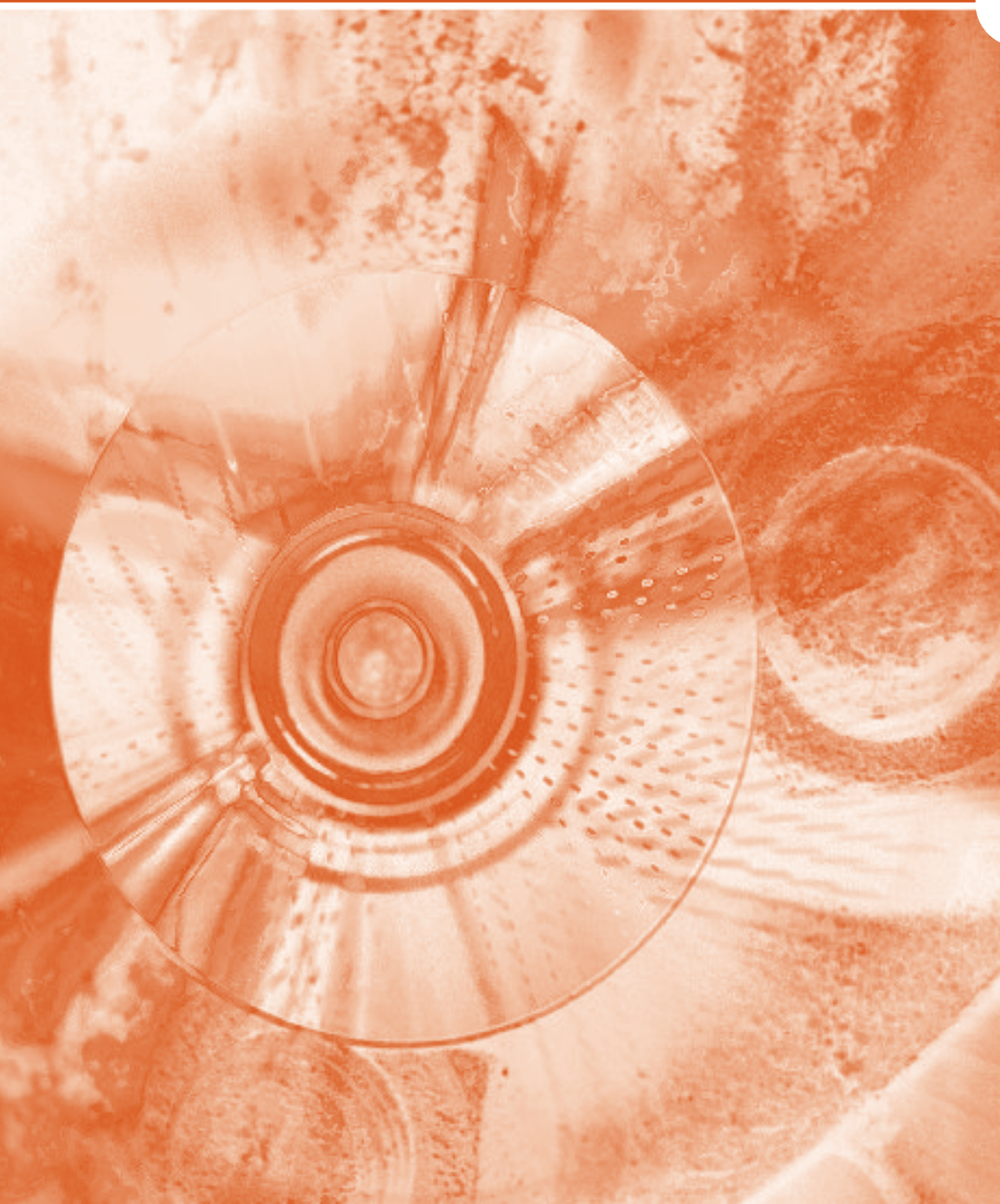# From Mosaic to Harmony: Multicultural Canada in the 21st Century

Results of Regional Roundtables

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PRI Project
Cultural Diversity

Canada

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Executive Summary

Canada's multicultural diversity is a product of three cultural drivers: Aboriginal peoples, the English and French "Charter" groups, and immigrants from around the world. In particular, successive waves of immigration since the 1970s have made Canada ever more diverse in ethnicity, culture, religion, and language. As do most multicultural societies, Canada faces the challenge of respecting cultural differences while fostering shared citizenship, conferring rights while demanding responsibilities, and encouraging integration but not insisting on assimilation.

Recent ethnic and religious-based conflicts and debates in Europe and Canada have renewed governments' interest regarding the integration of immigrants and their descendents. In Canada, especially following a number of incidents stemming from the complexities of accommodating religious sensitivities, the country's approach to ethno-cultural diversity has been pushed to the forefront of public discourse.

It is in this context that the Policy Research Initiative (PRI), in partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Metropolis Project, held roundtable consultations in eight cities across Canada: Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, and Vancouver. These consultations included representatives from all three orders of government, community organizations, business, and the media, as well as experts on immigration and diversity. The roundtables addressed two questions: 1) how to foster diversity without divisiveness and 2) whether Canada's multiculturalism policies need review in light of today's social and geopolitical realities.

At the roundtable consultations, it was agreed that managing multicultural diversity is a work in progress, evolving over time as social realities change. Regardless of these changes, however, the principles of these policies, such as equality, respect for diversity, human rights, and full participation, shall remain the cornerstones of inter-ethnic relations in Canada.

According to many participants, multiculturalism sets a vision for Canada and a framework for intercultural relations within a single society. That said, most Canadians understand multiculturalism as a policy to facilitate the integration of non-European newcomers and their immediate descendents. While there is general goodwill towards multicultural diversity, participants felt that Canada should not promote cultural differences at the expense of shared Canadian values.

