2008 Expert Roundtable on Canada's Experience with Pluralism

Canadian Multiculturalism:
Historical and Political Contexts

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Summary

This paper examines the historical roots of multiculturalism in Canadian society and traces its evolution through the modern era. Canadian multiculturalism grew out of the accommodation afforded French people after the 1759 British conquest of colonial Quebec and is informed by subsequent policies of bilingualism instituted by the federal government in the 1960s. Today, multiculturalism is integral not only to Canada's social-justice policy framework but also to the country's national identity. Legislation such as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* serve as the basis for provisions in other laws, regulations, policies and practices that support pluralism. A network of social organizations, ethnocultural groups, entrepreneurs, academics and artists has helped drive the evolution of multiculturalism. Racism continues to exist in Canada, however, along with significant opposition to multiculturalism. Countries around the world continue to study Canada's model of multiculturalism and many seek to emulate some of its policies and practices.