

Shared Values and Reasonable Expectations for Immigrants to English Canada

Royal Society of St. George, British Columbia Branch

Canada has experienced very high levels of immigration in recent decades. Our population has welcomed a larger number of immigrants per capita per year than any other country. No other has offered so much recent human history.

Immigration has enriched Canada greatly as waves of newcomers have made it their home. In particular, English Canada, one of the three founding cultures within Canada, has welcomed people from all parts of the world who have sought to build a new life in their adopted country. Moreover, it has offered them extensive support for their settlement, accommodating them in many ways.

Recently, the Province of Quebec passed legislation requiring all immigrants to Quebec to sign a declaration of shared values as a condition of settlement there. Although Quebec's context of French culture and language is unique within North America, we believe that the circumstances of English Canada outside Quebec are similarly important.

Our host culture for immigrants, the culture of English Canada, provides a guiding framework within which immigrants and native-born Canadians can live and prosper peacefully together in an integrated society. When we refer to the culture of English Canada, we mean the essential culture consisting of the fundamental values, beliefs, and institutions, not the popular culture, the high culture, or other subcultures.

Successful integration of immigrants requires reasonable accommodation to them on the part of a host culture as they adapt to their new surroundings. Integration also requires that immigrants themselves adopt core elements of a host culture so that they may take advantage of the extensive opportunities that the host culture provides them and as a consequence, participate fully in their new country.

All cultures require the loyalty of their citizens so they may continue to flourish. The culture of English Canada is no exception. It requires nurture so that newcomers come to love what we love and to defend what we defend. We believe that it is fitting and proper for those persons who value the culture of English Canada to offer a framework of shared values and general expectations to newcomers who settle within English Canada. In fact, it is their responsibility to do so.

The Royal Society of St. George, B.C. Branch, supports the customs and traditions that were brought to Canada from Britain and which are the core features of the culture of English Canada even as it has absorbed immigrants of all origins throughout Canada's history. These customs and traditions include Canada's system of governance, law, economy, procedural rights and freedoms, and the English language that are at the core of the culture of English Canada. Moreover, they are built into the Canadian Constitution.

We believe that the culture of English Canada is broad enough and flexible enough to welcome all people who come here. It is necessary to our unity and solidarity that all of us, native-born and immigrant alike, continue to embrace it.

We assert that the culture of English Canada should prevail within Canada separately from the culture of French Canada. Accordingly, the Royal Society of St. George, B.C. Branch, invites all immigrants who intend to settle, or have settled, in English Canada to sign the following statement of reasonable expectations in the spirit of commitment, hope, and friendship.

Agreement of Reasonable Expectations

This agreement specifies the shared values and expectations for immigrants to English Canada. Once signed, it is effective for as long as the individual remains a landed immigrant or a citizen of Canada.

I, _____ (full name), as a landed immigrant in Canada and as a settler in English Canada, make the following declarations:

I promise to learn to speak, to read, and to write the English language within three years of this date if I do not do so already.

I will encourage the members of my family who are immigrants to Canada and who reside in English Canada to learn to speak, read, and write the English language.

I will respect the use of standard English language in English Canada.

I will obey the laws of Canada, the laws of my province of settlement within English Canada, and the laws of the local authority within which I reside.

I will show respect for duly constituted authority within English Canada.

I will learn about the history, geography, accomplishments, traditions, customs, heritage, and way of life in English Canada.

If I have children, I will teach them to appreciate Canada as their adopted country.

I will support freedom of the press, assembly, belief, thought, and expression in English Canada.

I will endorse freedom of religion and the separation of religious and state institutions in English Canada.

I will show respect for the property rights of others who live in English Canada.

I will respect the basic rights, freedoms, and opportunities within English Canada that are accorded to all landed immigrants and residents of English Canada, including the members of my family who are landed immigrants or citizens of Canada.

I will participate in and contribute to the greater community outside my ethnic community in English Canada.

I will rely upon my sponsor if I need support and will not draw upon government welfare services within English Canada unless I have been admitted as a refugee.

I will conduct myself with honesty, integrity, and civility in all my public dealings within English Canada.

I will join in the celebrations of the culture, traditions, and customs of English Canada.

I enter into this agreement freely of my own volition and without duress or reservation.

If I am unable to read English, I have understood a translation that was either read to me or written by a qualified translator.

Signed _____ Dated _____ Witnessed _____