

# The 21st Century Act: Executive Summary and Blueprint for National Renewal

## 1. The Challenge: A 21st Century Polycrisis

Canada stands at a crossroads, facing a series of interconnected and accelerating challenges—a "polycrisis"—that our 20th-century institutions were not designed to manage. These are not separate issues but symptoms of a systemic fragility:

- **Economic Instability:** Decades of stagnant wages, rising inequality, precarious work, and financial systems that prioritize short-term extraction have eroded the promise of shared prosperity.
- **Ecological Collapse:** The existential threats of climate change and biodiversity loss are no longer future risks but present-day emergencies, demanding a response at a scale we have not yet contemplated.
- **Democratic Erosion:** Trust in our public institutions is declining, fueled by polarization, misinformation, and a sense that our democratic processes are no longer responsive to the will of the people.
- **Social Fragmentation:** A fraying social contract, a housing crisis, and an overburdened care system have left many Canadians feeling insecure, isolated, and anxious about the future.

The 21st Century Act is a comprehensive, integrated response to this polycrisis. It puts forward the argument that piecemeal policies are insufficient and that a foundational renewal of our national purpose and governing principles is required.

## 2. The Core Thesis: Dignity as an Operational Principle

The central thesis of the Act is that **Human Dignity** must be elevated from a philosophical ideal to the primary, operational, and legally enforceable principle of Canadian governance.

This means every law, every institution, and every public dollar spent must be designed and evaluated against its ability to uphold the inherent worth and potential of every individual. The Act seeks to build a society where the conditions necessary for a dignified life—security, opportunity, belonging, and purpose—are not a matter of luck or privilege, but a foundational right.

## 3. The Blueprint: An Integrated Framework for Renewal

The Act is structured as a single, cohesive framework because the challenges it addresses are interconnected. It is organized around seven core pillars of national renewal, all of which are built upon the foundational principle of Human Dignity.

### Pillar 1: Foundational Rights & Human Dignity (Parts III, IV)

This is the bedrock of the entire Act. Before any new institution is built, the framework legally establishes and empowers the rights of the individual.

- **Dignity as a Right:** The Act codifies the **Right to Human Dignity** as an absolute, inviolable, and legally enforceable principle of Canadian law.
- **The Dignity Directorate:** A new, independent Agent of Parliament is established to audit all federal legislation and programs through a "Dignity Impact Assessment," ensuring that government actions actively foster, rather than erode, the well-being of Canadians.
- **Entitlements to Flourishing:** The Act guarantees the core conditions necessary for a dignified life, legally establishing the rights to adequate housing, food security, a healthy environment, and lifelong learning.

### Pillar 2: Economic Democracy & Fair Taxation (Parts IX, X)

To build an economy that serves all Canadians, the Act proposes a new economic model founded on shared prosperity and fairness.

- **The Dignity Dividend:** A national Negative Income Tax system to provide a universal basic income floor for all Canadians, ensuring economic security and eradicating deep poverty.
- **The Century Bank:** A new Crown corporation mandated to provide patient, long-term capital for national projects, finance co-operative enterprises, and offer no-fee, public banking services to all citizens.
- **Fair Taxation Framework:** A progressive overhaul of the tax system, including a higher top marginal rate, tiered capital gains, a national wealth tax, and a ban on corporate lobbying to ensure that wealth generated in Canada is shared more equitably.

### Pillar 3: The Human Capital Engine (Part VIII)

To unleash the potential of all Canadians, the Act invests in lifelong learning and civic service.

- **The Canadian Century Corps (CCC):** A national service program providing paid, purpose-driven work for Canadians of all ages in streams such as infrastructure, conservation, community care, and digital services.

- **The Century GI Bill:** A national educational benefit that provides Cadets with full tuition coverage for post-secondary education or trades training for every year of service completed in the CCC.

#### Pillar 4: Ecological Stewardship (Part XIII)

To confront the climate crisis and restore our environment, the Act mandates a national mobilization.

- **Nationalization of Fossil Fuels:** A managed transition of the fossil fuel industry to public ownership via a new Crown corporation, **Century Energy**, tasked with phasing out extraction over 25 years.
- **Just Transition Fund:** Comprehensive support for all affected workers and communities, including pension bridging, retraining, and investment in new, sustainable industries.
- **The Crime of Ecocide:** Establishing severe, legally-binding penalties for acts that cause widespread and long-term environmental damage.

#### Pillar 5: Digital Sovereignty & Codeshare Civics (Parts XI, XII)

To build a free, open, and secure digital commons for all Canadians, the Act establishes a public digital infrastructure.

- **Public Infrastructure:** Creation of new Crown corporations to provide a universal, publicly-owned internet service (**CenTel**) and manage Canada's digital public square (CDPSC).
- **Digital Identity:** An opt-in, privacy-preserving digital identity system ([@canadapost.ca](mailto:@canadapost.ca)) to ensure secure access to government services and online participation.
- **Codeshare Civics:** A revolutionary framework for transparent and participatory law-making, using an open-source platform ([git.canada.ca](https://git.canada.ca)) where citizens can track, discuss, and propose changes to legislation.

#### Pillar 6: Democratic & Institutional Renewal (Parts VII, XV-XVIII)

To strengthen our democracy and ensure its resilience, the Act renews our core institutions.

- **A Canadian Head of State:** Proposing a transition away from the monarchy to a new domestic Head of State to better reflect a modern, independent Canada.

- **Electoral Reform:** Implementing **Circular Representation**, a hybrid proportional voting system, to ensure Parliament more accurately reflects the will of the people.
- **Accountability & Oversight:** Creating new independent watchdogs like **Democracy**

**Watch Canada** and a powerful, centralized **Foundation Commission** to oversee the implementation of the entire Act.

#### Pillar 7: Reconciliation & Co-Governance (Part V)

To move beyond colonialism, the Act commits to a new nation-to-nation relationship.

- **National Council for Reconciliation:** Establishing a permanent, co-governed body to oversee the implementation of the 94 Calls to Action and facilitate Land Back mechanisms.
- **Recognition of Indigenous Law:** Formally recognizing Indigenous law as a parallel and distinct legal framework within Canada's jurisprudence.

#### 4. The Implementation Plan: Sprint Governance & The Relay Model (Part XVII)

Recognizing that a project of this scale cannot be implemented all at once, the Act proposes a disciplined, phased approach called the **Relay Model**. The implementation is broken down into a series of multi-year "Sprints," each focused on a specific pillar (e.g., Year 1: Foundational Institutions, Year 2: Economic Democracy). This ensures focused delivery, manageable budgets, and sustained momentum, all overseen by the independent Foundation Commission.

#### 5. An Invitation to Collaborate

This document is a blueprint, not a final declaration. It is presented in the open to be challenged, refined, and strengthened. We invite academics, experts, Indigenous leaders, and all Canadians to engage with these proposals on their merits, to identify weaknesses, and to help build a more robust and viable framework for our shared future.