

Discussion Paper

Thinking of the new 21st-century mosaic

**Liberal Multiculturalism: A Perspective on
Canada's Federal Multiculturalism Policy**


Liberal

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Presented by the
Don Valley West Federal Liberal Association Working Group on Multicultural Policy

There is no such things as a model or ideal Canadian. What could be more absurd than the concept of an “all Canadian” boy or girl? A society which emphasizes uniformity is one which creates intolerance and hate.

Pierre Trudeau – 15th Prime Minister

(Speech to the Ukrainian – Canadian Congress, Winnipeg, Manitoba – 9 October 1971)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

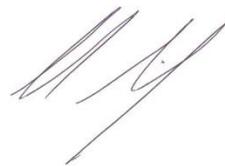
With recent experience in Europe showing a trend of turning back on multiculturalism as a policy allowing great tolerances, the time is right to question whether Canada should begin to rethink its multicultural policy. Reflecting on the Canadian identity as a mosaic of cultures, *“Thinking of the new 21st century mosaic – Liberal Multiculturalism: A Perspective on Canada’s Federal Multiculturalism Policy”* raises a number of issues under the umbrella discussion of Canadian culture.

Areas mentioned throughout include multiculturalism and Canada’s mosaic, the multiculturalism policy for immigrant integration into society, and Canadian identity in general terms. Meant as a discussion paper looking to generate debate on the topic, it posits that it is time to think about multiculturalism in Canada again, without suggesting that we should retreat from our policy.

The position found throughout is one which supports Canadian multiculturalism and the mosaic, although recognizes that with progress periods of self reflection are necessary. Given the existing European backlash, time to rethink our own policy is now.

Thinking of the new 21st century mosaic offers readers an overview of some of the issues involved in the discussion and a starting point for Canadian progress.

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A MOSAIC 30 YEARS IN THE MAKING

Quite awhile ago it was agreed that if foreign eyes laid themselves upon Canada, they would see a mosaic of distinct pieces that when combined would form a work of art resembling a modern and enlightened nation. A nation unique from the United Kingdom, the Ukraine, from Italy, France and others although with strong influencing elements of each culture as their representation would be found retained through political involvement. Canada would become the example of a nation where peoples from around the world could come and live in equality, with respect and tolerance for diversity, and with equal access to government. It is to this day the best example of a nation whose policy of Multiculturalism has enabled immigrants to integrate into society in a manner which strengthens the welcoming nation and balances the community needs of the immigrant, with the nation's need for integration. Far from ordinary, the level with which an immigrant can maintain their cultural heritage and have that preservation supported by government, is one of Canada's proudest accomplishments.

If a landed immigrant chooses, Canada's policy of Multiculturalism allows them to retain their "former" identity. As an example, after leaving India for Canada, the existing policy acknowledges it is far from realistic that upon landing an immigrant from India will identify as a Canadian, and even for a time thereafter. The claim could be made that they should drop a previous identity. Notions of ethnicity, culture, traditions, all of which tied to language with historic importance, are parts though of an individual whose right to practice transcends national boundaries. Although issues persist regarding levels of tolerance an important distinction exists between mere tolerances of a former identity found in many modern societies, and with a nations political sponsorship of the individual's right to maintain those traditions. Canadian Federal policy supports the ability of the immigrant to retain their former identity with the knowledge that by doing so Canada as a whole receives a competitive advantage over other developed nations. Looking back as historians will, most find easy answers as to why Canada's policy of Multiculturalism first arose. One simple answer is that in the eyes of settlers and those forming British rule in North America, they saw a land toiled by immigrants. Unlike the nations of Europe whose histories stretch back centuries, a group of

landed European immigrants started Western history for Canada and in doing this has linked Multiculturalism with government ever since.

