

Update Regarding Canada Summer Jobs Program

We the undersigned, representing Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities across Canada have spoken publicly about our concerns regarding the new application requirements for the Canada Summer Jobs program.

Groups applying for 2018 funding were required to endorse an attestation by checking a box, indicating their affirmation of certain beliefs held by the current government, described by many as a “values test.” Such a values test contravenes the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which guarantees the freedom of religion and conscience (2a), of thought, belief, opinion and expression (2b), as well as “equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination”(15 [1]).

In January of this year, we asked to sit down with the government to find a path forward. In the interim, we invited those sharing our deep concern to write, call or meet with their elected Member of Parliament, respectfully expressing these concerns.

We know that more than 1,400 applications have been denied, compared to 126 in 2017. It is no coincidence that the number of rejections has spiked due to the controversial attestation.

Hundreds of concerned groups did check the box, but amended the attestation to instead confirm that they will abide by the laws of Canada in their hiring practices and all other activities. Applications that failed to check the box, or did so with qualification or clarification were sent back as incomplete. Most were then resubmitted, asking for an accommodation under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

In spite of our ongoing efforts at dialogue with the government, which culminated in a meeting with Minister Hajdu on Wednesday March 21, and our persistent requests that the problematic attestation be amended or removed, it has been made clear to us by the Minister that there will be no accommodation provided, and no changes made to the attestation for this year.¹ Applicants that did not “check the box” will be ineligible for a Canada Summer Jobs grant in 2018.

The Minister has also indicated that changes will be made to the application for 2019 to provide greater clarity and precision. However, many of our organizations remain concerned that the question of ‘reproductive rights criteria’ and other undefined values will remain present in the application form in 2019.

While we welcome a review of the application process for 2019 and have asked the Minister to be included in the process of changing the policy, we are extremely disappointed that the government has chosen not to make adjustments to the program for this year. This leaves hundreds of programs across the country vulnerable. These groups must now consider modifying or cancelling programs, while others will be forced to launch emergency fundraising campaigns. It is disheartening to think that this whole situation could have been avoided.

¹ Proposed rewording of the attestation which was submitted to the Minister is attached.

As faith leaders, we will continue to raise our collective voices and encourage others to advocate for changes to the program and, most importantly, to respect the diverse views and beliefs of all Canadians.

Signatories:

Mr. Bruce Clemenger, President
The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Rabbi Chaim Strauchler
Rabbinical Council of America

Mr. Derek B.M. Ross, Executive Director & General Counsel
Christian Legal Fellowship

Rev. John Pellowe , Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Council of Christian Charities

Mrs. Margaret Ann Jacobs, National President
The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Dr. M. Iqbal Nadvi, Chair
Canadian Council of Imams

His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Toronto
Representing: The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

CANADA SUMMER JOBS ATTESTATION

MEETING WITH MINISTER OF EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR THE HONOURABLE PATRICIA A. HAJDU ON MARCH 21, 2018

The initial attestation consisted of four statements.¹ As you are aware, only one of those statements raised concern for many organizations. On or about January 23, 2018, supplemental information was released to clarify the initial attestation.

INITIAL ATTESTATION	PROPOSED ATTESTATION
Both the job* and my organization's core mandate* respect individual human rights in Canada, including the values underlying the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as other rights. These include reproductive rights and the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, mental or physical disability or sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression;	My organization complies with all laws to which we are subject, including all applicable human rights laws and labour/employment laws, and will use the Canada Summer Jobs grant only for the activities stated in our application. My organization recognizes that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees the rights and freedoms of all Canadians.

Supplemental Information

Organization: This is the entity that is directly applying to use CSJ funding.

Core mandate: This is the primary **activities** undertaken by the organization that reflect the organization's ongoing services provided to the community. It is not the beliefs of the organization, and it is not the values of the organization.

Respect: Individual human rights are respected when an organization's primary activities, and the job responsibilities, do not seek to remove or actively undermine these existing rights.

The CSJ program will not fund organizations whose primary activities:

- involve partisan political activities; or
- do not respect – seek to remove or actively undermine – established individual human rights in Canada.

ⁱ See for example: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/canada-summer-jobs/eligibility.html> and the Applicant Guide https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/employment-social-development/services/funding/canada-summer-jobs/CSJ2018_applicant_guide.pdf.