OVERVIEW

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Entitled *Multiculturalism @ 50 and the Promise of a Just Society*, this special edition of Canadian Issues, explores the roots, characteristics and structural fault lines of Canadian multiculturalism and outlines the reframing required if the policy hopes to live up to its initial promise of delivering a just society. In his introduction, guest editor and eminent political philosopher Will Kymlicka reflects on the insights of contributing authors some of whom trace multiculturalism's failings back to its very foundations, but who also offer "glimpses" of why and how multiculturalism might aspire to rebirth and offer a "better future".

The issue is divided into four sections: (1) Foundations, (2) Public Consciousness, (3) Structural Fault Lines and (4) Future Imperatives.

Section (1), **Foundations**, opens with an article by Daniel Meister, who places multiculturalism in its historical context, tracing its social, political and cultural roots to a pluralism infected by racist and settler colonialist ideologies that effectively excluded nonwhites. The decades preceding the official implementation of multiculturalism are also the focus of Lee Blanding's article, who questions whether, having failed to include the voices of key stakeholders including Indigenous peoples, the prevailing multiculturalist discourse can respond to the pressing needs of an "age of Reconciliation". In an article making a case for the complementarity of multicultural policy and official bilingualism, Commissioner of Official Languages Raymond Théberge depicts the often-overlooked diversity within Canada's Francophone population and maintains that Canada's bilingual framework enhances rather than detracts from diversity within the country.

In (2) **Public Consciousness**, John Berry sees "widespread acceptance of diversity" as fundamental to the success of multicultural policy and describes efforts to measure this prevalent "multicultural ideology" by means of an "intercultural scale" both

in Canada and internationally. While conceding that it is no simple feat to prove the impact on national unity of fifty years of multicultural policy, Varun Uberoi argues that it has been "effective at encouraging inclusive forms of national identity", given that a majority of Canadians identify multiculturalism as a "national symbol and an important feature of how they conceive of Canada." Jeffrey Reitz also explores the meaning of multiculturalism for Canadians and the role it has played in building "social capital", pointing out, however, that strong support for multiculturalism has not led to more willingness to tackle equity issues thus hampering the country's ability to address the underlying problems created by racism and discrimination.

In (3) **Structural Fault Lines**, four authors expound on the ways in which the very structure of multiculturalist policy either violates its own principles or is ill-equipped to meet the imperatives of a diverse society that aspires to equity and solidarity. In its promotion of a multicultural citizenship that limits full membership to "individuals who display middle-class traits and/or demonstrate economic utility," Jennifer Elrick argues that multicultural policy is possibly contravening its stated ideals and contributing to a decline in social solidarity. In his exposé of the views of an unrepentant critic of multiculturalism, Jean-Philippe Warren places sociologist Guy Rocher's objections to multiculturalism in the tradition of those who view the policy as a betrayal of the bilingual two-pillared conception of Canadian Confederation. In "Silences of Multiculturalism", Benjamin Berger sheds light on the failure of the liberal constitutional system to live up to its claims to autonomy and universality, showing up the law's incapacity to act as objective arbiter on fundamental issues of religious freedom, particularly in the case of "religious groups that diverge significantly from the metaphysical and normative mainstream."

The final section, (4) **Future Imperatives**, looks ahead to sketch the reframing, rebuilding and reeducating required to institute a multiculturalism inclusive of all Canadians. While remaining steadfast in her commitment to a policy that she helped develop and launch, former Multiculturalism Minister, Jean Augustine, is uncompromising in her call for a "reframing of multiculturalism, within an anti-racist and anti-oppression space that intentionally seeks to dismantle the systemic harms of white privilege." Cecil Foster also exposes the structural racism and exclusion built into the foundations of multiculturalism and calls for the courage to abandon old power structures to a well-deserved grave in favour of a "genuine multiculturalism – where power, belonging and entitlement start through individual recognition but that individuals can subsequently choose to be counted by ethnicity, racialization, gender, place of birth or any other social category that speaks to diversity and inclusiveness." While multiculturalism originally promised a reversal of assimilationist tendencies, Ratna Ghosh argues that its static focus on heritage cultures and language has blinded it to its perpetuation of structural inequalities, a challenge whose urgency has become all the more apparent in the present context. In his article, Shibao Guo describes how the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the propagation throughout the country of an anti-Asian virus fuelled racism and hatred, exposing the need for "critical deep reflections on the rhetoric of Canadian exceptionalism" and for the establishment of a comprehensive anti-racist education program.