The pluralism of cultures which dominated the Canadian identity in the early twentieth century was confirmed in 1982, ten years after the first wave of visible minorities and more than twenty after a wave of immigrants from Eastern Europe. An idea was spread that while those who come to Canada do not need to assimilate, they should integrate into all aspects of Canadian society. While integration and assimilation are on the same gray scale, the clear delineation on paper was indicated to make known the importance which would be given in allowing former identities to be retained. This was as it is today, only extending as far as cultural traditions and not to nationality or citizenship. Resulting from this is the longstanding debate on how much accommodation to foreign traditions is fair and pragmatic. How much tolerance should be given before long-established national identities are threatened and social cohesion jeopardized. These debates have continued and it is important they are allowed to do so as the questions being posed lead to answers relating to immigration policies and multicultural policies, and useful in attempts to strengthen said policies. Moreover, they shed light on problems within society in general as they relate to cohesion and its immense importance for communities of all sizes.

As Canada aged while perpetually remaining one of the youngest nations, the necessity of a national identity continued to force the inclusion of multiculturalism as a large part of the unifying shared identity. In adding multicultural elements to the constitution in 1982, the initial aim was to help immigrants overcome barriers to full participation in society, promote creative interchange between all groups, and help newcomers learn at least one of the official languages. Since that time it has made a considerable impact on the lives of immigrant families. Through this policy the Canadian identity of a multicultural nation framed as a mosaic would display immigrants as an important constituent part of the nation whereby the citizenship of the nation could link together in solidarity through community and politics with a feeling of pride and free of discrimination. This national framework offers immigrants an easier transition

from one nationality to another in a manner which, as Will Kymlicka writes “...provides a link by which immigrants come to identify with, and feel pride in, Canada.”

A number of experiences occurring today in several European countries have led questions to arise as to whether it is time to reform Canada’s policy of Multiculturalism and follow the European lead. What a new policy would consist of, what would need to change, and clear Canadiancentric reasons why a change is needed, are all areas of debate and discussion. This paper aims to stir interest of those in the riding and beyond into the issue of Multiculturalism, and to generate the much needed discussion between fellow Canadians and those just arriving.

Key questions posed in this paper include the core areas of:

- Is it time to rethink Canadian Multicultural policy given recent European sentiments?
- What is it that distinguishes the Canadian Multicultural experience from that of the contemporary European experience?
- Why do we need multicultural policy at all?
- Should our Multiculturalism policy be re-examined for the 21st century?

Recommendations found at the end of this paper are offered as suggested direction for discussion and not as final policy recommendations for approval. They include steps needing to be taken on approaching the discussion and the aim of that discussion, in addition to several core statements which it is the Federal Liberal Riding Associations hope, remains true in the future.

THE EUROPEAN BACKLASH: A TIME TO RETHINK CANADIAN POLICY?

Involved in the decision to immigrate from a person or family's home nation to another in search of prosperity, access to universal rights, or freedom from persecution are important distinctions between nations. Some of the key distinctions include immigration policy (i.e. how easy will it be for me to immigrate to the country?), historic record of integration and success with landed immigrants, and of course the nations Multicultural policy if one exists. Whether the migration is within a continent or between, the questions of how will I be received, and will I be able to get a "fair shake" are always at the forefront of an immigrants mind. These two questions are entirely answered with multiculturalism policy, the policy through which Canada enhances the resource of the landed immigrant as s/he integrates into society and becomes a valued member. At issue however is the European experience with immigrants who are not integrating into society in a way which national governments find acceptable, and have opted to turn back on their varying attempts at Multiculturalism. Whether it is a rise in radical Islam, shocking sights of ethnic ghetto's, or statistics such as 60% of the Netherlands one million Muslims unable to speak Danish, there is a growing sentiment in Europe that Multiculturalism does not work and an American approach of assimilation is preferable.

In discussions of multiculturalism and immigrant affairs in general it is essential a clear delineation be made between multiculturalism policy and immigration policy on their roles as they pertain to immigrants. While immigration policy limits the numbers of those migrating into a country by setting the requirements, multicultural policy established the method by which those who have migrated are to integrate into society and become productive members within their communities both social and professional. Integration often includes economic integration into the labour market, political integration into the electoral process and other forms of political participation, social integration into the networks and spaces of civil society, from informal networks of friends and neighbours to membership in more formal organizations. When we then look to statistics such as 60% of the one million Muslims in the Netherlands unable to speak Danish we are looking at a failure which cannot be attributed to multicultural policy, at the very least sole attributed, but additionally immigration policy. If the desire is to

have every citizen of the Netherlands speaking Danish then immigration policy can easily prescribe that criteria prior to entry into the country.

