

Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms

2024 Annual Report



Justice Centre
for Constitutional Freedoms

We Defend Freedom in Canada

www.jccf.ca

“On behalf of our amazing team, I thank you for your generosity. A future of freedom in Canada is not a guaranteed one; we must work together to preserve and extend freedom at all levels of government, in our classrooms, hospitals, places of worship, and other public spaces. You are partnering with us in that vital work, and I thank you for your incredible contributions. Let’s secure a future of freedom together.”

John Carpay, B.A., LL.B.
President and Founder
Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms

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About the Justice Centre

Founded in 2010, the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms is Canada's leading defender of *Charter* rights and freedoms. Our mission is to defend the constitutional freedoms of Canadians through litigation and education. Our vision is a free society where governments uphold human dignity by respecting fundamental rights and freedoms, and where Canadians can realize their potential and fulfil their aspirations.

Our Charitable Registration Number: 817174865RR0001

Our Beliefs

Equality: We believe that every Canadian should be treated equally by governments and by the courts, regardless of race, ancestry, ethnicity, age, sex, religion, political conviction or other personal characteristics.

Expression: We believe that all Canadians should be free to express peacefully their thoughts, opinions and beliefs without fear of censorship, persecution or oppression, as per Section 2 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Information: We believe the ability of the news media to gather and disseminate information, independent of government control and interference, is necessary for the functioning of a free and democratic society. We believe this same freedom is also the foundation of higher learning and education.

Autonomy: We believe all Canadians have the right to self-determination to make fundamental life choices for themselves and their children as free and responsible members of society, as protected under Section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Assembly: We believe Canadians have the freedom to gather together publicly and peacefully to express, promote, pursue and defend their common interests. This includes the freedom of Canadians to peaceful protest and demonstrations on public property.

Responsibility: We believe every Canadian has a responsibility to recognize, protect and preserve their human rights and constitutional freedoms.

Letter from the President

In 2024, protecting your freedom of expression (including your right to access information) was our highest priority. We also continued to fight for your *Charter* freedoms of association, conscience, religion, mobility, peaceful assembly, and medical privacy.

In February 2024, the federal government announced the introduction of the *Online Harms Act* – legislation that would have granted the government sweeping powers to regulate the internet and to severely punish “offensive” speech (even before it occurs). The Justice Centre took the lead on mobilizing opposition to the *Online Harms Act*, which I regard as the gravest threat to freedom of expression in Canadian history.

Never intimidated, the Justice Centre has continued to push back against threats to the free society. On our university campuses, academics like Dr. Frances Widdowson were cancelled and silenced. In our schools, parents were told that they have no right to know about the gender identity transitions of their children at school. In our healthcare systems, nurses like Amy Hamm were disciplined for expressing their sincerely held beliefs about issues of public importance. In Quebec, the Premier signaled that he would ban public prayer, and a city in the south of the province was even quick to censor a message about suicide prevention and the value of life. In Ontario, the government banned a highway billboard that challenged the federal government’s narrative about the safety and efficacy of Covid vaccines. We will continue to fight against these threats to freedom in Canada.

Sadly, governments are interested not only in *limiting* your access to information; in 2024 they were also keen to *extend* their access to your information. We have filed a court challenge to Nova Scotia legislation that would give politicians and bureaucrats access to personal medical information.

We played a key role in securing a remarkable court victory in January 2024, when the Federal Court ruled that the government’s 2022 invocation of the Emergencies Act was illegal, and that its use violated Freedom Convoy protestors’ freedom of expression and other *Charter* rights. We successfully defended nurse Leah McInnes’ right to express her views about mandatory vaccination policies. We motivated Canada Post to ignore demands to stop a “controversial” mailing. We successfully defended peaceful protestor Ben Spicer in a significant court victory for the legal and privacy rights of all Canadians.

I thank every Canadian who joined us in this critical mission to secure a future of freedom for Canada. No obstacle can overcome a people committed to truth, justice, and freedom.



John Carpay, B.A., LL.B.

President and Founder

Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms

Letter from the Chairman of the Board

Back in 1947, Winston Churchill opined that, “Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time...”

And, certainly, the same could be said of a critical element of our Canadian democracy: our justice system. It is also far from perfect and is currently in great need of reform and renewal. But, we should also recognize that it is a system that has worked in the past and can still work for the common good of society, if we are willing to take an active role in shaping it.

For the past 15 years the Justice Centre has been playing a leading role securing the decisions delivered by judges in many of the most important cases concerning our individual rights and freedoms. Indeed, our extraordinary legal team makes front page news on a regular basis with the cases they take on and the wins they secure.

The years ahead will undoubtedly be filled with similar battles for freedom as a variety of institutions across our nation continue to demonstrate a lack of understanding of, or even antipathy towards, the rights of Canadians. Whether it is the drive to impose a central bank digital currency, the “woke” agenda systematically dismantling our once hallowed halls of academia, professional regulatory bodies with totalitarian impulses or elected governments that prefer censorship over free speech - there is more trouble ahead. Please continue to give generously to support us so we can take on each of these battles as they arise.

I am thrilled with the Justice Centre’s decision to launch new educational initiatives focused on secondary-level students. A proper understanding of individual rights and freedoms is critical to the flourishing of a free society. As you know, such important concepts are simply not adequately addressed in public schools, so this new curriculum is essential if we are to influence the coming generations and secure a brighter future.

On a final note, in 2024 the Board of the Justice Centre was greatly pleased to honour Ezra Levant with the George Jonas Freedom Award. Fearless, bold and highly articulate, Ezra continues to give leadership as a unique advocate for freedom and as a pioneer in the growing independent Canadian media landscape. Thank you, Ezra!



Peter Stock

Chairman, Board of Directors

Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms

2024 by the numbers

Our team

Lawyers: 10

Paralegals: 3

Staff: 9*

*Education, communications, events, development, and administration staff

Our impact in the media

News releases: 48

Podcast episodes: 29

Speaking engagements: 33

Media interviews: 99

Columns published: 43

Facebook Followers: 37,000

Twitter Followers: 108,000

Website visits: 480,000

Litigation

In 2024, the Justice Centre provided legal counsel to hundreds of Canadians and advanced dozens of cases across Canada. We defended the freedoms of conscience and religion, expression, peaceful assembly, association, and the rights to mobility, equality and bodily autonomy before courts and tribunals across Canada. Further, we proactively defended Canadians' rights and freedoms by issuing legal warnings to government. In this annual report, we highlight some examples of our work to defend freedom in Canada in 2024.

Championing Dr. Frances Widdowson's freedom of expression on university campuses

In 2024, we continued to defend a principled and very courageous Canadian, Dr. Frances Widdowson, against censorship on university campuses. On November 16, 2024, Dr. Widdowson staged an informal debate on the Mount Royal University campus in Calgary using a conversational method known as Spectrum Street Epistemology – a non-confrontational approach to challenging someone's deeply held beliefs through conversation. During one such conversation, Dr. Widdowson was told, for the first time, that several MRU professors had restraining orders against her. Campus security officers later advised her that approaching students to open a dialogue violated the university's solicitation policy.

With help from the Justice Centre, constitutional lawyer Glenn Blackett issued a demand letter to the university, seeking proof of the restraining orders and a copy of the university's solicitation policy. He stated, "We all know there is a problem with free speech on campus, but to claim that people aren't even allowed to approach one another to speak is just parody." Indeed, professor Widdowson believes that Mount Royal University is attempting to stifle freedom of expression and critical debate under the guise of protecting its faculty and upholding its policies.

This was not the first time she had encountered such censorship. In 2023, the University of Lethbridge cancelled her talk, "How Woke-ism threatens academic freedom," following backlash from various students and faculty and the university's Department of Indigenous Studies. Undeterred, she attempted to speak on the campus anyway but was drowned out by the shouting, drumming, and chanting of counter protesters. In 2023, we helped Dr. Widdowson file a constitution challenge against the University of Lethbridge on the grounds that the cancellation of her event violated her freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly – protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. That case is still ongoing, and we look forward to carrying out her challenge in 2025.



