

2008 Expert Roundtable on Canada's Experience with Pluralism

Pluralism as Process: The Role of Liberal Democratic Institutions¹

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Between 2001 and 2006, well over one million immigrants entered Canada, and since immigrants normally acquire citizenship after three years, today nearly one in five Canadians are foreign-born (or 19.8 percent of the population).² Moreover, Canada's population, which numbers over 31 million, has grown increasingly more heterogeneous. Consider that the 1901 Census recorded only 25 different ethnic groups, whereas the most recent 2006 Census recorded over 200.³ It is these features that have led some to describe the country as a "microcosm" of all the ethnic, religious, linguistic and racial diversity in the world.⁴

Of course, in this regard Canada is not entirely unique. Today, most societies are characterized by heterogeneity. Demographic statistics show that only about 10 percent of countries of the world can be said to be ethnically homogenous.⁵ It can also be expected that the ethnic composition of many national populations will continue to diversify, since one major feature of contemporary globalization is the qualitatively distinct nature of international migratory flows both to and from a much wider range of countries and world regions than was ever the case historically.⁶

If Canada is not unique in being diverse, it is nonetheless worth examining for how it has responded to being diverse. As noted, immigrants — including refugees — to Canada normally obtain citizenship relatively quickly, unlike countries that have made heavy use of "guest worker" schemes (such as Germany, France, Switzerland, Kuwait and Japan, to name a few). In addition, in 1971 Canada became the first Western country to adopt an explicit national policy of multiculturalism. Until now, Canada stands amongst only a handful of Western countries (including Australia and Sweden) that have done so. In contrast to policies of assimilation (which force immigrants and minorities to conform to the dominant group), or differential and discriminatory treatment (which exclude

immigrants and minorities), one UNESCO research paper suggests that a policy of multiculturalism, as it exists in Canada, comes closest to potentially addressing “the aspirations contained in the various United Nations instruments on cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.”⁷ In short, a policy like multiculturalism is in keeping with the ideal of cultural pluralism.

The ideal of cultural pluralism holds that all ethnic and cultural groups in a society can maintain their linguistic and/or cultural and religious distinctiveness without being relegated to the economic or cultural margins. There is little doubt, as Will Kymlicka has shown, that through such bodies as the United Nations and the European Union there has been a global diffusion of discussion about ‘cultural pluralism,’ though its ongoing salability, achievability, and sustainability, especially outside countries of the consolidated liberal democracies of the West, remains an open question.⁸ Yet, measured against the ideal, arguably even the Canadian experience cannot reasonably be judged a uniform story of success.

Canada is not a society that is free of racism and discrimination, and there remain economic and social inequalities based on immigrant status, race, ethnicity and gender.⁹ While Canada is a member of the wealthy group of G-8 countries, within Canada resources are unevenly distributed, and in recent years there has been some withdrawal of the state from public-spending initiatives that might ameliorate inequality.¹⁰ There is an ongoing debate over “the future of Canada” fueled in large part by the possibility of the province of Québec, which contains a majority of French-speakers, seceding.¹¹ Moreover, the fallout from the September 11, 2001 attacks has led to re-vamped security policies and practices, and renewed forms of violence, discrimination and stereotyping against those who are — or are perceived to be — Arab and/or Muslim.¹²

Nonetheless, in a world of real states, for many outsiders Canada seems to be a place where “diversity works.” Indeed, a survey of recent immigrants conducted by Statistics Canada found fully 98 percent had no other country in mind when they applied to immigrate to Canada.¹³ Moreover, many Canadian citizens also take pride in the image of their country as a place that welcomes, respects, and even thrives on difference — an April 2008 Globe and Mail/CTV poll showed 61 percent felt “accepting new immigrants of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds to be a defining and enriching part of our Canadian identity”¹⁴. Notably, this same poll found that some 30 percent felt accommodating newcomers “weakens Canadian identity.”¹⁵ It is the attention to actually existing states like Canada and its contradictions — including in policies, polls and perceptions— which suggests that measuring countries only against the ideal of cultural pluralism may be misleading. To do this risks treating pluralism as a clear and static end-point and as an unidirectional evolutionary development.

