



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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MEMO

DATE: February 1, 2018
TO: Pastors, Parishioners, Principals, Teachers, and Support Staff
FROM: Bishop Gary Gordon
RE: CCCB organizes interfaith news conference to address the Summer Jobs program

On Thursday, January 25, 2018, with ecumenical and interfaith organizations, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) organized a news conference at St. Benedict Catholic Church, Toronto. Present at the news conference were His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins; Mr. Bruce Clemenger, President of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada; Rabbi Chaim Strauchler of Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, Toronto; Imam Refaat Mohamed of the Canadian Council of Imams; and others from faith communities who had received funding in the past through the Canada Summer Jobs program.

During the news conference, four spokespersons released an ecumenical and interfaith statement signed by more than 80 leaders of faith communities, organizations and institutions. The statement called for the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to amend the present Canada Summer Jobs guidelines and application process to enable religious organizations to remain true to their identity and beliefs. A copy of the statement is attached for your convenience, to be inserted in the weekend bulletin, and posted on the bulletin board.

The interfaith news conference was in response to the government's update of the program released on January 23 that failed to address concerns among Catholic Bishops brought forward to the Honourable Patricia A. Hajdu, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour on January 22, 2018. The discussion with the Minister highlighted that beliefs and practices of not only Catholics but also of other faith traditions may be excluded from receiving funding through the Canada Summer Jobs Program due to present guidelines, which amounts to coercion in matters of conscience, religious belief, and freedom of expression.

The CCCB offices are currently gathering the statements of a number of Canadian Bishops for circulation and posting on the CCCB website, along with a list of summer jobs that are being affected. Together, let us affirm and stand firm, with our religious brothers and sisters, in upholding the Charter of Rights for Freedom of Religion, Conscience, and Expression.

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- The video of the news conference is on the Archdiocese of [Toronto Facebook page](#), and the [Salt + Light TV website](#).
 - CCCB link to the statement: <http://www.cccb.ca/site/eng/media-room/statements-a-letters/4872-faith-leaders-ask-government-to-revise-canada-summer-jobs-requirements>