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PATRIARCHATE



DIOCESE OF MISSISSAUGA,  
Vancouver and Western Canada



## **Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada Rejects the Removal of the Religious Expression Exemption in Bill C-9**

December 10, 2025

MISSISSAUGA, ON - Christian communities in Canada fully and unequivocally condemn hate. Our faith teaches mercy, dignity, compassion and reconciliation. We support firm enforcement against actual hate speech, especially where safety is threatened or violence is encouraged. At the same time, biblical teaching is not hate speech. The Bible is a spiritual framework meant to form the heart and not a coercive system imposed on others. His Grace Bishop Mina said: *“The Bible was not given to condemn but to transform the heart. The Bible shapes conscience by invitation, never by force.”*

For decades, Canada’s hate laws have respected this distinction. The religious expression exemption in s.319(3)(b) of the Criminal Code was carefully crafted to preserve a constitutional balance: to protect vulnerable groups and safeguard peaceful religious teaching. Crucially, it includes a good-faith standard, ensuring that only sincere theological expression is protected and not any misuse of Scripture to justify malice.

Removing this exemption in Bill C-9 would erase that balance. It risks criminalizing sermons, pastoral counseling, youth instruction and ordinary teaching simply because someone disagrees or takes offence, even when no hostility, threat, or intent to harm exists. This is not how hate laws were designed to function. It would also create a troubling inconsistency in enforcement: peaceful Christian expression becomes increasingly vulnerable to complaint or prosecution, while hostility directed toward Christians through vandalism, intimidation and online harassment rarely receives the same urgency.

This change also sends a powerful and harmful message to Christian communities across the country. It makes many feel unsafe, marginalized and effectively under siege for merely practicing and articulating their faith. When one group’s peaceful expression is uniquely exposed to criminal risk, while others remain protected, the law inadvertently picks winners and losers. This undermines public confidence and contradicts the principle that every Canadian should stand equal before the law.

History has shown that the Bible often speaks to moral questions on which society may disagree. Disagreement is not hate, moral teaching is not violence and Spiritual instruction is not a public safety threat. If peaceful religious expression becomes criminally vulnerable simply because it challenges a moral position, then the absence of religion, when asserted as superior, must also be recognized as ideological.

Neutrality requires that both religious and nonreligious expression be treated with equal dignity and protection. Criminalizing faith while elevating secular conviction is not neutrality; it is worldview preference. This preference, when enforced by law, becomes coercive in a pluralistic society. True neutrality does not silence faith. It safeguards the equal place of all worldviews in a diverse society.

We respectfully ask that the longstanding exemption in s.319(3)(b) of the Criminal Code be retained so Canada can continue to protect both vulnerable communities and the peaceful expression of faith. Hate must be confronted without redefining genuine religious teaching as criminal conduct. A loving faith cannot and does not promote hate.

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