

CANADA 2022 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution guarantees freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, expression, and the right to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination based on religion. The federal government does not require religious groups to register, but some registered groups may receive tax-exempt status.

A Quebec provincial law on secularism prohibits certain provincial government employees from wearing religious symbols when publicly exercising their official functions. In May, the Supreme Court ruled Alexandre Bissonnette, who killed six worshippers at the Grand Mosque in Quebec City in 2017, would be eligible for parole after serving 25 years of his life sentence, rejecting the Crown prosecutor's appeal to impose a 50-year wait for parole eligibility. Provincial governments continued to impose COVID-related restrictions on assembly, including for all faith groups, through the end of April. While the provincial orders were in place, religious communities continued to criticize the measures limiting religious gatherings for being discriminatory, given that mass gatherings for sports events and other functions were permitted. In May, an Alberta provincial court found Church in the Vine Pastor Tracy Fortin guilty of obstructing an Alberta health inspector's attempt to verify if the church was enforcing COVID-19 masking and social distancing rules. In July, an Alberta provincial court ordered Fortin to pay a fine and a victim surcharge; in October a higher Alberta court dismissed Fortin's appeal.

In January, the Ontario government announced it would partner with the Center for Israel and Jewish Affairs and the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies as part of the province's plan to fight racism, hate, and prejudice in schools. In June, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) investigated the arrest of two Sikh men by Ottawa police on Parliament Hill on June 11. Police sources said they received a tip, subsequently proven false, that members of an extremist group were headed to a protest with explosives. Police arrested and questioned the men, who were organizers of a peaceful protest by Members of the United Front of Sikh Canadians; police subsequently released them without charge. In September and October, the provincial governments of

Alberta and Manitoba adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, becoming the fourth and fifth provinces to formally adopt or endorse the IHRA standard.

Reports continued of anti-Muslim and antisemitic incidents, including cases of violence, hate speech, harassment, discrimination, and vandalism. In July, Statistics Canada reported 884 incidents of police-reported, religiously motivated hate crimes in 2021, a 67 percent increase from 2020. According to the B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights, there was a 7.2 percent increase in antisemitic incidents in 2021, compared with 2020. The league recorded 2,799 reports of antisemitic incidents in 2021, compared with 2,610 in 2020. B'nai Brith Canada said online hate had become the preferred method of targeting Jews; it recorded 2,093 incidents of online hate in 2021 compared with 1,863 cases in 2020. During the year, authorities continued to detain Nathaniel Veltman, pending trial for killing four members of a Muslim family and injuring a fifth in a vehicle attack in London, Ontario, in June 2021. Police said they believed the defendant targeted victims because they were Muslim. Charges against Veltman included four counts of first-degree murder, one count of attempted murder, and associated terrorism charges. In January, Jeffrey Ryan Hill attacked a Muslim woman who was sitting in her vehicle with her children at the al-Ameen Mosque in Edmonton, Alberta; police arrested and charged Hill with mischief and uttering threats. He was sentenced to 90 days in prison. In May, police arrested Uber Eats delivery man Kyle McLeod for a suspected hate crime committed outside a Jewish school in Toronto. According to media sources McLeod assaulted a school staff member and used antisemitic invectives. In March, Vancouver police arrested and charged Yuniar Kurniawan with one count of mischief for the August 2021 vandalism of a Vancouver, British Columbia, memorial to 376 Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu passengers on the ship *Komagata Maru* who were denied entry to the country in 1914 and forced to return to India; the court case continued through year's end. According to the group Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society, the incident resonated with Indo-Canadians as a reminder of historic prejudice directed against South Asian immigrants on racial and religious grounds.

In July, Pope Francis traveled to the country and issued an apology to its Indigenous peoples for the "the evil" committed in the former residential school system administered by the Catholic and other churches. Prime Minister Trudeau stated Pope Francis's visit had an "enormous impact" on survivors, although it

was only a first step, and reconciliation will continue to be the shared responsibility of all Canadians.

U.S. embassy, consulate general, and other U.S. government officials emphasized the need for respect for religious freedom and diversity with national and provincial governments. They likewise reaffirmed the U.S. government commitment to addressing discrimination and exclusion through the 2021 U.S.-Canada Roadmap for a Renewed Partnership. The Roadmap is a strategic document of shared policy priorities. Embassy and other U.S. government officials met with representatives from Global Affairs Canada's Office of Diversity and Inclusion to discuss issues of religious freedom in the country, including religious expression, inclusion, and respect for religious diversity. Throughout the year, the embassy and consulates general used social media to amplify religious freedom messaging from senior Department of State officials. In January, the Ambassador marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day at the National Holocaust Memorial in Ottawa alongside the mayor of Ottawa, members of the diplomatic community, and leaders of the Jewish community. As part of the national #WeRemember commemoration, the embassy building was one of many buildings and monuments across the country that lit its lights in yellow to mark the day. In December, the Ambassador participated in an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Company's program *The House* to underscore the U.S. government's commitment to fighting antisemitism.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the country's total population to be 38.2 million (midyear 2022). According to its most recent census in 2021, which provided general data on the country's religious composition, 63.2 percent of the population self-identified as Christian, 26.3 percent stated no religion or identified as secular, 3.7 percent was Muslim, 1.7 percent Hindu, 1.2 percent Sikh, 1.4 percent Buddhist, 1.2 percent stated another religion, and 1.0 percent was Jewish. According to the 2021 census, which had the most recent detailed data available on religious affiliation, Roman Catholics constituted the largest Christian group (29.9 percent of the total population), followed by the United Church of Canada (3.3 percent), Anglicans (3.1 percent), Baptists (1.2 percent), and Christian Orthodox (1.7 percent). Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Pentecostal groups each constituted less than 2 percent of the population. The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints estimates its membership at 200,000. The Hutterites, or Hutterite Brethren, which number approximately 35,000, are an Anabaptist ethnoreligious group living primarily in Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan Provinces. Other religious and spiritual traditions constitute less than 1.2 percent of the population. According to the 2021 census, approximately 18,000 persons (0.2 percent) practiced traditional Indigenous spirituality; 90.2 percent of these are First Nations peoples. Nearly 47 percent of the country's Indigenous population reported having no religious affiliation.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution provides for freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion, and expression. Every individual is equal under the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination based on religion. The law imposes "reasonable limits" on the exercise of these religious rights only where such restrictions can be "demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." The law permits individuals to sue the government for violations of religious freedom. Federal and provincial human rights laws prohibit discrimination based on the grounds of religious belief. Civil remedies include compensation and changes to the policy or practice responsible for the discrimination.

The law does not require religious groups to register, but the federal government grants tax-exempt status to religious groups that register as nonprofit organizations with the Charities Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency. Nonprofit status provides such organizations with federal and provincial sales tax reductions, rebates, and exemptions. To gain and retain tax-exempt status, a group must be nonpolitical and undergo periodic audits. Charitable status also grants members of the clergy various federal benefits, including a housing deduction under the tax code and expedited processing through the immigration system. The term "clergy" includes persons whose communities have licensed, ordained, or otherwise formally recognized them for their religious leadership and authority to perform spiritual duties and services within their religious organization. Individual citizens who donate to tax-exempt religious groups receive a federal tax receipt entitling them to federal income tax deductions.

A Quebec provincial law on secularism prohibits certain provincial government employees from wearing religious symbols when publicly exercising their official functions. The law defines a religious symbol as “any object including clothing, a symbol, jewelry, an adornment, an accessory, or headwear that is worn in connection with a religious conviction or belief or is reasonably considered as referring to a religious affiliation.” Classes of individuals and offices covered by the law include the president and vice presidents of the national assembly; administrative justices of the peace; certain municipal court employees; police, sheriffs, and deputy sheriffs; certain prosecutors and criminal lawyers; and certain principals, vice principals, and teachers, among others. The law also requires anyone seeking certain provincial government services to do so with “face uncovered.” The law invokes the “notwithstanding clause” of the federal constitution, which permits a province to override specific constitutional protections for a period of five years to prevent citizens from bringing challenges to the law based on the federal constitution. The law is subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms after the five-year period if the exemption is not renewed. The law exempts employees working for the provincial government prior to the implementation of the law, though they lose their right to wear religious symbols on the job upon changing jobs or receiving a promotion.

Government policy and practices regarding education, including regulation of religious schools, fall under the purview of the provincial, rather than federal, governments. Six of the 10 provinces provide full or partial funding to some religious schools.

Catholic and Protestant schools in Ontario, Alberta, and Saskatchewan retain the federal constitutionally protected right to public funding they gained when those provinces joined the federation. Other provinces either had no legally recognized denominational schools that qualified for such protection at the time of federation or accession, or they subsequently secured a federal constitutional amendment allowing them to terminate religious education funding rights and introduce an exclusively secular publicly funded education system. Federal statutory protection for Catholic and Protestant publicly funded minority education exists in the Yukon, Nunavut, and Northwest Territories, which do not have provincial status. Constitutional or federal statutory protection for public funding of religious education does not extend to schools of other religious groups, although British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Quebec

offer partial funding to religious schools of any faith that meet provincial scholastic criteria. The laws permit parents to homeschool their children or enroll them in private schools for religious reasons.

The country is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Government Practices

In a judicial development in the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting case, the Supreme Court in May upheld a Quebec Court of Appeal ruling that Alexandre Bissonnette, who killed six worshippers at the Grand Mosque, would be eligible for parole after serving 25 years of his life sentence for the crime. Bissonnette pled guilty in 2018 to six counts of first-degree murder and six counts of attempted murder for the attack on worshippers at the mosque and received a life sentence with no eligibility for parole for 40 years. The Quebec Court of Appeal reduced his parole eligibility to 25 years on the grounds the longer eligibility period violated Bissonnette's constitutional rights. On appeal, Crown prosecutors asked the Supreme Court to overturn the appeal court decision and impose a 50-year wait for parole eligibility, but the court unanimously upheld the 25-year eligibility period. It determined that "not only do such [excessive] punishments bring the administration of justice into disrepute, but they are cruel and unusual by nature."

Provinces continued to temporarily impose restrictions that varied by province and limited the number of persons permitted to gather to stem transmission of COVID-19 from January to April. Provinces and territories lifted all provincial and territorial COVID-19 restrictions by the end of April. Some religious communities said provincial orders and additional measures discriminated against religious groups. For example, in May, an Alberta provincial court found Church in the Vine Pastor Tracy Fortin guilty of three counts of failing to comply with a public health order by obstructing access to the church by an Alberta health inspector who, in 2020 and again in March and June 2021, attempted to verify that the church was enforcing COVID-19 masking and social distancing measures. In July, an Alberta provincial court fined Fortin CAD \$65,000 (\$48,000) plus a CAD \$15,000 (\$11,100) victim surcharge. The judge said the fine must be "significant" in order to be "a deterrent, not a licensing fee." A higher Alberta court dismissed Fortin's appeal in October.

In February, a Manitoba judge ruled that a group of seven Manitoba churches and three individuals who lost a challenge against the province's pandemic restrictions in October 2021 were public interest litigants and were not required to pay the province's legal fees. In March, an Ontario judge dismissed a case brought by two Ontario churches that challenged the province's COVID-19 restrictions on religious gathering. The judge explained in her decision that "while other means of gathering were not ideal, including periods where outdoor services were allowed or in smaller indoor settings, they need to be understood within the broader context of the pandemic." She added, "Full accommodation of religious freedom would not have resulted in 'legitimate inconvenience' for government. It would have represented a wholesale abdication of government responsibility to act in the public interest. It would have meant turning a blind eye to the threat of severe health consequences for a large swath of the population."

In January, the Quebec government issued formal notices to three Jewish Orthodox schools to stop holding classes after they contravened provincial COVID-19 orders that had closed all schools in the province to in-person learning until January 17. In a press statement, Quebec Public Security Minister Genevieve Guilbault, appealed to religious leaders to ensure their communities respected the rules and "did their part to get this fifth wave of the pandemic under control."

In June, B'nai Brith Canada backed a student's lawsuit against McGill University for not withholding student fees from two student groups that repeatedly introduced anti-Israel referendums. According to B'nai Brith, the continued payment of fees violated the university's policies to cease funding student groups that participated in boycotting Israel or affiliated groups and was perceived as tantamount to condoning antisemitism. The lawsuit also named as defendants the student groups promoting the anti-Israel referendums - the Student Society at McGill University and Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights. The lawsuit continued through year's end.

In December, a British Columbia appeals court rejected claims from an evangelical Protestant mother that Indigenous cultural events at her children's school infringed on their religious freedom. In 2016, Candice Servatius claimed her children were forced to participate in religious ceremonies after an elder performed a smudging ceremony and a hoop dancer said a prayer at her

children's school. Upholding the British Columbia Supreme Court ruling against Servatius in 2020, the appeals court ruled the ceremonies were public demonstrations for the purpose of community building. The court further held that public educational institutions were to be involved in reconciliation efforts with Indigenous communities, citing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that the province adopted in 2019. The appeals court judge also ruled that while the students observed a smudging ceremony and a hoop dance, "They did not hold cedar branches and were not smudged or otherwise cleansed." The lower court had exempted Servatius from payment of legal costs on the basis she lacked sufficient funds, but the appeal court reinstated them after verifying Servatius had received covert funding from the Justice Center for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF), a Christian activist organization. The court ruled the JCCF funding allowed Servatius to litigate "minor complaints that would not usually justify a lawsuit."

In January, federal Minister of Housing, Diversity, and Inclusion Ahmed Hussen highlighted the government's intent to appoint a special representative on combatting Islamophobia as part of the federal government's renewed Antiracism Strategy. In June, the federal government encouraged eligible candidates to submit their applications for the new position by July 6. The Ministry of Housing had not appointed the special representative as of year's end.

In January, the Ontario government announced it was investing approximately CAD \$300,000 (\$222,000) to partner with the Center for Israel and Jewish Affairs and the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies as part of the province's plan to fight racism, hate, and prejudice in schools. According to the Ontario government, CAD \$148,000 (\$109,000) will go to the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies to create a collection of bilingual classroom resources and programming that will introduce students to the topic of antisemitism and ways to recognize and address antisemitism. Activities will include workshops and webinars for students and parents. Another CAD \$150,000 (\$111,000) will go to the Center for Israel and Jewish Affairs to develop bilingual classroom resources, targeted at students in grades five through eight, on the dangers of antisemitism. According to the government, parent resources will also be developed on how antisemitism manifests itself on social media and in online gaming.

In May, Prime Minister Trudeau and federal Minister of Justice David Lametti announced the federal government planned to intervene in a legal challenge of Quebec's law on state secularism brought by Quebec residents and groups if and when it is appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada. Lametti stated, "We have always said since the beginning that we have some concerns with this bill and that we were going to leave some space for Quebecers to express themselves before the courts." Quebec Premier Francois Legault publicly rebuked the Prime Minister for the announcements. The Quebec Premier stated, "Mr. Trudeau, the message I have for him is, please have a bit of respect for the majority of Quebecers." Quebec Justice Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette added, "That's none of their [the federal government's] business. That's a Quebec matter, and right now we're in front of the [provincial] Court of Appeal."

In November, Quebec's highest court started hearings appeals on the constitutionality of the secularism law. During the initial hearing on the first appeal, the lawyer representing the English Montreal School Board contended that under the law, at least eight individuals had lost their jobs for wearing religious symbols, all of whom were Muslim women who wore the hijab. In response, the province's defense lawyer held that the state "can't associate itself with a religion that suggests a woman cannot appear in public without being covered in some way." Arguments included discussions on whether the secularism law known colloquially as Bill 21 protects or infringes on the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. No decision had been reached by the year's end on any of the pending appeals.

In December, the Montreal police department prohibited its officers from wearing religious symbols at work, including images of St. Michael the Archangel, the patron saint of the country's police, in accordance with Quebec's law barring public service workers from wearing religious paraphernalia. The prohibition was a direct response to the uniform worn by officers at protests related to the COP15 international forum held in Montreal September 7, during which some officers wore badges that read, "Saint Michael protect us."

The federal government criminalized acts that publicly condone, deny, or downplay the Holocaust in a bill passed on June 23. The bill did not specify what the penalty would be for a person convicted of Holocaust denial. Speaking about the law, Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said, "There is no place for antisemitism and Holocaust denial in Canada."

In February, New Democratic Party Member of Parliament Peter Julian tabled a private member's bill that would prohibit the sale and display of symbols that promote hatred and violence. Symbols that would be banned included swastikas and other Nazi emblems. According to Julian, "Symbols that have been used to incite violence against people have no place in our society." The bill had not passed as of year's end.

According to press reports in June, the RCMP investigated a tip that led to the arrest of two Sikh men on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. Police sources said the tip, which was subsequently proven false, was that members of an extremist group were headed to a protest with explosives. The men, who were organizers of a peaceful event sponsored by Members of the United Front of Sikh Canadians to commemorate a 1984 Sikh massacre in India, were arrested and questioned by police and subsequently released without charge. The investigation continued through the end of the year. The Ottawa Police Service said it would fully review the incident and incorporate feedback from the community in considering how police could improve their responses to similar incidents.

In July, Ontario arbitrator Robert Hernan determined that Public Health Sudbury, Ontario, discriminated against a nurse who is a member of the "Latin Mass" group of Catholics by denying her a religious exemption to the COVID-19 vaccine. Hernan found that accepting the COVID vaccine would interfere with the exercise of her faith and her relationship with the divine. The arbitrator did not rule whether the nurse should be reinstated or awarded monetary compensation.

