



May 27th, 2026

*Combating Hate and Protecting
Religious Freedom in Canada Submission*

from

the 4 My Canada Association

to

the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights

regarding

***Bill C-9: An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Hate Propaganda,
Hate Crime and Access to Religious or Cultural Places)***

THANK YOU | COVER LETTER

At the onset of this briefing, we would like to begin by expressing our *sincere gratitude to the members of the Senate and the Standing Senate Committee (RIDR)* for the significant time, diligence, and care devoted to studying Bill C-9 over the past two weeks, during what would normally have been a break week.

Thank you also for the invitation and opportunity to submit this briefing for consideration.

The issue at hand is of utmost importance to Canadians. We are in agreement that the trend of rising hate in our nation — towards *a variety of identifiable groups* — needs to be addressed in a way that brings authentic change.

For this reason, we deeply appreciate your faithfulness to a true *sober second thought, and commitment to hear from a broad cross-section of Canadians* in this process. We understand that the amendments you bring forward, or not, *will impact the lives of countless Canadians* who are both the victims of hate and also sincere and authentic Canadians of a diverse spectrum of beliefs.

We appreciate the seriousness with which senators have approached the testimony, concerns, and perspectives presented.

We respectfully submit *this briefing for your careful consideration*. It reflects the concerns of a large and diverse base of Canadians who care deeply about protecting both human dignity and the fundamental freedoms that underpin our democracy, including freedom of religion, conscience, and expression. It also summarizes insights and recommendations submitted by others in which we wish to express our agreement.

THANK YOU | COVER LETTER CONT.

This briefing is organized into two distinct sections:

1. **BACKGROUND | A HISTORIC RESPONSE?** — An overview of the broad base of Canadians that our organization represents and our advocacy work regarding Bill C-9 in both the House of Commons and the Senate, demonstrating the historic, broad and growing concern among Canadians about the bill in its current form. | **Page 4**
2. **CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** — A clear outline of our specific concerns and recommendations regarding Bill C-9. | **Page 7**

Thank you in advance for your time and attention. It is appreciated.

I am available for further dialogue, or for an appearance as a witness before the RIDR.

Respectfully,



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BACKGROUND

A HISTORIC RESPONSE?

In the way of background, 4 My Canada was established in 2005 to serve grassroots everyday Canadians by informing, training, and encouraging engagement in Canada's political process through issue-based advocacy campaigns.

Over more than twenty years of service, this has included regular national updates, the organization and leadership of 17 Next Generation Delegations to Parliament, appearances before Parliamentary committees, media appearances, issue-based campaigns and active involvement in multiple policy conventions and election campaigns across party lines.

We begin by highlighting the following important information for consideration:

— In over two decades of grassroots advocacy work, we have never witnessed the level of concern and public outcry surrounding Bill C-9. —

We observe that several Members of Parliament have confirmed that this has been their experience as well.

To quantify our observations, since mid-October of last year, our network has:

- Conducted and registered *more than 164,000 phone calls to Members of Parliament and Senators by everyday Canadians* asking them to address problematic elements of the bill; no call centre was utilized in this; every call made was by an authentically concerned Canadian

- Hosted a national declaration articulating the primary concerns of Canadians regarding Bill C-9, which has *now been signed by 1,074 independent businesses, charities, and faith-based organizations collectively representing approaching 1.4 million Canadians*; the declaration can be read at www.4mycanada.com/declaration (see Appendix for the text of the declaration).
- Facilitated direct citizen engagement with Senators through a postcard initiative made available via our website. In just two weeks, *more than 145,000 postcards were ordered and personally paid for by individual everyday Canadians from coast to coast.*

It is **profoundly regrettable** that we were recently informed by multiple Senator staff that these postcards were **not** actually delivered directly to Senators' offices but instead remained in the Senate mail distribution centre. Because of this, we are concerned that Senators may not fully grasp the magnitude of the concern currently being expressed.

This is a notable detail.

We would respectfully emphasize that *the postcards were not an organizational bulk-mail campaign funded by a centralized entity*. These were individual Canadians who personally took the time and incurred the expense to order and send these postcards. The total cost to Canadians to express their voices this way has been over \$68,159.95 to date.

Each day, more and more Canadians continue to order postcards and register their phone calls. We track activity statistically to determine how much of our organizational staff time to allocate to addressing this concern.