This paper overviews key elements of Canadian pluralism since the 1960s, to show how the Canadian federal state (along with subnational governments including provinces and municipalities) and civil society groups have all played a role in shaping institutional

practices, policies and symbols within a common set of liberal democratic values and institutions. It is argued that a key element of the Canadian experience of governing pluralism is that there are multiple sites for participation and the expression of conflict, as well as multiple sites in which recognition and equity can be fostered. In this way, Canadian pluralism is an ongoing and evolving process involving state and societal actors. This argument is traced in three parts: 1) the emergence of post-1960s pluralism; 2) the common institutional and value framework of pluralism; and 3) state and civil society practices. The paper concludes with a consideration of what may be taken from the Canadian case.

History and context of post-1960s pluralism

Canada was forged through European settler-colonization — first by the French, and then the British — and repeated waves of immigration. The indigenous population was itself politically and culturally diverse prior to first contact with Europeans. Unlike Britain – as an outcome of pressures of French Canadians – Canada adopted a federal system of government at the time of the foundation of the modern Canadian state with Confederation in 1867. Nonetheless, Canada was formed as a “white settler colony” of Britain. The historic project of primarily modeling Canada after Britain politically, economically, culturally, socially and demographically frequently led to explicitly assimilative and discriminatory measures until very recently.

The decade of the 1960s marks the turning point in a number of areas, and developments from this decade lay the foundation for contemporary Canadian pluralism. For the purposes of this discussion, three features are noteworthy.

First, by the 1960s ideas began to change amongst Canadian political elites and in the general population. Following World War Two, there was a growing international emphasis on human rights; race-based exclusions were delegitimized not only because of the horrors of the Holocaust, but also as a result of the successes of Third World anti-colonial liberation struggles and the American civil rights movement. It is not a coincidence that by the 1960s Canada’s explicitly racist immigration policy became untenable. In 1967, Canada’s immigration policy became officially non-discriminatory with respect to race and ethnicity.

Second, the role of the national/federal state began to change. Across many industrialized countries, the post-World War Two period saw the emergence of the welfare state designed to ensure that the risks and economic inequities associated with a competitive market economy were minimized. In the Canadian context, by the 1960s and 1970s the social rights associated with the welfare state marked a new understanding of citizenship that stressed themes of fairness and equity not only for Canadians as individuals, but also as groups (based on gender, ethnic and linguistic differences).¹⁶ Although all public policies (and non-policies) may be seen to have cultural ramifications even if they are not explicitly set out as “cultural policy,” the federal state played an active role in fostering new policies

that explicitly reflected on Canada's diversity. These included the 1969 *Official Languages Act*, which declared English and French to be official languages of Canada; the 1971 policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework; and the 1988 *Multiculturalism Act*. The federal state also was instrumental in passing the 1986 *Employment Equity Act* and related policies which focused on increasing the numeric representation of women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and visible minorities in federally regulated corporations (such as banks, broadcasting, and airlines) as well as in the public service and institutions doing business with the federal government (companies, as well as universities).

Third, the 1960s were characterized by a (re)mobilization of the Canadian population into identity-based political movements and organizations demanding recognition, fairness, equity and self-rule. Today, the number of minority groups involved in varying quests for recognition are numerous, complex and variegated (along regional, class, gender and other lines). These groups include what might be termed “national minorities” (including French-speaking Québécois and Aboriginal peoples), “linguistic minorities” (including the official language minorities of French-speakers outside Québec and English-speakers inside Québec); and “ethnocultural minorities” (including non-French, non-British and non-Aboriginal refugees, immigrants, and racialized minorities).

In considering the (re)mobilization of minority groups, it is useful to simultaneously consider what I have called the morphing majority (whose characteristics may shift depending on the specific nature of the minority group under consideration).¹⁷ For example, the English-speaking majority is not a grouping which is strictly or exclusively confined to those of British origin. Yet, this diverse category is important to understanding some contemporary dynamics, including how relations with the United States often tap into identity, and assertions of Canadian sovereignty and distinctiveness — particularly for many Canadians outside Québec.¹⁸

The “English-speaking majority” is also relevant for understanding how quests for recognition, self-rule and fairness by francophones inside and outside Québec co-exist with elements of resistance to cultural pluralism. The “white majority” is useful to keep in mind in considering how contemporary processes of racialization favour those of European origin, as well as the fact that according to the 2006 Census, numerically indigenous peoples comprise merely 5.4 percent of the Canadian population and visible minorities (defined in *Employment Equity Act* as “persons other than Aboriginal persons, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”) comprise 16.2 percent of the Canadian population.¹⁹ The “Christian majority” may be relevant to certain discussions relating to non-Christian faith communities, especially Muslims, since September 11, 2001.²⁰ And the non-indigenous form a majority in examining the Canadian settler-society. Given this morphing majority, assertions of “Canadianness” (whether in terms of values, culture, religion/secularity or racial/ethnic identity) sometimes reflect a backlash to diversity and pluralism as it has developed in Canada since the 1960s.