In July, the city of Toronto, Ontario, announced it had directed its security contractors to rehire and appropriately compensate more than 100 Sikh security guards whom contractors had removed from their positions after they refused to shave their beards in order to wear the N95 face masks required under the city's COVID-19 policy. The city had required all its employees and contractors to be clean-shaven to ensure the masks fit properly. The World Sikh Organization of Canada called the policy "absurd" and said the guards were being punished for their faith. The guards who were removed from their jobs had been offered reassignment to new positions, but the jobs often paid less than the guards were earning on the contracts with the city of Toronto, and some of the guards lost their jobs. The city of Toronto released a press statement that it had directed the contractors to accommodate the religious requirements of their Sikh employees,

reinstate those terminated due to the mask policy, and to accommodate the employees' religious requirement to be bearded. Toronto mayor John Tory stated he strongly believed that no one should be subject to discrimination because of religious beliefs.

In July, Quebec Judge Manlio Del Negro opined in court that the link between Nazi ideology and the murder of Jews was not a widely accepted fact, and he called out Crown prosecutors in court for not submitting evidence or expert testimony that Nazi ideology led to the Holocaust. The comment occurred during the trial of a Montreal man, Gabriel Souhier Chapit, accused of willfully promoting hatred against Jews in an article on the neo-Nazi, Holocaust-denying Daily Stormer website in 2017. B'nai Brith Canada called for federal and provincial governments to ensure that judges received training on the Holocaust and on antisemitism. In a press release, it said, "We don't expect Holocaust denial and distortion from our courts. The prosecutor does not need to establish that the Holocaust happened. No expert witness is needed. The Jewish community is outraged." The judge was not subject to any disciplinary action.

In September, the government of Alberta adopted the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and became the third province in the country, along with New Brunswick and Ontario, to formally adopt or endorse the IHRA working definition. The CEO of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton Stacey Leavitt-Wright said, "Today, the Government of Alberta sent a strong message that antisemitism has no place in society. To combat antisemitism effectively, it must first be defined. The IHRA definition will help Albertans identify and combat antisemitism in all its forms." In October, the government of Manitoba also adopted the IHRA definition. At the announcement, Minister of Sport, Culture, and Heritage Andrew Smith stated, "By adopting this definition of antisemitism, we are empowering our policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and community leaders with a critical framework they can use to identify, understand, and combat contemporary forms of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, workplaces, and religious spheres." In June, Quebec Antiracism Minister endorsed the IHRA definition of antisemitism in the provincial legislature, which had been unable to achieve unanimous consent in 2021. In October, B'nai Brith Canada's League of Human Rights called on Quebec's newly elected provincial legislature to take steps toward adopting the IHRA working definition. While British Columbia cities such as Vancouver and Richmond previously adopted the

IHRA definition, the province had not legislated the IHRA working definition by year's end. Former Premier John Horgan wrote in June, "... We see the IHRA definition as an important non-legally binding educational tool to help us determine what is and what is not antisemitic, which allows us to work toward a society that is better for all British Columbians."

In June, Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Captain Marie-Claire Khadij was appointed as CAF's first humanist chaplain. According to the CAF Royal Canadian Chaplain Service, the addition of a humanist chaplain provided another option for the moral and spiritual support of CAF members.

In January, Prime Minister Trudeau issued a statement on International Holocaust Remembrance Day stating, "Today, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we remember and pay tribute to the more than six million Jews who were systematically persecuted and murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust, and the millions of other victims of Nazi atrocities. We offer our deepest sympathies to their families and loved ones and recommit our efforts to keep their memory alive for future generations."

The country is a member of the IHRA.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Reports increased of physical violence, vandalism, hate speech, and harassment directed at religious groups, particularly against Jews and Muslims. The most recent figures released by Statistics Canada in August showed a 67 percent increase in the number of police-reported, religiously motivated hate crimes from 530 in 2020 to 884 in 2021. According to Statistics Canada, Jews, who comprise approximately 1 percent of the population, were the targets of 14.5 percent of all hate crimes in the country and remained the country's most targeted religious group.

In 2021, the most recent year for which there were statistics, the B'nai Brith Canada League for Human Rights reported 2,799 antisemitic hate incidents compared with 2,610 in 2020, a 7.2 percent increase. Violent incidents increased by 733 percent from nine in 2020 to 75 in 2021. There were 264 reports of vandalism, including the painting of swastikas, damage to religious buildings, and

the desecration of cemeteries and synagogues, compared with 118 in 2020. B'nai Brith also received 2,460 reports of harassment in 2021, compared with 2,483 in 2020. The number of in-person harassment cases declined from 620 in 2020 to 367 in 2021, while incidents of online hate rose from 1,863 in 2020 to 2,093 in 2021, accounting for 85 percent of all harassment cases.

