

PROVINCE OF QUEBEC BILL 21

Whereas the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms enshrines Freedom of Religion in our society;

Whereas the Ontario Human Rights Code and related provincial legislation includes protections for religious freedoms in the workplace;

Whereas the Niagara Region joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities on September 18, 2020 whose 'advance initiatives' include "establish policies to eradicate all forms of racism and discrimination";

Whereas Niagara Regional Council adopted a Community Safety and Wellbeing Strategy on June 24, 2021 that seeks to create a community where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, has access to services and is able to meet their needs (either individually or as a family) for education, health care, food, housing, income and social and cultural expression;

Whereas an important component of belonging is to ensure that Niagara's diversity is reflected in local public sector roles when serving the community;

Whereas in collaboration with the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) and the World Sikh Organization (WSO), the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) is part of a legal challenge to Quebec's Bill 21 - legislation that makes it illegal for Quebec workers in the public sector to wear religious symbols; and

Whereas a Supreme Court decision allowing the infringement of religious freedom would have negative consequences for the people of Niagara and all Canadians.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. That Niagara Regional Council **OPPOSE** the Province of Quebec's Bill 21, An Act respecting the laicity of the State and its discriminatory and draconian measures affecting racialized communities;

2. That Niagara Regional Council **SUPPORTS** the legal challenge against Bill 21 and **REAFFIRMS** Niagara Region's commitment to upholding the freedoms set out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

3. That Niagara Regional Council **PROVIDE** a one-time 2022 contribution of up to \$10,000 to the joint legal challenge of Bill 21 led by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the National Council of Canadian Muslims, and the World Sikh Organization to be initially funded by the Taxpayer Relief Reserve with the amount replenished with the 2022 year-end operational surplus; and

4. That this resolution **BE CIRCULATED** to Niagara Local Area Municipalities, MARCO Member Municipalities, Premier Doug Ford, Premier Francois Legault, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Union des Municipalites du Quebec (UMQ), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities.