



# SEPARATING PRAYER FROM OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT PROCEEDINGS

## A FREEDOM PARTY OF ONTARIO 2011 ELECTION PLANK

During the 2007 election, the Progressive Conservatives proposed that taxpayers begin funding private religious schools, and lost the election. Perhaps because of the unpopularity of the PCs disastrous proposal, on February 13, 2008, Dalton McGuinty stated that: “We’re much more than just Protestants and Catholics today. We have all the world’s faiths represented here. If they’re represented outside the legislature, I think we ought to find a way to ensure that diversity is reflected inside the legislature as well.” (source: Canadian Press). He added: “I think it’s time for us to ensure that we have a prayer that better reflects our diversity.” And, with that proposal, he opened a can of worms.

“...one religion cannot be preferred over another.”

- Michael Bryant, then MPP,  
Liberal Party of Ontario  
Hansard, June 12, 2008

A small percentage of vocal hard-line traditionalists and religious Ontarians complained that - the Lord’s Prayer - was no longer to be said. Folding to pressure, McGuinty ultimately decided to keep the Lord’s Prayer.

That decision came too late. McGuinty had let the religious genie out of the bottle. Because Ontario was not going to adopt a single “prayer that better reflects our diversity”, non-Christian religions wanted their prayers to their gods said in the legislature too.

Ultimately, on June 12, 2008, Liberal MPP Michael Bryant introduced a motion which passed, with the support of Progressive Conservative and NDP MPPs (Dalton McGuinty was absent during the vote, but Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak was present, and voted in favour of the prayers): the government increased the number of gods who are praised by our MPPs, and from whom our MPPs now officially seek guidance in making the laws that

“...a second, rotational prayer reflecting multi-denominational faiths would be something that we would clearly accept....We believe very strongly that the Lord’s Prayer is part of that, that Christianity is part of the very foundation of our wonderful country, and we want to retain that.”

- Garfield Dunlop, MPP  
Progressive Conservative (“PC”) Party  
Hansard, June 12, 2008

govern us. In addition to saying the Lord’s Prayer, Ontario lawmaker’s now say:

- an Islamic prayer in which MPPs declare to Allah: “You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help. Guide us on the Straight Path, The path of those whom You have given Your bounties, Not the path of those who deserve Your anger...”;
- a prayer in which MPPs beg a Hindu god: “We pray that he may inspire our intelligence and guide our vision and will...take us from illusion to reality, take from darkness to light and from death to immortality”;
- a prayer in which they declare the greatness of the Jewish god and ask him to bless them and provide for them (i.e., to “keep” them);
- a Buddhist prayer has MPPs declaring that: “Happiness cannot be found through great effort and willpower, but is already present, in open relaxation and letting go. Don’t strain yourself, there is nothing to do or undo...let the entire game happen on its own”;
- a “Native Spirituality” prayer in which MPPs declare to the “great Spirit” that “We are weak... we are small...we need your wisdom and your strength”;

- a Sikh prayer in which MPP's declare to the Sikh god: "Whatever exists, is by Your Will... You Yourself act, and inspire all to act; only You Yourself know"; and
- a Baha'i prayer in which each MPP declares to the Bahai god: "My God, Whom I worship and adore!...All are but poor and needy, and Thou, verily, art the All-Possessing, the All-Subduing, the All-Powerful."

A democracy is a society in which the origin - hence the scope - of government's authority is given to it only by the people it governs. A democratic government does not concern itself with gods, alleged afterlives, or the allegedly supernatural. A democracy is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

In contrast to a democracy, a theocracy is a society in which the origin - hence the scope - of government's authority is given to it by a supernatural god. In a theocracy, the government makes laws influenced by, or dictated by, the alleged commandments or will of a god. A theocracy is a government of the people, by a god, for a god: in a theocracy, the government is accountable to a god.