The common institutional and value framework and Canadian pluralism

Owing to Canada's economic and industrial development and historic place in the international political economy, today it joins the ranks of other Western industrialized liberal democracies in having a high level of affluence. Western liberal democracies have in common certain basic values and institutions. These serve to foster a capitalist system, regular, free and competitive elections, respect for basic individual rights (like freedom of the press, religion, association and speech), and respect for the rule of law (that is, all citizens, including leaders, are governed by a single set of legal rules that are supposed to be applied equally and impartially). In Canada, the institutions and values associated with liberal democracy provide the overarching framework in which state and civil society actors generally operate.²¹

In addition, Canada adopted some distinctive institutional and constitutional practices in 1867, and after the 1960s, which are not necessarily shared by all liberal democracies. These contribute to a specifically Canadian pluralism. An obvious distinct constitutional dimension would be federalism. As noted, Canada adopted a federal system of government in 1867. Thus, powers are subdivided between the federal government and provinces. Indeed, the *Constitution Act, 1867* primarily concentrated on formally delineating the powers between the two levels of government. However, the practice of federalism has vacillated between being centralized (with power concentrated with the federal government) and decentralized (with powers shifting towards the provinces).

Notably, in the 1960s power shifted towards the provinces, initially because of the efforts by Québec provincial leaders to gain more autonomy. In Québec, the so-called "Quiet Revolution" was symbolized by the election of the provincial Liberal government of Jean Lesage in 1960. Commitment to a philosophy of "*maîtres chez nous*" (masters in our own house) led successive Québec governments to seek greater jurisdictional and fiscal powers at the provincial level, as well as federal recognition of the distinct constitutional status of Québec because the French were a "founding people" at Confederation.

However, the federal government still plays an important role and the quest for autonomy has been selective both within and between provinces. Thus for example, while healthcare is actually defined constitutionally as a provincial area of jurisdiction, Québec and the other provinces agreed to the principles established by the federal government in funding medicare (Canada's national health insurance plan). In contrast, by opting out of certain conditional grant programs, Québec established its own pension plan, gained more powers in the area of immigration, and pursued its own diplomatic relations abroad. More recently, Québec has emerged as distinct and at the forefront of all other provinces in the area of child care by developing a provincially subsidized program in which child care workers are relatively well compensated, and parents with young children can access daycare for a minimal fee (now seven dollars a day).²² In these ways, expressions of cultural pluralism

and self-rule have been sponsored through the federal system in Canada because within the province of Québec, there are a majority of French-language speakers.

In addition, Québec's gains have the potential to affect other provinces (for instance following Québec's lead, other provinces have recently acquired more powers in the area of immigrant selection). Thus, the devolution of powers from the national level to the provincial level can have the effect of empowering a specific collectivity, but it also can have an impact on other provinces/regions and can contribute to asymmetry in policies and programs.

Federalism, however, cannot deal with all collective claims — particularly for groups which are not territorially concentrated. Importantly in 1982, the constitution itself changed to incorporate greater recognition of group rights. Specifically, the *Constitution Act, 1982* (known as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* or Charter for short) primarily stresses individual rights, and it has certain limitations. However, the Charter also recognizes a number of group rights, including those of linguistic minorities (Sections 16-22 deal with official language rights and Section 23 with minority language education rights); ethnocultural minorities (Section 27 holds the Charter will be interpreted in light of the “multicultural heritage” of Canadians); and Aboriginal peoples (Section 25 affirms existing Aboriginal rights, including as recognized by the Royal Proclamation of 1763).

