

Creating the Charter

Even before the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms became law, it changed how our government works.

A special document called for a special way of listening to Canadians.



What do you notice about the people who met in 1864 to talk about creating Canada as a country? The people who gave their ideas 120 years later to creating the Charter looked very different! People with disabilities, women, LGBTQ2S+ people, people of colour and even people representing kids like you actually had a say this time.

Rex Woods, House of Commons

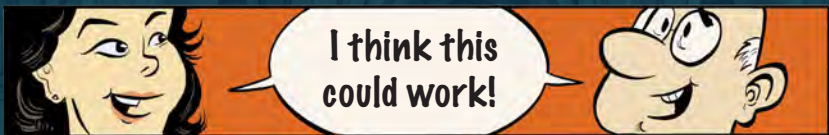
The Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada listened to people's ideas about a charter of rights from November 1980 to February 1981. It received written suggestions from more than 1,000 groups and individual Canadians. More than 100 presented ideas in person.

“Well, it is all fine and good for you girls to be here, but who is looking after the kids?” — *committee co-chair Senator Harry Hayes, to women making a presentation about the importance of equal rights*

Indigenous groups hadn't often been asked to be part of discussions about human rights in Canada. And Indigenous people had many reasons to distrust governments. But this time, some Indigenous groups did get involved, saying the new Charter had to tackle discrimination against them as well as recognize Treaties and other long-ignored rights.



Danesh Mohiddin



The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is part of the Canadian Constitution. It became law when Queen Elizabeth II signed it in Ottawa on April 17, 1982.