

What is Freedom of Belief?



Freedom of belief is where law must be based on fact and not on the beliefs or religion of any person or group of people. This is often referred to as the separation between church and state. Laws based on fact are equally applicable to people of all beliefs.

According to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, everyone is equal before the law. Therefore, the law to wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle must be followed by everyone. However, some provincial governments have exempted people, that wear a religious headdress, from obeying this law but have maintained enforcement of this law for all other people.

How can everyone one be equal before the law when the law is not equally applied to all people?

To allow people, that wear a religious headdress, to legally ride motorcycles without wearing helmets, the law requiring the helmet to be worn while riding a motorcycle should have been repealed in total. This would have given everyone the right to choose whether or not they wear a helmet; thus, treating people of all beliefs equally.

Provincial governments are still having to develop policies to treat people of all beliefs equally. For example, the province of Quebec has passed Bill 21 that does not allow wearing of religious symbols by public servants. This legislation was made to ensure that public services are equally available to everyone in a manner free from the influence of any religion or belief that is not theirs. People are free to practise their faiths in their own private lives.

Do people, who wear religious symbols, wear them when they take a shower or bath?

Not wearing religious symbols while working in the public service should not make people any less faithful to their religion. The provincial government of Quebec does not wish to promote any religion; therefore, Bill 21 was passed to treat people of all beliefs equally.

The Government of Canada is founded upon the Magna Carta (Great Charter) which states that no person is above the law, not even the monarch. Therefore, the freedoms provided in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including the freedoms of religion and belief, cannot provide anyone exemption from the law.<