

August, 2007

POGG Group
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RE: CANADIAN VALUES 'the thoughts of nine ordinary Canadians'

To Canadians All,

Since the 1990's, various federal political leaders and parties have claimed to be the best representatives to define and safeguard 'Canadian Values'. This claim is obviously intended to automatically exclude any other persons or parties from the right to define and govern Canada. This claim is a call to accept a form of dictatorship; be it one man or one party rule or fascism. Such claims, if accepted without question, can only prove harmful to the very basic of values treasured by Canadians, freedom and democracy.

The nine of us who prepared the document, 'CANADIAN VALUES - 'the thoughts of nine ordinary Canadians'', are just that, ordinary Canadians; except we are also concerned Canadians. We include immigrant-citizens from Ireland, Wales, England, South Africa and Romania. We include native-born Canadians from Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec.

During April and May this year, a fellowship developed between disparate Canadians as we earnestly debated the content of our document. We developed a strong mistrust, even disdain, of those who so glibly claim to be paramount in the knowledge and wisdom necessary to define and safeguard 'Canadian Values'. In our struggle to put into words what we see as commonly accepted Canadian Values, we became more and more aware of how difficult that task is - perhaps, how impossible it may be to accomplish that task. We accept quite readily that our collective view is one of many; that it is our snapshot of what we believe Canadians treasure at this time in history - May, 2007. We found that we all can agree on the contents of the document. We chose not to issue minority comments containing the relatively minor additional wording some of us may have wished.

We offer a challenge to those who read our collective view - get your peers, friends, neighbours and family together (try to keep your group to nine or ten to allow much discussion within a short time of a month) and do what we did. Then share your results with us and others.

Thank you for reading our efforts,

Members of the POGG Special Task Force on Canadian Values
Phil Donnelly, George Hariton, Brian Newman, Rod & Prue Packwood, Eric Smith,
Harry & Helen Weldon, Ken Winchiu

Note: POGG is a monthly political discussion group. It derives its name from 'Peace, Order, and Good Government',

CANADIAN VALUES

'the thoughts of nine ordinary Canadians'

PURPOSE :

The purpose of establishing a set of Canadian values is two-fold:

- (1) Establish a set of criteria against which to judge government policies - whether actual or proposed;
- (2) Identify areas where further government action may be needed

INTRODUCTION:

In an increasingly complex world, it is difficult to judge the merits of many government initiatives. This is aggravated by the opportunistic nature of some government actions, which may pursue short-term tactical political advantage, rather than advancing a principled agenda. Short-term solutions and tactics are necessary, of course, but they should be consistent with a core of principles and values that guide the country's development in the long term.

The values set out below are intended to provide such a benchmark. Not all government initiatives will advance these values, as some will be designed to solve much more specific problems. Programs and policies that run counter to these values, however, should receive special scrutiny and consideration.

THE VALUES

Central Canadian values have evolved out of centuries of Judeo-Christian tradition as it developed, first in Britain and France, and then in this country. Over the last two centuries, these values took root in Canada and are the genesis and overarching guide in the formation and advancement of Canadian values. Since World War II, other traditions and cultures have contributed to attaining the values widely recognized as Canadian values in the twenty-first century. These basic values are set out below.

1. FREEDOM

The following fundamental freedoms form the basis of our society:

- a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and speech;
- c) freedom of peaceful assembly;
- d) freedom of association, including the right not to associate;
- e) the right to life, liberty and security of the person; and
- f) the right to own property.

Canadians place a very high importance on these freedoms and rights, and see them as underpinning all

other values. While some limits may be required on these freedoms and rights to ensure the proper functioning of a complex society, these limits should be kept to the strict minimum necessary. Respect for the dignity and autonomy of others, public order, personal integrity and truthfulness are deemed necessary companions to freedom.

In the long run, a free society is one that can adapt itself as necessary to correct any errors in government or other institutions, and to provide a framework which better allows Canadians' hopes and aspirations to be realized.

2. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Fundamental rights and freedoms cannot exist without the acceptance of responsibilities. Canadians value individual taking on responsibility for oneself, one's family, and one's community. Dependence on government should be kept to a minimum.

Canadians value the operation of free markets as the best way to self-reliance. Government intervention should be limited to circumstances where it is absolutely necessary for the functioning of an economically successful and compassionate society.

Canadians desire to be accountable for their decisions and their actions, as these affect themselves and others.

3. EQUALITY

Canadians believe that society in general, and governments in particular, should treat all individual Canadians equally. Government rules, policies and actions, should be blind to race, religion, gender, ethnic origin, or deeply held personal beliefs.

Canadians believe in equality of opportunity, as regards society in general and government in particular. Equality of opportunity should take precedence over equality of outcome: Canadians should succeed chiefly by means of their own efforts. For example, affirmative action and quotas to benefit certain groups are measures of inequality of opportunity, and create multiple classes of citizen. Similarly, the justice system must treat everyone the same way, and should not have separate procedures for specific groups in Canadian society.

4. FRATERNITY

Canadians feel solidarity with each other, and are proud of belonging to one country. Shared experiences, aspirations, institutions and historical experiences, and appreciation of the physical beauty of Canada, create strong bonds between Canadians.

Canadians believe that, while collective rights are important, they should not take precedence over individual rights and freedoms. It is the individual, acting of his or her own free will, who is the basis for the Canadian collectivity.

However, this does not preclude collective action taken in the interests of the individuals who make up the collectivity.

Compassion for others less fortunate is a central Canadian value. Canadians help those who are less fortunate than themselves. However, assistance to others should not be transformed into a denial of

individual autonomy.

5. DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW, AND PEACE

Canadians strongly believe in democracy, and in elected governments who are responsible to the people. Accountability of governments and elected officials to their electors, both through periodic elections and through various reporting and other transparency mechanisms, are necessary to make democracy work. Non-elected public bodies lack the legitimacy of elected ones, and should be used only where justified by some other values, e.g. the independence of the court system.

Canadians believe in the rule of law. Government actions must not be arbitrary, but must conform to the democratic process and reflect the will of the people. The justice system must treat everyone fairly. It must not be used as a substitute for the elected legislature, and should limit itself to applying the law.

Finally, Canadians value non-violence at home and peace internationally. However, we recognize that force may sometimes be necessary to safeguard the values discussed above.

6. CIVILITY

Canadians value civility in interpersonal and societal relationships and discourse.