"My experience at the University of Lethbridge is a textbook case of how 'woke-ism' is threatening academic freedom and freedom of expression on university campuses."

- Dr. Frances Widdowson

Courts continued to vindicate peaceful protestors, but the battle is far from over

In early 2022, thousands of Canadians travelled from coasts, mountains and prairies to the nation's capital to protest mandatory vaccination policies, which effectively turned into second-class citizens the millions of Canadians who chose not to get injected with the Covid vaccine.

One such Canadian, Ben Spicer, was standing near the intersection of Bank Street and Sparks Street in Ottawa on February 19, 2022, when police struck him twice in the midsection and forced him to the ground. He was arrested and charged with mischief, obstructing justice, and weapons charges. Police then loaded Mr. Spicer into a police van equipped with a secret audio/video recording device; Crown prosecutors later tried to submit the recording as evidence against him. On August 2, 2024, Justice Timothy Lipson ruled that Mr. Spicer had a reasonable expectation of privacy in the police van and that the recording would not count as evidence against him. He also ruled that the police had violated Mr. Spicer's right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned and to be free from unreasonable search and seizure. Mr. Spicer remarked, "I am extremely grateful for everything that the Justice Centre and Ms. Grenier have done. I thank the Justice Centre for funding my defence, with particular thanks to all those who donated."

Likewise, Chris Barber, a trucking company owner from Swift Current, Saskatchewan, was arrested on February 17, 2022, and charged with mischief, intimidation, obstructing a highway and a police officer, and counselling others to commit the same. Many other peaceful protestors were also arrested and charged during the violent police suppression of a non-violent protest, following the illegal invocation of the *Emergencies Act*.



He pleaded "not guilty" to all charges on April 23, 2023, asserting his freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly – protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Exercising one's *Charter* freedoms is not a crime, or should not be a crime. The Justice Centre provided Mr. Barber with legal counsel throughout his lengthy criminal trial of 45 days.

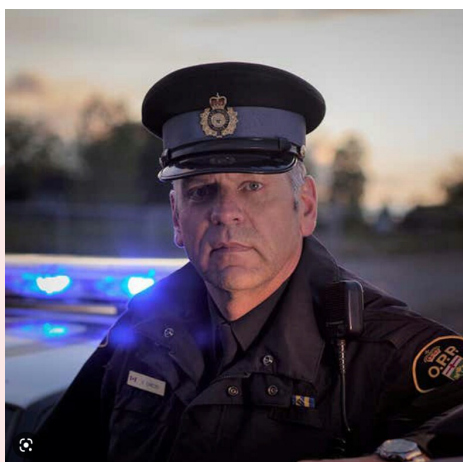
That trial finally concluded on September 13, 2024, and we expect a decision in early 2025.

Court victory: Government acted illegally in response to peaceful Freedom Convoy



Characterizing a peaceful protest in one city as a “national emergency,” Prime Minister Trudeau invoked the *Emergencies Act* on February 14, 2022, granting law enforcement unprecedented powers to suppress the protest. By the time the federal government had used emergency powers against citizens, the border blockades in Coutts, Alberta, and Windsor, Ontario, had been fully resolved.

The Justice Centre provided legal representation to four brave Canadians who challenged the invocation of the *Act*. Each had suffered significant harm during the militaristic police crackdown that was unleashed after the February 14, 2022 declaration of a “national emergency.”



One of them, retired military veteran Edward Cornell (pictured top-left), stated, “I broke no law, yet the government seized my accounts and froze my hard-earned money. I am not a criminal. I am not a terrorist. I am a retired Canadian military veteran who honourably served his country...I feel betrayed by my own government.”

Likewise, decorated former member of the Ontario Provincial Police Vincent Gircys (pictured left) reflected, “Following 32 years of service with the Ontario Provincial Police, I chose to support Canadians facing government overreach. I did so by being vocal and informative regarding the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* relative to government mandates and the resultant abusive police response.”