In particular, multicultural policies have yet to resonate with younger Canadians, who grew up in a multicultural and global environment. Roundtable results asserted that younger Canadians often find it difficult to pigeonhole themselves into a certain ethnic group – especially those from intercultural families whose ancestries consist of more than one ethnic or religious heritage. They are more likely to see themselves first and foremost as Canadians. With the Internet being an integral part of their life and with the ease of travel, they regard themselves as

global citizens. A more relevant question for them would be how to define their Canadian identity in the global context.

It was noted that multiculturalism has become an easy target for failings and challenges resulting from other policies. It was almost universally argued that recent backlash against multiculturalism can be traced to anxiety and fear about the unknown. Many participants described debates about multiculturalism issues, such as religious diversity and the effects of ethnic enclaves,[1] as poorly informed and frequently simplistic.

Many of the roundtables touched on the fact that religious diversity lies at the core of many of the current debates about multiculturalism. As revealed by the discussion of "reasonable accommodation" in Québec and elsewhere, and due to the increasing religiosity among new immigrants, this is likely to continue. It appears that religion is a dimension that current conceptions of multiculturalism are ill-prepared to handle.

Roundtable participants pointed out that multiculturalism policies can work only if they are in sync with other domestic and foreign policies, such as those on employment, immigration, health, and international relations. There is a sense that government departments operate in isolation in their respective silos. It was felt that there is little dialogue across sectors and cultural groups.

Discussions on cultural diversity also generally involve only members of visible minorities and newcomers, who represent only one fifth of Canada's population. Aboriginal groups and those who are not visible minorities are not represented in consultations. This practice reinforces perceptions that multiculturalism is only for visible minorities, exacerbating the "us vs. them" dichotomy.

Roundtable findings reveal that future efforts must focus on four areas:

Move from "Narrowcast" to "Broadcast" – There is a need to create a multicultural tent for all Canadians by including a wide spectrum of the Canadian population in the policy dialogue. Furthermore, the voices of younger Canadians should be heard. Roundtable participants asserted that the "multicultural generation" is negotiating their multiple identities in a global context. Canada's approach to multicultural relations needs to reflect this shift in orientation.

Roundtable participants unanimously agreed on the need for a vertically integrated policy dialogue that engages the grassroots as well as governments (municipal, provincial, territorial and federal) and that is backed by a formal commitment. However, participants cautioned against efforts that could be described as social engineering. Cultural diversity is a lived experience that requires the collaboration of all sectors of society.

Combat Ignorance through Evidence – Participants advised governments to be more active in combating poor analysis and false associations when they appear in the various fora that inform debates about the practice and reality of multiculturalism in Canada.

Though much research has been conducted on immigration and diversity, the results need to be better utilized in policy development. And valuable lessons could be learned through study of factors that contributed to the success (or the lack thereof) of current and past practices.

Integrate Faith into Modern Multicultural Discourse – It is apparent that, contrary to earlier predictions, religion will not fade away as a source of distinctiveness in modern society. Previous decisions about how societal institutions and religions interact with one another may need to be revisited, particularly in the formation of policy.

Religious literacy (or the lack thereof) appears to require more attention. While much of the debate on managing diversity centres on accommodating religious principles, decision-makers and the public in general are often ill at ease in responding to these challenges. People lack knowledge about the tenets of various religious beliefs and how they interact with public policy issues. Instead, much effort is devoted to particular concerns, such as radicalization and terrorism.

Transform Principles to Practice – Much consternation was expressed about a disconnect between the policy of multiculturalism and the reality of multiculturalism on the ground. Often, roundtable participants argued, the delivery of programs emphasized cultural differences at the expense of encouraging individuals from different cultural backgrounds to learn about each other. It was felt these contributed to the challenge described above and have kept cultural communities from interacting with other communities as much as they might.

Canadian society has evolved from a mosaic to a fusion of cultures where people of different origins interact and contribute to the communities where they live. A recurring theme from the roundtable consultations is that multiculturalism is a means to an inclusive and equitable society. Policy tools need to be adapted to the changing dynamics of inter-ethnic relations. In particular, policies need to be communicated and implemented effectively so that Canada may remain truly multicultural.

Introduction

"The Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada"
– Preamble to the Canadian Multiculturalism Act

Canada's demographic diversity, which predates all policies and legislation on this issue, continues to evolve. Canada's multicultural diversity is a product of three cultural drivers: Aboriginal peoples, the English and French-speaking "Charter" groups, and other immigrants. Furthermore, successive waves of immigration since the 1970s have made Canada ever more diverse in ethnicity, culture, religion, and language.

Canadians believe that our country's diversity, if properly nurtured, can become its strength.[2] We pride ourselves on being the first country to adopt an official policy of multiculturalism. Supported by a suite of policies and legislations, Canada's approach to inter-ethnic relations is based on the principles of equality, respect for diversity, and human rights. In practice, however, nurturing ethno-cultural diversity remains a work in progress subject to the constant evolution of social realities.

Since its inception in 1971, multiculturalism policy has evolved in terms of focus, reference point, and mandate. Confronted by issues of the time, each decade also has taken its own approach to address such issues (See Table 1).

Table 1 Evolution of Multiculturalism Policies: Version 1

	Ethnicity Multiculturalism (1970s)*	*Equity* Multiculturalism (1980s)*	*Civic* Multiculturalism (1990s)*	*Integrative* Multiculturalism (2000s)
Focus	Celebrating differences	Managing diversity	Constructive engagement	Inclusive citizenship
Reference Point	Culture	Structure	Society building	Canadian identity
Mandate	Ethnicity	Race relations	Citizenship	Integration
Magnitude	Individual adjustment	Accommodation	Participation	Rights and responsibilities
Problem Source	Prejudice	Systemic discrimination	Exclusion	Unequal access, "clash" of cultures
Solution	Cultural sensitivity	Employment equity	Inclusiveness	???
Key Metaphor	"Mosaic"	"Level playing field"	"Belonging"	???

