

What does Mark Carney's slimmed down cabinet signal to Canadians and the world?

Our identity as Canadians needs to go beyond generating revenue from extracting our natural resources under a maple leaf banner, Lyla Miklos writes.

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Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks with members of cabinet on Parliament Hill on March 14. His removal of DEI cabinet portfolios sends the wrong message, Lyla Miklos writes. **(Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press file photo)**

Mark Carney was sworn in as the 24th prime minister of Canada on March 14. His cabinet was sworn in that day, too. Down to 23 ministers from the previous 37, this cabinet was lean and mean so it could focus on the trade war with the U.S. No longer just an existential threat, Donald Trump's America with its daily taunts of turning Canada into the 51st state is now an actual threat to our sovereignty.

Some of the portfolios removed from Carney's cabinet included: "Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities," "Labour," "Official Languages," "Seniors" and "Women, Gender Equality and Youth." Carney said his cabinet was "made to meet the moment we are in."



Prime Minister Mark Carney, front fourth from left, poses on March 14 with members of the newly sworn-in Liberal cabinet following a ceremony at Rideau Hall in Ottawa. **(Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press file photo)**

His focus is on the economy, but this crisis goes well beyond the financial. Trump's attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are devastating. He has removed DEI language from all government policies. Trans people have been erased. Black history is being expunged. Women's rights are being stripped away. International aid has been stopped. Trump has called for the Department of Education to be shut down. Temporary residents, immigrants, students and tourists have been thrown into ICE detention centres. Some news media have been banned from government press conferences. Democracy is being proactively dismantled from within.

Removing DEI cabinet portfolios here sends the wrong message — our identity as Canadians needs to go beyond generating revenue from extracting our natural resources under a maple leaf banner.

[The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women released a joint statement](#), co-signed by hundreds of individuals and organizations, condemning Carney's elimination of the Minister for Women and Gender Equality.

"Even in a lean cabinet, which purports to be responding to specific economic pressures, the absence of this dedicated minister sends a troubling message about the current government's priorities and commitment to advancing rights for intergenerational women, 2SLGBTQIIA-plus people and gender equality at large," the statement reads.

"A strong economy demands that we invest in feminist policies, like health care, pharmacare, child care, the national action plan to end gender-based violence, and so much more. Gender equality is not an afterthought; it is the backbone of a strong economy and resilient society."

[The Canadian Human Rights Act](#) ensures all individuals can "make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have and to have their needs accommodated, consistent with their duties and obligations as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, family status, genetic characteristics, disability or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted or in respect of which a record suspension has been ordered."

[The Canadian Labour Congress shared a statement](#) saying, "Attacks on DEI initiatives are part of a concerted and organized effort to undermine progress on human rights, sow division among workers and maintain power structures that benefit the few at the expense of the many. These are deliberate attacks on the fundamental human rights that underpin a just society. They aim to create a narrative, and indeed a society, where equity and social progress are seen as threats, and exclusion and discrimination are accepted, normalized and further entrenched."

Socialist principles frame so many of the things we take pride in as Canadians that differentiate us from our southern neighbours — universal health care, same-sex marriage, abortion rights, two official languages, multiculturalism, the metric system, gun control, the CBC, trans rights, legal marijuana and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to name a few.

Many have made excuses for Carney's removal of DEI portfolios from his cabinet, saying it's just a temporary cabinet. He'll restore those ministries after the election. I long ago learned if someone tells you who they are, believe them the first time.

[Erica Ifill, in a column for The Hill Times](#), wrote, "We may be fighting Trump's encroachment on Canada in the light, but we are ushering in his policy directions in the dark."

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