

Dear Ms Sourial and Members of the Committee,

We would like to add our support to the position expressed by Justin Trottier at the Center for Inquiry--Ontario, recommending a strict separation between the state and religions. The Lord's Prayer, or any prayer for that matter, should not be recited at Queen's Park.

It should be emphasized that our society will not fall to pieces if this prayer is not recited in our legislature. The 2004 United Nations' "Human Development Report" which ranked 177 countries on a "Human Development Index" measured such indicators of societal health as life expectancy, adult literacy, per-capita income, educational attainment, and so on. It found that the twenty-five nations characterized by organic atheism with the highest proportion of nonbelievers scored remarkably well. The top five nations were Norway, Sweden, Australia, Canada and the Netherlands. All had notably high degrees of atheism.

Conversely, the bottom fifty countries of the "Human Development Index" lacked statistically significant levels of organic atheism. (irreligious countries had the lowest infant-mortality rate and religious countries the highest; there are numerous such comparisons in the report).

Countries with the highest level of religiosity are the most destitute. We are not arguing that there is a direct cause and effect but the people who claim we must be religious and insist on public prayer in the Ontario legislature or else our society will break down, are mistaken. The facts do not support their claims. Prayer and belief in a supernatural deity may comfort the individual believer but at the societal level, the results do not compare at all favourably with the more secular societies. Dr Phil Zuckerman, Professor of Sociology and author of "Invitation to the Sociology of Religion" concluded "When seeking a more civil, just, safe, humane, and healthy society, one is more likely to find it in among those nations ranking low in religious faith -- contrary to the preaching of religious folks."

Please remove this anachronistic, discriminatory, irrational and unnecessary practice from Queen's Park.

Thank you.

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