



MY VISION FOR CANADA:

The Andrew Scheer Keynotes

UNITY IN DIVERSITY





Canada should be a country where no ambition is too big and where no dream is out of reach.

We should be a principled force for peace and freedom on the world stage, a disciplined and compassionate protector of the public purse here at home, a welcoming land of refuge for the world's persecuted and afflicted, a proud champion for clean Canadian technology, and a model of clear roles and responsibilities between levels of government.

I am running to be the next Prime Minister.

Welcome to My Vision for Canada.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Scheer'.

ANDREW SCHEER
Leader of Canada's Conservatives

Thank you for that warm welcome.

Friends, what a pleasure it is to be back in Toronto and here with each of you.

And it is fitting that we gather here on this particular day at the Armenian Heritage Centre, because today is the 101st anniversary of the first Republic of Armenia.

And at a time when the ancient Armenian people were threatened by Soviet Communist Revolutionaries on one side, and Ottoman genocidal persecution on the other, this independence became a symbol that Armenians around the world celebrate to this day.

It is this very same spirit of freedom that Canada has always stood for. So, we congratulate and join Armenians in Canada and around the world to celebrate this very special occasion.

Toronto is by any measure a growing, global metropolis.

And every time I am back in the GTA, I am struck by how fortunate we are as Canadians to welcome people who have chosen Toronto and Canada as their home.

That is, indeed, one of the best parts of my job, and the job to which I aspire.

I get to meet almost daily with inspiring and industrious people who have made brave decisions to leave their loved ones and their homelands to start a new life in a new country.

They have chosen Canada.

And almost to a person, newcomers to Canada and those who have come in previous generations are united by the same dreams we all share.

They want a shot at full freedom and dignity...opportunity and prosperity.

They want to make life better for themselves and their families.

More importantly, they want to make a positive difference in their communities, and contribute to making Canada an even better place.

That is the story of immigration in Canada...and, fundamentally, the story of Canada itself.

A PROUD HISTORY

I believe Canada is the greatest country on earth.

But this is no accident. Nor was Canada's greatness automatically assured.

It took work...hardship...sacrifice...faith...risk-taking...and the entrepreneurial spirit.

If we want to understand what Canada is and what it can be, we need to understand where we have come from...

From the very first Indigenous peoples – to each wave of new arrivals that have come to Canada – to hopeful newcomers that are arriving even today at Pearson and other ports of entry – all are part of that shared story.

And we are all part of a grand tale still being written.

A success story of different people – humanity in all its diversity – each adding its own chapter.

One country – the true North, strong and free.

Now together, we have built Canada into greatness, despite great odds.

Just think of the hardship and suffering faced by the original First Nations, or the earliest European settlers to arrive.

Yet, each successive wave of new arrivals not only survived. They thrived.

Canada's first Indigenous peoples who established a foothold on the land and built a lasting way of life out of harsh natural environments.

French settlers who founded colonies that have become thriving centres like Quebec City and Montreal.

And United Empire Loyalists fleeing oppression in the United States who helped build the provinces that would form our Confederation.

Indeed, Canada has long been a haven for refuge in the world.

Whether for African-Americans fleeing slavery via the Underground Railroad;

...for Poles, Jews, Hungarians, Czechs and Ukrainians fleeing totalitarian, Communist regimes in Eastern Europe;

...or for Chinese, Tibetans, and Vietnamese fleeing Communism, poverty, persecution and war.

Each of these groups of new arrivals saw in Canada the chance to realize their hopes and dreams.

They have helped grow this country – literally and figuratively.

As have more recent arrivals.

Iranians fleeing theocratic despots. Copts persecuted for their belief in Jesus Christ.

Muslims afflicted by oppression and civil war.

Gays and lesbians escaping literal extermination simply for being who they are.

And it's all because Canada is built on a rock-solid foundation of enduring values, democratic institutions, the rule of law, and fundamental and universal human rights.

We absolutely must protect these values – because they are what set us apart.

They allow Canada to offer what so many other countries simply cannot:

The freedom to preserve and pass on their cultural traditions and the opportunity to live in peace with those around them.

And the economic freedom that so many governments around the world deny their people. And that economic freedom that ensures that hard work pays off, that gives people the ability to work towards their dreams and choose their own path in life.

