

2025-26

Annual Report



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1. About The ILS

The Institute for Liberal Studies (ILS) is a registered educational charity that hosts and sponsors non-partisan, educational events and programs that encourage exploration of the importance of political and economic freedom and the classical liberal tradition.

Since 2006, the ILS has hosted hundreds of events across Canada.

At ILS events, students hear from leading scholars and experts on the economic, philosophical, and political foundations of a free society while meeting peers who share their interest in the ideas of freedom.

2. Word From the Executive Director

Looking around both Canada and the world it is easy to feel that the values of classical liberalism are under threat from segments of the political left and right.

At the Institute for Liberal Studies we believe that education in the ideas of freedom is the most effective means of countering illiberalism.



Last year we reached nearly 2,000 people in person and over 20,000 people online with lectures and discussions about the importance of political and economic freedom and the foundations of a free society.

We held our biggest **Freedom Week** yet with 60 students joining us in Montreal for a weeklong seminar. We held 47 in-person and on-line events for over 1,500 people.

We awarded scholarships to promising young scholars as well grants to professors who are helping their students to engage with important ideas.

Our **Socratic Seminars, Summer Fellowship, and PPE Graduate Fellowship** continue to help us identify and train young Canadians who will contribute to the intellectual foundations of a free society in their academic and professional careers. We have introduced a series of **Civil Discourse Workshops** to help build and model skills for productive disagreement.

We are continuing to encourage the exploration of the ideas of a free society, and models the principles of open inquiry, respectful dialogue, intellectual curiosity, and civil discourse.

The ideas of a free society are as important now as they have ever been, and I am proud of the work we've done to show students their relevance.

Matt Bufton

Executive Director

Institute for Liberal Studies

3. Event Summary



Freedom Week is a five-day, intellectual experience for students and recent graduates from a wide variety of academic disciplines to explore the social, political, and economic foundations of a free society, and the classical liberal tradition.

A typical Freedom Week features a faculty of five distinguished professors from leading universities. The itinerary includes formal lectures and discussion groups, as well as informal opportunities for students and professors to engage further.

Freedom Week 2026 took place at McGill University from August 10-16 and included 60 students from 8 provinces and 26 universities.

Our faculty consisted of:

- Jacob Levy (McGill University)
- Julia Cartwright (American Institute for Economic Research)
- Brian Kogelmann (Perdue University)
- Brandon Turner (Clemson University)
- Moin Yahya (University of Alberta)



Socratic Seminars are in-person meetings which allow small groups to explore original texts and consider their connection to the classical liberal tradition.

Students prepare for a weekend of intensive discussions with a set of assigned readings. Each discussion is facilitated to ensure participants

have the ability to exchange ideas while exploring the ideas of important thinkers in politics, philosophy, economics, and law.

In February, we hosted a group of students for a discussion of economic history and theory grounded in Professor Lawrence White’s book “The Clash of Economic Ideas”.

In September we welcome young professionals working policy-focused non-profits for a discussion based on Thomas Sowell’s book "A Conflict of Visions."



Public lectures and talks reach students on campuses and online to present classical liberal perspectives on social, political, economic, and philosophical issues. These events help attendees explore the ideas of freedom bring to the topic.

Talks are aimed at students and faculty, though the general public is also welcome.

Last year we organized or sponsored 47 events across Canada, ranging from Fredericton, NB to Nanaimo, BC.

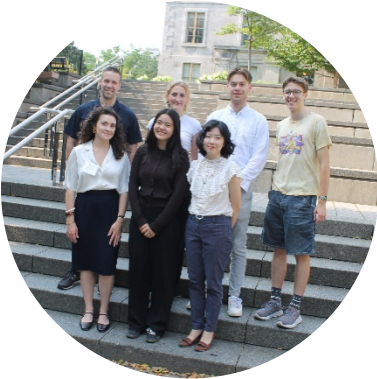
A total of more than 1,500 people attended.