*Source Fleras, A. and Kunz, Jean (2001). *Media and Minorities: representing diversity in a Multicultural Canada.* Toronto: Thompson Education Publishing.

In the 1970s, the emphasis was on encouraging individuals to participate in Canadian society by valuing their cultural identities. From the 1980s on, a significant evolution occurred as the original concept of multiculturalism evolved away from a mere celebration of cultural differences to a removal of barriers to economic participation for racial minorities at the institutional level. With the passage of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* and the *Employment Equity Act*, institutions were increasingly obligated to reflect Canada's multicultural reality in their organizational structures. While equity is still a key aspect of multiculturalism, in the 1990s the focus moved to fostering shared citizenship in order to develop a sense of belonging for all Canadians regardless of their social, economic, and demographic differences.

Globalization and security have entered the lexicon of multicultural discourse, especially following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Due to the advancement in information and communications technology, as well as the ease of travel, individuals are more connected globally. Yet nationally, they differ in language, ethnicity, religion, and culture. Among countries that have adopted a multicultural approach to diversity, some have voiced concerns that multiculturalism may come at the cost of their national identity.[3, 4]

Recent ethnic and religious-based conflicts and debates in Europe and Canada have renewed governments' efforts to integrate immigrants and their descendents. In Canada, especially following incidents stemming from the complexities of accommodating religious sensitivities, the country's approach to ethno-cultural diversity has been pushed to the forefront of public discourse. The July 7, 2005 attack on the subway system in London, England, as well as the arrest of 17 terrorist suspects in the Greater Toronto Area in Canada in June 2006, generated debates about "home-grown terror" that, justly or not, put the second generation in the limelight.

At issue are how to foster diversity without divisiveness and whether Canada's multiculturalism policies are in need of a review in light of today's social and geopolitical realities. In this context, the Policy Research Initiative (PRI) spearheaded a pilot project to assess the need for research on cultural diversity issues caused by immigration. In early 2007, the PRI, in partnership with the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Metropolis Project, held roundtable consultations in eight cities across Canada: Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, and Vancouver. These consultations included representatives from all three orders of government, community organizations, business, and the media, as well as experts on immigration and diversity. The following is a summary of the results.

Overall Findings

Canada's Approach to Multicultural Diversity: Excellent in Principle, but a Challenge in Practice

Overall, participants believed that multiculturalism policies are forward-looking, representing a vision to which Canada aspires and a framework for managing inter-ethnic relations. Participants believed that this vision should speak to all Canadians and affect all policies and sectors of society. Compared with other policies, such as those on defence, finance, and the environment, policies on cultural diversity were viewed as matters of encouragement and ideals, with broad objectives but few specific goals. Furthermore, since cultural diversity differs across regions and cities, the implementation of a national policy on multiculturalism would reflect such differences.

It was agreed that the process of managing multicultural diversity evolves as social realities change. Regardless, the principles of these policies, such as equality, respect for diversity, human rights, and full participation, will remain the cornerstones of inter-ethnic relations in Canada. Table 1, above, illustrates this evolution.

Nevertheless, while the policies appear sound in principle, they need to be updated to respond to new challenges. And while Canada is good at developing sound policies, it is less successful in translating policy goals into reality due to overly subtle and uncoordinated practices in communicating principles, as well as disconnects between policy goals and implementation on the ground. According to many participants, while multiculturalism sets a vision for Canada, it could be better communicated. Consequently, participants believed there is not a single conception of multiculturalism shared by all. This has led to social divisions, false associations, and the policy's lack of relevance to youth.

> The government needs to help **all** Canadians understand how the concepts of multiculturalism transcend everyday life (e.g., justice). They need to spell out and clearly articulate what [a multicultural society] would look like. In the business sector, what gets measured gets done. This needs to be built into policy discussion or else it is all just talk.
>
> *Calgary Roundtable*

Further, it was felt that discussions regarding multiculturalism have been too abstract to be translated effectively into the everyday realities. In particular, questions emerged regarding terminology, such as "shared citizenship" and "two-way street." These phrases are hollow if not grounded on a basis of equality. Shared citizenship without equal access would lead to a sense of second-class citizenship among the excluded.

Participants pointed to an apparent gap between policies and implementation, which frequently made policies ineffective and sometimes even divisive. In spite of policies such as employment equity and multiculturalism, it was argued that a number of issues identified in the 1980s and 1990s are still current. These include

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the unequal access to employment for recent immigrants and visible minorities and the prevalence of low incomes among certain ethnic groups.

Communication Issues

In spite of decades of government efforts, multiculturalism is still perceived as something only for visible minorities and non-European immigrants. As such, the Charter groups, others of European origin, and Aboriginal Peoples do not see themselves in these policies. While overall there is general goodwill towards multicultural diversity, participants felt that there is often a bias against promotion of such diversity, particularly at public expense. In large part, this is thought to be because few people have read the multiculturalism legislation and policies, apart from a few practitioners. Therefore, governments should better explain the principles and the intent of these measures to the general public. There was near consensus among participants that all governments need to improve and expand their outreach efforts, especially through schools and public education, to communicate the principles of multiculturalism, and show Canadians how they are reflected in these policies.

> What is the ideal state? [To answer this question]…we have to [also] engage the 72 percent who are not born outside of Canada.
>
> *Vancouver Roundtable*

It was also observed that, while multiculturalism is a Canadian trademark, many countries have been managing intercultural relations much longer than Canada. There are other ways to manage pluralistic societies. A study of other pluralistic societies, both similar and dissimilar to Canada, would identify success factors common to all.

