

City of Edmonton Resolution on Quebec's Bill 21

Attention: Resolutions Coordinator

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

June XX, 2020



Title of Resolution: Resolution Against Quebec's Bill 21

Moved by: Councillor Banga, City of Edmonton

Seconded by: City of Calgary

WHEREAS the National Assembly of Quebec passed *Bill 21: An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State*, a secularism law which bans public servants from wearing religious garb and symbols in the workplace;

WHEREAS the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and *Alberta Human Rights Act*, which enshrines the freedom of belief and expression, and expressly prohibits discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs, respectively;

WHEREAS the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association is committed to supporting strong, multicultural, and inclusive communities.

IT IS THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association provides a statement of support condemning and opposing any law that would seek to restrict or limit the religious and cultural freedoms of our citizens and continues to support building and welcoming communities across our province.

BACKGROUND

In the Summer of 2019, Quebec's National Assembly introduced and passed Bill 21, formally known as *An Act Respecting the Laicity of the State*. This bill prohibits public servants (teachers, police officers, judges, etc) from wearing religious garb or symbols while in the workplace, including: turbans, hijabs, crosses, and yarmulkes.

Bill 21 is in direct contravention of Section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees all persons in Canada the right to freedom of religion and freedom of expression. Upon introducing Bill 21, the governing Coalition Avenir Québec invoked notwithstanding clause, which permits provincial legislatures to override sections 2 of the Charter. Religious groups in Quebec have launched legal challenges to Bill 21, and the decision is making its way through the courts.

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While this bill is only in effect in Quebec, the effects of it can be felt by equity-seeking individuals and groups across Canada. Democratic governments are tasked with protecting the rights of marginalized communities; and the enacting of this legislation in Quebec can be viewed as encroaching on a fundamental right that all Canadians are entitled to.

Alberta is not immune to discriminatory, exclusionary, and prejudicial attitudes and it is important that elected leaders set the tone against such sentiments. AUMA and many member municipalities large or small throughout Alberta have welcoming and inclusive communities.

AUMA's Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (WIC) initiative is a partnership between the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and the Government of Alberta to support municipal governments to be leaders in the implementation of policies and practices that create and maintain welcoming and inclusive communities in Alberta. The goal of the WIC initiative is to create communities where all residents and visitors enjoy a sense of belonging and where diversity adds to the social and economic vibrancy of the community, and improves the quality of life for all residents.

Taking a firm stand on Quebec's Bill 21 confirms the commitment of Alberta municipalities to continue working towards being more welcoming and inclusive of all. Through this resolution, the City of Edmonton asks that AUMA to issue a public statement of support to acknowledge that Alberta's municipalities oppose the legislation of discriminatory practices that are being employed in other Canadian jurisdictions.

Supporting Past City of Edmonton and City of Calgary Resolutions:

Edmonton City Council motion on Quebec's Bill 21: Mover - Sarah Hamilton, Seconder - Mohinder Banga, approved by City Council, October 22, 2019

"That the City of Edmonton support in principle the legal challenge against the discrimination of freedom of religion proposed in Quebec's Bill 21."

Calgary City Council Resolution on Quebec's Bill 21

On September 30, 2019, the City of Calgary passed a [resolution](#) to oppose Quebec's Bill 21 and continue to support building a welcoming city where everyone has access to opportunity and prosperity.

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