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Official Multiculturalism

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Chapter

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Abstract

This chapter sketches the historical background to the adoption of multiculturalism as a national policy and as a definition of the Canadian identity in 1971. It emphasizes the place of “official multiculturalism” alongside “official bilingualism” within the overall response of the Liberal federal government led by Pierre Elliott Trudeau to the growing independence movement in Quebec, which in the 1960s and 1970s was posing an increasingly serious challenge to Canadian federalism. “Official Multiculturalism” explains what the term “multiculturalism” meant when it was first popularized by Senator Paul Yuzyk, outlines the practical measures promised by the federal government in 1971, and concludes with brief accounts of the policy’s bureaucratic incarnations and its public reception, in Quebec and in the rest of Canada.

In an ideal civilization, nationality as we know it would no longer exist. National sovereignty must ultimately give way to a new unity with its bounds as wide as humanity itself.

Vincent Massey, *Being Canadian*

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