But with each passing day, Justin Trudeau and the Liberals undermine this proud legacy.

In four years, they have not only undone progress the previous Conservative government made to strengthen our immigration system, to speed up processing, and to eliminate backlogs...

They have managed to undermine the long-standing consensus that immigration is, indeed, a positive thing for this country.

CANADIANS LOSING CONFIDENCE

Sadly, under Justin Trudeau, a record-high number of Canadians believe that immigration should be reduced.

Worse, Canadians have lost faith in the fairness of our system.

They now question the integrity of our borders.

And they're less confident about newcomers' ability to integrate fully and contribute to our shared prosperity.

Now, Canadians rightly expect that our immigration programs will lead to new arrivals being fully integrated into Canadian society and Canada's economy.

But if that system begins to break down, as it has under Justin Trudeau, public support breaks down as well.

The numbers are almost hard to believe.

Since 2017, more than 43,000 people have crossed into Canada illegally from the United States – which is still one of the freest, safest, and most prosperous countries in the world.



Canada has long been a haven for refuge in the world.



This has cost taxpayers well over a billion dollars – and that number is only going up.

Among the people I hear from most often on this point are new Canadians themselves.

People who have played by the rules and arrived in Canada fair and square.

They are the most offended at Trudeau's status-quo, where some are able to jump queues, exploit loopholes, and skip the line.

And like you, Conservatives have questioned the current government's ability to preserve the integrity of our immigration system.

Now, Justin Trudeau and his ministers responded how they always do when confronted with criticism – with more rhetoric and personal attacks.

In fact, even before I started speaking here, the Liberals already put out a statement on what I was going to say without having even heard it.

That's what we can expect from this party in the lead up to the next election.

Now, I think we can all agree that we should be able to have an immigration debate in this country without the government calling the people who criticize their failures racists and bigots.

This government's approach is dangerous for two reasons.

First, it reduces legitimate criticism to cheap partisanship and makes it easier for the government to ignore the very real problems in the system.

And second, and more importantly, it debases and devalues the threats that are still, unfortunately, all too real in our society.

Racism is real. Bigotry is real. Extremism is real.

And to ascribe those motives to those who simply want stronger security screening procedures or fewer people entering the country illegally makes a mockery of such hateful forces.

NO PLACE FOR EXTREMISM

Now, before I move on to what a new Conservative government will do to renew faith in our immigration system, I'd like to make something absolutely crystal clear.

What I'm about to say, I have said many times before.

There is absolutely no room in a peaceful and free country like Canada for intolerance, racism, and extremism of any kind.

And the Conservative Party of Canada will always make that absolutely clear.

This goes to one of my most deeply held personal convictions.

I believe that we are all children of God.

And therefore, there can be no inferiority amongst human beings.

And that equal and infinite value exists in each and every one of us.

And I find the notion that one's race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation would make anyone in any way superior or inferior to anybody else absolutely repugnant.

And if there's anyone who disagrees with that, there's the door.

You are not welcome here.

Over the last several months, Canada's Conservatives have consulted Canadians and stakeholders from all over the country as part of our Pathway to Canada tour.

And I want to thank our Immigration Shadow Minister, Michelle Rempel, for all her work on these consultations.

These consultations have concluded, and what we heard from Canadians and newcomers was clear:

They want the immigration system to be managed competently.

They want to know that every measure is being taken to ensure their safety.

But most of all, they want Canada to remain a safe and welcoming place for the world's most vulnerable.

We heard concerns about the failure to ensure that processing standards are met for immigrants who want to come to Canada through legal channels,

About inadequate integration services for newcomers,

About backlogs and delays in the system for legitimate refugees and asylum seekers fleeing violence and persecution;

and about ballooning costs to manage the ongoing situation at Canada's border with the United States.

As Prime Minister, my government will restore fairness, order, and compassion to the immigration system – so allow me to expand on that for a couple of minutes.

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**FAIR, ORDERLY,
AND COMPASSIONATE**

Because this is personal to me.

My mother, who passed away just a couple of years ago, was deeply committed to helping the vulnerable. She instilled in us and our family an enduring appreciation for how a commitment to social justice flows naturally from the conservative principles of individual responsibility, compassion and common sense.

