

Donald Johnston

Chair of the McCall MacBain Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland



Donald Johnston has had a long career as a lawyer and politician, spending ten years in the Canadian Parliament, and serving as a Cabinet Minister in a number of senior portfolios. Mr. Johnston was a Member of Parliament from 1978 to 1988. He served in the Cabinet, first as President of the Treasury Board (which manages the Federal Public Service and controls the National Budget), and then as Minister of State for Economic and Regional Development, Minister of Science and Technology, Minister of Justice, and Attorney General of Canada. With the defeat of the Liberal government in 1984, Mr. Johnston became Opposition Critic for Finance and, later, for External Affairs. Mr. Johnston did not stand for re-election in 1988. In 1990, he was elected President of the Liberal Party of Canada. Re-elected in 1992, he held the post through the election in 1993 that returned the Liberal Party to power under Prime Minister Jean Chretien. He was Secretary-General of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and served two terms from 1996 to 2006. After stepping down from the OECD in 2006, he resumed his legal career as Counsel to the then national law firm of Heenan Blaikie until 2014. He is currently Chair of the McCall MacBain Foundation (based in Geneva, Switzerland) which works to improve the welfare of humanity through focused grants in areas of health, education and the environment. From 2006 to 2009, he chaired the International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) based in Switzerland. He was also a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea from 2006 until 2009. Later he served as a Commissioner of the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI) of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace which delivered its report to the Munich Security Conference in February 2012. Mr. Johnston studied Arts and Law at McGill University, graduating from law in 1958 as the Gold Medalist. He holds Honorary Doctorates in law from McGill University, King's College, Bishop's University and McMaster University and in Economics from the Economics University of Bratislava. He taught fiscal law at McGill University from 1963 to 1976, has written many articles on taxation, law and public affairs and is the author of several books, including a political memoir and in 2017 a book on international public policy "Missing the Tide: Global Governments in Retreat."

He is an Officer of the Order of Canada, an Officer of the French Legion of Honour and he has also received the highest honours bestowed on non-citizens from the Governments of Slovakia, Hungary and Belgium and is a recipient from the Emperor of Japan of the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun.