

The Canadian Interfaith Conversation
November 2016

Charter Vision

Deep in the life of Canada and Canadians is the identity and practice of religion. The Charter Vision of the Canadian Interfaith Conversation (CIC) represents the desire to **advocate for religion in a pluralistic society and in Canadian public life**. We, the members of the Canadian Interfaith Conversation, want to promote harmony and religious insight among religions and religious communities in Canada, strengthen our society's moral foundations, and work for greater realization of the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion for the sake of the common good and an engaged citizenship.

Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is founded on principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law, and that everyone has the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion. The principle of religious freedom is embedded also in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Issues of the Common Good and Harmony in Society

Beginning from positions of deep respect and a deep acknowledgment of pluralism, we also want to address together issues of concern to the common good of all. We have already been working together on addressing poverty, caring for the Earth, and investing in peace¹.

We also recognize the particular moment we are in, one of working for greater truth and reconciliation between Indigenous peoples in Canada and later arrivals of Canadians. This situation calls us to deeper understanding of past wrongs and shared future hopes for living in harmony together.

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law...

Article 2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- (a) Freedom of conscience and religion;
- (b) Freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media communication;
- (c) Freedom of peaceful assembly
- (d) Freedom of association

¹ *A Time for Inspired Leadership and Action*, 2010 Interfaith Partnership, 2010 Religious Leaders' Summit, June 2010.

Engaging issues involves both a speaking inwardly to one another and a speaking outwardly to society and the public.

Local and Canadian

Our preference is for favoring and supporting local interfaith relationship building and collaboration. We also want to facilitate the engagement and bringing together of heads of religious communities in Canada on the issues of the day. Each of these dimensions, local and Canadian, would be incomplete on their own.

Relationships

Overall, we see this as a process of organic development of relationships, not primarily a structural organizational development. Nevertheless, as part of civil society we have an obligation to participate in the issues of the day. When acting together we may also make common cause with other groups.

Acting Together

The Canadian Interfaith Conversation will cooperate whenever possible with existing interfaith initiatives and may also sponsor and facilitate participation and engagement in interfaith events and initiatives locally, regionally, and nationally. Unless explicitly given the authority by all Conversation Participants, the Canadian Interfaith Conversation will not speak or advocate in the name of the organizations or persons who are on its Participants list. Likewise, Participants in the Canadian Interfaith Conversation are not bound to participate in all of the collaborative efforts that may emerge from the conversation held among the Participants; each Participant is free to join, as they are able, the various activities to which the conversation may lead.

Those who do not agree with projects and plans that receive the agreement of the majority of Participants in a meeting will be asked to detail and clarify their alternate view in writing within 60 days, so that the dissenting view can receive full consideration. This will give time for recognizing the reasons behind a dissenting view and either reaching full consensus or abandoning the project or plan in question.

Conversation Participants are expected to pay an annual fee to help support the ongoing activities of the Conversation. Individuals who are interested in the conversation, but do not represent a particular organization, are welcome as regular Observers; although they may be consulted at times on Conversation initiatives, their agreement is not required to authorize such initiatives.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights

Article 18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Leadership: Chair and Secretariat

The leadership of this Canadian Interfaith Conversation rotates from one faith community to another. Ordinarily the leadership will rotate every three years.

We work with a consensus model of decision-making. The Chair prepares and leads meetings. The Secretariat provides administrative and communications support to facilitate the function of this Canadian Interfaith Conversation.

A small Executive Committee will be formed composed of representatives from two to three Eastern and Western traditions to facilitate cooperation.

Resources

Regarding human and financial resources, we will continue to focus on a vision that may or may not attract those resources. We endorse and commend those organizations that step in to take up the rotating leadership role and support specific initiatives as they arise.

Participation

Those who are drawn to this charter vision are invited to participate. This is an open, voluntary conversation. Each faith community is invited to work out and define, internally when appropriate, their own participation and accountability. All who participate are committed to being on the journey together.

This may result in the participation of multiple voices from a given faith community. The values behind this Charter Vision define the participation; an honest, open dialogue and clarity of purpose is important so that the safety and security of the Conversation is preserved.

Contact List

The Secretariat keeps a contact list of Participants and Observers.

To see a list of current Participants in the Canadian Interfaith Conversation, check the Participants section of our website (www.interfaithconversation.ca).

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Article 12(1). Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.