My mother loved the scripture

verse that goes – “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

One of the last causes my mother took on before she got sick and wasn't able to be as active as she was, was to serve on the refugee committee at our local parish in Ottawa, at the outset of the Syrian civil war.

Refugees were just starting to come, and she was ready and eager to do whatever she could to help.

She did what she could to help financially, but she also showed them around town, had them over for dinner, and made sure they had the things they needed. My father also got involved, helping to celebrate their birthdays by bringing over cakes and gifts.

It was deeply moving for me to see, as my mother received medical treatment before her death, how those same refugees visited her in the hospital to return the love and compassion that she had shown to them.

And it reinforced for me how Canada must continue to be that place for those truly in need.

This strikes at the very fairness of Canada's immigration system, and there is absolutely nothing fair about forcing the oppressed and the persecuted – like the Syrians my mother helped – to wait longer for Canada's help, while others cross the border illegally from places like upstate New York.

Just like there is nothing fair about individuals flagged as threats to national security entering the country, gaining residency, and receiving benefits.

Or hundreds of Mexican drug cartel members setting up shop in Canada because the government lifted visa requirements for Mexican travelers.

And just like there is nothing compassionate about Yazidi genocide survivors – already without proper mental health treatments here in Canada – having to fight the government to be reunited with their families.

This government has failed on these and so many other counts and – and in doing so – has degraded Canada's standing as a place able to welcome and be safe for those in need.

And friends, while history and humanity alone would be enough for Canada to uphold this proud legacy, there are – frankly – important and concrete economic arguments to be made as well.

IMMIGRATION FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

Like many Western countries, Canada is facing a massive demographic shift in the coming decade.

As baby boomers retire, we will need workers, innovators, and risk-takers to sustain a thriving economy and ensure we can maintain the high standard of living that we Canadians enjoy and rightly expect. We need the world's best and brightest to choose Canada.

And we want them to integrate fully, socially and economically.

To contribute as previous generations have done to building the Canada we know and love.

And to ensure it remains the great country it always has been.

When newcomers to Canada succeed, Canada succeeds. A safe, orderly, and compassionate system can ensure new arrivals make the most of their new lives in their new homeland.

Such a system ensures all Canadians are better off, as well.

Now Canada's Conservatives are preoccupied by jobs and

the economy first and foremost because we know that prosperity lifts everyone out of poverty and allows everyone to have a better quality of life.

So you'll hear me talking about those two topics often...because this current government ignores them.

We in the Conservative Party understand that immigration, done right, is good for the economy, good for jobs and good for people who have chosen to come to Canada.

Now, I want to touch a little bit on immigration numbers.

Because I think, in a lot of ways, this topic has become a little bit of a red herring.

There are those who say the number of immigrants that Canada admits is too high and have made rash promises to reduce it without considering the economic impact.

Similarly, there are those who say the number is too low and have set high targets without adequate integration services in place.

In both cases, political purposes trump economic and social reality.

As Prime Minister, I will set immigration levels consistent with what is in Canada's best interests. Now, that number may change every year, and I'm not going to get into a political debate or, worse, an auction about immigration numbers.

The number will reflect what Canada needs and, just as importantly, who needs Canada. This brings me to a few final thoughts I would like to share with you.

In a few months, when our next federal election campaign begins, each party will release a platform full of ideas and options for voters to consider.

And I would like to share some of those in a general way with you today.

As Prime Minister, I will work to immediately restore fairness, order, and compassion in our immigration system.

I will safeguard and emphasize economic immigration.

I will stand up for families and ensure that spouses and children can be reunited. We will improve language training to ensure greater proficiency in English or French and newcomers' ability to succeed economically and socially.

I will ensure that our system prioritizes people facing true persecution – focus government sponsorship on the victims of the four atrocity crimes – and restore integrity to our system by supporting the consistent application of fair rules.

I will improve credential recognition and make it easier for new Canadians who have existing skills that meet our standards to ply their trades here.

We all lose out when doctors and engineers are not able to practice their profession. I want them to come to Canada to do what they were trained to do.

And I will work to allow those who enter Canada as low-skilled workers a permanent path to residency, making sure wages are fair and worker abuse is prevented.