In our organization's history, we have never seen this degree of sustained grassroots engagement. *Some elected officials have described this response as historic — or, at the very least, extraordinary.*

We share these figures not for political effect but to sincerely illustrate the depth of concern expressed by everyday Canadians, whom we feel obligated to authentically represent in this matter.

Given the above data, we were surprised that we have not yet been invited to appear before the committee, though we deeply value the opportunity to submit this briefing.

Thank you again for your consideration.

CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Bill C-9, the *Combating Hate Act*, seeks to address real and serious concerns surrounding hate crimes, antisemitism, intimidation, and violence against identifiable groups.

We concur with the many organizations and legal experts who have given testimony and submitted briefs *acknowledging that genuine hate propaganda and violence should be strongly condemned*.

However, we also concur with the broad range of legal, religious, and civil-liberties groups who have pointed out that Bill C-9 in its current form goes too far, weakens important constitutional safeguards, and risks undermining Charter freedoms — particularly freedom of religion and freedom of expression.

We believe it is notable that objections have come not only from religious organizations but also from constitutional lawyers, legal scholars, and even the Canadian Bar Association. We strongly share the view that Bill C-9 should either be significantly amended or opposed in its current form.

The following are our primary reasons for this.

Canada Already Has Strong Laws Against Hate Propaganda

Canada's Criminal Code already contains extensive provisions addressing hate propaganda and hate-motivated crimes. Existing provisions already include:

- **Criminal Code s. 318** — Advocacy of genocide
- **s. 319(1)** — Public incitement of hatred likely to lead to a breach of the peace
- **s. 319(2)** — Wilful promotion of hatred against an identifiable group
- **s. 718.2(a)(i)** — Hate motivation as an aggravating sentencing factor
- Existing offences for threats, intimidation, obstruction, assaults, vandalism, and mischief against religious property

The issue is not the absence of laws, but inconsistent enforcement of laws already on the books.

Bill C-9 does not strengthen current law enforcement — it only expands criminal liability while removing long-standing safeguards that protect lawful religious expression.

We believe this is unnecessary and unwise and could put innocent Canadians at risk of costly, unnecessary prosecution.

Additionally, churches, synagogues, mosques, and cultural institutions *are already protected* under existing Criminal Code provisions dealing with mischief, obstruction, threats, intimidation, vandalism and interference with lawful activity. We are in strong agreement that rather than creating new legislation, enforcement of current laws should be prioritized.

The Removal of the Good-Faith Religious Defence Is Of Serious Concern

The strongest concern we have, and the most consistent concern of those in our network have is the repeal of:

- **Criminal Code s. 319(3)(b)**
- **Criminal Code s. 319(3.1)(b)**

As you are well aware, these provisions currently protect individuals who, **in good faith**, express: “an opinion on a religious subject” or an opinion “based on a belief in a religious text.”

We concur with the *many* submissions which have accurately pointed out that these protections are foundational safeguards for:

- sermons,
- biblical teaching,
- evangelism,
- theological debate,
- pastoral counselling,
- discipleship,
- public Christian advocacy,
- and religious discussion generally.

If Bill C-9 passes in its current form, Canadians of faith — Christians, Orthodox Jewish Canadians, Muslims, Hindus or others could increasingly face complaints, investigations, or prosecutions for expressing orthodox faith-based convictions on controversial moral and social issues.

FINLAND: A Genuine Warning for Canada



The most notable example of the unintended harmful impacts of a bill such as C-9 is Finnish Member of Parliament Päivi Maria Räsänen.

In 2010, Finnish Member of Parliament Päivi Räsänen voted in favour of legislation intended to address hate crimes in Finland.

To her shock, earlier this year *she was personally criminally charged under the same law that she voted for because of a Bible pamphlet she wrote 20 years ago that was reposted online.*

Like many Canadians concerned about genuine acts of hatred, Finnish MP Räsänen believed it was important to ensure appropriate protections for victims of hate in her nation.

Years later, however, activists and ideological opponents unearthed a little-known pamphlet she had contributed to for her local church.

In it, *she clearly affirmed the equal dignity and value of every human being* before God *while also articulating the historic biblical understanding of marriage*. The pamphlet itself had extremely limited circulation and was posted only on the website of a small church, reportedly viewed by very few people until the activists discovered it, at which point controversy was stirred and it was widely distributed (because of her opponents).

Activists initiated criminal proceedings against MP Räsänen because of her sincerely held religious beliefs and expression regarding marriage. Although she repeatedly prevailed in lower courts, prosecutors continued pursuing the matter through appeals, *ultimately bringing the case before Finland's Supreme Court, where she ultimately lost by one vote*. That one vote cost her hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Tangible Harms

Throughout the process, MP Räsänen endured *significant legal expenses* that were not reimbursed because of the Supreme Court ruling, *substantial emotional, mental, and physical strain, widespread public ridicule, online harassment and reputational harm* because of her sincere Christian faith position.

In a recent interview with us, *MP Räsänen warned Canadian legislators that when she originally supported similar legislation, she did not foresee how such laws could later be weaponized* against individuals holding traditional religious beliefs.

It was only through painful firsthand experience that she came to understand the profound impact such legislation can have on freedom of conscience and religion when interpreted or enforced by activists.



Available To Witness to Canadian Senate

MP Räsänen is available to testify before the RIDR Committee and remains *willing to provide firsthand testimony regarding the unintended consequences legislation such as Bill C-9 can produce.*

If Senators take nothing else from our briefing, we sincerely hope it will prompt serious consideration of Finland’s cautionary example of the criminal prosecution of MP Räsänen and its implications for Canadians who hold sincerely held faith beliefs.

To view our interview with MK Räsänen please visit this link: <http://4mycanada.com/finland>

Canada’s Supreme Court Relied on These Defences When Upholding Hate Speech Laws

It has been pointed out that in **R. v. Keegstra** the Supreme Court of Canada upheld hate propaganda laws partly because of the existence of the statutory defences in s. 319(3). This consideration of the courts illustrates the importance of this portion of the Criminal Code.

The Court stated these defences:

- reduce overbreadth,
- reduce vagueness,
- provide clearer guidance,
- and create “leeway to freedom of expression.”

These safeguards were part of the constitutional balance that made the legislation acceptable under the Charter. Removing them would significantly alter that balance and be detrimental.

There Is No Evidence the Religious Defence Has Been Abused | Therefore It Should Remain

As has been pointed out by many witnesses, there are no reported cases where the religious defence successfully shielded genuine hate propaganda.

While advocates for removing this section cite this as a reason for removal, asserting it will not be consequential for people of faith, this raises the question:

Why then the strong motivation to remove it?

If the section is of no real consequence, there should be no fixation on removing it.

There is no harm in keeping it.

At A Time Of Low Trust in Public Institutions Keeping It Will Build Trust With Canadians | This Serves Canada Well

Canadians, civil liberty groups, faith groups and academics have all raised concern about the removal of this defence.

If the section truly is of no consequence, it should remain in the Criminal Code if for no other reason than to honour the voices of the multitude of Canadians that have expressed concern.

At a time when trust for public institutions is at an all-time low, we are in a national unity crisis, and Canadians are profoundly concerned about the protection of their Charter Rights, it is important for legislators to take every opportunity to raise trust with Canadians.

Building trust builds national unity.

Keeping the religious defence in the Criminal Code *would go a long way toward building trust with Canadians, restoring faith in the value of the Senate and faith in public institutions in general.*

Had the outcry of Canadians not been so large surrounding Bill C-9, this might not be the case. However, *given the broad-based concern*, we strongly believe *it is wise for the Senate to amend*

C-9 to restore the faith defence. It is our view that it is not the right time, or cultural climate, to remove this defence.

No Strong Judicial Reason to Remove The Religious Defence

Finally, as legal witnesses have pointed out already, courts have repeatedly shown themselves capable of distinguishing:

- lawful religious teaching, from
- actual wilful promotion of hatred.

This means:

- the defence is already narrow,
- courts already know how to apply it,
- and **there is no demonstrated legal crisis requiring its removal.**

High Cost To Citizens To Defend Charter Rights

Advocates of Bill C-9 have repeatedly argued that the religious and conscience freedoms of Canadians remain protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that, therefore, Canadians have no cause for concern with the bill. However, *this argument fails to account for the real-world burden of frivolous or overreaching prosecutions.*

Even if Charter protections ultimately prevail in court, the removal of explicit religious protections could still subject Canadians to costly investigations, reputational harm, years of litigation, and significant legal expenses simply to vindicate rights already guaranteed to them under the Charter.