Specific Challenges

1 – Perceptions of "Us" and "Them"

In principle and intent, multiculturalism is for all Canadians, as stated in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. But instead of uniting Canadians of all ethnic origins, some participants argued that, in practice, multiculturalism has caused divisions along the lines of time of arrival in the New World, power, and skin tone. This involves individuals such as the Aboriginal Peoples, members of the Charter groups, and those of European descent who do not demonstrate their ethnicity in terms of skin colour and visible minority status. Roundtable participants asserted that this is because most Canadians understand multiculturalism as a policy for facilitating the integration of non-European newcomers and their immediate descendents. The concept of multiculturalism as a framework for intercultural relations within a single society is largely alien.

This narrow understanding is a significant challenge that affects how Canadians articulate and understand issues. For example, from this perspective, Canadians of European descent (as well as many of non-European descent) concede that some members of the first generation may experience discrimination due to their accent and culture. Those who believe this comfort themselves, however, with the belief that the descendants of these immigrants – the second generation – will be able to easily integrate into Canadian society. In contrast, for many who are visible minorities, multiculturalism is seen as meaningless without an emphasis on anti-racism, human rights, and equal access.

It was argued that this difference in understanding regarding the nature and role of multiculturalism fosters disunity and a sense of isolation between different cultural segments of Canada's population. Those who do not recognize or respond to the understanding and concerns of the other group are seen as alien. This was identified as being corrosive to social cohesion.

2 – Gross Simplification and False Associations

It was almost universally argued that recent backlashes against multiculturalism can be traced to anxiety and fear about the unknown. Debates about multiculturalism issues, such as religious diversity and the effects of ethnic enclaves, were described by many roundtable participants as poorly informed and frequently simplistic. At the same time, it was noted that multiculturalism has become an easy target for failings and challenges caused by other policies. Participants frequently stated that much that is said about multicultural relations today is based on false conceptual linkages and poor analysis. This is especially true regarding discussions of social tensions, barriers to immigrant integration, and terrorism. When closely examined and evaluated, arguments linking security concerns, terrorism, and radicalization with multiculturalism are typically weak or even false. More often, roundtable participants asserted, these issues are structural and societal rather than multicultural.

Religion is identified as an area of special concern. As some participants observed, this form of diversity is generally alien to the theory and practice of

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multiculturalism – instead, differences are more commonly attributed to race, country of origin, and other more visible forms of difference. This can frustrate our understanding of the issues we face.

Many of the roundtables touched on the fact that religious diversity lies at the core of many current debates about multiculturalism. As revealed by the discussion of "reasonable accommodation" in Quebec and elsewhere, and due to the increasing religiosity of new immigrants, this is likely to continue. It appears that religion is a dimension that current conceptions of multiculturalism are ill-prepared to handle.

> We don't have a good sense of what people are afraid of (the metrics of what is working and what isn't). [For example,] anxiety is growing more rapidly at the upper end of the socio-economic spectrum.
>
> *Toronto Roundtable*

A common observation at the roundtables was that the implementation of multiculturalism policies currently focuses on distinctiveness, inhibiting true integration of ethno-cultural groups and new immigrants. This was a divisive issue; many participants asserted that, on the contrary, linking poor integration with multiculturalism was a "stretch." Nevertheless, due to the prominence of the attitudes at the roundtables and within general society, this interpretation must be evaluated. Since multiculturalism, as popularly understood by Canadian society, focuses on the preservation of cultural and religious customs, people argue that it encourages immigrants and ethnic groups to remain within their own cultural groups instead of becoming part of the broader society. Some at the roundtables even attributed the increase in single-ethnicity neighbourhoods in large urban centres ("ethnic enclaves") to multiculturalism. It was observed that, in spite of having been in Canada for a long time, some first-generation Canadians do not speak either official language, due to their isolation. This perception may, however, be a "false association" – other issues may be involved in this phenomenon, and arguments linking integration challenges to ethnic enclaves are untested. Even so, this belief continues to drive Canada policy agendas associated with multiculturalism.

> We need to look at generational differences, particularly with respect to youth who may be questioning the meaning of "Canadian" values. Multiculturalism policy should be a driver of other policies, both foreign and domestic; when it does not inform other policies, it can lead to disengagement.
>
> *Calgary Roundtable*

3 – Intergenerational Gap

It was frequently observed that issues of diversity differ according to generation. Indeed, younger roundtable participants often argued that multiculturalism is a concept of the 1970s and is more relevant to their immigrant parents than to themselves. This opinion is reflected in public opinion surveys, in which second-generation Canadians are more likely to identify themselves as Canadians than are their first-generation parents.[5]

Roundtable participants explained this finding by asserting that it is less important for them to maintain their ethnic heritage; many do not speak the language of their ancestral home, and some do not see the relevance of identifying themselves solely with one ethnic heritage. On the contrary, it was asserted that younger Canadians often find it difficult to pigeonhole themselves into a certain ethnic group – especially those from intercultural families. As a result, they are more likely to see themselves first and foremost as Canadians. Furthermore, with the Internet being an integral part of their life and with the ease of travel, they regard themselves as global citizens. A more relevant question for them would be how to define their Canadian identity in the global context. This has profound implications for traditional interpretations of multiculturalism.

Potential Responses

Multicultural diversity benefits all Canadians and their institutions. This message should be effectively communicated – just as the benefits of a clean and healthy environment are promoted. Education was identified as a key way to familiarize Canadians and immigrants with our country's multicultural past and present, and with what we can expect in the future. It was emphasized that the concept of multiculturalism must be shown as relevant for all groups and all sectors, both private and public.

Encouraging Intercultural Dialogue

Initiation of an "intercultural dialogue" was seen as a paradigm shift from the current practice of multiculturalism. It would enable individuals to identify the ideas, concepts, and goals that bring them together, as well as those that keep them apart. At every roundtable, participants mentioned the current lack of interaction and understanding between newcomers, Aboriginal Peoples, and Canadians in general, and between ethnic and religious groups. Encouraging co-operation to achieve mutual understanding would not be a stretch for multiculturalism. As stated in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, federal institutions have a role to "promote policies, programs and practices that enhance the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society" (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act*: 3[2][*c*]). However, rather than aiming only at lofty concepts, an intercultural dialogue would focus on practical goals that transcend all cultures in addition to the notion of being a proud Canadian. This dialogue would address issues such as the hopes we hold for our children, economic security, health and well-being, and respect for others.

