

Immigrants not welcome here?

Letter in The Suburban

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As an attorney practicing Immigration Law since 1990 and more recently representing clients in wrongful dismissal claims, it is clear that the proposed Quebec Charter of Values is a wanton aggression on fundamental rights.

In a province with such a rich diversity of communities I cannot believe that this is something that could ever come into law. The Parti Quebecois government is sending an insidious message that some people are not wanted here. As responsible Quebecers we must oppose it and let all Quebecers know what the dangers of such a proposal are.

Lawyers from our firm have travelled on business missions with the Government of Quebec (Team Canada and Equipe Quebec Missions) and have watched our provincial governments whether Liberal or Parti Quebecois promote Quebec as a multi-cultural community that welcomes individuals from around the world, offering them the opportunity to become full members of our society, while maintaining their religious beliefs and culture. They have encouraged immigration and presented Quebec as a place that welcomes individuals of diverse religious beliefs and culture. It is ironic that after such solicitation and encouragement, that the Marois Government has now decided that these same individuals are not welcome.

Many of our clients, who have chosen Quebec as their home, wear Hijabs, Turbans, Kippahs, ornamental crosses and other religious symbols. They are doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, business people, and students and come here with the greatest desire to contribute to Quebec society. They work in the private and public sector and chose Montreal as the place they thought welcomed them as full members of society, including their right to religious freedom.

Should this Charter come into law individuals working in the Public Sector as teachers, nurses, doctors or other professions will be told to take off their religious/cultural garb or resign. Quebecers should not have to choose between their religious beliefs and economic well-being. In Labour law this is called constructive dismissal and under existing law, provides the individual with the same rights and recourses against their employer as wrongful dismissal, since changes in the terms of employment that force an individual to quit are tantamount to being fired. This argument is one that the Federal Government should use to illustrate the unconstitutionality of this proposed Charter of Values, should it come in to law, as it clearly infringes on an individual's religious rights as guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

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