It is incumbent upon legislators not only to preserve Charter rights in theory, but also *to ensure that Canadians are not unnecessarily forced into long, exhausting, and financially devastating legal processes in order to prove those rights in practice.*

The “For Greater Certainty” Amendment Is Inadequate

We understand that in response to public concern, Parliament added a “for greater certainty” clause intended to reassure religious communities. However, does nothing of the sort because it’s logic is circular.

The clause essentially says: religious speech is protected if it does not wilfully promote hatred. But *whether hatred was wilfully promoted is already the central legal question*. Thus, the amendment creates no meaningful independent safeguard.

We agree with the criticisms which have pointed this out:

- if speech is lawful, the protection is unnecessary;
- if speech is deemed hateful, the protection disappears.

The Bill Creates a Chilling Effect on Faith-Based Speech

We concur that even unsuccessful complaints or investigations *can, and already have had, severe consequences*:

- legal costs,
- reputational damage,
- public accusations,
- media pressure,
- loss of employment,
- online censorship,
- and self-censorship.

This is especially concerning because orthodox faith-based beliefs on:

- sexuality,
- gender identity,
- marriage,
- abortion,
- and sanctity of life

Faith-based views on these topics are increasingly labelled “hateful” in public discourse. This concern is not hypothetical. Mainstream Christian advocacy positions are already publicly categorized as hateful, at times even when expressed with meekness and gentleness.

The result of the “chilling effect” could be that pastors, churches, schools, ministries, and believers become reluctant to speak openly about biblical convictions that strengthen people’s personal faith.

Evidence for Concern: Barry Neufeld Fined \$750,000

Perhaps nowhere has the dynamic of the vilification of some faith-based views been more publicly illustrated than in the recent example of school board trustee Barry Neufeld, who was fined \$750,000 by a human rights tribunal for his publicly stated views on sexuality.

For his views on sexuality, views which are shared by millions of Canadians, Mr. Neufeld has incurred legal bills exceeding hundreds of thousands of dollars, been subjected to widespread reputational harm and a long-drawn-out process of prosecution — spanning years of his life and still underway. He has been given a fine that he, in his own words, admits he “...*will never be able to repay.*”

“Public Interest” Language Creates New Uncertainty

We agree with the many submissions warning that the revised clause protecting statements made on matters of “public interest” is vague and potentially exclusionary.

- Who decides what counts as “public interest”?
- Would sermons, Bible writings or podcasts qualify?
- Would pastoral counselling qualify, or conversations overheard in a coffee shop?
- Would internal church teaching or honest discussions qualify?

The ambiguity itself creates uncertainty and would create an unnecessary “culture of fear” in genuine and loving Canadians.

The Bill Risks Expanding Criminal Liability Beyond Genuine Hate

Canadian hate law has historically targeted extreme vilification, dehumanization and incitement of hatred —not merely offensive or unpopular opinions.

We concur with ARPA Canada, which has specifically recommended *clarifying that speech is not hatred merely because* it is: offensive, shocking, repugnant, distasteful or contrary to prevailing cultural norms. As already mentioned, this is especially relevant for faith-based communities whose beliefs increasingly conflict with prevailing secular orthodoxy.

Concerns On Retroactive Prosecution

While the C-9 does not explicitly authorize retroactive prosecution, previously lawful sermons, articles, videos, podcasts, social media posts, and other content expressing sincerely held faith beliefs that remain online could later become the subject of complaints or investigations after the law comes into force.

In the digital age, archived or third-party reposted content can remain publicly accessible *indefinitely*, creating uncertainty and a culture of fear for religious communities concerned that longstanding biblical teaching could be reinterpreted under evolving hate-speech standards.

This is incredibly problematic, particularly in the digital age, where *it is virtually impossible to remove content once it has been posted, reposted, or circulated by third parties*.

Given the realities of the current digital age, *it is critical that C-9 be amended to ensure that content created prior to the law, even if it remains available online, does not leave the creator vulnerable to prosecution — as in the case of MP Räsänen*.

The legislation must acknowledge the limits good-willed Canadians have in controlling the dissemination or removal of materials they produced and published online prior to the legislation.

Attorney General Oversight Should Be Preserved

We are in full agreement that Attorney General oversight should be preserved.

We applaud the House of Commons Justice Committee for restoring this safeguard. *Such oversight is critically important for the protection of innocent Canadians.*

This oversight helps ensure that prosecutions are reserved for serious matters, rather than being driven by political motivations or activist prosecutorial movements and organizations. This protection is especially essential in safeguarding individuals who hold sincerely held religious beliefs or viewpoints that may be culturally unpopular or in the minority from unjust or ideologically motivated targeting.