Date	Topic	Speaker(s)	Location
2025-05-03	Jane Jacobs 101	Matt Bufton	Ottawa
2025-05-04	Jane Jacobs 101 (Civitas)	Matt Bufton	Ottawa
2025-05-09	The Humanizing Effect of Market Interaction	Colin Harris	Online
2025-06-06	Annual Meeting of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship	Scott Turner	Wilfrid Laurier University
2025-09-04	Civil Discourse Workshops - College of the Humanities	Matt Bufton, Geoff Kellow	Carleton University
2025-09-26	Civil Discourse Workshop - Ottawa	Alex Emes (moderator)	Ottawa
2025-09-29	Federalism in Canada and the United States: Theory in Practice	Moin Yahya	University of Regina

2025-09-30	Morality of Markets and Economics (MOMAE) student reading group	Tracy Stobbe	Trinity Western University
2025-10-02	Civil Discourse Workshop - UCalgary	Alex Emes (moderator)	University of Calgary
2025-10-14	Rethinking Housing Policy	Sam Bowman, Uytae Lee	UBC
2025-10-14	The Housing Theory of Everything	Sam Bowman	Vancouver
2025-10-21	Resolving Thomas Sowell's Conflict of Visions	Art Carden	Online
2025-10-24	Legislative Overreach or Constitutional Necessity?	Christine Van Geyn	UBC - Okanagan
2025-10-25	Civil Discourse Workshop - UBCO	Alex Emes (moderator)	UBC - Okanagan
2025-10-28	Civil Discourse Workshop - Pints and Politics McGill	Alex Emes, Connor Sutton, Phil Hoyeck	Montreal
2025-11-06	Ronald Reagan: Free Trader or Protectionist?	Marcus Witcher	Online
2025-11-18	Civil Discourse Workshop	Alex Emes (moderator)	Toronto
2025-11-18	From Ideas to Impact	Ken Schooland	Toronto Metropolitan University
2025-11-18	Public Interest Litigation: Free Speech in American and Canadian Legal Contexts	Ben Field and Paul Warchuk	UNB Law School
2025-11-20	Excessive Beneficence: Regulating Generosity in the Modern Natural Law School of Hugo Grotius	Daniel Lee	McGill (RGCS)
2025-11-21	Constitutional Degeneration	Mark Mancini	UBC-Okanagan
2025-11-27	Pints & Public Policy: Classical Liberalism & Canada's Budget	Alex Emes & Nicolas Gagnon	Montreal
2025-11-29	The Individualists: A History of Liberty	Alex Emes	Montreal
2025-11-29	Civil Discourse Workshop	Alex Emes	Montreal
2026-01-04	Career Panel	Matt Bufton	Queen's Model Parliament
2026-01-09	Understanding Intervention: Why "Regime Change" Fails	Abby Hall	Online
2026-01-16	After Cowichan	Dwight Newman	UBC-Okanagan
2026-01-21	Interprovincial Trade Barriers	Ryan Manucha	University of Calgary
2026-01-22	Civil Discourse Workshop	Alex Emes	University of Calgary
2026-01-23	Checks and Balances as Democracy	Richard Bellamy	UBC-Okanagan
2026-01-26	Civil Discourse Workshop	Alex Emes	University of Fraser Valley, Abbotsford
2026-01-28	Civil Discourse Workshop	Alex Emes	University of British Columbia
2026-01-30	Debate on the Notwithstanding Clause	Dwight Newm, Dave Snow, Kerri Froc	Toronto (Law and Freedom Conference)
2026-02-05	Can industrial planning cope with uncertainty?	Bryan Cheang	Online
2026-02-05	Governing Across Time: Transitional Provisions in Constitutions	Tom Ginsburg	McGill (RGCS)
2026-02-17	Socratic Seminar: Nozick and Rawls on Justice and Fairness	Peter Jaworski	Ottawa
2026-02-23	Why is Free Trade good?	Moshe Lander	Queen's Model Parliament, Queen's University
2026-02-25	AI Regulation & Free Speech	Enrique Armijo	University of Toronto Mississauga

2026-02-26	Civil Discourse Workshop	Alex Emes	University of Toronto Mississauga
2026-03-03	Enlightenment Reading Group	Geoff Kellow and Mark Hanvelt	Carleton University
2026-03-04	Debating UBI	Casey Pender, Evelyn Forget	Mount Allison University
2026-03-10	The Stolen Republic	Khalid Ramizy	University of Ottawa
2026-03-20	Socratic Seminar: Free Market Environmentalism	Glenn Fox	Edmonton
2026-03-24	Warring Words: Rhetoric, Theatre, and Education	Torey Shanks	Carleton University
2026-03-27	Canada vs. US Health Care: More Similar Than You Think	Jeffrey Singer	Online

4. Program Summary



The ILS Summer Fellowship is a ten-week paid internship program, designed to provide students the opportunity to build experience working with non-profit organizations that deal in public policy analysis or educational programs. Work placements may be remote or in-office.