The Charter has allowed for a new role for the courts in ruling not just on federal/provincial rights, but also on other dimensions of pluralism pertaining to collectivities. As just one example, in March 2006 the Supreme Court of Canada, by interpreting the meaning of religious freedom in light of Canadian values based on multiculturalism, overturned a ‘weapon’ ban which had prevented an orthodox Sikh boy from wearing a *kirpan* (ceremonial dagger) to school. The Court's use of the term “reasonable accommodation” also helped to fuel a larger ongoing debate, particularly in Québec, which has come to focus on all non-Christian minorities, especially Muslims.²³

The experience of Canada also shows that federalism can be an insufficient tool for accommodating national minorities. This is probably most evident in considering Canada's still unresolved constitutional dilemma—namely while the *Constitution Act, 1982* applies to Québec, the province never actually signed on to the document. This is because successive Québec governments sought to have constitutional recognition as a “distinct society,” from the 1960s through the 1990s, but ultimately failed. In part, this was because for many Canadians outside Québec (especially in the western provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia) the idea of Confederation as a pact between “equal provinces,” rather than as a pact between “two founding peoples” has a powerful hold. In 1990, the failure of Québec to secure recognition as a “distinct society” also led to the formation of a new separatist party, the Bloc Québécois (or Bloc), which competes in national elections only in the province of Québec.

Federalism is also imperfect in meeting all issues of recognition and equity because just as Canada is heterogeneous, so too are all the provinces, and provinces also have their own role to play in governing linguistic, cultural, ethnic and racial diversity. Thus, while Québec has a majority of French-speakers, there are ongoing issues relating to the Québec state and indigenous peoples.²⁴ as well as racial minorities.²⁵ In the specific case of Québec, the policy of multiculturalism was perceived by both federalist and separatist politicians as an explicit attempt at weakening their claim to be a “founding people,” and “official bilingualism” as an inadequate response to the place of the French language within the province of Québec. Consequently, from the 1970s through to the 1990s, a series of provincial language bills were passed that aimed to affirm that Québec was an officially French province, that the major language of business was French, and that education for immigrants to Québec would be in French.

In the 1980s, in response to the presence and demands of ethnocultural minorities, the Québec government introduced a policy of interculturalism, which focuses on the acceptance and interaction between distinct groups that may maintain aspects of their culture within the context of the supremacy of the French language. In the aftermath of the failed referendum on sovereignty in 1995, however, the Québec government shifted its focus somewhat away from interculturalism. In the referendum, while a majority (60 percent) of Québécois of French-Canadian origin were in favour of sovereignty, a majority (95 percent) of Québécois of non-French-Canadian origin were against it.²⁶ The failure of non-French Canadians to embrace the nationalist project led to a new strategy on the part of the provincial government of stressing a shared republican Québec citizenship, rather than simply institutional pluralism.²⁷ In this way, while the reasons are distinct, in recent years within Québec pluralism has been viewed by some as divisive, just as it has been by some in the rest of Canada.²⁸

In both Québec and other provinces, there is also an important role played by provincial human rights legislation and institutions. For example, in the case of Alberta, the existence of a human rights commission allowed a channel for Muslim-Albertans to effectively pursue civil dialogue and redress when two Calgary-based publications chose to re-print the deeply offensive cartoon images of the Prophet Mohammed originally appearing in a 2005 issue of the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*.²⁹

This complexity of identity and location is reflected in other jurisdictions, as well. In addition to the federal and provincial governments, other jurisdictional levels —particularly larger cities and evolving new jurisdictions— are important to the post-1960s model of pluralism. While Canada’s constitution deals only with delineating the powers between the federal and provincial levels of government, provinces enjoy a permanence that municipalities do not. Municipalities draw their existence and powers from provinces, not from the constitution. Nonetheless, at the level of cities the playing out of diversity, along with issues of identity, recognition and equity, are particularly vibrant and important. This is because while immigration is defined as a joint area of both federal and provincial responsibility, in the post-Second World War period it is cities that were primarily affected

by immigration (this stands in contrast with the early part of the twentieth century, which was characterized by agricultural settlement). As well, after 1967 Canada's immigration policy became formally non-discriminatory with respect to race/ethnicity and thus the origins of immigrants became much more diverse.

Immigrants are primarily to be found in medium sized Canadian cities like Edmonton, Calgary and Ottawa and in the three largest centres (and surrounding suburbs) of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. In fact, according to the 2006 Census, immigrants (defined as Canadian citizens born outside of Canada) now make up 20.6 percent of the population of Montreal, 39.6 percent of the population of Vancouver, and 45.7 percent of the population of Toronto.³⁰ In such cities, issues relating to settlement for newcomers, (affordable) housing, the delivery of services, transportation and representation are particularly pertinent,³¹ and municipal governments in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver have increasingly grappled with such issues. However, the dynamics around these issues at the local level are highly variable across urban centres,³² thus further contributing to an asymmetry in public policies and programs.