Debunking False Associations

It is important to deconstruct any false linkages between multiculturalism and other policy areas. Participants asserted that multiculturalism has been blamed for a number of concerns in Canadian society, ranging from settlement to security. Some of these are legitimate – for example, settlement issues, such as foreign credential recognition and official language proficiency, must be dealt with.

Other areas, however, need to be explored further. In particular, do ethnic enclaves or ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods facilitate or impede the integration of newcomers and ethnic minorities? Research has demonstrated that the rise in single-ethnicity neighbourhoods in urban centres probably reflects the increase in immigration from certain regions.

Regardless, governments need to more actively combat inadequate analysis and false associations when they appear in the fora that inform debates about the practice and reality of multiculturalism in Canada.

> The notion of "Canadian values" is a slippery slope, as they are constantly changing. It is the fear, and lack of understanding about those who are coming to Canada, that is leading to anxiety.
>
> *Toronto Roundtable*

Intergenerational Dialogue

Related to the observation above, participants pointed out the need for a new approach to multiculturalism that resonates with the realities and experiences of young Canadians growing up in an interconnected world. It is essential to reach out to the descendents of immigrants, particularly the second generation. The experiences of different generations vary significantly. Children of immigrants, or those who came at a young age, spend their formative years in Canada. Unlike their parents, they are fluent in either or both of the official languages, as well as familiar with the Canadian way of doing things. Economically, they often do better or at least as well as their parents. It was argued that they are also more likely to come into close contact with other cultures, even within their own communities. In many cases – though not all – it is easier for younger generations to identify with Canada, where they grew up, than with the ethno-cultural origin(s) of their parents or grandparents. Finally, it was observed that most of this younger generation are Internet savvy, communicating with individuals around the world. In sum, roundtable participants asserted that members of the "multicultural generation" are negotiating their multiple identities in a global context. Canada's approach to multicultural relations needs to reflect this shift in orientation.

Knowledge Gaps

While clear policy trajectories were presented at the roundtables, many questions remain to be answered. At issue is what multiculturalism means to Canadians, both individually and as a collective society. In particular, the relevance of multiculturalism to younger Canadians – the "multicultural generation" – must be explored. This group is more globally aware and integrated than previous

generations of Canadians, and their experiences, opinions, and attitudes will play a greater role in Canadian multicultural policies. The challenges that the second generation faces require specific attention. Governments need to learn more about these issues in order to re-create multiculturalism so it can contribute to intercultural dialogue.

At the same time, questions about discrimination and potential responses to it figure prominently in debates about multiculturalism between various facets of Canadian society. It was observed repeatedly during the roundtables that opinions on this topic vary markedly, depending on an individual's generation and ethnic heritage. This issue needs to be explored in greater detail.

Finally, debunking of false associations requires credible research and analysis, and this requires government investments in generation of knowledge. Beyond media headlines and polemics, research evidence is needed to find the facts about formation of ethnic-concentrated neighbourhoods and integration of immigrants. Because we will continue to be influenced by news of events outside Canada, we also need to know what is actually happening in those countries so that analysts and policy-makers can evaluate the situation here in Canada and communicate this understanding to the public. Therefore, we need more information on context and outcomes in other countries, to supplement what we already know about their approaches to managing diversity.

> Multiculturalism becomes anything that a particular writer wants it to be. But the things identified by media have nothing to do with multiculturalism. We need to be careful that a good thing doesn't get swept away by media that distorts what is happening.
>
> *Vancouver Roundtable*

A number of knowledge gaps became evident during the roundtables. To address these, it will be necessary to:

- explore the challenges that second-generation Canadians face (e.g., mixed cultural identities, social integration, sense of belonging), in order to develop policies that respond to and reflect their experiences;

- explore the intersection of religion and public policy in terms of the impacts of religious diversity on social inclusion;

- examine ethnic enclaves (the formation of neighbourhoods with an overrepresentation of a single ethnic group) in order to understand their origins and their social and economic impacts;

- explore and define the concept of "inclusive citizenship," particularly to determine how rights and responsibilities, civic education, and other factors can inform multicultural policy; and

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- evaluate the extent and effects of discrimination in Canadian society, with particular attention to how discrimination affects Canadians' ability to communicate with one another and how it undermines social cohesion.

Implementation

Roundtable participants identified challenges in implementation of multicultural policies. In part, these challenges contributed to the communication issues described above; it was observed that actions speak louder than words. Implementation challenges also have a considerable effect on Canadians' experiences with multiculturalism.

Three particular issues were identified. First, policies must have tangible goals so that results can be measured. Second, all stakeholders need to be involved in achieving these goals. Third, organizations need the right tools and knowledge to implement them. In all these regards, Canada's approach to managing multicultural relations appears to fall short of the country's vision of multicultural diversity.

Specific Challenges

1 – A "Lack of Teeth"

Participants stated a need for indicators to evaluate the health of multiculturalism, similar to measures for economic growth, level of immigration, or reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Many participants also asserted that the federal government often only "talks the talk." For example, it was noted that visible minorities are still underrepresented in the public service, especially at the executive level.[6] In addition, while there are monitoring mechanisms for organizations under the *Employment Equity Act*, few mechanisms exist to mandate compliance, and the legislation covers only a fraction of the labour force. These efforts appeared shallow to many roundtable participants, particularly relative to official languages legislation.

> It [multiculturalism policy] doesn't translate into tangible action. If we look at the laws, there are regulations in place, and efforts have been made, but at the end of the day, you end up with laws that are somewhat utopian, that are difficult to translate into reality; through union negotiations, etc. There are some aspects [of multiculturalism] that don't seem to take into account the realities that exist on the ground.
>
> *Montréal Roundtable*

Overall, participants expressed much frustration regarding government efforts to improve intercultural relations and the principles of multiculturalism. However, little interest was expressed in setting targets – since these are policies of principle, it was agreed that it would be difficult to set hard targets for inter-ethnic relations.