And I will work to reunite survivors of genocide who have already resettled in Canada more expeditiously.

Now as I stated earlier this month when sharing my vision for Canada's foreign policy, Conservatives will also bring back the Office of Religious Freedom so that we can protect our shared humanity and promote interest in the dignity of all people.

We will work to put an end to illegal border crossings at unofficial points of entry like Roxham Road by closing the loophole in the Safe-Third Country Agreement that allows some people to skip the line and avoid the queue.

And we will do more to promote private sponsorships of refugees.

PRIVATELY SPONSORED REFUGEES

See, nothing can compare with the love and compassion that churches, synagogues, mosques, or service clubs offer to refugees.

And the evidence backs this up. The government's own data shows, that even more than a decade after they arrive, privately sponsored refugees earn more and depend less on government than those who came through government sponsorship.

When churches, mosques, community groups, temples, synagogues, cultural associations made up of people like my mom – when they put their own money forward and devote their own time to help a refugee family, then they are deeply invested in the success of those refugees.

By comparison, government-sponsored refugees are placed in hotels.

Right now, we hear time and again from private sponsors that the government is getting in their way. We hear about how costs and needless red tape are being piled onto the good work they do, and how some caps are imposed arbitrarily.

We can in fact do more for the most vulnerable if the government gets out of the way and works to better enable and support private sponsoring organizations.

Now these are just some of the proposals we will put forward and others will follow in time, and we will fill in some more details during the election campaign itself.

Although in our view – there is no debating the need for real action to restore our system's integrity.

Conservatives have cleaned up Liberal messes in immigration before and we are prepared to do it again... with fairness, order, and compassion as the pillars of our efforts.

Now friends, we have all seen how the Liberal leader reacts to dissent and disagreement within his ranks. He silences it.



We can in fact do more for the most vulnerable if the government gets out of the way and works to better enable and support private sponsoring organizations.



He and his party are also intolerant of, and openly hostile toward, the personal beliefs and convictions of millions of Canadians.

There are others, too, who abuse words, devalue meaning, and silence views that don't conform to a narrow way of seeing things.

FREE, OPEN, AND EQUAL

That means today's Conservatives are alone in being the last, true 'big tent' national party.

We embrace personal freedom, we embrace the freedoms that people have when they come to Canada.

I am proud to lead a party that believes that Canada's best characteristics are reinforced by the best values of new Canadians:

- Hard work... entrepreneurship... personal industry...
- Family...faith... religious freedom...
- Sacrifice...risk-taking...
- Individual freedoms...and respect for the rule of law

All of these inherently conservative principles are ones shared amongst those who have come to Canada over the course of our history.

Conservative values are values shared by hundreds of thousands of newcomers who arrive in Canada each and every year.

They are why so many people chose Canada, they are the ideals that make us Canadian and ones which Conservatives place at the heart of our party.

They are what Canada was built on and what Canada stands for. What new Canadians stand for.

Now Justin Trudeau says that diversity is our strength.

But there is more to it than that. We have to focus on why Canada is diverse.

The reasons why waves and waves of immigrants from all corners of the world have come to Canada.

It is because we are free – free to worship and free to speak and free to believe.

It is because of our economic freedom that produces so much prosperity and opportunity.

It is because we are open – open to the persecuted and the oppressed and the broken.

It is because we are equal – equal in opportunity and equal before the law.

It is because we are all these things that we are diverse.

Diversity is the result of our strength. And our strength is and always has been our freedom.

And that freedom is based on the institutions and principles that we hold so dear and that we must ensure are protected.

The reason why so many people from around the world are able to be treated equally, practice their faith, pass on their customs and traditions, is because ours is a society based on the equality of all human beings.

Of the inherent human rights that we are endowed with by our Creator, not by the government of the day.

And that is safeguarded by strong democratic institutions and the rule of law.

It is essential that in order to continue to be the place where people can come and add their contribution to our story as it unfolds, that we protect and promote those principles and institutions to all who chose this wonderful country.

As John Diefenbaker said, "I am a Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, or free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind."

These are the things that Conservatives are fighting for all together come October.

So I ask for your support and pledge you mine in this important cause.

Thank you very much.

It's been a pleasure talking to you this evening. 🍁