The post- 1960s period is one in which other new kinds of jurisdictions have also been created – for example, as a result of the 1993 Nunavut Land Settlement Agreement. Nunavut (meaning “Our Land” in Inuktitut) came into existence. Prior to the 1970s, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories (where Aboriginal peoples comprise the majority of the population) were basically internal colonies of the federal government. However, through the 1970s and 1980s Ottawa devolved most of its powers to these northern territories.³³ Created in 1999, Nunavut is a territorial sub-division in the Northwest Territories with a majority Inuit population. A legislative assembly governs it, and while this assembly is modeled after the Westminster system, there is no role for political parties in elections or in the legislature. The consensus-style of government is further distinguished by a commitment to operate structurally with “Inuit traditional knowledge” (*Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*).³⁴

Not least, the post-1960s period is one in which land claims and self-government are being negotiated, and in some cases concluded. An example would be the 1998 Nisga'a Treaty, which, amongst other things, agrees to give the Nisga'a self-government and ownership of resources over some 2,000 square kilometres of land.

In the final analysis, all of the changes that have occurred since the 1960s have coincided with an important role for the federal state. In particular, while federalism has been more decentralized in the decades since the 1960s, and other jurisdictions are also relevant to the way in which pluralism is experienced, the federal government has played a strong role in the governance of pluralism by affecting the way civil-society groups were mobilized and funded, and legitimizing their participation. A particularly important aspect of the post-war development of the Canadian welfare state was not only the development of universal social programs designed to protect all Canadian citizens, but also how federal public funding flowed from several government departments to advocacy groups representing

issues tied to such movements as feminism, bilingualism, Aboriginal rights and multiculturalism. For instance, through the 1970s and 1980s the federal government provided both core and project funding to a variety of disadvantaged groups including Aboriginal groups, women's groups, ethnocultural minorities and official language minorities (including francophones outside Québec and anglophones inside Québec). This was done with the understanding that both the pursuit of equity and the groups that stood behind recognition and equity claims were legitimate.³⁵

Since the 1990s, the federal government has begun to claw back the core funding given to such advocacy groups, putting in jeopardy the ability of them to participate as effectively. Thus although there are new forms of social spending which have emerged (for example on “child poverty”³⁶), the new relationship of the federal state to groups such as women and minorities may be read as part of a larger shift away from a (Keynesian) welfare state model emphasizing redistribution and equity, towards a neoliberal state model emphasizing themes of competition and self-sufficiency.³⁷ The changes to the funding given to advocacy groups representing women and ethnocultural minorities were supported by a discourse which served to negatively malign such disadvantaged groups as “special interests” that were presumably out of touch with “ordinary Canadians.”³⁸

State and civil society

Despite the impact of neoliberalism on the vibrancy of many civil society groups, there are a number of practices — some of which pre-date and some of which post-date the 1960s — which have served to symbolically recognize diversity, and even frame it as a benefit. These practices involve state institutions, political parties and civil society organizations.

One major way in which the diversity of Canada is continuously recognized and reinforced is through the national census. The Canadian national census (like all national censuses) creates a picture of “the population.” In doing this, a notable feature of Canada's census is that there has been an “ethnic origin” question since 1871. Not all countries ask an ethnic origin question, and in immigrant-receiving societies one consequence of not asking such a question is to make the immigrant disappear from history.³⁹ In the case of Canada, the actual wording of the ethnic origin question has varied. Until 1981, the question directed respondents to base their answer on paternal lineage and to indicate only one ethnic origin. Since 1981, the question allows for the possibility of maternal and/or paternal lineage, and it also allows for the option of indicating multiple origins. The effect of this has been that a growing number of Canadians identify with two or more origins.

Another trend (evident since the 1991 Census) has been the large number of respondents who simply list “Canadian” (Canadien in French) in response to the ethnic origin question. In 2006 this was the single largest reported ethnic origin alone or in combination with other origins.⁴⁰ The reasons for this are complex, but it should be noted that most of those reporting “Canadian/Canadien” were born in Canada as were their parents, and had English or French as their mother tongue.⁴¹ Notwithstanding this and other trends and the

challenges they pose to analysts, the existence of an ethnic-origin question also allows for certain kinds of public policy responses. Indeed, without an ethnic origin question a wide range of public policies (including employment equity) might be affected, since these policies depend on having a profile of the ethnic make-up of the country.

