

**Bill #1**  
**The Religion Equalization Act**  
Moved by: Minister of Defence

**WHEREAS** Canadian society has become less religious;<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS** Provincial laws have already begun separating religion and political life;<sup>2</sup> and

**WHEREAS** The only Statutory holidays related to Christianity such as Christmas and Easter are the only Canadian statutory holidays related to Christianity, which is discriminatory towards other religions.<sup>3</sup>

**HIS MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Youth Parliament of Manitoba, enacts as follows:**

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**Purpose**

**1** The purpose of this Act is to

- (a) establish **EAR [Equal Affiliation of Religions Committee]** with the mandate set out in section 4;
- (b) Establish an official list of recognized religious holidays from all major religions and Spiritualities;
- (c) Assist workers with requesting dispensation from going to work or receive extra pay for when a worker does work on their religiously mandated day off;
- (d) Assist students with requesting dispensation from going to school without penalty for their religious holiday;
- (e) Cease any tax benefits or lack of taxation on any and all religious organizations and their properties; and
- (f) Mandate that all government agencies, schools and companies, if they so wish, no longer comply with a religious based ‘days off’ schedule;

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. *Two-thirds of the population declare Christian as their religion*. 2016.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-003-x/2014001/section03/33-eng.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Publications Quebec. *Act Respecting the Laicity of the State*. 2023.  
<https://www.legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/l-0.3>

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Human Rights Commission. *Discussion Paper on Religious Intolerance*. 2023.  
<https://www.chrc-ccdpc.gc.ca/en/resources/publications/discussion-paper-religious-intolerance#fn4>

## **Definitions**

**2** The following definitions apply in this Act.

- (a) **Students:** persons studying at a primary school, secondary school, university of college or other recognized educational institution.
- (b) **Religion:** the belief in and worship of a superhuman power or powers.
- (c) **Religious:** those who affiliate with a particular religious or spiritual tradition.
- (d) **Pre-Approved:** officially agreed to before something happens.
- (e) **Letters of Religious Affiliation:** letters written by individuals requesting certain days off in accordance with their religious background.
- (f) **Statutory Holiday:** A public holiday recognized by law and is given as a non-working day. In application to the Religion Equalization Act all Statutory Holidays shall only last 24-48 hours and not exceeding 72 hours.

## **Establishing EAR**

**3** **EAR** [The Equal Application of Religions Committee] is hereby established.

## **Mandate and powers of EAR**

**4** The mandate of **EAR** is to

- (a) Remove Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and all religious based holidays as Statutory holidays;
- (b) Begin the process of allowing individuals to submit Letters of Religious Affiliation so workers and students may be excused from work or/and school without the risk of losing wages or punishment;
- (c) Transition government agencies, departments, schools and consenting companies to no longer mandate work or school on Saturdays, Sundays and previous “Christmas/Winter Break” holiday schedules;
- (d) Begin taxing all religious properties and end any government assistance to religious groups via tax benefits; and
- (e) Ensure companies whose employees work on their pre-approved religious holiday or pre-approved mandated religious ‘day of rest’ be given financial compensation or extended available holiday days.

## **Letters of Religious Affiliation**

**5** How to Apply for Letters of Religious Affiliation:

- (a) All persons before they start their job must declare their religious affiliation or non-affiliation.
- (b) People must then declare what holidays or days their specific religious days they should be given off.
  - (i) These holidays are to be approved by **EAR** from the List of Religious Holidays mentioned in clause 10.

- (c) All minors will automatically share the same Letter of Religious Affiliation as their parents until they reach the age of majority, then they must declare their own religious affiliation or lack-of-religious affiliation.
  - (i) Should a child have parents of differing religions, the parents may decide which holidays they will request their child be excused from school for.
- (d) If people decide to no longer affiliate with their religion or if they decide to formally join a religion they can notify **EAR** for either a Letter of Religious Affiliation or to rescind their affiliation.
  - (i) Those who no longer wish to affiliate are asked to send a new Letter of Religious Affiliation to **EAR**, within a year of their decision to no longer affiliate.
  - (ii) Those who wish to change their religious affiliation are asked to send a new Letter of Religious Affiliation to **EAR** within a year of their decision to affiliate with a new religion/spirituality.
  - (iii) **EAR** will issue confirmation checks, ensuring that all those whose affiliate are still affiliated or not at random intervals.
    - 1 All confirmation checks for those who have a religious affiliation must have a reference by someone not-related to the applicant and who has known the person for at least 2 years.
  - (iv) If the individual is unable to find references they may still apply but after a 2 year period they will be sent a confirmation check.
- (e) Every year, January 1<sup>st</sup>, every worker and student requesting a specific religious holiday or day of rest must submit a request to **EAR** with all religious dates.
  - (i) This does not apply to weekly mandated religious days off, those days off will be recurring once the Letter of Religious Affiliation is sent to **EAR**, unless revoked.
- (f) If a request is made it will be the worker or the student's responsibility to submit the request from **EAR** to their rightful authority, i.e employer, teacher or postsecondary institutional Registrar's office, thereby the request can be denied or accepted by the company or educational institution.

