



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-02118**

BY: **MR. TABBARA (KITCHENER SOUTH-HESPELER)**

DATE: **MARCH 1, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **HONOURABLE JODY WILSON-RAYBOULD**

Response by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Discrimination

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government is firmly committed to respecting and upholding the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Charter) and its protections, including the freedom to have no religious beliefs. In light of the foregoing, study of this question by Parliamentary Committee is not warranted.

The Charter guarantees rights and freedoms that are essential to maintaining a free and democratic society. These rights and freedoms include freedom of conscience and religion, which includes the freedom to have no religious beliefs. The Charter also protects all individuals from discrimination based on several grounds, including religion.

Discrimination is a distinction based on a prohibited ground, such as religion, that perpetuates or promotes the view that an individual is less capable or worthy of recognition or value as a human being or member of Canadian society. Canadian courts have established that the analysis to determine whether there is discrimination involves a consideration of the broader context and any negative impact of the law.

In its application, the Charter ensures that the state and its institutions maintain a religiously neutral public space that is free from coercion, pressure, and judgment on the part of public authorities in matters of religion. Government cannot use its powers to impose a religious belief or to compel the observance of a religious practice. Nonetheless, the Supreme Court of Canada has noted that the Canadian cultural landscape includes many traditional and heritage practices that are religious in nature, and that the state's duty of neutrality does not require it to abstain from celebrating and preserving its religious heritage.