Another way that diversity can be symbolically recognized is through political appointments. For instance, traditionally Canadian cabinets are carefully constructed by prime ministers to reflect regional and linguistic diversity. By constitutional convention, three of the nine justices that sit on Canada's Supreme Court must be from Québec. As well, there has been a tradition of alternating French and English speakers in the offices of the Governor General and the Speaker of the House of Commons. In more recent years, these kinds of traditions have also moved to incorporate other forms of diversity, such as gender and race/ethnicity. The office of the Governor General (who acts as the Queen's designate in Canada) is one such place where other forms of diversity have been recognized. The 1999 appointment of Adrienne Clarkson (the first visible minority) to the post of Governor-General was framed by Clarkson herself to be important in terms of symbolically recognizing a diverse population. As she put it, "I am the first immigrant, I am originally a refugee and I think this is a very important evolution for Canada."⁴² In 2005, the second visible minority, Haitian-born Michaëlle Jean, assumed the post of Governor General.

Political parties also have a role to play in symbolically recognizing diversity. For instance, the Liberal Party of Canada (the party that dominated federal politics throughout the twentieth century) has traditionally alternated between a French- and English-speaking leaders.

Civil society groups also have a major role to play in recognizing diversity symbolically. For example, since the late 1980s, the Canadian women's movement has been one of the movements that has been most affected by issues of diversity. It has also been one of the most responsive to addressing issues of diversity and racism not only in Canada but also within the movement. NAC (the National Action Committee on the Status of Women) is the main umbrella organization for women outside Québec. A 1991 amendment to NAC's constitution required that one of four vice-presidents and four member-at-large positions be reserved for women of colour, Aboriginal women and women with disabilities. In 1993, Sunera Thobani became the first "visible minority" to be president of NAC. Her leadership was part of a larger move for the organization which involved re-defining "women's issues" to include such issues as racism, immigration and refugee policy, and economic and trade policies. Similarly, the Canadian labour movement has been impacted by issues of diversity, and in recent years has attempted to incorporate an array of issues relating to anti-racism and Aboriginal peoples. In the 1990s, the Canadian Labour Congress also moved to better include visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples within union decision-making bodies and in leadership positions.

Conclusion: the lessons of a process in flux

The combination of demographic, constitutional and policy developments since the 1960s, alongside pre-existing arrangements like federalism, have created multiple, asymmetrical and even ongoing mechanisms for the expression of conflict and points of recognition that allow for a pluralist ethos. This is not the product of the design of one person, one institution, one identity group or one level of government. Rather, it is the outgrowth of a fractured history which featured group-based inequalities, the intended actions of political leaders, governments and social groups to deal with this legacy, and sometimes the unintended consequences of doing so. This has led to a process which is ongoing, evolving and involves both state and societal actors. Within this process, it is possible to identify five key features which may have applicability outside the borders of Canada.

1: There is a strong role for the state

The central/federal state has traditionally played a role in governing pluralism by funding less advantaged groups and by legitimizing their presence in the national political process. Policies like official bilingualism, multiculturalism and employment equity have created pressure to ensure that the services offered by the state are sensitive to diversity, and that government personnel themselves reflect the diversity of the country. As such, along with possible resistance on the part of the morphing majority, cuts to social spending can affect the content of and impact of pluralism.

2: There are some costs involved in Canadian pluralism

There are costs involved for programs like official bilingualism, multiculturalism, employment equity and immigration. However, it should be noted that these kinds of programs make up a tiny fraction of overall federal government spending. The bulk of federal spending goes into areas like health, seniors' benefits, and defence. It might also be speculated that in the absence of such programs there would be greater costs. For example, without immigration, fewer workers would pay into benefits for the aged.

3: There is asymmetry in policies and programs dealing with diversity, but there is also a common value framework

Owing to federalism, the inherent geographical and internal diversity of national and ethnocultural minorities, and the pressures of a variety of civil-society groups and Canadian citizens, there is variation over time and geography in the exact content and impact of policies relating to pluralism. Yet, at the same time, there is an overarching set of values and institutions associated with the governance of pluralism in Canada: liberal democracy. As the Canadian case suggests, liberal-democratic institutions and values are not in themselves sufficient for Canadian pluralism — after all, there are liberal democracies that are unitary and have not adopted official policies of multiculturalism or multilingualism akin to Canada's. It also remains an open question as to whether liberal democracy, as

developed in the West, is necessary for pluralism if there are alternative frameworks that provide common values.