This program is open to undergraduate and graduate students in any field, as well as recent graduates (within two years). In addition to the internship placement, ILS Summer Fellows attend weekly webinars (virtually) and Freedom Week (in-person).

Last year we placed seven Summer Fellows who completed their work terms with the following organizations.



MLI





The John Dobson Bursary for the Study of Free Enterprise awards up to \$10,000 to a student (or students) with an interest in a better understanding of free markets and the free enterprise economic system.

Applicants are studying humanities, economics, business, law, or social sciences at a Canadian university at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Bursaries are awarded for one year, with the possibility of renewal for one or two further years, in support of continued study.

Last year, we awarded \$5,000 each to **Christina Leach Allan** (MA Candidate, Philosophy, University of Calgary) and **Avi Woodward-Kellen** (JD Candidate, Allard School of Law, UBC).

The Curious Task podcast releases weekly interviews with professors and public intellectuals who discuss issues in politics, philosophy, and economics from a classical liberal perspective.

20,000+
Downloads

Most Popular Episodes from the last year:

1. Brian Dijkema - Did Liberalism Fail?
2. Andrew Coyne - Why Is Canadian Democracy In Crisis?
3. How Is Conservatism Changing In Canada? - Sam Routley
4. Mike Munger - Can Classical Liberalism Be Saved?
5. What Is The New Right? - Sean Speer

The ILS PPE Graduate Fellowship is an exclusive program for Canadian graduate students in politics, philosophy, and economics. The fellowship is designed as a support network that enables students to:

- Receive career advice from professors and scholars.
- Develop an academic paper.
- Receive feedback on an initial draft/working version of an academic paper.
- Have a paper ready for journal submission within six months of the end of the fellowship.

The fellowship centers around 10 paper-discussion and career-advice virtual meetings (90 minutes each) with professors and other members of the ILS network. The fellowship concludes with a full day, in-person conference where all Summer Fellows present a working draft of their paper.

Fellows receive a stipend and funding is provided for travel to the final meeting.



**Nearly
\$45,000
in Faculty
Grants**

The ILS awards **faculty grants** to support the organization of guest lectures, reading groups, and other educational activities at university campuses in Canada.

Grant applications are for projects that last one year or less but may be renewed.

Successful grant applications go to promoting student engagement on issues related to economic and political freedom and the classical liberal tradition.

In 2025, nearly \$45,000 in university grants were awarded to the following faculty members and universities.

University: **Carleton University**

Project Name: Reading Group and Public Lecture

Project Lead: Marc Hanvelt, Associate Professor of Political Science

Grant Amount: \$6,500

University: **UBC-Okanagan**

Project Name: ILS-UBCO PPE Visiting Speaker Series

Project Lead: Geoffrey Sigalet, Assistant Professor of Political Science

Grant Amount: \$10,000

University: **Trinity Western University, School of Business**

Project Name: Morality of Markets and Economics

Project Lead: Tracy Stobbe, Associate Professor, Economics

Grant Amount: \$3,000

University: **Wilfrid Laurier University**

Project Name: How government funding impacts research

Project Lead: Geoff Horsman, Associate Professor

Grant Amount: \$2,500

University: **McGill University**

Project Name: Research Group on Constitutional Studies Lecture Series

Project Lead: Jacob Levy, Tomlinson Professor of Political Theory

Grant Amount: \$15,000

University: **Mount Allison University**

Project Name: Debating Safety Nets and the Concept of a Universal Basic Income

Project Lead: Casey Pender, McKenna School of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) Postdoctoral Fellow

Grant Amount: \$6,000

5. Funding



The ILS does not seek or accept government funding for our work. The majority of our funding – roughly 85% - comes from foundation grants. We receive about 10% of our funding from individuals, and a further 5% from sponsorships and partner organizations.



Institute for
**LIBERAL
STUDIES**

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