In terms of geographic distribution, Ontario, the country's most populous province, experienced a decline in reported cases of antisemitic hate incidents from 1,130 in 2020 to 821 in 2021. According to Statistics Canada, Ontario is home to nearly 60 percent of the country's Jewish population, and it logged 29 percent of all reported incidents targeting Jews. Quebec, with a quarter of the country's Jewish population, reported an increase in cases from 686 in 2020 to 828 in 2021, accounting for 29 percent of all incidents. There were also increases of antisemitic acts in reports from the western provinces. British Columbia, which comprises 8 percent of the country's total Jewish population, recorded 409 incidents in 2021, up from 194 in 2020. Alberta's cases rose by 56 percent, while Manitoba and Saskatchewan collectively had increases from 101 to 228 cases, or a 126 percent annual increase. All three of these provinces combined have slightly more than 5 percent of the national Jewish population. The Atlantic provinces experienced a decrease in cases from 199 in 2020 to 80 in 2021. The Atlantic provinces have 1 percent of the country's Jewish population.

Throughout the year, media reported that religious minorities continued to encounter discrimination, hate, and aggression based on Quebec's secularism law, which bars certain civil servants from wearing religious symbols such as hijabs, crucifixes, or turbans while at work. According to a 2022 study conducted by Leger and the Association for Canadian Studies, Muslim women who wear the hijab are most acutely affected. Of the 632 Muslims surveyed for the study, which polled a total of 1,828 individuals, 53 percent said they had experienced prejudicial remarks about Muslims from family, friends, or colleagues, while 47 percent of Muslim women surveyed said they had been treated unfairly by a person in a position of authority. Two-thirds of Muslim women surveyed said they had been a victim of or witness to a hate crime, ranging from death threats to having their hijabs ripped off and being spat at. Meanwhile, 50 percent of Jews surveyed reported feeling compelled to mask their Jewishness. One Jewish survey respondent stated reported being asked to remove their kippah by an

employer while working as a multifaith chaplaincy student. When asked for comment on the survey results, Quebec Premier Francois Legault stated the secularism law is “a very reasonable bill” and that Muslims or Canadians of any religion can “do what they want on the street [and] at home.”

In April, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice announced Nathaniel Veltman, whom police charged with killing four members of a Muslim family and injuring a fifth in a June 2021 vehicle attack in London, Ontario, would face trial in September 2023. Police stated they believed Veltman targeted the victims because they were Muslim. According to London police, Veltman faced four counts of first-degree murder, one count of attempted murder, and associated terrorism charges. In March, unsealed court documents revealed that London police had found hate-related material “relevant to the listed offences” on a laptop belonging to Veltman. According to a ruling by Ontario Superior Court Justice Renee Pomerance in July, because of the high-profile nature of the case, the trial would be held in a municipality outside London to ensure a fair and impartial jury pool. Veltman did not enter a plea and remained in jail at the end of the year.

Media outlets reported that the trial of Guilherme “William” Von Neutegem was scheduled to begin in February 2023. Von Neutegem was charged with first degree murder in the 2020 killing of Mohamed-Aslim Zafis in the parking lot of the International Muslim Organization Mosque in Rexdale, a suburb of Toronto. Zafis was a member and voluntary caretaker of the mosque.

In March, Mohammad Moiz Omar entered Dar Al-Tawheed Islamic Center in Mississauga, Ontario, and discharged bear spray toward congregants while brandishing a hatchet. A group of worshippers tackled Omar to the ground. Some congregants reported minor injuries from the bear spray, but there were no reports of serious injuries. Peel Regional Police charged Omar with six offenses, including assault with a weapon and administering a noxious substance with intent to endanger life or cause bodily harm. Investigators stated they believed the attack was a hate-motivated incident. Dar Al-Tawheed Islamic Center imam Ibrahim Hindy said Omar yelled that he was there to “kill terrorists” during the attack and said Omar had posted anti-Muslim comments on social media. Hindy said Omar was not known to members of the Muslim community. The RCMP and Peel Regional Police announced that Omar would also face terrorism charges.

Prime Minister Trudeau described the attack as “incredibly disturbing” and condemned the violence, which he said, “has no place in Canada.”