Our court action on behalf of these Canadians, filed in 2022, was consolidated with other court actions filed by other groups, which also challenged the wrongful use of emergency powers. The court was presented with various perspectives, all of them arguing that the federal government had acted illegally. In a significant victory for the rule of law and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the Federal Court ruled on January 23, 2024, that the invocation of the *Emergencies Act* was illegal and that its use violated the freedom of expression and legal rights of the protestors.

Protecting the privacy and expression of Freedom Convoy donors

Various Ottawa businesses and residents, including Zexi Li, felt disrupted by the peaceful Freedom Convoy protest and launched a \$290-million class-action lawsuit against Chris Barber, Tamara Lich, and hundreds of other protestors. Their lawsuit even targeted donors to the Freedom Convoy and people who were not in Ottawa at the time.

On October 28, our lawyers argued in court that Zexi Li's lawsuit should be dismissed because its primary intent was to intimidate or silence legitimate expression of citizens. All protestors in Canada enjoy the right to proclaim, peacefully and publicly, their political opinions and deeply held convictions. If we are successful in court, the outcome will send a powerful message to anyone tempted to silence the expression of peaceful protestors. John Carpay stated, "The fundamental *Charter* freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly must be vigorously protected and defended, whether they are attacked directly by government or indirectly through a misguided civil action."



Likewise, we continued to defend Constable Michael Brisco (pictured left) in 2024. He privately and anonymously donated \$50 to the Freedom Convoy protest through the GiveSendGo fundraising platform. The donor list of that platform, however, was hacked, and a list of donors was forwarded to the Windsor Police Service. After a six-day hearing before an Ontario Provincial Police Adjudicator, Constable Brisco was found guilty of discreditable conduct and was forced to forego 80 hours of pay as punishment. Our lawyers launched an appeal of that decision, and we expect a decision in early 2025.



"It was unfortunate that private donor information was unlawfully accessed. It is outrageous that the Ontario Provincial Police obtained this information to assist in persecuting police officers who were exercising their right to free expression."

- Constitutional lawyer Darren Leung

Defending Canadians against censorship from their professional regulators



In 2020, Vancouver-area nurse Amy Hamm (pictured top-left) co-sponsored a billboard that read “I ♥ JK Rowling” – a reference to the British author’s defence of women’s right to female-only spaces, such as prisons, crisis centres, and sporting events. A self-proclaimed “social justice activist” complained to the British Columbia College of Nurses and Midwives. Ms. Hamm was then charged with professional misconduct – the start of what was to become more than four years of disciplinary proceedings against her. With help from the Justice Centre, Ms. Hamm and her legal counsel have argued that there is no evidence that Ms. Hamm

was unprofessional; her speech was reasonable, sincere, and scientific. We expect a decision from the College in early 2025.

In Alberta, we were proud to have successfully defended Dr. Michal Princ against charges of professional misconduct. A family medicine physician of 49 years and a refugee from communist Czechoslovakia, Dr. Princ was accused of failing to follow vaccine exemption requirements imposed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta. He believed that these requirements violated the bodily autonomy and right to voluntary consent of his patients. The College dropped his charges on January 18, 2024.

In Saskatchewan, nurse Leah McInnes (pictured bottom-left) objected to Covid vaccination mandates at various protests and on social media during the summer of 2021. A fellow



registered nurse filed a complaint against her to the College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan, calling her “Leah, aka anti-vaxxer.” That complaint resulted in charges of spreading misinformation and professional misconduct. On January 12, 2024, the Discipline Committee dismissed all charges against her and stated that the case against her should not even have proceeded to a hearing in the first place. Constitutional lawyer Glenn Blackett remarked (in words that could easily apply to the case of Dr. Princ as well) that this was “a hugely important decision, not just for Ms. McInnes, who embodies the ‘moral courage’ Canadians should expect of all health professionals. It is perhaps

most important for upholding a nurse’s right to voice ethical and scientific dissent and to participate in democratic discourse. The importance of professional freedom of speech and conscience can hardly be overstated.”