When thinking of policy failures and successes the time by which such outcomes are known can always be debated. There are no easy and fast timelines which can be applied across the board in determining which ought to be scrapped and which saved. The issue of a large percent of the population not speaking an official language is certainly a societal issue for Government response however it is not a sign that multicultural policy has failed. In the first instance it should not be seen as a failure of multicultural policy after a period of ten years, I would argue it takes a generation to determine such a claim. If it must be chalked up as failure though for a political agenda, it must be done under that of a failed immigration policy. Immigrants were admitted into the country who either initially lacked the capacity to speak an official language, thus should not have been permitted entrance, or lacked the capacity to learn the language upon entering, and again should not have been allowed to immigrate. A test period of ten years for multiculturalism policy amounts to allowing for the initial time to pass whereby you have a sufficient case group by which to measure integration levels under a given multiculturalism policy.

The European backlash as being felt by numerous immigrant families through the continent is a feeling of wilful neglect by the Government with the addition of official statements bordering between thinly veiled statements of discrimination to woeful signs of hatred and xenophobia. They are living through a time where isolationist mentality towards economic practices is reverberating through society to boarder controls and national security. The Dutch case which is now seen as the prototypical European example of “the failure of multiculturalism” forms the ground evidence for other European countries to retreat from their policies of multiculturalism. In some cases it is used for dismissing such policy outright. Civic integration policies are now followed in the Netherlands, Austria and Germany who have sought to integrate new immigrants into their country through what has been described as “coercive” measures rather

than the strict willingness and gratitude from the immigrants themselves. It is found an extra push is needed.

As Europe moves increasingly introverted, the question being asked and discussed for the past few years is whether Canada will allow Europe to be the harbinger for multiculturalism in Canada or whether as a nation we will recognize our unique relation with the subject and lead with it as an exemplary model in the world. With commentators closely monitoring the multicultural environment to find the slightest evidence of similar segregation, isolation, prejudice and polarization that is found in Europe, the biggest question is whether Canada will feel a need to follow in Europe's footsteps.

The question as to whether Canada will follow Europe's footsteps rests largely with a question put differently; Does Canada need to follow Europe's footsteps? In answering societal problems for instance will Canada look at crime in immigrant communities and blame the policy of Multiculturalism, resting on the idea that they are immigrants and not however many generations Canadian, therefore somehow exempt from criminal behaviour. Or will Canada look at issues such as residential ghettoization and social isolation and determine that in fact immigrant enclaves are fine, rather the criminal elements of low economic areas which remain true whether the individual is a Canadian citizen or not, is the best approach in solving the problems faced. The same holds true for other areas typically associated with failed multicultural policy such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, political radicalism, and general perpetuation of illiberal practice.

The idea of multiculturalism in Canada is one where the identities of the individual citizen as it is in private life, can be preserved, shared and in fact promoted in public. Alternatively, the European trend is to say that if identities are to be preserved at all, they must only be done so in private life and not form the basis for political claims favouring multiculturalist policy.

Witness to a world-wide retreat from multiculturalism, commentators are beginning to argue whether we as Canadian's can expect a similar retreat in Canada, the defacto world leader regarding multiculturalism policy. Forming the essence of the argument and its impetuous is the apparent rise in radical Islam and subsequent attacks and threats of attack made by followers. Followers who originate in foreign countries, bring with them criminal hatred, and methods by which to breed hostility towards other ethnic groups and particularly the Judeo-Christian bedrock.

Looking at the demographics of jihadist criminals similar to and including those responsible for the terrorist bombings in London England, it is the second generation of immigrants who exhibit an alienation with an adopted society. What is arguably sole a security issue is more and more involving other realms such as that of multiculturalism. Keeping in mind that a rise in radical Islam is not parallel to a rise in Islam and that ardent followers would cast off such terror inspiring clerics as outsiders, the importance here is on whether multicultural policy has a role in the debate on security and whether if it does, how could a decrease in its use be deemed beneficial.