4: Leaders at all levels have a role to play in symbolically recognizing the diversity of the population and framing diversity as an advantage

Within both state and civil society organizations (including political parties, trade unions, the women's movement) leaders can play a positive role by framing diversity as a positive (rather than as "a problem") and by ensuring that members of diverse identity groups are represented in leadership positions.

5: Ideas change over time and they matter if the practice and governance of pluralism is an evolving one

The changes that took place in the meaning of Canadian citizenship in the 1960s came out of a context of growing international attention to human rights. To a certain degree, these changes were reflected in the 1982 Charter. Yet, Canadian scholars and citizens and governments continue to devote time and resources to thinking about the ideal of cultural pluralism, which means that the process is implicitly viewed as evolving.

If these five features have applicability beyond Canada's borders, there is still the question of how the Canadian model of governing pluralism should be judged. As noted earlier, it is not a uniform success when measured against the ideal of cultural pluralism. However, if the standard of measurement used to judge the post-1960s model of governing pluralism is in relation to Canada's settler-colonial foundation, and the not so distant past, then there are some distinct successes. As a result of a new role for the state in relating to minorities, public policy initiatives, constitutional changes, and symbols and language, the Canada of today has marked some distance from its historic tendency towards assimilative and coercive policies and measures designed to ensure Anglo-conformity.

If the standard of measurement is having multiple sites in which to participate and non-violently express conflict, and to pursue recognition and equity, then the post-1960s model of governing pluralism is also a success. And if the standard of measurement is openness to ideas and an evolving process, then the post-1960s model of governing pluralism can also be judged a success. In the ways that the Canadian approach to pluralism has been successful, these may be construed as lessons learned for Canada with potential application elsewhere.

Endnotes

¹ This paper draws from and updates Yasmeeen Abu-Laban “Governing Pluralism in Canada: Institutions, Policies and Process” paper prepared for the Aga Khan Foundation Canada (November 2002).

² Canada, Statistics Canada, *Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-Born Population, 2006 Census* (Catalogue No. 97-557-XIE). (Ottawa: Minister of Industry: December 2007). Available: <http://www.statscan.ca>. [Accessed 19 April, 2008].

³ Canada, Statistics Canada, *Canada’s Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census* (Catalogue No. 97-562-X) (Ottawa: Minister of Industry: April 2008), p. 6. Available: <http://www.statscan.ca> [Accessed 28 April, 2008]

⁴ Canada, Canadian Heritage, *Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act 1999-2000* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2001),p. 1.

⁵ MOST Newsletter 3 (June 1995), p. 1. Available: <http://www.unesco.org/most/newlet3e.htm> [Accessed 19 April, 2008].

⁶ David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. (Stanford: Standford University Press, 1999) p. 297.

⁷ Christine Inglis. “Multiculturalism: New Policy Responses to Diversity.” Management of Social Transformations (MOST) UNESCO Policy Paper Number 4 (1996), p. 18. Available <http://www.unesco.org/most/pp4.htm> [accessed 19 April, 2008]

⁸ In examining this global diffusion, Kymlicka uses “multiculturalism” as a shorthand umbrella term that others have substituted with terms like “pluralism=;” he is also careful to stress his focus on “liberal” multiculturalism. See Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 3-25.

⁹ See Jeffrey G. Reitz and Rupa Banerjee, “Racial Inequality, Social Cohesion and Policy Issues in Canada,” in Keith Banting, Thomas J. Courchene and F. Leslie Seidle (eds.), *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada* (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2007) pp. 489-527, and Janine Brodie, “Putting Gender Back In: Women and Social Policy Reform in Canada,” in Yasmeeen Abu-Laban (ed.), *Gendering the Nation-State: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives*. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), pp. 165-184.

¹⁰ Yasmeeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel, *Selling Diversity: Immigration, Multiculturalism, Employment Equity and Globalization* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2002) and Audrey Kobayashi, ““Ethnocultural Political Mobilization, Multiculturalism and Human Rights in Canada,” in Miriam Smith (ed.) *Group Politics and Social Movements in Canada* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2008) pp. 131-157.

