CHP CANADA COMMUNIQUÉ
Volume 33, Issue 44 November 10, 2026

GOD, etc.

David Darwin
National Secretary, CHP Canada

On a Friday afternoon in the middle of this summer, National Defence issued its final word on prayer at official military events.[1] Or, as the instruction says, "Spiritual reflections in military settings." The announcement caused a furor amongst religious organizations, military chaplains, independent journalists, commentators, and web podcast hosts. And rightly so.

The tone is set right at the beginning of the directive. "In military settings, spiritual reflections are inclusive public addresses to a group of individuals that nurture resilience by fostering meaning, purpose, and spiritual well-being, especially within a culture of care and service. Spiritual reflections do not use religious specific language, including references to God, etc."

"In that two-word nutshell, the current federal government has expressed the fullness of its utter contempt for religious faith and religious believers." "God the Etc., present for the thousands of warriors who have fought since Confederation for Canada in His name, has now been dishonourably discharged by federal bureaucrats.

"In the Deity's place will be 'reflections' that are, in the awful cliché, spiritual but not religious and will usher in a new age of "inclusive public addresses…that nurture resilience by fostering meaning, purpose and spiritual well-being, especially within a culture of care and service."

"Did it never occur to those involved in the drafting, after all, that the forced public suppression of God's name from the lips of military chaplains (!) might just, in fact, discourage the participation of, be contrary to accommodation of, and actively exclude, say, armed forces members who, well, happen to strongly believe in God?"[2]

The first real impact of this directive will be felt on November 11 of this year. The public will gather at cenotaphs and memorials all over Canada, and in other parts of the world. "Remembrance Day does not belong to the military bureaucracy. It is a civic ritual that includes a military component. It is part of the foundation of this country's culture, a part no military command office should have authority to amend unilaterally.

"Yet, the military bureaucracy has presumed to do so. On the 11th day of the 11th month, chaplains will stand before cenotaphs facing a choice no 20th-century predecessor faced. The crowd will have just sung an anthem asking God to keep our land glorious and free. The ceremony will close with "God Save the King," a sung prayer. Between those two invocations, the chaplains, under written orders, may not say what everyone around them is permitted to sing.

"An institution that permits no God above itself breaks with the Constitution and has already told you what it worships. A country that turns its back on the traditions of its most tradition-bound institution

turns its back on its own identity. Nobody voted for this. It arrived by command. Parliament can send it back."[3]

Chaplains react

"Canadian military Bishop Scott McCaig says he wants the federal government to go "back to the drawing board" with its new policy on prayer in official settings by looking at international chaplaincy models that respect "open secularism" while accommodating diverse religious traditions.

"McCaig addresses the purported purpose of the instruction — state neutrality — and says the policy shows a "fundamental misunderstanding" of the concept and the inclusivity the policy is meant to foster. While the policy's intention is sound, he said, the instruction is "out of sync with the legal rationale of state neutrality."

"He said the Charter is meant to protect freedom of religion and non-religion, not provide "freedom from selective faith traditions that one disagrees with." The separating of "meaning, purpose, and spiritual well-being" from God is contrary to the beliefs and conscience of many, he said. "Is this not precisely the kind of coercion that the Charter is meant to protect us from?," he added. McCaig also challenged what he called the instruction's "false premise" that an atheistic outlook is somehow neutral."[4]

Previously, in 2023, McCaig warned that restricting religious expression could reduce chaplains to "interchangeable generic counsellors or motivational speakers," weaken their effectiveness, and undermine the morale and spiritual resilience of military personnel and their families.

For Fr. Tim Nelligan, a long-time military chaplain in Ottawa, the "spiritual neutrality" mandated (and masked in banality of evil bureaucratese) … assaults the very soul of Canada.[5]

The new idolatry

"Veteran journalist and former citizenship court judge, Joe Woodard, … sets the threat squarely among fundamentalists of the federal bureaucracy he served for several years. Civil service gradualism intent on removing the cornerstone of faith from public life is but one, albeit deeply alarming, aspect of the new idolatry in Ottawa, he says. "Now is an opportune moment (for the federal bureaucracy) to eradicate the last vestiges of faith among its own employees."

"A future without faith might seem unthinkable to Canadian Catholics and other Christians, indeed to all who manifest the genuine religious sense that is indivisible from the meaning of being human. But Woodard's warning is ultimately that we should never let what we can't imagine blind us to what is already being planned and carried out.

"Andrew Bennett, former Ambassador for Religious Freedom, reminds repeatedly that religious liberty is the foundation of all other liberties because its very essence is freedom to believe and express.

"To deny them that freedom [to deploy Christian language], to prohibit them publicly using "the language of God etc." is an even worse travesty than assaulting religious freedom. It is to efface, with the stroke of a bureaucratic pen, their reason for being, we might even say their Being."[5]

Commentator Tanner Hnidey said, "Shockingly, the same institution that's supposed to defend our right to announce the name of God in public doesn't allow its members to announce the name of God in

public. The absurdity of the command is obvious. “Thou shall not impose thy worldview on another” is itself a worldview. When the Canadian government “refuses” to legislate morality or religion, it legislates both morality and religion. To assert, “The state has no God,” makes government God. This new directive is yet another proof that the Canada of old is gone. The modern Canada isn’t the Canada that so many remember. This nation isn’t the one our ancestors built in the 40s, 50s, and 60s.”[6]

As a party that defends faith, family and freedom, the CHP condemns this diminishment of the rightful place of faith in our society. Perhaps, just maybe, some good may come from all the controversy. “[T]his administrative overreach remarkably united Canada’s disparate religious bodies. Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic groups jointly condemned the move, viewing the policy as a blunt instrument of state erasure.”[7]

On November 11, remember those who sacrificed their lives, and futures, for this great country. Offer heartfelt prayers of thanks to our King of kings, even if our chaplains are prohibited from doing so.

Footnotes

[1] www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/canadian-forces-military-personnel-instructions/spiritual-reflections-in-military-settings.html

[2] www.catholicregister.org/item/4215-inclusion-once-again-divides

[3] www.theepochtimes.com/opinion/dont-remove-god-from-canadas-military-traditions-6072547

[4] www.catholicregister.org/item/4293-mc-caig-urges-government-to-go-back-to-the-drawing-board-on-military-prayer-rules

[5] www.catholicregister.org/item/4270-freedom-denied

[6] tannerhnidey.substack.com/p/an-armed-forces-without-faith-the

[7] www.theepochtimes.com/opinion/remembrance-day-without-prayer-undermines-canadas-religious-pluralism-6111024

The Christian Heritage Party of Canada
www.chp.ca • NationalOffice@chp.ca • 1-888-VOTE-CHP (868-3247)
PO Box 4958, Station E, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5J1
Authorized by the Chief Agent of the Christian Heritage Party of Canada and may be copied.