Despite the involvement of radical Islam in the argument, it is not one which is without a different placeholder earlier. The use of the immigrant as the root of all of societal ills seems to be an old one and easy one in generating familiar and strong political support. As stated in "The State of Multiculturalism in Canada" by Will Kymlicka:

This is not a case of people deciding whether to support or oppose multiculturalism based on new evidence. Rather, long-time critics of multiculturalism have jumped on the European anti-multiculturalism wagon, and have hoped to ride it into Canada, desperately looking for any shred of evidence that can be (mis)-interpreted as proof that Canada is falling into European-style patterns of ethnic animosity and division.

Questions such as whether a Western European withdrawal from such a policy will be echoed in Canada are interesting in its content but greater in its impact and the potential felt effects. These questions come at a time when Canada as a nation is finding itself at a mature enough

age to seriously consider increasing our distance from the British Monarch let alone feel the need to follow European footsteps. On the side which would have a reaffirmation of Canadian multiculturalism is the growing evidence of our comparative advantage and success in the necessary process of integrating immigrants. Not only does Canada remain a constant at the top of the Human Development Index of countries, but as one of Canada's foremost authorities on multiculturalism has stated, Canada is unusual in the extent by which multicultural practices are symbols and narrative of "national-blood", therefore providing and overtime having become a distinguishing and deep part of the Canadian identity. Ethnic enclaves continue to dot the demographic landscape (currently standing at 254) as having done so for generations of Canadians in the past.¹

As part of the international community struggling with issues of ethnic and racial diversity being linked into national security issues, Canada has seen a backlash and retreat from multiculturalism. An international backlash which is saying that multiculturalism has "failed", and that it is time to pull back from a policy which has been taken too far in its allowances. Still witnessing this backlash, time is ripe for a serious discussion in this country on the issue of rethinking our multicultural policy for the twenty-first century.

¹ Ethnic Enclaves: Where more than 30 percent of a particular community consist of a single visible minority group

RATIONALIZING MULTICULTURAL POLICY

Multiculturalism is not a matter of immigration. Where immigration policy addresses who is allowed into the country, multicultural policy addresses how best to integrate those who have arrived. From the extreme of having them work as migrant workers with little to no rights from the country of employment to the complete range of human freedoms being upheld and promoted, there is a wide spectrum in not only how much an immigrant is privileged through migration, but additionally how they are acquired. Examples include that of the United States of America who share the freedoms and human rights upheld in the constitution by declaring that all landed immigrants must adopt the strict American identity. In contrast, the Canadian policy states that the freedoms and rights shared in Canada are accessible by adopting a Canadian identity which contains elements of the previous national identity. Thus, the extremes range from becoming e.g. American – Chinese to Chinese – Canadian. Despite the two extremes both are still forms of multiculturalism policy.² Where the Canadian example offers a more multiculturalist outlook, the American example is nevertheless still their policy on addressing immigrants whose cultural heritage varies greatly. Important to note, multiculturalism policy is not the same as policies towards Indigenous Peoples although, as similar to immigration policy, is often confused with as dealing with largely people from a heritage different than that of the majority population. As with Indigenous peoples, multiculturalism should also be distinguished from discussion of Anglo-Francophone relations.

In Canadian life and society, supporters of multiculturalism assert the position that our existing policy assists integration by removing barriers to participation in their communities at a number of levels, and that that leads to a stronger sense of belonging and pride in Canada. It allows them early on after migrating to participate in society without having to first take on an entirely new identity by which to participate with and in allowing this, shows an increased level of welcomeness, open-mindedness, and above all respect for previous identities. From the Vietnamese example in Toronto we can see that multiculturalism has a positive effect on

² Other extremes can be thought such as the immigrant maintaining their foreign identity for classification and identification. For this discussion however, the variance between the Canadian and American policies is more than sufficient.

citizenship in their level of activity in Canadian public life. Additional studies from 2006 to 2008 provided strong evidence of the fact that multiculturalism promotes rather than isolates immigrants and facilitates integration and citizenship best through its individual-level effects on attitudes, self-understandings and identities, in addition to its society-level effect on institutions.