¹¹ Alain-G. Gagnon and Raffaele Iacovino, *Federalism, Citizenship and Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

¹² Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "Liberalism, Multiculturalism and the Problem of Essentialism," *Citizenship Studies* 6, 4 (2002), pp. 458-482; Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "The New North America and the Segmentation of Canadian Citizenship," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 29 (2004), pp. 17-40; and Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Linda Trimble, "Print Media Coverage of Muslim-Canadians During Recent Federal Elections," Elections Canada, *Electoral Insight* 8, 2 (December 2006): 35-42.

¹³ Statistics Canada, *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada* (2003) as cited in Canada, Statistics Canada, *Immigration in Canada*, p. 8.

¹⁴ Brian Laghi, "Majority Believes Canada Coddles Minorities," *The Globe and Mail* (17 April 2008).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Jane Jenson and Susan D. Phillips, "Regime Shift: New Citizenship Practices in Canada," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 14 (Fall 1996), pp.111-135.

¹⁷ Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "History, Power and Contradictions in a Liberal State: A Response to Will Kymlicka," in Banting, Courchene and Seidle eds. *Belonging*, p. 99.

¹⁸ See Mildred Schwartz, "NAFTA and the Fragmentation of Canada," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 28 (Spring/Summer 1998), pp. 11-28.

¹⁹ Canada, Statistics Canada, *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic*, pp.11-12.

²⁰ See Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Baha Abu-Laban, "Reasonable Accommodation in a Global Village" *Policy Options* 28, 8 (September 2007), pp. 28-33.

²¹ The relevance of liberal democracy to how diversity has been responded to in Canada is also made in Jane Jenson and Martin Papillon, "The 'Canadian Diversity Model': A Repertoire in Search of a Framework," CPRN Discussion Paper No.F/19 (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, November 2001), p. 4, and more generally it is highlighted by Will Kymlicka in relation to certain common policies in Western states (see *Multicultural Odysseys* pp. 87-134).

²² Laurie Adkin and Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "The Challenge of Care: Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada and Quebec," *Studies in Political Economy* 81 (Spring 2008) pp. 49-76.

²³ Abu-Laban and Abu-Laban, "Reasonable Accommodation," p. 32.

²⁴ Daniel Saleé, "The Québec State and Indigenous Peoples," in Alain-g. Gagnon (ed.) *Quebec State and Society* (Third Edition) (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), pp. 97-124

²⁵ Daniel Saleé, "The Quebec State and the Management of Ethnocultural Diversity: Perspectives on an Ambiguous Record," in Banting, Courchene and Seidle eds., *Belonging?* pp.105-142.

²⁶ Ken McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997) as cited in Danielle Juteau, "The Citizen Make an *Entrée* : Redefining the National Community in Quebec," *Citizenship Studies* 6, 4 (December 2002), pp. 441-458.

²⁷ Danielle Juteau, "The Citizen Make an *Entrée*," pp. 441-458.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Abu-Laban and Abu-Laban, "Reasonable Accommodation," pp. 32-33.

³⁰ Canada, Statistics Canada, *Immigration in Canada*, p.18..

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- ³¹ Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "Ethnic Politics in a Globalizing Metropolis: The Case of Vancouver," in Tim Thomas (ed.), *The Politics of the City: A Canadian Perspective*. Scarborough: ITP Nelson, 1997), pp. 77-95.
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- ³⁴ Graham White, "And Now for Something Completely Northern," pp. 80-99.
- ³⁵ Jenson and Phillips, "Regime Shift: New Citizenship Practices in Canada," pp. 118-119.
- ³⁶ For an overview see Jane Jenson, "Citizenship in the Era of 'New Social Risks': What Happened to Gender Inequalities?" in Abu-Laban (ed.), *Gendering the Nation-State* pp. 185-202.
- ³⁷ See Abu-Laban and Gabriel, *Selling Diversity*, pp. 11-30.
- ³⁸ Jenson and Phillips, "Regime Shift: New Citizenship Practices in Canada," p.125.
- ³⁹ For the case of France, see Gérard Noiriel, "Difficulties in French Historical Research on Immigration," in Donald L. Horowitz and Gérard Noiriel (eds.) *Immigrants in Two Democracies: French and American Experience* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), pp. 66-79.
- ⁴⁰ Canada, Statistics Canada, *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic*, p. 8.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ⁴² William Walker, "Clarkson Reflects Canada's Profile." *The Toronto Star* (9 September, 1999), p. A7.