2 - Engagement of Only the "Usual Suspects"

Since they are part of a matrix of policies, multiculturalism policies cannot work out of sync with other domestic and foreign policies, such as those on employment, immigration, health, and international relations. Nevertheless, there is a sense that government departments operate in isolation in their respective silos. Participants perceived little dialogue across sectors and cultural groups. Implementation of diversity remains the responsibilities of select branches or divisions in a few government departments and ethno-cultural groups. Private sector players who have made efforts to have a culturally diversified workforce are seldom present in government consultations on the implementation of multiculturalism. Also not represented are Aboriginal groups. More broadly, discussions on cultural diversity also tend to involve only members of visible minorities and newcomers – who represent only one fifth of the population. This reinforces perceptions that multiculturalism is only for visible minorities and exacerbates the "us vs. them" dichotomy.

Some participants felt that even when they were included in the consultations, their advice was often ignored. The federal government's roundtable on security was cited as an example. That process appeared to be highly unresponsive, and participants felt a great deal of frustration about that exercise.

> For a society that is still struggling to be just to its First Nations, [the real question is] how do we expect society to be just to one another?
>
> *Calgary Roundtable*

3 – Lack of Knowledge and Capacity

As classrooms and workplaces become more culturally diverse, employers and groups often have to grapple with how, having few resources, to benefit from the opportunities and manage the pressures. Grassroots organizations in particular often find themselves stretched to the limit by these challenges – by human resource constraints as well as by finances. Interestingly, this issue did not resonate the same way with private sector participants; their business operations demand that they understand how their client base changes, and so they allocate appropriate resources to this activity. For example, media outlets closely monitor and study their changing audience in order to inform their programming. Nevertheless, even with the resources they have, private representatives at the roundtables acknowledged difficulties in managing the complexities of an increasingly diverse population.

Religious literacy (or the lack thereof) appears to require more attention. While much of the debate on managing diversity centres on accommodating religious principles, decision-makers and the public in general are often ill at ease in responding to these challenges. People lack knowledge about the tenets of various religious beliefs and how they interact with public policy issues. Instead, much effort is devoted to particular concerns, such as radicalization and terrorism.

Potential Responses

Policies must deal with real issues such as barriers to full participation; otherwise, they would remain nothing more than abstract concepts. To reduce gaps between policies and programs, one must engage all those who will be affected by these measures. Moreover, it is important to enable stakeholders to develop and acquire the capacity to adapt and respond to their multicultural reality.

Improving Accountability

Accountability is necessary if results are to be attained. As one participant observed, as in business, "what gets measured gets done." Repeatedly it was asserted that all governments need to be more accountable and focus on results by putting more teeth into their multicultural policies (such as legislation to protect people from hate, discrimination, and violence). Action was called for on several fronts. Under the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, federal institutions are to "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" (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act* 3[2][*d*]). Some suggested that such evaluative efforts should be extended to other sectors, such as the media. The feasibility of this approach is yet to be determined.

> We can have the best policies in the world, but if there are no ways of implementation, then the policy is a failure. There is currently a lack of accountability in terms of the implementation end of things.
>
> *Halifax Roundtable*

It was observed that there is a need to move programs to "the next level"; current approaches are too "polite." It was argued that newcomers may not be aware of their rights regarding reporting incidents of racism. This could be remedied by making such information more accessible for newcomers. Expansion and improvement of educational tools, particularly in the corporate sector, was often identified as a priority. Employment equity legislation needs to be expanded to cover more employers. The most frequent comment, however, was that human rights laws in this country could be strengthened. Many argued that current human rights laws are not really laws, but rather guidelines about how groups should relate to one another.

To give multiculturalism more teeth, it was also suggested that governments apply the logic of bilingualism policy and apply it to multiculturalism. For example, official languages policy appears more effective due to the role of the Commissioner of Official Languages, who monitors the government's efforts to fulfill the obligations in the *Official Languages Act*. More than one roundtable recommended establishing a similar commissioner for diversity issues. Caution, however, would be required, to ensure that various policy domains do not compete for the same resources.

Engaging all Sectors

It was argued that engagement of all sectors would reduce the "us and them" dichotomy. Although immigrants and visible minorities account for nearly one fifth of the population, it is important to also include the Canadian-born and those who are not visible minorities. It would be useful to ask all Canadians what they understand multiculturalism to be and what their concerns are. Constructive dialogues among various sectors and population groups could enhance mutual understanding.

Few specific recommendations were made about how to carry out such expanded engagement. It was observed that partnerships across all sectors are important. All three levels of governments should work together on diversity issues, as they currently do regarding immigration. And the federal government is strongly encouraged to take the lead in policy issues involving the private sector, community organizations, and all levels of governments.

> Having a Social Integration/Inclusion task force is one idea; something that will foster more integration and inclusion. It would bring together people who would otherwise have difficulty getting together.
>
> *Vancouver Roundtable*

All roundtables agreed on the need for an effective policy dialogue that is vertically integrated (engaging the grassroots and all governments: municipal, provincial, territorial, and federal) and backed by a formalized commitment. Participants underlined that such a commitment was missing from the roundtable on security.

Applying a Multicultural Diversity Lens

Addressing multicultural diversity in all policies would make multiculturalism the responsibility of all government departments. Roundtable participants pointed out the need to pay attention to areas where policies may complement or cancel each other out. Foreign policy was a particular area of interest. As one participant put it, "You cannot bring people from 'threat' countries, while at the same time demonizing their home countries and expect them to integrate." Immigration was another concern. While Canada accepts immigrants under its immigration programs, successful integration requires other policies, especially regarding employment.

