



Hon. Dominic LeBlanc  
Minister of Finance  
Government of Canada  
Sent via e-mail

February 21, 2025

Dear Minister LeBlanc,

Be assured of my prayers for you and all those who have chosen the noble vocation of politics.

I write today to express my deep concern regarding the recent Finance Committee's pre-budget report. The committee proposes to remove advancement of religion as a charitable purpose. More specifically, as recommendation 430 states: *"Amend the Income Tax Act to provide a definition of a charity which would remove the privileged status of 'advancement of religion' as a charitable purpose."*

As you know, religious charities strengthen the very fabric of our nation through their dedicated service, outreach and care. This charitable work is often done to fill gaps in services or funding not provided by government programs. It is not unreasonable to suggest that without the presence of these charities, there would be a crisis of care in communities throughout Canada.

Pope Francis has asked that in 2025, a global Jubilee Holy Year, be focused on the theme: "Pilgrims of Hope". Sadly, our society is consumed with heart-wrenching stories of isolation, loneliness and marginalization all too close to home. Religious charitable organizations are hope personified in our communities, motivated to help others, not because of the beliefs of those who will be served but rather our own desire to provide loving care and compassion – values and virtues so deeply rooted in our religious traditions.

The recommendation itself to strip away official charitable status from these organizations demonstrates a lack of understanding of the critical role religiously-affiliated groups offer in every corner of our nation: urban centres, rural communities and the isolated North. Aside from social service programs, places of worship are spiritual homes for hundreds of thousands of Canadians each week, relying on these havens of hope, peace and prayer to nurture their souls, promote emotional/mental well-being, strengthen their families and provide a social gathering space that reinforces community life.

Our many and life-giving religious charities account for approximately 40% of the more than 73,000 charitable organizations registered with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) - removing their charitable status would have a devastating impact and send a divisive message to Canadians from your government.

I also convey my profound concern regarding Recommendation 429: *"No longer provide charitable status to anti-abortion organizations."* If this recommendation were to pass, every Catholic Church and Catholic social service agency in Canada would lose its charitable status due to



our “pro-life” approach. These deeply rooted beliefs form the basis of much of our work, from operating hospitals to providing for the vulnerable and marginalized to welcoming the stranger/migrant/refugee and caring for every individual in need – body, mind and soul. It is astonishing to think that a pro-life approach to public living is no longer seen as acceptable in a country that enshrines freedom of religion and belief in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

There are countless groups and associations in our country that enjoy charitable status with views that differ from large segments of the population for any number of reasons. Needless to say, and thoroughly backed up by sociological studies, religious practice continues to provide enormous potential for addressing today's social problems. A government truly at the service of the population must necessarily consider that society, our Canadian society, is made up of innumerable persons and communities who are religious and for whom religion places a most important role in their life and activities. To deny this aspect of living in society by intending to do away, in such a draconian fashion, with the current status for religious and pro-life charitable organizations is utterly deplorable and entirely unacceptable in a democracy that is supposed to celebrate people's religious faith and rights and has always recognized the irreplaceable role of faith, worship and religion in society. We ask that your government respect and acknowledge the fact that religion and its advancement is beneficial to many, many Canadians and that it is a right that no government ought to try to take away as it would very well be an expression of severe overextension of the mandate of elected public office.

I strongly urge the federal government to reject these recommendations and ensure that we remain a country committed to freedom *of* religion as opposed to freedom *from* religion. If you wish to discuss tangible examples of how religious charities are strengthening our country, I would be most pleased to meet with you along with those on the front lines of care, ministry and accompaniment.

In closing, let us not forget the myriad of religious women and men who came before us and the debt of gratitude we owe for their work in establishing hospitals, schools, social service agencies and houses of worship.

Thank you for your careful consideration. I will continue to keep you and all Members of Parliament close in prayer.

Sincerely,

Frank Cardinal Leo  
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto

cc. Hon Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Opposition, Government of Canada