



27 March 2026

Communication regarding Bill C-9 – Combatting Hate Act - Sent to all Canadian Senators

Dear Honourable Senators,

Know of my esteem for your office and be assured of my ongoing prayers for your vocation to public service.

I write to you as Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act, comes before the Senate for consideration. The Catholic community recognizes the importance of addressing hatred and protecting individuals and communities from violence, intimidation, and discrimination. Every person must be able to live and worship in safety and dignity, and we support efforts that genuinely advance these noble goals.

At the same time, many faith leaders, civil liberties experts, and members of civil society have expressed sincere and grave concerns about aspects of the aforementioned bill as it stands in its latest iteration. Throughout the legislative process, thoughtful recommendations were offered to ensure that the legislation would both address the malevolence of hatred effectively while by the same token seeking to dutifully protect certain fundamental freedoms that Canadians cherish. Regrettably, the legislation in its current form clearly does not adequately address these serious concerns.

We are all aware of the broad coalition that is presently opposing the bill in its current formulation. In fact, we are speaking of millions of Canadians representing many and diverse religious traditions, faith communities, interest groups, organizations and affiliates – including non-religious institutions as well.

It is imperative that the commitments that the government has voiced as safeguards make their way into the bill itself. Only once enshrined in legislation can these protections - these rights - truly be honoured and secured. It is one thing to desire and work towards the elimination of all words and acts of hatred – and it is a laudable and just thing to do. However, this should not come at the cost of diminishing or doing away with basic, fundamental civil liberties.

There is a way, and I pray the Senate will endeavour to discover it – whereby legislative mechanisms are introduced to eliminate the dreadful expressions of hatred all the while assuring that violation of acquired and recognized freedoms, especially for people and communities of faith – are preserved and enshrined, honoured and protected. The future of our faith communities depend largely on the freedoms that allow us to do what we do, in great respect to all persons of all or of no faith in our multicultural, pluralistic Canadian society.



To ignore these rights and freedoms and to avoid defending them through legislation is indeed contrary to what we stand for as Canadians in a democratic society; it diminishes the positive impact which religious faith and faith-based institutions provide to the wider society and have been doing so for centuries in this land.

As the Senate now undertakes its important role of sober second thought, I respectfully ask that you carefully consider amendments that will provide clear and unambiguous protection for freedom of religion, conscience, and expression. These rights are foundational to Canada's democratic society and are essential for the flourishing of diverse communities, including the many faith communities that serve the common good across our country.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, faith communities stand firmly against hatred and discrimination in all its forms. At the same time, it is vital that legislation aimed at confronting hatred does not inadvertently limit the lawful expression of religious beliefs or the ability of communities to live out their faith. Though consultations were held, and we are very appreciative of this gesture, nonetheless the removal of the defence of religious speech will not ensure that religious speech is dutifully protected from eventual hate charges. Though we applaud and stand behind the necessary efforts to be made so as to rightfully address anti-religious threats, this praiseworthy endeavour ought not undermine those protections we all enjoy and which exist with particular significance for religious groups.

At this stage of the process it is vital, therefore, that an unequivocal clarification be added to the bill making it abundantly and unmistakably clear that the reading of religious texts, as well as teaching and preaching are not in any way considered the intentional promotion of hatred of any kind.

Henceforth I respectfully urge you and call upon you to take this opportunity to exercise your role to scrutinize legislation and provide crucial improvements, incorporating the necessary amendment so as to strengthen Bill C-9 with the scope of both protecting vulnerable communities and clearly safeguarding the fundamental freedoms that Canadians hold dear.

Thank you for your service to our country and for your thoughtful consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully yours,

+Frank Cardinal Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto

cc. The Right Honourable Mark Carney, P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada
Honourable Sean Fraser, P.C., M.P., Minister of Justice