In May, two men assaulted a Jewish man in Montreal as he returned from an event celebrating Israel’s independence. A video taken by a witness showed the men trying to wrestle away a rolled-up Israeli flag from the victim. According to the video, when the two assailants let go of the flag, one of them picked up a stick and struck the victim. Montreal police characterized the assault as a hate crime. They arrested a 15-year-old male in connection with the assault but later released him under the condition he would appear in court at a later date. Police did not arrest the second assailant, and the investigation of the case continued through year’s end.

In January, Jeffrey Ryan Hill attacked a Muslim woman who was sitting in her vehicle with her children at the al-Ameen Mosque in Edmonton, Alberta. Hill spat on the woman’s car window, punched it several times, uttered threats, and damaged mosque property before returning to the scene with a shovel. Edmonton police arrested and charged Hill with mischief and uttering threats. In May, a provincial court sentenced Hill to 90 days in jail. In a statement, the National Council of Canadian Muslims said it was deeply troubled by the attack, adding that “the rising number of Islamophobic attacks in Alberta is alarming.”

In May, police arrested Uber Eats delivery man Kyle McLeod for a suspected hate crime committed outside a Jewish school in Toronto. According to media sources, McLeod used antisemitic invectives and assaulted a school staff member. According to press reports, McLeod faced multiple charges, including assault, uttering threats, and assault with a weapon. A spokesperson for Uber said the company had “zero tolerance for violence or hate on the Uber platform” and had “removed this driver’s access to the app.” McLeod was scheduled to appear in court on July 28. The case continued in the courts through year’s end.

In July, Toronto filmmaker Leena Manimekalai portrayed the Hindu goddess Kali as smoking a cigarette in a poster for her independent film, *Kaali*. In a statement, India’s High Commission in Ottawa urged Canadian authorities to “take action” against what it called a “disrespectful depiction.” The film was among 18 works intended to explore multiculturalism at the Toronto Metropolitan University’s showcase at the Aga Khan Museum. The Aga Khan Museum announced that it

would no longer exhibit Manimekalai's work. The Toronto Metropolitan University also expressed 'regret' at "having caused offence."

In March, Vancouver police arrested Yuniar Kurniawan for allegedly vandalizing the Komagata Maru memorial in Vancouver in August 2021. The memorial is dedicated to 376 Sikh, Muslim, and Hindu passengers aboard the ship Komagata Maru whom officials denied entry to the country in 1914 under exclusion laws and forced to return to India. Vancouver police charged Kurniawan with one count of mischief. The court case continued through year's end. According to the Descendants of the Komagata Maru Society, the incident resonated with Indo-Canadians as a painful reminder of historic prejudice directed against South Asian immigrants on racial and religious grounds.

In June, staff at Winnipeg's largest Jewish cemetery found 70 gravestones toppled to the ground. The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center in Canada tweeted, "We're horrified by the despicable vandalism ... This act shows sheer disrespect toward members of Winnipeg's Jewish community." The Winnipeg Police launched an investigation that remained ongoing at year's end.

In July, Toronto police arrested Paul Cote of Toronto on suspicion of inscribing graffiti inciting violence against Jews and a series of other hate-motivated acts of vandalism in the city's York University area. Police charged the suspect with eight counts of hate-motivated crimes and seven counts of mischief damage to property. York University denounced the "hateful, antisemitic act." Authorities arrested another man for desecrating an art sculpture at the Art Gallery of Ontario with antisemitic graffiti in July. He was charged with mischief and damage to property. As of October, Toronto police were investigating nearly identical antisemitic graffiti found at three Toronto schools in March. York Regional Police were also investigating the vandalism of 17 signs with swastikas in Bruce Creek Park in Markham, Ontario. Markham mayor Frank Scarpitti denounced the acts as "absurd, racist and offensive."

In February, images taken at "Freedom Convoy" protests in Ottawa showed Nazi flags and swastikas flown. The images drew condemnation from across the political spectrum.

In March, two nonprofit organizations, StandWithUs Canada and U.S.-based JewBelong, launched a billboard campaign in Toronto against antisemitism. The campaign featured three bright pink billboards visible on Toronto's main roadways. The billboards included slogans, such as, "We're just 75 years since the gas chambers. So no, a billboard calling out bigotry against Jews isn't an over-reaction." Rebecca Katzman, senior director of campus affairs with StandWithUs Canada said, "We want people to think about things that Jewish people face on a daily basis ... Jewish people are harassed, they face antisemitism and violent threats."