That said, it was observed that this is not a call for a national program based on a pan-Canadian perspective. There was caution against efforts that could be described as social engineering. Rather, cultural diversity is seen as a lived experience that requires the collaboration of all sectors of society. Further, one needs to be cognizant of differences across communities, provinces and territories, and regions. Large urban centres that have experience with both internal and international migration have infrastructure that deals with such dynamics. On the other hand, things are quite different in small towns and in the

North, where international migration is relatively new. Policy-makers must keep these differences in mind.

Building Knowledge and Capacity

Building knowledge and capacity through education and partnership is the essence of implementing multiculturalism policies. At the roundtables, two facets of this need were identified:

1. Newcomers must gain a realistic understanding of the country to which they are immigrating. This includes knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, the challenges they are likely to face, and ways to overcome these barriers.

2. Citizenship education also needs to be extended to all Canadians. Long-time residents and newcomers alike need to know about their country's diverse past and present, and understand how these will affect their future.

It was frequently and unanimously asserted that, even though Canada is a secular society, religion's role in public policy should not be overlooked. Furthermore, many current conflicts associated with multiculturalism in Canada are rooted in religion. It would therefore be prudent to understand the socio-political dimensions of strong religious belief. Decision-makers' level of religious literacy was often raised over the course of the roundtables. In particular, it was observed that the very low knowledge of religion among decision-makers, policy advisors, the media, and the public in general weakened individuals' ability to grapple with the challenges being faced in many communities. Thus, training was recommended, starting with senior policy analysts and decision-makers.

Knowledge Gaps

There are many ideas and experiences on which to base plans for next steps. Nevertheless, throughout the roundtables a consensus emerged that Canadians' understanding of the issues is limited by a lack of a coherent, targeted research on best practices.

And if multiculturalism is to expand to embrace religious differences, much more needs to be known about religion's effects on individual and group identity, as well as about how these differences may play out in society. Canada could also benefit from learning about how other countries have responded to these challenges.

As a result, Canadians must endeavour to:

- find out how private sector firms (e.g., banks) implement diversity initiatives, to identify best practices that governments may emulate and to develop ways to support those efforts;

- identify difference between regions and between urban and rural areas, to improve the application of multicultural policies and inform the development of future policies;

- review and assess current approaches in other portfolios (e.g., the environment, Aboriginal issues, gender) to identify practices transferable to multicultural policies;

- explore practices and approaches to managing diversity at the municipal, provincial/territorial, and international level, with particular attention to the handling of religious differences;

- improve our understanding of outcomes, both in Canada and elsewhere in the world;

- review indicators in Canada and abroad, to use in the development of a multicultural integration index to evaluate effectiveness and inform the allocation of resources; consider models (such as gross domestic product) used in other spheres;

- evaluate the media's role in debates about the accommodation of religious differences; and

- monitor how Canada responds to recommendations from international bodies such as the UN regarding cultural diversity and race relations.

Multicultural Diversity for the 21st Century: From Mosaic to Harmony

In this globalizing era, multicultural societies face the challenge of respecting cultural differences while fostering shared citizenship, conferring rights while demanding responsibilities, and encouraging integration but not assimilation. This is the message from the roundtables. Canadian society has evolved from a mosaic to a fusion of cultures, where people of different cultural origins live in harmony, and contribute to the communities where they live. This finding is reflected in the revised version of Table 1; the key metaphor of our time and the solution to the challenges we face have become apparent (See Table 2). A recurring theme from the roundtable consultations is that multiculturalism is a means to an inclusive and equitable society. Policy tools need to adapt to the changing dynamics of inter-ethnic relations. In particular, policies need to be communicated and implemented effectively so that Canada remains truly multicultural. As declared in the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, federal institutions are to promote policies, programs, and practices that "enhance the ability of individuals and communities of all origins to contribute to the continuing evolution of Canada" and to enhance "the understanding of and respect for the diversity of the members of Canadian society" (*Canadian Multiculturalism Act* 3[2][*b*] and 3[2][*c*]). That said, administration of cultural diversity must be based on the principles of equality, human rights, respect for diversity, and the rule of law, as well as on full participation.

There are pockets of ignorance in society, and it comes from a lack of enforcement of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. There are some aspects of it that we could review, and we should encourage interaction between different communities, and this is missing. We should promote and foster this [interaction between different communities] in society. Each of the many diverse communities has a wealth to offer, and what are we doing to take advantage of this wealth?

Montréal Roundtable

Table 2 Evolution of Multiculturalism Policies: Version 2

	Ethnicity Multiculturalism (1970s)*	*Equity* Multiculturalism (1980s)*	*Civic* Multiculturalism (1990s)*	*Integrative* Multiculturalism (2000s)
Focus	Celebrating differences	Managing diversity	Constructive engagement	Inclusive citizenship
Reference Point	Culture	Structure	Society building	Canadian identity
Mandate	Ethnicity	Race relations	Citizenship	Integration
Magnitude	Individual adjustment	Accommodation	Participation	Rights and Responsibilities
Problem Source	Prejudice	Systemic discrimination	Exclusion	Unequal access, "clash" of cultures
Solution	Cultural sensitivity	Employment equity	Inclusiveness	Dialogue/Mutual understanding
Key Metaphor	"Mosaic"	"Level playing field"	"Belonging"	"Harmony/Jazz"

*Source Fleras, A. and Kunz, Jean (2001). *Media and Minorities: representing diversity in a Multicultural Canada*. Toronto: Thompson Education Publishing.

Nevertheless, even as we begin to fill in our knowledge gaps about the state of Canadian multiculturalism and the challenges we face, new questions emerge.

Moving Forward: The PRI's Project on Cultural Diversity

The findings from the roundtables show that future efforts need to focus on the following four transitions.

