Entretien avec

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Le gouvernement du Canada nous parle souvent des « valeurs canadiennes ». À votre avis, qu'entend-on exactement par « valeurs canadiennes » ? Ces valeurs sont-elles exclusives au Canada ? Jusqu'à quel point sont-elles répandues à travers les démocraties libérales et à travers les diverses religions à l'échelle mondiale ?

Le Canada est unique parce qu'il est doté d'une Charte des droits et libertés de la personne. Cette Chartre est le reflet de la substance du Canada. Lorsque nous parlons de valeurs canadiennes, nous entendons parler de répartition, d'opportunité, de tolérance et de liberté. Par dessus tout, nous entendons parler de multiculturalisme. Ce caractère multiculturel propre au Canada nous rend plus sensible à la diversité culturelle, ethnique et religieuse. Le tout rend le Canada unique en son genre. Notre politique en matière d'immigration n'est pas seulement axée sur les points d'entrée au pays, mais aussi sur le processus d'intégration des nouveaux venus dans la société canadienne. Plusieurs de nos valeurs sont effectivement universelles mais nous sommes également différents. L'essence de cette valeur intrinsèque se retrouve dans la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés.

What role does the Government of Canada play in shaping and articulating values?

The Government of Canada is about the people of Canada. The government reflects the multicultural make-up of Canada and its citizens and the values they hold so dear. We have to ensure that our policies reflect the values of the people of Canada.

What responsibilities do all citizens have in Canada?

The pillars of our policies are based on values that represent our citizenship. Our responsibility as citizens is to make sure we are ambassadors and promoters of those values. At the same time we need a balanced approach between freedom and rights, and duties and responsibilities. So every context is different. The most important thing is to strike that balance. We must keep in mind those values, that openness to maintain the uniqueness of this great country of ours.

Comment les programmes de Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada contribuent-ils à promouvoir l'attachement au Canada ? Est-ce que notre conception d'une identité nationale inclusive facilite ou gêne le processus d'attachement ?

Les politiques d'intégration du département facilite l'adaptation et l'accoutumance des immigrants dans les communautés à travers le Canada en favorisant l'acquisition de connaissances plus approfondies par les Canadiens et les nouveaux arrivants les uns sur les autres. Les programmes d'intégration promeuvent l'apprentissage d'une de nos deux langues officielles dans le but de faciliter la participation sociale et économique des immigrants dans leurs nouvelles communautés. Le programme d'hôte encourage les Canadiens à approfondir leurs connaissances des nouveaux arrivants et de leur contribution à l'évolution du Canada. Cette approche réciproque à l'apprentissage et au respect fait partie intégrale de notre identité nationale. C'est dans cette nature chaleureuse que l'on retrouve l'attachement au Canada.

Quel est le rôle de la citoyenneté et de l'allégeance dans l'agenda de la sécurité nationale ?

Les Canadiens sont fiers de leurs politiques respectueuses et paisibles. Les nouveaux arrivants sont attirés vers le Canada précisément parce qu'ils s'y sentent les bienvenus et sont encouragés à devenir des citoyens canadiens à participer pleinement dans une société libre et démocratique.

It has been suggested that participation in decision-making processes is a key responsibility of citizens. We note the lack of strong analysis on newcomers in the Canadian Elections Survey and in other research and wonder how the Government of Canada identifies barriers and works to remove them?

Newcomers should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of Canadian society. To do this, they are encouraged to learn one of our official languages, to understand our governance structures, to become Canadian citizens and to vote. The vote gives them the ultimate power to influence the future of their new country. We need to understand the barriers to these processes and best practices to overcome such barriers. The federal government works with provincial governments and academics to promote such immigrant-related research. Every avenue is explored to ensure that immigrant issues are reflected in polls and surveys. Metropolis is an excellent tool for bringing together policy makers and researchers to ensure that areas of interest are examined.

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Regional identity and attachment play strong roles in Canada. You have been particularly active in engaging Canadians and their governments in regions across the country, even regions with lower levels of immigration like the Atlantic provinces, the Prairies and the North. How do you imagine that your department can assist these regions to attract and retain more newcomers?

I firmly believe that all parts of the country should benefit from immigration. Discussions are ongoing at many levels, federal, provincial and local. It will be through these collaborative efforts that communities will self-identify as wanting more immigrants and being prepared to welcome newcomers. I believe that those communities will identify employment opportunities, take into account newcomers' needs for housing, schooling, health care and education, to name a few key elements, and most importantly ensure that they are welcoming. For our part the Department will work with provinces through existing programs, like the Provincial Nominee Program and other pilots to support these communities in their efforts to better attract and retain newcomers.

What role do Citizenship and Immigration Canada programs like language training and the host program play in fostering connections across diverse communities?

Language skills are essential to social and economic participation in communities. Federally funded language training and host programs help newcomers to better orient, adapt and settle in communities. Our settlement services rely on service providers who are close to the newcomers. These providers foster positive relations between different groups through a multicultural approach to orientation and language training. Our Host program links newcomers with established Canadians so they can learn about each other's traditions and cultures, thus building mutual respect.

Many have argued that knowledge of our official languages, history, cultural heritage, and civic/political processes is essential to an active and engaged citizenry. What role Citizenship and Immigration Canada play in promoting/encouraging the acquisition of this knowledge?

Citizenship and Immigration Canada promotes citizenship through settlement programs and citizenship promotion. Outreach through citizenship and reaffirmation ceremonies, combined with activity guides for schools and communities, create the basis for welcoming communities. Speakers' programs and sharing of immigrant success stories help established Canadians to better understand newcomers' contributions to Canada. The more welcome newcomers feel, the more they will be involved in building their new communities. My department has taken a leadership role in encouraging the acquisition of knowledge about Canada and our citizenship legislation ensures that new Canadians have demonstrated their language and knowledge skills as well as their attachment to Canada through a residence requirement.

Le sujet de la citoyenneté a été identifié comme une question interdisciplinaire par plusieurs départements du gouvernement fédéral ainsi que par leurs partenaires paragouvernementaux. Comment percevez-vous le rôle de Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada dans cet optique élargie ?

Mon département, ainsi que celui de Patrimoine canadien partagent la chaire d'un comité formé de départements fédéraux qui sont intéressés à la promotion de la citoyenneté canadienne. À travers certains projets collaboratifs et à travers la communication d'information, tous les départements seront mieux armés pour diriger leurs efforts et élargir leur rayon d'action.