

BRITISH COLUMBIA HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

422 Richards St, Suite 170
Vancouver, BC V6B 2Z4

(604) 265-9298
bchumanist.ca
info@bchumanist.ca



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Re: Christian Nationalism vs Canadian Civic Nationalism

Dear Prime Minister:

We were pleased to hear your recent distinction between Christian Nationalism, as championed by the current Government of the USA, and what you termed civic nationalism.¹ As an organization that represents a naturalistic worldview that promotes secularism and human rights, many of our members resonated with your comments. We particularly appreciated the recognition of « *des gens sans foi* » as equally deserving of respect as the religious.

While Canadians are known for their wariness of overt displays of patriotism and nationalism, we appreciate your focus on respecting cultural diversity and protecting the rights of everyone who lives here. Christian Nationalism, by contrast, attempts to subsume difference into a narrow and exclusionary vision of society. Under that worldview, groups like ours are often considered subversive and dangerous.

Nevertheless, while we appreciate your sentiments, words alone are insufficient. Given our nation's history, Christian privilege permeates our laws and institutions. Defending our system and our rights against the threat posed by Christian Nationalism requires more than just well-intentioned speeches; the Government must actively work to align our structures with the respect for diversity that you spoke of. We must work to build a Canadian civic nationalism that reflects the multicultural nature of our society, and that respects the state's duty of religious neutrality. But such a vision is merely a mirage if the state remains imbued, at its core, with religious privilege.

To that end, we offer the following non-exhaustive list of opportunities for your Government and Parliament to promote civic nationalism by removing religious privileges in our tax system, our criminal code, and public symbolism. We have previously written extensively on each of these points in our reports and submissions to parliamentary committees and budgetary consultations. We would happily provide any additional information that might assist your office in considering these or similar reforms.

¹ CPAC. (2026 February 17). "PM Carney Announced Defence Industrial Strategy."

Income Tax Act

1. Remove the privileged status of theistic beliefs in Canada's charity law by either removing 'advancement of religion' as a charitable purpose or expanding the definition to include atheistic belief systems.
2. End charitable status for anti-choice organizations.
3. Eliminate the clergy residence deduction.

Criminal Code

1. Repeal the religious exemptions to hate speech laws (S. 319(3)(b) and 3.19(3.1)(b)).
2. Repeal Section 176, obstructing a religious officiant or disturbing religious worship.

Symbolic changes

1. End the practice of opening sittings of the House of Commons and Senate with prayer.
2. Modernize *O Canada* by updating the line "God keep our land" in English and removing the Catholic references from the French version.
3. Remove "the supremacy of God" from the preamble of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Additionally, we'd encourage the Government to ask Statistics Canada to update the question on religion for Census 2031. Presently, the question not only presumes people have a religious faith but requests they identify with one "even if the person is not currently a practising member of that group."

We also encourage the provinces to work toward this vision of civic nationalism. For example, Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan should merge their separate Catholic school systems into the secular system. Provinces should end the partial funding of private religious schools. Publicly funded religious healthcare institutions should not be exempted from providing reproductive and end-of-life care. And property tax exemptions should be reformed to prioritize broader public benefits.

Through these actions, Canada can further strengthen its commitment to equality, inclusivity, and secular governance. These changes would ensure that our institutions better reflect the diversity and values underlined in your comments. We trust that your office will consider these proposals thoughtfully and act to build a more just and equitable society for generations to come.

Sincerely

Ian Bushfield
Executive Director