

# O Canada, The Land of Freedom

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Canada is such a fantastic country; it's no wonder people want to live here. However, have you ever considered how it became the country it is today?

Canada was built on a Constitution, which includes the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This act was signed by Queen Elizabeth II on April 17, 1982, in Ottawa (Government of Canada). The purpose of the Charter is to ensure that individuals are bestowed with rights and freedoms that allow them to live without discrimination, harassment, prejudice, racism, or harm.

As mentioned, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is part of Canada's Constitution. To further explain, the Constitution is a "set of laws containing the basic rules about how our country operates" (Government of Canada). The Charter outlines seven distinct areas of rights and freedoms, which include; democratic rights, mobility rights, legal rights, equality rights, official language rights, and minority language education rights (Government of Canada). Each category offers a different purpose and protects all people of Canada, which includes Canadian citizens, permanent inhabitants, and immigrants.

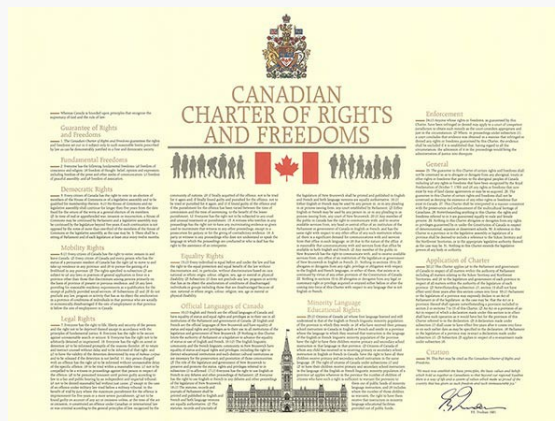


Fig. 2. "Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms Download." *Government of Canada*, 19 January, 2021.

Each of the seven areas that comprise the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides an objective, which can be seen in the concise summaries below (Canada Justice Laws):

- **Fundamental Freedoms** - Canadian citizens have the right to practice any religion of choice; the right to have their own perspectives, views, judgements, and expression; the right to peacefully protest, rally or parade; and the freedom of association.

- **Democratic Rights** - Canadian citizens have the right to participate in an election by voting and be able to have their political voice heard. However, this applies to individuals that are 18+ years old.
- **Equality Rights** - Canadian citizens have the right to be treated equally and fairly without discrimination based on origin, ethnicity, background, faith, gender, age or mental or physical disabilities.
- **Legal Rights** - Canadian citizens have the right to existence, emancipation, and protection and to be treated fairly during legal processes.
- **Mobility Rights** - Canadian citizens have the right to access, remain and/or exit Canada, along with the ability to seek or set up a business within Canada.
- **Official Language Rights** - Canadian citizens have the right to use English and French language, especially in all institutions of parliament and the government of Canada.
- **Minority Language Education Rights** - Canadian citizens have the right to be provided an education in the minority language of each province.



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The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is fundamental to our country and how Canada is governed, but there are some issues with it. One fundamental issue is that some people are not reaping the benefits of their rights and freedoms. For example, it has come to light that there has been negligence of basic human rights on Indigenous reserves, especially with regard to the scarcity of clean drinking water. According to the Indigenous Foundation (2023), “many Indigenous groups in Canada are living in third world conditions in a first world country. Canada possesses the world’s third largest freshwater reserves. Despite that, 618 First Nations Communities are not supplied with safe drinking water”.

Not only does this go against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but it also goes against the third and sixth Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) of good health and well-being and clean water and sanitation (United Nations). This violation has been disregarded and neglected for decades and has been a source of disease, causing bacteria, parasites, and viruses (Yenilmez). As we can see, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is correctly implemented, and everyone is able to benefit equally from it.

Although we still have work to do, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has come a long way, and we as Canadians, have privileges that allow us to live freely in this country. We have the right to be able to be who we are and be able to express it. That’s what makes Canada so wonderful, and I am beyond proud to be a Canadian citizen and live in such a beautiful and diverse country.

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