New Hate Crime Provisions Are Overly Subjective

We wholeheartedly agree with concerns raised about the proposed standalone hate crime offence under s. 320.1001, as it could elevate virtually any Criminal Code or federal offence into a hate crime if motivated by hatred — this is a highly subjective standard. Under these thresholds, there is a risk of inconsistent application across jurisdictions or of excessive prosecutorial discretion.

Broad Concern Exists From Canadians

Lastly, it is notable that concern about Bill C-9 is not limited to a single denomination, faith or political perspective. Submissions and witness testimony to the RIDR raising concerns have come from:

- Muslim organizations,
- constitutional lawyers,
- civil-liberties advocates,
- Christian organizations,
- and legal professionals.

Even organizations supportive of combating hate warned that vague drafting, removal of safeguards and insufficient protections for lawful religious expression could undermine Charter freedoms. **The concern is broad and consistent. This is notable.**

Summary of Recommendations

Given the widespread concern surrounding Bill C-9 and its many flaws, *it would be our strong recommendation that C-9 be halted altogether and that the focus instead be on applying existing legislation and on unity and reconciliation initiatives that build a culture of kindness and mutual respect between people and groups with opposing views within Canada.* It is our strong view that this focus would go *much further to effectively addressing the issue* of rising hate crimes in Canada than creating new laws would, or ever could.

If C-9 progresses to law (we hope it does not), we adamantly support the following common and repeated recommendations:

1. **Restore Criminal Code ss. 319(3)(b) and 319(3.1)(b)** in full.
2. Maintain strong prohibitions against genuine incitement to violence and hatred.
3. Preserve or restore Attorney General consent requirements.
4. Clarify that lawful religious teaching, sermons, prayer, pastoral counselling, theological debate, and scriptural discussion are protected.
5. Narrow vague language to prevent criminalization of merely offensive or unpopular beliefs.
6. Remove or significantly narrow the proposed standalone hate crime offence under s. 320.1001.
7. Focus on enforcing existing Criminal Code provisions rather than expanding them.
8. Amend Bill C-9 to explicitly provide that no person shall be investigated, charged, or held criminally liable solely because historical religious or expressive content created *prior* to the Act coming into force remains digitally accessible online, including where such content is archived, indexed, reposted, or redistributed by third parties without the active participation or intent of the original speaker or author.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bless you and your loved ones.

APPENDIX

TEXT OF C-9 DECLARATION SIGNED BY **1,076 ORGANIZATIONS** **REPRESENTING APPROXIMATELY 1.4 MILLION CANADIANS**

We, the undersigned Christian churches and Christian charitable organizations across Canada, wish to express our deep concern regarding Bill C-9, the proposed hate speech legislation currently before Parliament.

As followers of Jesus Christ and servants of our communities, we affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person. Our faith calls us to love our neighbours, pursue peace, and speak with both truth and grace. At the same time, Canada's longstanding commitment to freedom of religion and freedom of expression has ensured that people of faith can live out and express their sincerely held beliefs without fear of criminal sanction.

For decades, the Criminal Code has recognized this balance by including protections for the good-faith expression of sincerely held religious beliefs. The proposed removal of these protections in Bill C-9 raises serious concerns for churches, ministries, and faith-based organizations across our nation.

We therefore respectfully call upon Parliamentarians to restore explicit protections for the good-faith expression of sincerely held faith beliefs within the Criminal Code.

If such protections are not restored, we urge our leaders to vote against Bill C-9 at third reading.

Our request is simple: that Canada's laws continue to clearly safeguard the fundamental freedoms that have long allowed people of faith to contribute openly and positively to the life of our nation.

We offer this declaration in a spirit of respect, prayer, and sincere concern for the future of religious freedom in Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

The perspectives, concerns, and recommendations presented in this briefing have been informed by a review of multiple legal and policy submissions already provided to the Senate regarding Bill C-9, including briefs submitted by the Association for Reformed Political Action (ARPA) Canada, the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council (CMPAC), the Canadian Council of Imams, Pray for Canada Network, Louis-Philippe Noël, and legal commentary submitted by Joseph Richards on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada. These submissions reflect a broad range of religious, legal, academic, and civil liberties perspectives from across Canada and were carefully considered in formulating the concerns and recommendations in this briefing, alongside our direct observations and feedback from those we serve in the 4 My Canada network.

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