Move from "Narrowcast" to "Broadcast": The Challenge of Creating a Multicultural Tent for all Canadians

Many of the challenges multiculturalism faces are due to Canadians' misunderstanding of its intended role in our society. Policies need to resonate with younger and second-generation Canadians, who are increasingly multi-ethnic in ancestry and global in outlook. Today transnational linkages and intercultural marriage result in fluid identities. Despite the wording of the *Canadian*

Multiculturalism Act, it was argued that too many Canadians of all backgrounds view multiculturalism as a policy only for new arrivals from non-traditional (i.e., non-European) source countries. This, it was argued, has contributed to the cultural estrangement of many Canadians from one another.

Combat Ignorance through Evidence: The Challenge of Re-examining our Preconceptions

Roundtable participants repeatedly observed that many debates about multiculturalism are based on poor analysis or faulty assumptions, especially when regarding security-related concerns. Participants also commented that in questions about the integration of ethnic enclaves, public and popular opinion leaders have gone too far beyond research and policy thought. Combating sensationalistic reports that are based on little evidence was identified as a priority.

Find Religion: The Challenge of Integrating Faith into Modern Multicultural Discourse

It is apparent that, contrary to earlier predictions, religion will not fade away as a source of distinctiveness in modern society. Previous decisions about how societal institutions and religions interact with one another may need to be revisited, particularly in the formation of policy.

Transform Principles to Practice: The Challenge of Transforming Lofty Goals into Effective Action

Much consternation was expressed about a disconnect between the policy of multiculturalism and the reality of multiculturalism on the ground. Often, roundtable participants argued, the delivery of programs emphasized cultural differences at the expense of encouraging individuals from different cultural backgrounds to learn about each other. It was felt these both contributed to the challenge described above and have kept cultural communities from interacting with other communities as much as they might.

Though much research has been done on immigration and diversity, the results need to be better utilized in policy development. And valuable lessons could be learned through study of factors that contributed to the success (or the lack thereof) of these practices.

To begin this work, the PRI will focus on the following topics, which were identified in most of the roundtable discussions:

- **The second generation**, addressing how these people's experiences are changing, the process of acculturation, and policy implications.

- **The role of religion**, to stimulate the development of a research and policy agenda exploring religion's role in the state and society.

- **Ethnic enclaves**, to inform debates about how these communities influence the process of acculturation.

Summary Chart

Issue	Challenge	Potential Responses
Communication	"Us and them"	- Foster Mutual Understanding through Intercultural Dialogue. - Expand our understanding of how Canadians, as both individuals and as members of discrete social segments, think of and relate to multiculturalism in their daily lives. - Evaluate the extent and effects of discrimination in Canadian society, with particular attention to how discrimination affects Canadians' ability to communicate with one another and how it undermines social cohesion. - Explore and define the concept of "inclusive citizenship," particularly to determine how rights and responsibilities, civic education, and other factors can inform multicultural policy.
	Gross simplification and false associations	- Debunk Myths and Incorrect Analyses. - Explore the intersection between faith and public policy. - Examine ethnic enclaves to improve our understanding of their origins and their effects on social and economic inclusion. - Explore the potential role of new transnational networks in radicalization and de-radicalization.
	Intergenerational gap	- Facilitate Intergenerational Dialogue. - Utilize the "multicultural generation" to promote multiculturalism at the

Issue	Challenge	Potential Responses
		community level. ▪ Explore the challenges that second-generation Canadians face (e.g., mixed cultural identities, social integration, sense of belonging) in order to develop policies responsive to their experiences.
Implementation	"Lack of teeth"	▪ Improve Accountability. Consider accountability mechanisms that have worked for other policies (e.g., perhaps an "Officer of Parliament for Diversity"). ▪ Review indicators in Canada and abroad, to use in the development of a multicultural integration index to evaluate effectiveness and inform the allocation of resources; consider findings of international bodies (such as the UN) and models used in other spheres (such as gross domestic product). ▪ Improve our understanding of outcomes, both in Canada and elsewhere in the world.
	"Usual suspects"	▪ Engage all Sectors. ▪ Find out how private sector firms (e.g., banks) implement diversity initiatives, to identify best practices that governments may emulate and to develop ways to support these efforts. ▪ Explore practices and approaches to managing diversity at the municipal, provincial/territorial and international level, with particular attention to the handling of religious differences. ▪ Demonstrate examples of multicultural initiatives in Canada (e.g., Toronto Region Immigrant

Issue	Challenge	Potential Responses
		Employment Council).
		▪ Review and assess current approaches in other portfolios (e.g., the environment, Aboriginal issues, gender) to identify best (and worst) practices for developing and delivering horizontal policy.
	Lack of knowledge, capacity	▪ Build Up Knowledge and Capacity Across Governments and Sectors.
		▪ Build up knowledge on religion and its effects on public policy development and implementation.
		▪ Identify differences between regions and between urban and rural areas, to improve the application of multicultural policies and inform the development of future policies.
		▪ Evaluate the media's role in debates about the accommodation of religious differences.
		▪ Assess approaches to handling religion in public policy discussions.

Notes

[1] The term "enclave" is often a misnomer. From a research perspective, it simply means an overrepresentation of one ethnic group in a neighbourhood. Sometimes, it is used interchangeably with "ghetto," which is usually associated with lower socio-economic status.

[2] Address by the Prime Minister of Canada to the third World Urban Forum, June 19, 2006, Vancouver.

[3] Commission for Racial Equality (2006). *The Decline of Britishness: A Research Study.*

[4] Allan Gregg (2006). "Identity Crisis – Multiculturalism: A Twentieth-Century Dream Becomes a Twenty-First-Century Conundrum" *The Walrus*, 5(2):38-47.

[5] Ipsos-Reid/Dominion Institute (2007) "Becoming Canadians"

[6] National Council of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service. The EE Report in brief. <http://www.ncvm.gc.ca/eereport-en.html?page=eereport&page_id=164&lang_id=1> Accessed 15 June, 2007.