



Liberal Party of Canada

350 Albert, Suite 920
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Parti Libéral du Canada

350 rue Albert, Suite 920
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Dear Friends,

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share the Liberal Party of Canada's position on these important issues. Arab and Muslim Canadians are an essential part of Canada's growth; contributing to the social, economic and political fabric of our country. Canada has proven that a country can be built on, and defined by, shared values and not by religion, language, or ethnicity. As Canadians prepare to go to the polls, they should know what core values will motivate their leaders' decisions, whatever events occur. I believe that one of the most important core values is liberty and, in Canada, when we are at our best, liberty means inclusion. Liberals will always stand up to the politics of division and fear. This core value will serve as one of our fundamental pillars and guide a Liberal government's decisions.

Bill C-51

I believe that one of the priorities of Canadian political leadership should be to protect and expand freedom for Canadians. The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is at the centre of what it means to be a Liberal. Canadian liberty cannot exist without collective security, but Canadians understand that we must always balance our collective security with the rights and freedoms we cherish.

A Liberal government will repeal the problematic elements in Bill C-51 and introduce new legislation that better balances our collective security with our rights and freedoms. In order to effectively protect Canadians' public safety, a Liberal government will ensure that Canada has a robust plan for preventing radicalization. I want to re-affirm to you, our friends, and fellow citizens in the Muslim community, that Canadians know recent acts of terror - committed in the name of Islam - are an aberration of your faith. Continued, mutual cooperation and respect will help prevent the influence of distorted ideological propaganda posing as religion. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank community leaders like you for your substantial efforts to combat the radicalization of Canadian youth. We will walk forward together, not apart.

Liberals will never play the politics of fear on either side of this fundamental issue. While the Conservatives stoke fears of terrorist attacks and propose legislation without consultation; the NDP plays on the fears of various communities, environmentalists, and Indigenous Peoples about increased police powers. The NDP has stated it would repeal this legislation, but has refused to provide Canadians with any details about what measures they would introduce to improve and advance public safety. This is simply irresponsible.

Canadians expect their government to do two things at the same time – protect their security, and defend their rights and freedoms. Liberals have advocated a balanced approach that will keep Canadians safe, and protect their rights and liberties.





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Canadian Citizenship

Liberals believe that citizenship is a fundamental building block of Canada. A Liberal government will repeal the Harper Conservatives' divisive Bill C-24 because it devalues Canadian citizenship by creating two classes of citizen. No elected official should have the exclusive power to grant or revoke this most basic status. I believe that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. We have respect the rule of law in this country, and someone's citizenship should not be taken away because you do not like what someone does. Citizenship should not be conditional on good behaviour.

We will however, maintain the provisions for "Lost Canadians". We will guarantee that all Canadians' fundamental rights are respected, as guided by the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Electoral Reform

The Conservatives' (un)Fair Elections Act bars thousands of Canadians from voting and limits investigations into electoral fraud. Liberals will continue to stand up for every Canadian's right to vote. A Liberal government will repeal the Conservatives' undemocratic changes to the *Canada Elections Act*.

A Liberal government will restore the integrity of our electoral process and improve the fairness of our elections. It is vital to make our electoral system more civil and ideas-based, rather than an overly partisan process that leaves out most Canadians.

A Liberal government will also ensure that 2015 will be the last federal election conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system. As part of a national engagement process, we will ensure that electoral reform measures – such as ranked ballots, proportional representation, mandatory voting, and online voting – are fully and fairly studied, and considered. This will be carried out by a special all-party parliamentary committee, which will bring recommendations to Parliament on the way forward. Within 18 months of forming government, we will bring forward legislation to enact electoral reform.

Further, we will protect the integrity of our elections and encourage more Canadians to vote. Fair elections are the cornerstone of democracy. We will give Elections Canada the resources it needs to investigate voter fraud and vote suppression, illegal financing, and other threats to free and fair elections. We will help encourage more Canadians to vote, by removing restrictions on the ways in which the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Canada can communicate with voters. Any incident of electoral fraud must be prosecuted. To that end, we will restore the independence of the Commissioner of Canada Elections, so that they are accountable to Parliament and not the government of the day.