Helping an Ontario man challenge censorship from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation



**THEY KNOWINGLY
LIE ABOUT SAFETY
AND STOPPING
TRANSMISSION**



**CANADIANS DEMAND
ACCOUNTABILITY**

On March 1, 2024, George Katerberg of Lake Huron, Ontario, rented a highway billboard sign (pictured top-left) depicting the faces of various government officials, including Prime Minister Trudeau, Deputy Prime Minister Freeland, NDP leader Singh, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada Tamm, and others. His sign read, “They knowingly lie about safety and stopping transmission” – a reference to Covid vaccine mandates.

Shortly after, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation ordered Mr. Katerberg to remove the sign, claiming that one of the images on the sign (two hammers and a Canadian flag) represented white supremacist ideology. This was news to Mr. Katerberg, who was unaware of such an association. Nevertheless, he created a new sign without the image (pictured bottom-left), but the Ministry revealed its true motivations when it denied him permission to post the new sign. “The message on the billboard,” stated the rejection letter from the Ministry, “may be seen as promoting hatred or contempt for the individuals pictured on the billboard, which may violate certain policies regarding advertising.”

With help from the Justice Centre, Mr. Katerberg launched a constitutional challenge against that decision, arguing that it violated his freedom of expression.

Constitutional lawyer Chris Fleury stated, “Mr. Katerberg’s proposed sign was a matter of legitimate expression, protected by the *Charter*. In a functioning democracy, individuals like Mr. Katerberg need to be able to express their dissatisfaction with public officials. Criticizing politicians, even when using strong or extreme language, is not illegal and should not be characterized as promoting hatred.” We look forward to defending Mr. Katerberg’s freedom of expression in 2025.

Demand letter motivated Canada Post to respect freedom of expression

In August 2024, a grassroots citizens' group launched a New Brunswick flyer campaign promoting the importance of parental notification and consent whenever children consider a gender identity transition at school. The question about the role of parents in the development and oversight of their children at school featured in headlines all across the country in 2024.

Politicians and media put pressure on Canada Post to stop mailing the flyers. With support from the Justice Centre, lawyers sent a letter to Canada Post, reminding the Crown Corporation that they are bound by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

"This is a dangerous precedent which threatens the very foundations of our democracy," remarked Jack Fonesca. "If Canada Post, a federal government agency, is allowed to deny us service because some workers disagree with our political or moral viewpoint, where might that lead? Should letter carriers who are offended by the policies of the New Brunswick Liberal Party be allowed to refuse to deliver its flyers?"

This demand letter was a proactive move to defend freedom of expression for all Canadians, even before a violation could occur. In a significant victory, Canada Post responded on August 30 with assurances that it would not disrupt the mailing of the flyers.

Challenging irrational and unfair treatment of faith communities in British Columbia



In November 2020, Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry (pictured left) banned in-person worship services throughout British Columbia, while people could continue going to bars, restaurants, salons and gyms. Pastor John Koopman of the Free Reformed Church in Chilliwack continued holding in-person services while complying with orders regarding masking, hand washing, social distancing, etc. In January 2021, Pastor Koopman and two other churches filed a constitutional challenge against the orders, and later submitted a request to gather for in-person services. The office of Dr. Henry did not respond to that request for several weeks.

At the same time, her office had been responding within one or two days to accommodation requests from Orthodox Synagogues, granting them permission to gather indoors. During one week in February 2021, Dr. Henry granted synagogues permission to gather indoors on a Tuesday, denied mosques permission to gather either indoors or outdoors on a Wednesday, and told three churches that they could meet outdoors but not indoors on a Thursday.

In a 10-day hearing in Chilliwack in June 2024, our lawyers presented evidence that Dr. Henry acted dishonestly and in bad faith when banning in-person worship services in 2020 and 2021. Pastors and churches who defied the restrictions argued that the prosecution against them was an abuse of process and should be stayed, given the conduct of Dr. Henry and her office. Compelling evidence shows that Dr. Henry promptly considered requests from synagogues to be exempted from her ban on religious gatherings while ignoring similar requests from Christians and Muslims. This case raised important issues about the rule of law and the government's obligation to act in good faith.