At the other end of the debate rests those who maintain the belief that our policy encourages immigrants to look inward, emphasizes the differences between groups rather than shared rights under a shared identity, and leads to ghettoization and balkanization. There are important points to note here which counters the most visually damaging criticism that it leads to ghettoization. This shocking claim is known to be false from the almost complete absence of immigrant ghettos in Canada. Moreover, where there is seen a high proportion of a particular ethnic group, it is important to see them as by-products from the fact that immigrants like to live where co-ethnics already reside and reflect in important aspects the demographics of a “normal” neighbourhood. Rather than looking at them under the term ghetto, they can be seen as neighbourhoods with demographics of Canadians whose ancestry is of a particular nationality or from a specific region, similar to the majority of neighbourhoods with this being European. This is backed with the fact that these neighbourhoods do not exhibit the economic impoverishment, impaired mobility, or social isolation that the ghettos in America or Europe are characterised with in terms of groupings of immigrants. Another reason to know the European example is not one which can be translated into the Canadian experience.

Other points raised are harder to negate with empirical evidence however on the point of inwards looking, it should be taken with the reminder that in fact multiculturalism policy is written with the idea that they can become extroverted and participate in local government for example. With multiculturalism studies continuously showing that the political process becomes more inclusive. Similarly, the notion of shared identity being impossible is riddled with error in the Canadian example. Multicultural heritage is point of fact a bedrock of the Canadian identity, that will not change. What may need to be restated is the concept of rethinking how

best to integrate other cultures once an immigrant has landed. They would certainly share the Canadian identity of “the immigrant”.

Greater in the debate on the side of the critic is with whether multiculturalism policy plays a significant role in Canada’s comparative success with integrating immigrants into society. Can our success really be attributed to multiculturalism alone or at all. Critics believe that a larger contributing factor is with the immigration policy which allows in more highly-skilled immigrants than other countries, in addition to relatively open labour markets. It is argued that while multiculturalism exists, almost by necessity, it is really through our immigration policy and its stringent criteria which avails the greatest explanation of how immigrants in Canada integrate better than in many other countries.

The mentality of those looking to push away from Canadian heritage and reverse the open minded culture of multiculturalism is exemplified by Arthur Schlesinger who has written about the “cult of ethnicity”. Cults which “exaggerates differences and intensifies resentments and antagonism, drives even deeper awful wedges between races and nationalities. The end-game is self-pity and self-ghettoization.” Statements such as the above are reflective of recent settlement trends which seem to show that while not ghetto’s, Canadian “ethnic box settlements” are on the rise. Feeling out of place in Canada, 80 percent of new arrivals settle in Toronto, Montreal, and/or Vancouver and into tightly knit, ethnically homogenous neighbourhoods.

At real issue with the facts of increasing “ethnic box settlements” is with loyalty or lack thereof towards Canada. Argued is that loyalty is being extended to their particular ethnic groups and a sense of civic nationalism and loyalty to Canada is altogether missing.

In no way at present, they say, does it encourage newcomers to move from immigrant “them” to citizen “us”. Nor does it stress that Canada holds certain non-negotiable values – the rule of law, sexual equality, freedom of expression and tolerance. If nothing else, they argue, that must be made explicit.

The evidence is showing that key areas are missing for successful integration into citizenship and sharing of identity. Missing are core elements such as acceptance of immigrants as equals, demonstrated willingness and desire to join mainstream society by adopting fundamental morals and values of the culture, and lastly a high-degree of cross-fertilization between ethnic groups. According to University of Toronto professor Jeffrey Reitz, recent evidence is casting serious doubt as to whether any of the above is occurring in Canada today.

In general terms it is clear that either for or against strong multiculturalism policy, immigrants must be given an accurate representation of integration into Canadian life knowing that it may be “incompatible” with their cultural beliefs and will most likely require considerable willingness to adjust. A good example to clarify this point is with a daughter’s lack of willingness to conform to traditional male-dominated customs. Some immigrants go further and think wrongly that as Quebecers have self-governing rights, so to then under the multiculturalism act they will have similar governing rights.

