



Report Number: C2021-1704

Meeting: Combined Meeting of Council

Meeting Date: 2021 December 20

URGENT NOTICE OF MOTION

RE: Condemnation of Quebec's Bill 21 & Commitment to Anti-Racism as Led by Canadian Municipalities

Sponsoring Councillor(s): Councillor Carra, Councillor Penner, Councillor Mian, Councillor Spencer, Councillor Dhaliwal, Councillor Walcott & Mayor Gondek

WHEREAS:

- In 2019, the Province of Quebec enacted Bill 21 (An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State) which prohibits public servants from wearing religious symbols including turbans, hijabs, yarmulke, the cross and many others;
- The wearing of signs or clothing as a religious symbol is a fundamental right in the exercise of "freedom of thought, conscience and religion," as written in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Freedom of Religion in Canada is protected by Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act;
- The infringement of religious freedom would have negative consequences for Calgarians and all Canadians, and it is critical that formal support be in place to address this;
- In fall 2019, Calgary City Council unanimously opposed Quebec's Bill 21 (An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State) and agreed to continue to support building a welcoming city where everyone has access to opportunity and prosperity;
- In 2020, through Notice of Motion C2020-0715 (Calgary's Commitment to Anti-Racism), Calgary City Council committed to a number of actions to dismantle systemic racism in our city and directed the establishment of an anti-racism committee to advise Council on the development and lead the implementation of a community-based anti-racism strategy, including identifying opportunities to work with community partners and organizations on actions to address structural racism;
- Since 2006, The City of Calgary has been a member of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CCMARD), now known as Canadian Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (CCIM), committed to undertake initiatives to eliminate all forms of discrimination with a view to building open and inclusive societies;
- Because Calgary is the third most diverse city in Canada and home to people of many different faiths, religions, genders, languages, and cultures, The City of Calgary stands firmly to support religious freedom in alignment with the Canadian Charter of Human Rights; and
- The public service and elected officials have an important role in protecting our shared values of tolerance and diversity, and Canadian municipalities have made a commitment to collaborate collectively on behalf of their citizens.

URGENT NOTICE OF MOTION

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That the City of Calgary endorse the current legal challenge against the discrimination of freedom of religion in Quebec's Bill 21, an effort led by National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), the World Sikh Organization of Canada (WSO) and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA); and
2. That Council convene a task force - led by Councillors Mian, Dhaliwal and Spencer - to engage local legal and religious communities to work with The City of Calgary in creating a coalition that:
 - a. identifies how expertise and resources can best be deployed to assist the legal challenge against Quebec's Bill 21 and/or to support local inclusivity initiatives,
 - b. enables the ability for existing non-profit organizations to raise funds on behalf of citizens and corporations in Calgary that wish to add their support towards this effort, and
 - c. informs how matching funds from The City of Calgary as a corporation could or should be advanced to aid in the legal challenge against Quebec's Bill 21 and/or to support local inclusivity initiatives.
3. That the recommendations of the task force described above in point 2 be formalized by the end of Q1 2022 to accommodate a potential further decision of Calgary City Council to consider allocating funding for the legal challenge against Quebec's Bill 21 and/or in support of local inclusivity efforts.