Court orders Dr. Bonnie Henry to reconsider her unreasonable order

In November 2021, BC Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry ordered specified groups of healthcare workers to show proof of having been injected with the Covid vaccine. Exemptions to the vaccine mandate were available for only limited reasons, as determined by government authorities, not patients' doctors. To be considered for an exemption or deferral, healthcare workers were required to have (a) taken one dose of an approved Covid vaccine and be able to prove having experienced a serious adverse reaction or (b) have been diagnosed with myocarditis or pericarditis. No exemptions were granted for reasons of conscience or religion, or to account for other medical concerns.

These Orders saw approximately 2,500 healthcare workers – many of them working remotely with no contact with patients – fired for their decision not to be vaccinated or not to disclose their vaccination status. This made critical shortages in the BC healthcare system even worse.

In defence of bodily autonomy and the freedom of conscience and religion, both protected by the *Charter*, the Justice Centre helped 11 BC healthcare workers file a constitutional challenge to the Orders. After more than two years of legal proceedings, the BC Supreme Court ruled on May 10, 2024, that Dr. Bonnie Henry should reconsider the vaccine mandate for remote working healthcare workers who have no contact with patients. This was the first time a court has found that a Covid vaccine order by a provincial health officer was unreasonable.

Exposing invasions of medical privacy in Nova Scotia

In April 2024, the House of Assembly amended Nova Scotia's *Personal Health Information Act* to give the provincial government power to force doctors and other healthcare providers to disclose private medical records to government officials without patients' consent. These amendments violate Nova Scotians' rights to security (*Charter* section 7) and the right to be secure against unreasonable search and seizure (*Charter* section 8).

The government justified its violation of patient privacy as necessary for (1) planning and management of the healthcare system, (2) resource allocation, and (3) creating or maintaining electronic health record programs and services through a smartphone app.

Our lawyers launched a constitutional challenge against these amendments, arguing that Nova Scotians should have the opportunity to opt out of a program that grants the government access to private medical information. There is no reason why this proposed app cannot accommodate informed consent or personal choice. We expect this case to be heard in 2025.



"No one in Nova Scotia should lose control over who gets to see their private medical information. That information should stay between them and their healthcare team. The Supreme Court of Canada says that respect for individual privacy is an essential component of what it means to be free."

– Constitutional lawyer James Manson

Shielding a suicide prevention group from censorship in Quebec

Approximately 12 Canadians die by suicide every day. After his own son committed suicide, Claude Tremblay founded Le Groupe Jaspe in 1999. He set out to knock on every door in Quebec's 1,000 cities and towns to "break isolation and promote dialogue with suicidal and desperate people." Over the past 25 years, the volunteers of Le Groupe Jaspe have reached the people of 50 cities and 771 villages with a powerful religious message about the value of life.

Earlier this year, the town of Waterloo ticketed a member of Le Groupe Jaspe for violating a bylaw that prohibits soliciting without a permit, even though the law in Quebec

appropriately recognizes the right of people to share their message door-to-door. The City prosecutor is invoking Quebec's notorious "secularism" law, passed in 2019, which violates religious freedom on the pretext of promoting the separation of state and religion. This prosecutor seemed to think that "state neutrality" means that religious expression should be outlawed in public. "Since the *Loi sur la Laïcité de l'État* [Quebec's secularism law] came into force, religious groups have felt that their rights were being flouted by the public authorities, but always in an unofficial manner," remarked constitutional lawyer Oliver Séguin. "For the first time, a municipal body seems to be formally invoking the *Loi sur la Laïcité de l'État* to justify the degradation of freedom of conscience and religion. If the Court were to rule in its favour, it would seriously infringe the religious freedoms of all Quebecers."

With help from the Justice Centre, Le Groupe Jaspe has challenged the repressive application of this bylaw on grounds that it violates their freedoms of expression and religion. This case will set a precedent that impacts the freedoms of expression and religion in Quebec and across Canada.

Premier François Legault warned to back down from threat to ban public prayer

On December 6, 2024, Quebec Premier François Legault publicly stated that his government was considering a ban on prayer in public. "Seeing people praying in the streets, in public parks, is not something we want in Quebec...And, yes, we will look at the means where we can act legally or otherwise," stated the Premier. He even went so far as to say that his government would invoke section 33 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the "Notwithstanding Clause"). Such a move would shield the ban on public prayer from constitutional challenges for a period of five years.