INTO THE NEXT 20

Retreating from multicultural policies steeped in notions of tolerance and respect for diversity, is a frightening trend, and is seen as such by all those who hope to see discrimination squashed, and environments rich in diversity nurtured. To think of turning a nation back on a policy which has shown such historical success and a fabric of Canadian identity is unconstitutional and unCanadian.

Listening to proponents who look to change the existing multiculturalism policy of Canada so that it is more aligned with current political, cultural protectionist dogma in Europe, would have significant economic, political, and social backlash in Canada, and for Canada's image abroad. With growing evidence of the existing policy being a success, in terms of integration into the labour market of immigrants, integration into politics both formal and informal, along with inclusion in culturally welcoming programmes and networks, a desire to at this point begin a course alteration is mysterious. Although it could be thought that such a change would increase Canada's relation with historic European nations, the question which would need answering would be whether such relation needs to be strengthened, and particularly at the cost of lessening relations with rising Asian nations such as India and China. Of even greater worry would be going back on years of progress towards differentiating Canadian national identity from European nations and one which at the core is a multicultural mosaic.

Despite the success of existing policy, the evidence does not seem to resonate with groups in Quebec, particularly with the Action Democratique du Quebec who have influenced the Parti Quebecois and Quebec Liberals. Drumming the cultural protectionist policy of "getting tough on immigrants" similar to that which is increasingly being found in Europe, its appearance in modern politics should frighten any observer. Questions on how best to "get tough on immigrants" leads invariably to answers which at a base are difficult to distinguish from discrimination and at worst may not be constitutionally protected. They are easily taken as calls to decrease the quality of services offered to immigrants than to those offered to natural born citizens or worse withhold them altogether. It is stating that we do not recognize the hardship

involved in immigrating to a country and is quite explicitly stating that we are going to make that experience even tougher. Rather than integrate this into a policy which aims to ease integration, perhaps such a stance is better suited towards immigration policy. Even awarding that to such proponents is questionable as Canadian immigration standards are exceptionally high, well regulated, and well enforced.

A lot needs to happen to ensure not just that multiculturalism continues in Canada but that it improves with the passing of the years. Harmless comments made such as “My parents are from Russia and Greece so I don’t know what I am” show an underlying problem with Canadian identity. Although made only in jest, it shows the entire crux of the argument. Either upon landing it is clear that all other nationalities and their associated cultures are dropped for a homogenous Judeo-Christian culture or, the notion that you can have a parent from Russia and from Greece and be as Canadian as every other citizen continues. The idea is over whether the state should support the idea that Canadian citizens can enjoy aspects of “other” cultures and still integrate into society in a mutually beneficial manner. This point though is difficult to articulate given that as a mosaic, other cultures in one sense do not exist within Canada. A Canadian who enjoys Russian and Greek culture in Canada is enjoying Canadian culture as comprised of the individual’s component.

Politicians and community leaders must now consider the possibility that it is time to re-think Canada’s Multicultural mosaic. What must be looked at is the evidence. What is it? Is it wrong to make a course correction at this point in time. Should it be due to a European perspective or a mature Canadian perspective. What is Canadian identity?

No matter how the questions are answered, what must at all cost be avoided is the misguided use of multicultural policy to explain multicultural tensions and economic imbalances. Recommended as an initial way forward is a national dialogue to begin on the subject. Backed by the involvement of politicians and community leaders from various ethnicities, a dialogue must take place. Stemming from this dialogue and as a first step in revitalizing multiculturalism

in Canada could be, as an example, the formulation of a small working group aimed at supporting or replacing existing bodies whose focus is enhancing multiculturalism as a means for integration in Canada.

The time of European dominance into Canadian affairs has ended. So too should unwarranted and undue influence end. Let it be that Canadian freedoms, unique as they may be, remain true for all Canadians and continue to be expressed, felt, and defended in the twenty-first century by all citizenry.

Submitted for the consideration of
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