

The rights and freedoms guaranteed are:

1. Democratic rights (for example, the right of every citizen to vote for the House of Commons and the provincial legislative assembly, and the right to elections at least every five years, though in time of real or apprehended war, invasion or insurrection, the life of a federal or provincial house may be prolonged by a two-thirds vote of the Commons or legislative assembly).
2. Fundamental freedoms (conscience, thought, speech, peaceful assembly, association).
3. Mobility rights (to enter, remain in, or leave Canada, and to move into, and earn a living in, any province subject to certain limitations, notably to provide for "affirmative action" programs for the socially or economically disadvantaged).
4. Legal rights (a long list, including such things as the right to a fair, reasonably prompt, public trial by an impartial court).
5. Equality rights (no discrimination on grounds of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability; again, with provision for "affirmative action" programs).
6. Official language rights.
7. Minority language education rights.

All these rights are "subject to such reasonable limits as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." What these limits might be, the courts will decide.

The equality rights came into force on April 15, 1985, three years after the time of patriation. (This gave time for revision of the multitude of laws, federal and provincial, which may have required amendment or repeal.)

The fundamental, legal and equality rights in the Charter are subject to a "notwithstanding" clause. This allows Parliament, or a provincial legislature, to pass a law violating any of these rights (except the equality right that prohibits discrimination based on sex) simply by inserting in such law a declaration that it shall operate notwithstanding the fact that it is contrary to this or that provision of the Charter. Any such law can last only five years. But it can be re-enacted for further periods of five years. Any such legislation must apply equally to men and women.