  - (g) assist ethno-cultural minority communities to conduct activities with a view to overcoming any discriminatory barrier and, in particular, discrimination based on race or national or ethnic origin;
  - (h) provide support to individuals, groups or organizations for the purpose of preserving, enhancing and promoting multiculturalism in Canada; and
  - (i) undertake such other projects or programs in respect of multiculturalism, not by law assigned to any other federal institution, as are designed to promote the multiculturalism policy of Canada.
- (2) The Minister may enter into an agreement or arrangement with any province respecting the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada.
- (3) The Minister may, with the approval of the Governor in Council, enter into an agreement or arrangement with the government of any foreign state in order to foster the multicultural character of Canada.
6. (1) The ministers of the Crown, other than the Minister, shall, in the execution of their respective mandates, take such measures as they consider appropriate to implement the multiculturalism policy of Canada.
- (2) A minister of the Crown, other than the Minister, may enter into an agreement or arrangement with any province respecting the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada.
7. (1) The Minister may establish an advisory committee to advise and assist the Minister on the implementation of this Act and any other matter relating to multiculturalism and, in consultation with such organizations representing multicultural interests as the Minister deems appropriate, may appoint the members and designate the chairman and other officers of the committee.

(2) Each member of the advisory committee shall be paid such remuneration for the member's services as may be fixed by the Minister and is entitled to be paid the reasonable travel and living expenses incurred by the member while absent from the member's ordinary place of residence in connection with the work of the committee.

(3) The chairman of the advisory committee shall, within four months after the end of each fiscal year, submit to the Minister a report on the activities of the committee for that year and on any other matter relating to the implementation of the multiculturalism policy of Canada that the chairman considers appropriate.

**GENERAL**

8. The Minister shall cause to be laid before each House of Parliament, not later than the fifth sitting day of that House after January 31 next following the end of each fiscal year, a report on the operation of this Act for that fiscal year.

9. The operation of this Act and any report made pursuant to section 8 shall be reviewed on a permanent basis by such committee of the House, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament as may be designated or established for the purpose.

Source: retrieved from Canadian Heritage website  
<http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1266246238320/1266202785200>

**Appendix 2**

