

John Diefenbaker and a National Bill of Rights

In 1936, four years before being elected to Parliament, John Diefenbaker began drafting his Bill of Rights. As a young boy, he saw injustice first-hand in the form of discrimination against French-Canadians, natives, Metis and European immigrants ^[9]. As a lawyer, he would have been aware of the Jehovah's Witnesses' cases being tried in the courts.

On March 16, 1950, a decade before the Canadian Bill of Rights became law, Diefenbaker, then a Saskatchewan MP, told a public forum why such a law was needed. Individuals' freedoms of religion, press, speech and association are threatened by the state, he said. A Bill of Rights was needed to take a "forthright stand against discrimination based on colour, creed or racial origin." ^[10]

In 1960, as Prime Minister, Diefenbaker successfully introduced the Canadian Bill of Rights, the precursor of the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#).