

MEMORANDUM

TO: Faith Leaders in Québec

FROM: Jean-Christophe Jasmin, Director for Québec

DATE: November 7, 2025

SUBJECT: Québec’s Report on Secularism – Key Takeaways for Faith Communities

WHO WE ARE

Cardus is a non-partisan research institute committed to clarifying and strengthening, through research and dialogue, the ways in which society's institutions can work together for the common good.

INTRODUCTION

The report of the *Comité d'étude sur le respect des principes de la Loi sur la laïcité de l'État et sur les influences religieuses* (Study Committee on Compliance with the Principles of the Act respecting the laicity of the State and on Religious Influences) proposes an unprecedented expansion of Québec secularism through 50 recommendations.¹ If adopted, these measures would have catastrophic consequences for faith communities and would, in some respects, create one of the most hostile regulatory environments in the world.

KEY CONCERNS

The recommendations in the report highlight several key issues that should be of great concern to faith communities:

- **Recommended expansion of secularism:** Secularism would no longer only apply to state institutions, but would also be imposed on independent bodies associated with the state (CPEs, universities, subsidised daycares, subsidised private schools, etc.). This would lead to the marginalization of visible and collective expressions of religion.
- **Recommended end to tax exemptions,** including:
 - Eliminating the advancement of religion as a charitable purpose making these organizations ineligible for tax benefits;
 - Eliminating municipal tax exemptions for places of worship; and
 - Eliminating tax exemptions for clergy
- **Recommended increases to restrictions for faith-based activities:** The study recommends that there be reduced access to public spaces, and limitations on the rental of venues for religious activities. Further recommendations call for the exclusion of organisations with so-called “anti-choice” and “discriminatory” positions from funding

¹ Québec, Comité d'étude sur le respect des principes de la Loi sur la laïcité de l'État et sur les influences religieuses. *Pour une laïcité québécoise encore plus cohérente : bilan et perspectives. Rapport du Comité d'étude sur le respect des principes de la Loi sur la laïcité de l'État et sur les influences religieuses.* 2025. https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/org/secretariat-institution-democratiques/laicite/rapport-comite/rapport_laicite-bilan-perspectives-2025.pdf

programmes.² This would exclude faith-based charities, such as the Knights of Columbus, based on wide and undefined categories.

- **Redefinition of freedom of conscience:** The report reinterprets freedom of conscience in a way that seeks to protect individuals from religious influence in the public sphere but completely ignores the imposition of secular ideologies by the state on individuals.

The following is an illustration of how a medium-sized church that owns a building in Montreal valued at \$2 million could be impacted by these recommendations:

- Currently, the church has the following revenues and expenses:
 - Revenue: \$400,000
 - Expenses: \$400,000
- If the recommendations were implemented, the following changes would occur:
 - Property taxes would increase by \$60,000/year
 - Parsonage taxes would be paid at approximately \$5,000
 - We estimate that donations to the church would decrease by approximately 30 to 50 percent, meaning the church's revenue could decrease by \$170,000³
 - This would result in a total increase of expenses of approximately \$465,000
- The result would be a massive structural deficit of \$235,000, jeopardising the very survival of the church.

Implementing the 50 recommendations in this report would be catastrophic for faith communities in Québec and would lead to the closure of a significant portion of these communities in subsequent years.

CONTACT

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and assist with future considerations on this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact our director for Québec Jean-Christophe at jcjasmin@cardus.ca.

² Québec, Comité d'étude sur le respect des principes de la Loi sur la laïcité de l'État et sur les influences religieuses, *Pour une laïcité québécoise encore plus cohérente*, 17.

³ Estimate based on the study by Hickey et al. on the elasticity of charitable donations. See Ross Hickey, Brad Minaker, A. Abigail Payne, Joanne Roberts, and Justin Smith, 2023. "The Effect of Tax Price on Donations: Evidence from Canada," *National Tax Journal*, University of Chicago Press, vol. 76(2), pages 291-315.