An Angus Reid poll released in April found that nearly half of Canadians surveyed said religion contributed both good and bad to the community. The number of respondents who said they believed religion contributed "more bad" than "good" to society increased from 14 percent in 2017 to 22 percent. The survey reported the respondents believed the presence of three religions – Catholicism, Evangelical Christianity, and Islam – were more likely to be damaging to society. Respondents regarded other religions, including Hinduism, Sikhism, and Judaism as having a more positive than negative impact on society.

In July, Pope Francis traveled to the country to visit Indigenous communities with Prime Minister Trudeau and to issue a historic apology to its Indigenous peoples. Pope Francis's apology recognized "the evil" committed by members of the Catholic Church and recognized there had been a systematic effort to erase Indigenous traditional culture, religions, and spiritual beliefs as part of forced assimilation by the government, including through the establishment of residential schools. According to Indigenous leaders and extensive documentation and reporting, the residential school system administered by the Catholic Church and other denominations separated Indigenous children from their parents, inflicted physical, sexual, and mental abuse, and forced Christianity upon Indigenous children. Prime Minister Trudeau stated that the Pope Francis's visit had an "enormous impact" on survivors, although it was only a first step and reconciliation would continue to be the shared responsibility of all Canadians. An Angus Reid poll released in August found that three in five respondents viewed the pontiff's apology as a step toward reconciliation, while a third said the apology did not make a difference toward efforts to achieve reconciliation.

In October, the UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief published a report on Indigenous peoples and the right to freedom of religion or belief that referenced Canada seven times. The report cited historical violations of freedom of religion and belief through state-imposed restrictions on ceremonial practices often aimed at forced assimilation and conversion, such as the country's previous ban regarding Sun Dances, potlatches, and other traditional practices considered "anti-Christian." According to the report, inadequate contemporary legal protection for Indigenous lands has contributed to increasing vandalism and desecration in recent years of sacred First Nations sites. The report added that, given their belief in the relationship between the land and the sacred, many Indigenous peoples believed that restricting access to, and use of, ancestral territories was tantamount to prohibiting spiritual experiences.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy and Engagement

Embassy, consulate general, and other U.S. government officials emphasized with the national and provincial governments the need for respect for religious freedom and diversity and reaffirmed the U.S. government's commitment to addressing discrimination and exclusion through the Roadmap for Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership, a strategic document of shared policy priorities. Embassy and other U.S. government officials met with representatives from Global Affairs Canada's Office of Diversity and Inclusion to discuss issues of religious freedom in the country, including religious expression, inclusion, and respect for religious diversity. Throughout the year, the embassy and consulates general used social media to amplify religious freedom messaging from senior Department of State officials.

In January, the Ambassador marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day at the National Holocaust Memorial in Ottawa alongside the mayor of Ottawa, other members of the diplomatic community, and leaders of the Jewish community. As part of the national #WeRemember commemoration, the embassy was one of many buildings and monuments across the country that lit its lights in yellow to mark the day. In September, the Ambassador met Rabbi Adam Scheier, who leads Canada's oldest Ashkenazi synagogue in Montreal. Rabbi Scheier outlined his efforts to promote greater female participation in leadership roles in the synagogue. During the Ambassador's visit to Winnipeg, Manitoba, in October, he met with Jewish community leaders to discuss the community and issues facing it,

including their views of antisemitism in Manitoba. In November, the Ambassador opened the ninth annual Atlantic Jewish Film Festival in Halifax, which showcased Jewish filmmakers and highlighted Jewish life and culture around the world. In December, the Ambassador participated in an interview with CBC's *The House* to underscore the U.S. government's commitment to fighting antisemitism.

In March, the Consul General in Quebec City and the cofounder of the Islamic Cultural Center of Quebec hosted DEIA representatives for a lunch on the eve of Ramadan to celebrate the advent of the holy month. In April, the Consul General in Halifax met with the imam of the Ummah Mosque and Community Center, the largest mosque in Nova Scotia, and subsequently joined a community-led iftar at the mosque to celebrate Ramadan. Additionally, in April, the Consul General attended a Yom HaShoah event hosted by the Atlantic Jewish Council and read names of those murdered in the Holocaust. In May, the Consul General hosted a lunch for leadership of the Atlantic Jewish Council to better understand the community in the region. The Consul General and PD Ottawa jointly sponsored a speaker during the Atlantic Jewish Council's Holocaust Education Week, demonstrating the United States' commitment to preserving the memory of the Holocaust and combatting Holocaust denial and distortion and all forms of hate.