

10 November 2017

Stéphanie Vallée  
Ministère de la Justice  
Édifrice Louis-Philippe-Pigeon  
1200, route de l'Église, 9<sup>e</sup> étage  
Québec (Québec) G1V 4M1

Email: [ministre@justice.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:ministre@justice.gouv.qc.ca)

**Subject: Bill 62 and Religious Freedom**

Dear Minister of Justice Stéphanie Vallée,

I am writing to express the concerns of The Canadian Council of Churches regarding the assent and coming into force in Québec of Bill 62 *An Act to foster adherence to State religious neutrality and, in particular, to provide a framework for requests for accommodations on religious grounds in certain bodies*. We do not believe that the Government of Québec is fulfilling the demands of justice for all people in Québec.

In 2016 The Canadian Council of Churches – representing all the members of The Canadian Council of Churches - adopted by consensus the attached statement on religious freedom.

The Canadian Council of Churches is the broadest and most inclusive ecumenical body in the world, representing 25 denominations of Anglican; Evangelical; Free Church; Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox; Protestant; and Catholic traditions. Together we comprise more than 85% of the Christians in Canada.

We would like to, in particular, draw your attention to our conviction that, in the Canadian context to be a secular state means to remain pluralistic. Secularism includes freedom of belief, both in one's private and public life. Thus there should be no official religion in this country, but neither should there be any form of official atheism.

We understand that a healthy pluralism is one which genuinely respects differences and values them as such. Religious symbols and attire can be intrinsic to one's faith and cannot be

removed at a whim. We therefore understand that the state should normally have no role in regulating their use.

We are aware that Bill 62 is being framed as a question of safety, security and identity rather than one of curtailing religious freedom. However, the effect of the bill is plain: some religious communities feel the effects more than others and may be effectively prevented from participating in the public service or indeed in public life in Canada.

We call on you to assure all Quebecers and Canadians that you are committed to respect, protect and fulfill the fundamental freedoms that begin the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: that *Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression...* and likewise appear in the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms: *Every person is the possessor of the fundamental freedoms, including freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, freedom of opinion, freedom of expression ...*

Thank you for your careful attention to this matter. We hope you will reconsider your support for Bill 62; remove those provisions which hinder the freedom of conscience and religion ... thought, belief, opinion and expression; and seek to foster the full participation of all religious communities in public life in Canada.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Canon Dr. Alyson Barnett-Cowan  
President

Enclosure: *Statement on Religious Freedom*, Christian Interfaith Reference Group,  
The Canadian Council of Churches. September 2016.

Cc: Philippe Couillard  
Premier of Québec  
Édifice Honoré-Mercier, 3<sup>e</sup> étage  
835, boul. René-Lévesque Est  
Québec (Québec) G1A 1B4

*The Canadian Council of Churches is the broadest and most inclusive ecumenical body in the world, now representing 25 denominations of Anglican; Evangelical; Free Church; Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox; Protestant; and Catholic traditions. Together the CCC is comprised of 85% of the Christians in Canada who profess adherence to a church. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944.*