

[www.mcgill.ca /morsl/equity-and-inclusion/bill21](https://www.mcgill.ca/morsl/equity-and-inclusion/bill21)

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Resources for students regarding Bill 21

7-9 minutes

Frequently-asked questions (FAQ) about Bill 21

"An Act respecting the laicity of the State", or Bill 21 as it is commonly known, was passed into law on June 16, 2019. In a nutshell, the law prohibits some public servants (e.g. school teachers, police officers) from wearing religious symbols on the job. Although a lot of media and literature responding to the legislature has been circulating, we believe that students should be reminded of the opportunity to study the law themselves and form their own opinions as members of our academically free institution. The goal of this FAQ is to render more transparent the effects of the law on student and university life. While legal challenges are expected to continue, the law remains essentially in effect at present (2022).

Related: A [survey](#) is currently under way to assess the impact of Law 21 on career choice among students in Education and Law in Québec. This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board of McGill University.

1. What counts as a religious symbol for the purposes of this law?

Religious symbols are defined in the law as follows: "A religious symbol, within the meaning of this section, is any object, including clothing, a symbol, jewelry, an adornment, an accessory or headwear, that (1) is worn in connection with a religious conviction or belief; or (2) is reasonably considered as referring to a religious affiliation."

2. Can I still wear a religious symbol on campus?

Yes. The provincial law banning religious symbols for certain public servants does not apply to the general population or to students.

3. If I wear a religious symbol, can I still be employed by McGill (e.g. as a TA, Floor Fellow, research assistant)?

Yes. Although elementary and secondary school teachers employed in the public sector are prohibited from wearing religious symbols, this ban does not apply to college and university teachers or to any other employee of McGill University in the exercise of their functions.

4. Can I still pray, worship, or otherwise practice my faith on campus?

Yes. One option is MORSL's drop-in centre, which houses a small non-denominational [prayer and meditation room](#) for silent reflection. Additionally, MORSL's website offers a listing of faith-based [student clubs/groups on campus](#), a directory of [places of worship](#) in Montreal, and a list of [community faith volunteers](#) who are available to our students. Although McGill University is a secular institution, a number of community organizations

adjacent to campus offer space for worship and religious practice, such as the [Rohr Jewish Student Centre \(Chabad\)](#), the Jack Reitman [Hillel House](#) and the [Newman Centre](#).

5. What should I do if I wear a religious symbol, and my academic program leads to employment in the public service (e.g., education, law)?

As long as the law remains in effect, certain public sector employment opportunities will continue to be impacted in Quebec. Several legal challenges ([by the Canadian Civil Liberties Union](#), [Coalition Inclusion Québec](#), and by a school board, among others) have been launched in the days and months following its adoption, but at present (2022) the law remains in effect. Make sure you carefully review the section of the law that lists all persons subject to the prohibition on wearing religious symbols in the exercise of their job functions (Schedule II). Even when exploring jobs in the private sector (e.g. private schools, private law firms), take note that there may be instances when the prohibition may still apply to you, such as if you are appearing before a magistrate in a case where a government body has contracted your legal services. If your employment prospects will be impacted by this law, speak to [CaPS](#) and/or your [academic advisor](#) to discuss your options.

6. How will this law affect the internships/stages/work placements that are part of my program?

During your internship, you retain your status as a university student, not as an employee. As such, the ban does not apply to you.

7. How can I learn more about this law?

Read the [text of law online](#), in English.

8. Where can I find support?

Please refer to our [list of resources](#).

9. What is McGill University's stance on this law?

Read the [Provost's statement](#) on the June 16, 2019 Laicity law (Bill 21).

Support Resources

From our own contacts and from resources provided by student associations, the following is a list of on- and off-campus resources for those directly or indirectly affected by Bill 21.

Do you know of a resource we haven't listed? [Email us](#) to share it with our community!

On-campus Support

[McGill Office Of Religious and Spiritual Life \(MORSL\)](#)

3610 McTavish Street (3rd Floor), Montréal, QC H3A 1Y2

morsl@mcgill.ca / (514)-398-4104

Office of the Dean of Students

3600 McTavish, Montréal, QC

deanofstudents@mcgill.ca / (514) 398-4990

Office for Mediation and Reporting

sinead.hunt@mcgill.ca / (514) 398-6419

Muslim Students' Association of McGill University (MSA)

president@msamcgill.com

McGill Sikh Students' Association

Legal Information Clinic

pub.licm@mail.mcgill.ca

(514) 398-6792

McGill Affiliates

Chabad at McGill

3429 Peel, Montreal, QC

info@chabadmcgill.com / (514) 845-4443

Hillel Montreal

3460 Stanley, Montréal, QC H3A 1R8

Newman Catholic Centre

3484 Peel, Montreal, QC H3A 3T6

newmancentre@mail.mcgill.ca / (514) 398-4106

Off-campus Support

Canadian Civil Liberties Association: Non-profit dedicated to defending civil liberties and constitutional rights through advocacy in- and out-of-court. Along with the National council for Canadian Muslims, they are leading the court challenge against Bill 21.

mail@ccla.org // 416-363-0321

Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs: Advocacy wing of the Jewish Federations of Canada, raising awareness about issues that impact the Jewish community and fighting discrimination against Jewish peoples.

info@cija.ca // 416-638-1991

Coalition Inclusion Quebec: Network of community groups opposed to Bill 21

Coalitioninclusionquebec@gmail.com

Gurudwara Guru Nanak Darbar Montreal

430 St. Roch, Montréal, QC H3N 1K2

(514) 270-6600

[Islamic Centre of Quebec \(ICQ\)](#)

2520 Laval Road, Ville St. Laurent, QC H4L 3A1

info@icqmontreal.com / (514) 331-1770

[Justice Femme](#): Organization formed to support femme-identifying people affected by the “reasonable accommodation” debate. Offers advocacy, psychological, and accompaniment services for those affected by discrimination

justicefemme.org // [514-447-5141](tel:514-447-5141)

[National Council of Canadian Muslims](#): Canada-wide organization facilitating civic engagement for Muslim people, offering advocacy and support, and provides training to Canadian Muslim communities on civil liberties and human rights

nccm.ca // [866-524-0004](tel:866-524-0004)

[Quebec Inclusif](#): Publication group advocating for inclusivity in Quebec policy

1010 Sherbrooke Ouest // quebecinclusif@gmail.com

[Quebec Federation of Home and School Associations](#): Coalition that has taken a stance against Bill 21 in support of educators targeted by the bill, helping to run the Non à la loi 21 campaign

<https://www.facebook.com/nonl21> // nonalaloi21@gmail.com

3285 Cavendish Blvd // [514-481-5619](tel:514-481-5619)

[Vent Over Tea](#)

info@ventovertea.com

[World Sikh Organisation](#): Provides a united voice for the Sikh community worldwide, offering legal counsel and advocacy

worldsikh.org