Racism and Hate Speech

I believe pluralism means diversity; this is at the very heart of Canadian values. Canada must never allow prejudice and racism to take root in our society and jeopardize that uniquely Canadian perspective.

The Conservatives' losing battle in the courts to prevent women from wearing a niqab during citizenship ceremonies has become a matter of divisive debate in this election.





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Mr. Harper is irresponsibly using the politics of fear and division to distract Canadians from his record of 10 years of failed leadership. Fear is a dangerous thing. Once it is sanctioned by the state, there is no telling where it might lead. It is too short a path from being suspicious of our fellow citizens, to taking actions to restrict their liberty. I believe that Prime Ministers should not be in the business of telling women what they can, and cannot wear.

While the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is the ultimate guarantee of Canadian liberty, it is not enough. Canadian Liberty might be protected by the Constitution, but it must also be promoted by political leadership. I believe leading this country means bringing Canadians together, not dividing them against one another.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental Canadian right, but must never be allowed to justify hate speech. The criminal law provisions surrounding hate speech is one remedy – which Liberals support – but the civil remedy that was available in Section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* until the Conservatives repealed it, was another important recourse. The Liberal Party not only stands firmly in support of the criminal law hate speech provisions, but for restoring the important protections that were previously offered by Section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. In fact, the Liberal Party introduced legislation during the last session of Parliament to restore to the *Canadians Human Rights Act* protection from the communication of hate messages by telephone or on the Internet, while improving on the original language by adding measures to guard against frivolous lawsuits or abuse of process. This is the kind of balanced approach Canada needs.

Canadian Foreign Policy

An active, engaged Canada is good for Canadians and the global community. After 10 years, divisive and hyper-partisan foreign policy has become Stephen Harper's trademark. Canadians know that Mr. Harper is unable to work constructively with people who do not share his ideology.

Stephen Harper's divisive and hyper-partisan approach to foreign policy has meant missed opportunities for us to work with our international partners on major economic, environmental, security, and humanitarian issues. Liberals believe that Canada should be a world leader at multilateral institutions, working with our allies to promote cooperation, tolerance, and respect within those bodies. Canada also has expertise to export when it comes to the reconstruction of democratic institutions, providing development aid to those most in need, and forging partnerships with civil society to accomplish our shared goals.

The Syrian Refugee crisis has clearly illustrated just how disengaged and out of touch with Canadian values the Harper Conservatives have become. Canadians from across the country – from our Premiers and mayors, to non-governmental organizations, to private citizens – have already taken swift action to help alleviate the suffering of many Syrian refugees. It is time for action at the federal level. The federal government can, and must, do more to offer safe haven to the Syrian men, women, and children who so desperately need it.

In contrast to the Harper government's inaction, a Liberal government will expand Canada's intake to 25,000 refugees from Syria through immediate, direct sponsorship by the Government of Canada;





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work with private sponsors to intake even more; invest at least an additional \$100 million this fiscal year to increase – without reducing standards – refugee processing, as well as sponsorship and settlement services capacity in Canada; and provide an immediate \$100 million new contribution to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to support the critical relief activities in Syria and the surrounding area. We will also do more for refugees in Canada, including fully restoring the Interim Federal Health Program that provides limited and temporary health benefits to refugees and refugee claimants.

Canadians also need to know that their government will do everything in its power to ensure the release of Canadians unjustly imprisoned abroad. A Liberal government will stand up for the welfare of Canadians abroad and use all means available to ensure their access to justice.

Canada has always understood that being fully and firmly committed internationally is important, not only to our own success, but also to the success of others around the world. We are a country with a great deal to offer. Under a Liberal government, Canada will return to its place in the world as a constructive, valued partner within the broader international community.

Conclusion

This election will be about the values you care about, and will provide a chance to bring Real Change. It matters more than ever that Muslims across Canada engage in the political process and make their voices heard to build a better country. I am committed to working in partnership with the Arab and Muslim communities in Canada towards a more equal society, and growing opportunities for all Canadians.

On behalf of the entire Liberal team, thank you for writing to identify the major concerns of your membership. We appreciate your interest in the Liberal Party of Canada's policies as they relate to the issues which affect you.

Sincerely,

Justin P. J. Trudeau
Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada


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