



Centre juridique

pour les libertés constitutionnelles

Montréal, December 9, 2024

BY FAX AND E-MAIL

The Honourable François LEGAULT

Prime Minister

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The Honourable Jean-François ROBERGE

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Re: Ban on prayer

Dear Mr. Prime Minister

Monsieur le ministre de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration,

On December 6, following alleged breaches of secularism in a school, you stated that you were considering a ban on prayer in public places. At the same time, you mentioned a possible recourse to the Notwithstanding Clause of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, thereby implicitly acknowledging the violation of the Quebec and Canadian charters that such a measure would entail, first and foremost with respect to freedom of religion.

Far from reinforcing secularism, however, the ban on prayer in public places would contradict the principles on which the *Loi sur la Laïcité de l'État* is expressly based: (1) the religious neutrality of the State, (2) the equality of all citizens, (3) freedom of

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religion. Your approach to the situation suggests a militant, anti-religious and dogmatic conception of one of the healthiest and oldest practices that human beings have maintained in their relationship with their fellow human beings and with a higher power.

The ban on prayer that you are announcing borrows from the intolerant accents of a state atheism that swarmed east of the Iron Curtain during the twentieth century, and of which history has retained only sad memories.

This shows that state atheism in Quebec would in fact be the negation of the religious neutrality that the law is intended to promote.

I urge you to respect the dignity of your office and the wisdom of our civic and constitutional traditions. Let your subjects pray in peace, where they commit no evil and cause no objective harm to anyone.

Receive, Gentlemen, the expression of my highest consideration.

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