

Trudeau gives Canada first cabinet with equal number of men and women

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- Ethnically diverse ministers include 15 men and 15 women
- PM Justin Trudeau hails ‘a cabinet that looks like Canada’

Canada’s new prime minister Justin Trudeau has named a young and ethnically diverse cabinet, with a ministerial team that for the first time in the country’s history is equally balanced between men and women.

The ministers – 15 women and 15 men – are mostly aged under 50, in a team marking both a generational change and a commitment to reflecting Canada’s diversity.

“It’s important to be here before you today to present to Canada a cabinet that looks like Canada,” Trudeau, 43, told reporters on Wednesday soon after he was officially sworn-in as the country’s 23rd prime minister – the second-youngest in its history.

Asked to explain his gender parity promise, he answered: “Because it’s 2015.”

Many of the incoming female ministers have been given key roles, including former journalist Chrystia Freeland – now in charge of international trade – and Maryam Monsef, who fled Afghanistan as a refugee 20 years ago and will oversee the democratic reform portfolio.

Trudeau’s cabinet also includes two aboriginal members of parliament and three Sikh politicians.

But the prime minister also included some of the Liberal party’s old guard, putting former party leader Stéphane Dion in foreign affairs and giving one of his closest advisers, MP Dominic LeBlanc, the role of government leader in the House of Commons.

Trudeau is the son of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, one of Canada’s most recognizable and longest serving prime ministers. But he said he wasn’t reflecting on his father’s legacy during Wednesday’s swearing-in.

“My thoughts today – sorry Dad – aren’t mostly on him, they’re very much on my own kids and the kids across this country that we are going to work very, very hard for to ensure they have a better future,” he said.

An MP since 2008, Trudeau led the centrist Liberals to a resounding victory in October’s federal election, replacing Stephen Harper’s Conservatives, who held power for nine years.

The mandate gives him the opportunity to undo some of the former prime minister’s record, including amending sections of controversial anti-terror legislation and pulling Canadian forces out of the US-led coalition against Islamic State.

In a dig at his predecessor, Trudeau promised cabinet members would have significant independence with their files.

“Government by cabinet is back,” he said.

Harper was known for centralizing power around the prime minister’s office during his tenure and dominating the policy decisions being implemented by his own ministers.

Trudeau had repeatedly promised his government would be more open and transparent than the previous one.

That promise extended to Wednesday’s swearing-in, as hundreds of people took up the Liberals’ open invitation to watch the ceremony on large screens set up on the grounds of Rideau Hall.

Eschewing the customary black cars that carry soon-to-be ministers to the doors of the official residence of Canada’s governor-general, Trudeau and his family and the new cabinet arrived on the grounds in a bus.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been setting major goals for general awesomeness ever since he was elected as the 23rd Prime Minister, the second-youngest in the history of Canada.