
City Council

Motion without Notice

MM38.43	ACTION			Ward: All
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Reaffirming Toronto's Opposition and Providing Financial Support to the Legal Challenge against Quebec's Bill 21 - by Mayor John Tory, seconded by Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão, Councillor Shelley Carroll, Councillor Mike Layton, Councillor James Pasternak, Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson

** This Motion has been deemed urgent by the Chair.*

** This Motion is not subject to a vote to waive referral. This Motion has been added to the agenda and is before Council for debate.*

Recommendations

Mayor John Tory, seconded by Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão, Councillor Shelley Carroll, Councillor Mike Layton, Councillor James Pasternak, Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson recommends that:

1. City Council reaffirm its opposition to the Province of Quebec's Bill 21, An Act respecting the laicity of the State ("Bill 21") and reaffirm the City's commitment to upholding the freedoms set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
2. City Council support the current legal challenge against Bill 21.
3. City Council provide a one-time 2021 contribution of up to \$100,000 to the joint legal challenges of Bill 21 by the National Council of Canadian Muslims, the World Sikh Organization, and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, to be accommodated from available funding within the 2021 Operating Budget within Non-Program Expenditures.
4. City Council call on all other Canadian municipalities to affirm their opposition to Bill 21 and provide financial contributions to support the legal challenge.

Summary

Last week, Fatemeh Anvari was removed from her job as a Grade 3 teacher at Chelsea Elementary School in Quebec for wearing a hijab. Under Quebec's Bill 21, frontline public employees are banned from displaying religious symbols while working and can be removed or fired as a result.

Toronto City Council has taken a consistent and firm stance in opposition to Bill 21. Toronto, as one of the most diverse and multicultural cities on the planet, is home to many different

religious communities, and ensures that people of all faiths can feel comfortable wearing their religious symbols in schools, workplaces, and government institutions. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides that everyone has the fundamental freedom of conscience and religion.

In 2019, Council unanimously approved a motion in response to Bill 21 when it was first proposed in the Quebec National Assembly. The Motion stated:

City Council once again reaffirm its support for freedom of religion and expression, and, further state its opposition to any legislation that would restrict or prohibit such freedoms and by doing so, Toronto states its position that the City continues to be a source of worldwide inspiration.

Later that year, after Bill 21 was approved, Council again voiced its opposition, stating:

1. City Council oppose Quebec's Bill 21, An Act respecting the laicity of the State and reaffirm the City's commitment to upholding religious freedoms as outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
2. City Council endorse the initiative proposed by Calgary City Council and supported by the Regional Municipality of Peel that asks the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination, of which the City of Toronto is a member, to create a nationwide campaign that highlights the harmful widespread impacts of Bill 21 on social cohesion and inclusion in Canada.
3. City Council encourage the Federal Government to unequivocally condemn and challenge Quebec's Bill 21.

This law diminishes rights protected by The Canadian Charter of Rights of Freedoms and stands contrary to the values of Torontonians and Canadians—values this council has been vigilant in protecting and upholding.

Yesterday, Brampton City Council committed financial support to the legal challenge against Bill 21, and asked that other Canadian municipalities similarly provide financial contributions towards the legal challenge.

This Motion is urgent because, in order to provide the best fighting chance for the legal challenge to Bill 21, it requires a commitment of sufficient financial resources from Canadian municipalities as soon as possible.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM38.43

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-174505.pdf>