



Humanist Canada's Position Statement on Bill 21 – Quebec's Secularism Law

On June 16, 2019, Quebec's National Assembly passed legislation known as Bill 21 that bans the wearing of religious symbols by certain public servants, including teachers, police, government lawyers and others in positions of authority.

Quebec's Bill 21 pits fundamental individual freedoms against core secular values, both of which are cornerstones of a free and progressive society that fosters human flourishing.

The Board of Directors of Humanist Canada unanimously agrees that:

- We want to live in a secular society, free of religious indoctrination by the state.
- Every individual has the right to freedom of expression, without interference by the state, to the extent that such expression does not harm others.

Normally, these two positions are complementary and not contradictory, but Bill 21 has revealed an unusual situation where these two positions are in direct opposition with each other. For this reason, Bill 21 has become a deeply polarizing subject, with strong support both for and against the bill, with no apparent "middle ground" among Humanists.

A fundamental principle of modern Humanism is that "Humanism is undogmatic, imposing no creed upon its adherents." This is codified in the Amsterdam Declaration (1952/2002), which is a statement of the fundamental principles of modern Humanism, as ratified by Humanists International, of which Humanist Canada is a member organization and a signatory to the declaration. Therefore, we will not take a single unified position either for or against Bill 21 and impose it on our membership. In a poll of our membership on July 23, 2019, asking the question: "Given your understanding of Bill 21, do you support the legislation?" 36.4% responded, Yes; 47.3% responded, No, and 16.4% indicated they were Undecided.

Humanist Canada recognizes that you can be a Humanist and support Bill 21, or you can be a Humanist and oppose Bill 21. We respect your freedom to have your own opinion on the bill, and we continue to encourage healthy discussion on this subject. Whether for or against, the choice is yours, and you are welcome in our organization either way.

Approved December 22, 2019