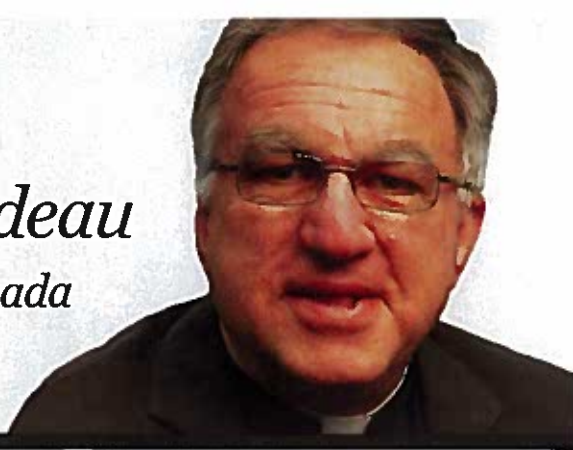


The Ideology of Justin Trudeau

Freedom of religion is under attack in Canada

By Thomas Rosica



On Dec. 19, the department of the Canadian government known as Employment and Social Development Canada announced a major change to its requirements for groups seeking federal funding under its Canada Summer Jobs program for youth employment. The program provides federal funding to entities—including small businesses and nonprofits such as charitable organizations—that hire students during the summer. The change has set off a firestorm in Canada that continues to this day.

Applicants for the grants must now affirm that “both the job and the organization’s core mandate respect individual human rights,” including “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, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.”

According to the department, the inclusion of language on reproductive rights (including “the right to access safe and legal abortions”), sexual orientation and gender identity or expression is intended to “prevent youth (as young as 15 years of age) from being exposed to employment within organizations that may promote positions that are contrary to the values enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and associated case law.”

Along with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Jewish and Muslim leaders have expressed alarm at these changes to the summer jobs

program. These faith communities in Canada consider sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and abortion as serious questions with ethical, moral, social and personal bearing. How we answer these questions determines our understanding of human dignity and the purpose and significance of human life. This new policy conflicts with the rights of these groups to freedom of religion and conscience.

The new requirement will have serious consequences: The services of many nonprofit organizations will be reduced; critical opportunities for young people to learn valuable work skills will be lost; even summer camps will close. These effects will be felt in faith communities across the nation. I am the chief executive officer of the Salt and Light Catholic Television Network in Canada, which has benefited in the past from these grants. We will also suffer the consequences of the loss of federal funding to employ young people this summer.

The Canadian government refers to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the basis for this new policy. But Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his advisors are misreading the Charter, which is supposed to protect citizens from being intimidated by the government. It is not intended to intimidate citizens.

Instead of focusing on what summer jobs would pay young people to do, Mr. Trudeau’s government has made an issue of what the organizations that apply for the funds believe. Wouldn’t it have

made more sense for the government to meet with faith groups and inform them that some past recipients of the grants have been problematic?

Several solutions have been proposed to allow groups to continue to apply for the jobs program. Some say, “Just check the attestation box; no one will ask questions.” Others suggest making an application for grants and adding a statement of alternative beliefs regarding the issues.

But many Canadians have decided to take a firm stand. We will not be bullied into the appearance of collusion on this most divisive issue. We cannot simply “check the box” and get on with life in order to benefit from the grants. By firmly saying no to Mr. Trudeau and his cohort, we also say no to any attempt to infringe on the freedoms of conscience and religion, of thought and belief, and of opinion and expression, as guaranteed by the Charter itself.

Mr. Trudeau and his colleagues have lost their moorings. They tout their liberal doctrine of diversity but in reality are agents of a new dictatorship of imposed ideologies. And ideology makes it impossible for people to confront individual issues on their own merits.

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