For decades, theocrats have declared war on freedom and democracy. Democratic governments have been overrun by theocratic ones throughout Africa and Asia, using both violent and non-violent means. Europe is now contending with advocates of theocracy who use legal and non-legal means to instill terror, to quash dissent, and to work toward the toppling of democracy. And we must be mindful of the fact that, in the name of freedom and democracy, Canadian soldiers have died fighting theocrats in foreign lands so that theocracy does not find its way to Canada.

Theocracy starts with small, politically correct concessions or accommodations by government. Theocracy is not yet encroaching on Ontario life as much as it has in Africa, Asia and Europe, but recent attempts to accommodate religious legal systems like Sharia, and recent attempts to silence Canadians who exercise their freedom to say things that some religious people might find insulting or offensive, demand that Ontario take

necessary precautions to defend the democratic nature of our governance. If democracy is to be maintained in Ontario, we cannot continue to have the MPPs we elect declaring - as an official statement by government officials - that they are wedded to a number of different gods, that obeying the wills of those various gods is their highest purpose, that a god is sovereign in Ontario, et cetera. If there is to be any statement at all at the beginning of Ontario's legislative proceedings each day, it should be a declaration by MPPs that they have no power or authority except that delegated to them by the people, that they recognize themselves to be the servants only of individuals living in Ontario, and that nobody - not even an MPP - is above the law.

"Those who don't want to pray should leave the [Legislative] chamber..."

- Cheri di Novo, MPP  
New Democratic Party ("NDP")  
Hansard, June 12, 2008

The Ontario legislature is not a church, or synagogue, or mosque. It is not a house of anyone's god. It is not a place where a god's commandments or wishes are put into Ontario law. To make it clear that Ontario is and will remain a democratic society, not a theocratic one, **a Freedom government will ensure that prayers are no longer be part of the official proceedings of the Legislature.** MPPs who believe in one or more gods are and will continue to be free to pray to them and to request guidance from them, as a personal matter.

Excerpt - HANSARD - June 12, 2008

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Mr. Bryant has moved that the Speaker commence each meeting day of the Assembly by reciting the Lord's Prayer, followed by another prayer, or the presentation of a verse or passage, or call for a moment of silent reflection, or any such other similar activity which, in the opinion of the Speaker, will serve to reflect over time the general demographic composition of this chamber and of the province of Ontario.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1323 to 1328.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those in favour of the motion will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

*Ayes*

Aggelonitis, Sophia

Albanese, Laura

Arnott, Ted

Arthurs, Wayne

Balkissoon, Bas

Bentley, Christopher

Best, Margaret

Bradley, James J.

Brotten, Laurel C.

Bryant, Michael

Cansfield, Donna H.

Chudleigh, Ted

Colle, Mike

Craitor, Kim

Delaney, Bob

Dickson, Joe

DiNovo, Cheri

Dombrowsky, Leona

Duguid, Brad

Dunlop, Garfield

Elliott, Christine

Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter

Hardeman, Ernie

**Hudak, Tim\***

Jaczek, Helena

Jeffrey, Linda

Jones, Sylvia

Klees, Frank

Kular, Kuldip

Kwinter, Monte

Leal, Jeff

Levac, Dave

MacLeod, Lisa

Marchese, Rosario

McMeekin, Ted

Meilleur, Madeleine

Miller, Norm

Moridi, Reza

Phillips, Gerry

Prue, Michael

Qaadri, Shafiq

Ramal, Khalil

Ramsay, David  
Runciman, Robert W.  
Sandals, Liz  
Savoline, Joyce  
Scott, Laurie  
Shurman, Peter  
Smith, Monique  
Smitherman, George  
Sousa, Charles  
Takhar, Harinder S.  
Van Bommel, Maria  
Wilson, Jim  
Witmer, Elizabeth  
Wynne, Kathleen O.  
Zimmer, David

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** All those opposed?

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 58; the nays are 0.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I declare the motion carried.

*Agreed.*

\*NOTE: Tim Hudak is now the *leader* of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.