In a letter to the Premier, constitutional lawyer Olivier Séguin wrote that, far from reinforcing secularism, the ban on praying in public places would contradict the principles on which Quebec's secularism law is based: (1) the religious neutrality of the State, (2) the equality of all citizens, and (3) freedom of religion.

"Your approach to the situation," stated Mr. Séguin, "suggests a militant, anti-religious and dogmatic conception of one of the healthiest and oldest practices that human beings have maintained in their relationships with their fellow human beings and with a higher power."

Mr. Séguin continued, "The ban on prayer announced by the Premier borrows from the intolerant overtones of a state atheism that flourished east of the Iron Curtain during the twentieth century, and of which history has retained only sad memories. In so doing, our government would be violating the principles of religious neutrality, equality and freedom of religion on which the secular state is supposed to be based."

Defending a Quebec teacher ordered to deceive parents about student's gender transition

In 2023, a Montreal high school created policies making it illegal for teachers to inform parents or guardians when their child seeks a gender identity transition at school. The school sought to implement directives from the Quebec Ministry of Education on trans and non-binary gender identity. In October 2023, administrators at the Montreal high school ordered a teacher to lie about the gender identity transition of a 14-year-old female student seeking a female-to-male gender transition. The teacher was ordered to refer to the student with the masculine “he/him” pronouns in class but to refer to the student with the feminine “she/her” pronouns in conversations with parents. School administrators gave this order even though there was no evidence or suspicion of parental abuse at home.

The school administrators even went so far as to threaten to fire the teacher if the teacher disclosed any information about the gender transition to the parents during an upcoming parent/teacher interview.

With help from the Justice Centre, the teacher launched a constitutional challenge against the Quebec Ministry of Education, arguing that the directives violated the student's parental rights and the freedom of conscience – protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The teacher remarked, “Transparent collaboration with parents is essential to my role as a teacher and critical for the long-term wellbeing of children. Lying to parents about how we are treating their children, or about what is going on with children at school, violates the principles of my vocation.” We look forward to defending this teacher in 2025.

Successfully resisting waves of censorship on the west coast

On June 10, 2024, Diane Sparks booked an event space at the Powell River City Library to host presentations and public discussions on a controversial proposed change to the name of Powell River. The Tla'amin First Nation had requested that the City of Powell River change its name in 2021, claiming that the city's namesake, Israel Wood Powell (1836-1915), had been involved in the residential school system. The Library later demanded more information from Ms. Sparks, including information about the panel topic, speaker names, and presentations. It appeared that the Library was considering cancelling the event.

On June 13, constitutional lawyer Glenn Blackett sent a legal warning letter to the Library, reminding the Library that it is a government entity and is, therefore, subject to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Cancelling the event would violate the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly of the organizers and attendees, according to the

letter. In a victory for rights and freedoms, the Library backed down and allowed the event to proceed. This was hardly the end of trouble in Powell River, however.

Later in 2024, the Powell River City Council proposed new policies that could be used to suppress the expression of residents concerned with the proposed name change to Powell River. Indeed, a proposed bylaw stated, “Members of the public who, when providing input use disrespectful language, make defamatory statements, allegations, inferences etc. will be asked to stop speaking immediately, be given the opportunity to apologize and adjust their comments accordingly. If the member of the public continues to speak disrespectfully, the presiding member will immediately advise the member to once again stop speaking or advise them to return to their seat in the gallery or leave the meeting room.”

Who gets to decide what is “disrespectful,” and on what basis? Which government official will exercise this power to censor a statement or inference because she or he deems it to be “defamatory”? The policy does not explain. Our lawyers sent a legal warning letter to the City Council, advising them to abandon these new policies.



“Some members of City Council seem to think ‘public consultation’ is less about listening to citizens’ thoughts and more about correcting citizen wrongthink through ‘education.’ Democracy is about open debate, including expression people might find wrong and offensive. To bubble-wrap democracy is to suffocate it.”

