

The Philosophy of the Liberal Party of Canada

The Liberal Party of Canada is committed to the view that the dignity of each individual man and woman is the cardinal principle of democratic society and the primary purpose of all political organization and activity in such a society.

It is dedicated to the principles that have historically sustained the Party: individual freedom, responsibility and human dignity in the framework of a just society, and political freedom in the framework of meaningful participation by all persons. The Liberal Party of Canada is bound by the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and is committed to the pursuit of equality of opportunity for all persons, to the enhancement of our unique and diverse cultural community, to the recognition that English and French are the official languages of Canada, and to the preservation of the Canadian identity in a global society.

In accordance with this philosophy, the Liberal Party of Canada subscribes to the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons under the rule of law and commits itself to the protection of these essential values and their constant adaptation to the changing needs of modern Canadian society.

The Liberal Party of Canada recognizes that human dignity in a democratic system requires that all citizens have access to full information concerning the policies and leadership of the Party, the opportunity to participate in open and public assessment of such means, such modifications of policies and leadership as they deem desirable to promote the political, economic, social, cultural and general well-being of Canadians.

To realize this objective, the Liberal Party of Canada strives to provide a flexible and democratic structure whereby all Canadians can obtain such information, participate in such assessment and militate for such reform through open communications, free dialogue and participatory action both electoral and non-electoral.

"I am a Liberal. I am one of these who think that everywhere, in human things, there are abuses to be reformed, new horizons to be opened up, and new forces to be developed."

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, June 1877

"Liberal philosophy places the highest value on freedom of the individual. The first consequence of freedom is change. A Liberal can seldom be a partisan of the status quo. He tends to be a reformer –

attempting to move society, to modify its institutions, to liberate its citizens. The liberal is an optimist at heart; who trusts people. He does not see man as an essentially perverse creature, incapable of moral progress and happiness. Nor does he see him as totally or automatically good. He prizes man's inclination to good but knows it must be cultivated and supported. While understanding as well as any other man the limits of government and the law, the liberal knows that both are powerful forces for good, and does not hesitate to use them."

Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, April 1974

"Liberalism is now, and has been since its beginnings, the one political philosophy that has promoted political freedom, cultural pluralism and economic democracy. Liberals believe, first of all, that the rights of the individual are paramount to those of the state - any state. We believe all individuals must be accorded the opportunity to fashion their own lives and grow to the limit of their own potential. We believe in promoting an equality of the human condition. Equality in employment, education, training, regardless of colour, creed, sex or family background. We believe that responsibilities go with those rights. We have a duty to exercise our rights in order to preserve the rights of others. We have a responsibility to serve the commonwealth, and to contribute to the governance of a free community, and to ensure with a vigilance that it remain free."

Right Honourable John N. Turner, September 1987

"The history of the Liberal Party is the history of a political party which has acted as an agent of change in Canada. From Laurier, who opened the West with a farsighted immigration policy; King, who began to build a national system of social security; St. Laurent, who completed Confederation with the entry of Newfoundland and who built a strong prosperous economy based on a mix of the public and private sector; Pearson, who added to the social security system with Medicare; Trudeau, who enshrined bilingualism and the place of French Canada and who fought for and won a Charter of Rights and Freedoms—the Liberal Party has always been at the forefront of social change in Canada "

Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, November 1991