## 6 Revised School schedule Clause

- (a) All primary and secondary schools, including Nursery, Kindergarten, University and College students, shall now hold classes on Saturday and Sunday.
- (b) Students will be given Mondays and Tuesdays off from school.
- (c) 'Christmas' or Winter break shall only be one week, starting one day before New Year's Eve and will last for seven days after.
- (d) Summer vacation will be extended to include another full week.
- (e) Schools with a specific religious affiliation may close for their mandated religious day of rest.

## **7 Religious days and Rest Day Clause & Compensation**

- (a) Workers can seek permission from **EAR** to not attend work without the risk of losing employment or wage to celebrate or abide by their religiously mandated holiday or day of rest.
  - (i) Any request must be cross-referenced with the Letter of Religious Affiliation from either the worker or their legal guardian.
- (b) Students can seek permission from **EAR** to not attend classes without the risk of penalty to celebrate or abide by their religiously mandated holiday or day of rest.
  - (i) Any request must be cross-referenced with the Letter of Religious Declaration from either the student or their legal guardian.
- (c) Any worker who works by request of their employer on their pre-approved religious holiday or religiously mandated day of rest will be compensated according to company policy via
  - (i) Overtime rate
  - (ii) Extended Vacation Days
  - (iii) Or any other recognized means of compensation recognized by provincial labour laws.
- (d) If there are any disputes between employer and employee, the employee may request for an arbiter to be sent by **EAR** to discuss with management regarding allowing its workers to seek a day off.

## **8 Revised New Work Week**

- (a) All government agencies and schools and consenting companies will be required to work from Wednesday to Sunday, taking Monday and Tuesday as non-working days.
  - (i) All essential services shall remain unaffected.
- (b) Previous entities that operate everyday will not be affected in their operation hours.
- (c) Previous entities that operated on differing days than Monday-Friday will not be affected in their operation hours, but are more than welcome to switch their operation hours to match government hours.
- (d) When an official holiday falls on a Monday or a Tuesday that day off will be transferred to the next working day.

## **9 Taxation of Religious Properties and Removal of Tax Benefits**

- (a) All religious buildings used for public worship not taxed prior to the **Religion Equalization Act** shall now be subject to property tax.
- (b) All donations that are given to religious organization are no longer subject to a tax receipt.

## **10 Religious Holiday List Approval Process**

- (a) The government shall create a list of all major religions' holidays which is the official list of holidays those seeking permission to not attend work or school must use in order to receive compensation.
  - (i) This shall be based on the Government of Canada's most recent Census Data of specific religions and spiritualities.
  - (ii) Any list of religious holidays will be compiled with the support and input of all major religious leaders and spiritualities and religion and cultural experts.
- (b) These holidays are to last between 24-48 hours and not exceed 72 hours.

## **11 Lose of Religious Holidays**

- (a) All religious holidays that are currently recognized as official holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, and Good Friday are now removed as official Statutory holidays.

## **12 New Social Holidays**

- (a) New Year's Eve shall be granted the level of Statutory Holiday in Canada, in lieu of Christmas;
- (b) Every February 15, also known as Flag Day, shall be granted the level of Statutory Holiday in Canada; and
- (c) Every June 21, also known as National Indigenous Peoples Day shall be granted the level of Statutory Holiday.

## **13 Penalties**

- (a) During random checks if the affiliated religion/spirituality cannot be verified or changed then the beneficiary must submit a new Letter of Religious Affiliation.
- (b) Failure to do so within a year of the random check will result in a fine of 1.63% of their total net income.
  - (i) If a person wishes to appeal they must do so during the year after their random check. Should the appeal process exceed the year, there will be no penalty.