- Constitutional lawyer Glenn Blackett

Defending a medical student from mandatory Covid vaccination and expulsion

In 2023, a Canadian university chose to reimpose a Covid vaccine mandate on its students, after having revoked a previous mandatory vaccine policy in 2022. Our lawyers assisted a student in seeking an exemption from the new mandate.

Our application was supported by an expert report and extensive submissions on the university’s legal obligations to respect the student’s right to freedom of conscience and religion, and bodily autonomy - protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. After some “back and forth” between our lawyers and the university, the student was granted a Covid vaccine exemption and was able to continue with their studies.

Education and Outreach

The 2024 George Jonas Freedom Award

The Justice Centre presented the 2024 George Jonas Freedom Award to Ezra Levant – entrepreneur, journalist, and public intellectual. Mr. Levant is an articulate and unapologetic voice for freedom within the world of independent media.

Previous George Jonas Freedom Award recipients include Mark Steyn, Christie Blatchford, the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship, Tamara Lich, and Dr. Jordan Peterson.

Author, poet, journalist and *National Post* columnist, George Jonas (1935-2016) made significant contributions to freedom in Canada after escaping from communist Hungary in 1956. George Jonas experienced totalitarianism under both Stalinist communism and the pro-Nazi Hungarian fascist regime of the Second World War. George Jonas supported the Justice Centre in his capacity as a board member of the Aurea Foundation, thereby greatly aiding the Justice Centre throughout its early years.

In 2018, the Justice Centre inaugurated this annual award to carry on the legacy of George Jonas and to highlight the impact that one individual can make in defence of a free society.

(Pictured below from top-left to bottom-right: Award recipients Mark Steyn, Christie Blatchford, Tamara Lich, Dr. Jordan Peterson, Ezra Levant, and George Jonas)



Educating Canadians about freedom



In 2024, the Justice Centre educated Canadians about freedom through courses, reports, events, contests, podcasts, and events. Visit the Justice Centre website (www.jccf.ca) to sign our petitions, explore our policy positions, or to learn more about our active cases.

The Justice Centre continues to develop a high school curriculum on the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. This curriculum educates high school students, parents, and teachers about the value of human dignity, about the importance of fundamental rights and freedoms, and about Canadian political institutions. Canadians of all ages, and in particular young Canadians, lack an understanding of these important concepts.

Our first module, “Exploring Freedom of Expression,” was taught in two Alberta private schools in 2023 with positive feedback from students, parents, and school administrators. In 2024, we taught modules on “Exploring Freedom of Conscience and Religion” and “Exploring Freedom of Peaceful Assembly” in private schools in Alberta and British Columbia.

We look forward to developing additional modules on “Exploring Freedom of Association” and “Exploring Canada’s Judicial System” in 2025.

Advocating for better laws and policies



Justice Centre President John Carpay in Ottawa in April 2024, to deliver petitions with over 55,000 signatures from Canadians in opposition to the Online Harms Act

Registered charities are permitted to advocate for changes to laws and policies. Our non-partisan advocacy is conducted through education resources, brochures, videos, podcasts, petitions, papers, reports, and columns published in the *National Post*, *Epoch Times*, *Western Standard* and other media - all part of a coordinated effort to inform Canadians about their *Charter* rights and freedoms.

We encourage every Canadians to voice their concerns to their Members of Parliament, Senators, provincial elected representatives, city councillors, school board trustees, and professional regulatory bodies.

In February 2024, we launched a petition against the notorious *Online Harms Act*. Justice Centre President John Carpay (pictured above) delivered more than 55,000 petition signatures to stop the *Act* to the Office of the Prime Minister in April 2024.

Thank you to our donors and supporters

Your donations are making a difference in courts, classrooms, and public spaces from coast to coast. When you give, you partner with our team of litigators, researchers, and advocates in defending Canadians' rights and freedoms from harmful laws and policies.

We cannot secure a future of freedom without you. Since our founding in 2010, we have chosen not to accept any government funding. We rely on the generosity of Canadians like you.

Consider giving today!

www.jccf.ca/donate/

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