



Bridging the Secular Divide:
Religion and Canadian Public Discourse

The Program - Monday, May 27

8:30am
to
9:00am

Welcome and devotions

Speakers:

- **Mike Hogeterp** (On behalf of conference steering committee)
- **Dean Ellen Aitken** (Dean of Religious Studies, McGill University)

Panel

Taking the temperature: Religion and secularism in Canadian society

- What does secularism look like in Canadian society? How does it influence our public discourse?
- How has the influence of religion on thinking about social issues and public policy changed over time?
- What are the prospects for a more civil and robust discourse on the relationship between religion, society, and politics in Canada?

9:00am
to
10:30am

Moderator:

- **Dr. Margaret Somerville** (Samuel Gale Chair in Law and Professor in the Faculty of Medicine, McGill University)

Speakers:

- **Lorna Dueck** (Host, Context with Lorna Dueck)
- **Dr. Patrice Brodeur** (Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair on Islam, Pluralism, University of Montreal)
- **Rabbi Lisa Grushcow** (Senior Rabbi, Temple Emmanu-El-Beth Sholom)

10:30am to 11:00am (Break)

Plenary

A look at history: Canada's legacy of pluralism and religious freedom

- What influence have Canada's religions had on its social and political development?
- How has religious freedom developed in law and society?

11:00am
to
12:00pm

Moderator and Respondent:

- **Dr. Daniel Cere** (Associate Professor of Religious Studies, McGill University)

Speaker:

- **Dr. Janet Epp Buckingham** (Associate Professor, Trinity Western University)

12:00pm to 1:00pm (Lunch)



McGill

Tony Blair
Faith Foundation

Panel

From the perspective of Canada's religions

- What does your religious tradition say about participation in the broader discourses of society by its members?
- What approaches and methods do you think are appropriate for religious actors to employ in their engagement with public issues?
- Do you believe there are 'limits' on acceptable public discourse and if so, why and what would they be?

1:00pm
to
2:00pm

Moderator:

- **Prof Arvind Sharma** (Birks Professor of Comparative Religion, McGill University)

Speakers:

- **Dr Victor Goldbloom** (former MNA and Cabinet Minister in Quebec, former CEO of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, former Commissioner of Languages, Companion of the Order of Canada)
- **Dr Imam Hamid Slimi** (Chairman, Canadian Council of Imams)
- **Susanne Tamas** (Director of Government Relations, Baha'i Community of Canada)
- **Bruce Clemenger** (President, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada)
- **Balpreet Singh Boparai** (Legal Counsel, World Sikh Organization – Canada)

Panel

All the news that's fit to print: Perspectives from the media

- Is the media 'secular'? And if so, what does this mean?
- What does the media need to learn about religion?
- What do religious communities and institutions need to understand about the media?

2:00pm
to
3:00pm

Moderator:

- **Dr Gerald Filson** (Director of Public Affairs, Baha'i Community of Canada)

Speakers:

- **Natasha Fatah** (former host of Promised Land on CBC Radio)
- **Douglas Todd** (Columnist, The Vancouver Sun)
- **Peter Stockland** (Publisher, Convivium; Past Editor-in-Chief, Montreal Gazette)

Panel

The view from the Hill: Perspectives from Parliamentarians

- What is the legitimate role of religion in discussions on matters on public policy?
- What interventions by representatives of religious communities have been helpful, and unhelpful, in your experience?
- What do those who seek to engage policy discussions at the level of principles and values need to understand about political processes?

3:00pm
to
4:00pm

Moderator:

- **Dr. Janet Epp Buckingham** (Associate Professor, Trinity Western University)

Speakers:

- **Mark Adler** (Member of Parliament for York Centre)
- **Joe Comartin** (Member of Parliament for Windsor-Tecumseh, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons)
- **Hon John McKay** (Member of Parliament for Scarborough-Guildwood)

Special Plenary Address

4:00pm
to
4:15pm

Speaker:

- **Archbishop Christian Lépine** (Archbishop of Montreal)

4:15pm to 5:00pm (Break)

Keynote Plenary

Bridging the secular divide: A conversation

5:00pm
to
6:30pm

Moderator:

- **Peter Stockland** (Publisher, Convivium; Past Editor-in-Chief, Montreal Gazette)

Speakers:

- **Hon Bill Blaikie** (Director, The Knowles-Woodsworth Centre for Theology and Public Policy; Former Member of Parliament)
- **Dr. Daniel Weinstock** (MacDonald Professor of Law, McGill University; founding director of the Centre de recherche en éthique de l'Université de Montréal)

6:30pm to 7:30pm (Networking Reception)

Tuesday, May 28

Welcome and devotions

8:30am
to
9:00am

Speakers:

- **Mike Hogeterp** (On behalf of conference steering committee)
- **Dean Ellen Aitken** (Dean of Religious Studies, McGill University)

Plenary

Speaking together as one: Religious pluralism and the future of Canada's public discourse

9:00am
to
10:15am

Moderator:

- **Lorna Dueck** (Host, Context with Lorna Dueck)

Speaker:

- **The Reverend Dr James Christie** (Director of The Ridd Institute for Religion & Global Policy, University of Winnipeg)

Respondent:

- **Alia Hogben** (Executive Director, Canadian Council of Muslim Women)

10:15am to 10:30am (Break)

Breakout Sessions: Engaging in public discourses – PART 1

Each session will be guided by the following questions:

- *What are the main issues and challenges in this discourse?*
- *How do religious or spiritual teachings provide a different perspective on these issues?*
- *How can our collective understanding be advanced through deeper dialogue?*

Youth empowerment (Birks 203)

Moderator:

- **Geoffrey Cameron** (Principal Researcher, Baha'i Community of Canada)

Speakers:

- **Rizwan Mohammad** (Canadian Council of Muslim Women)
- **Joycelin Ng** (Director, National Student Forum)

10:30am
to
12:00pm

Public education and religion (Chapel)

Speakers:

- **Prof Spencer Boudreau** (Faculty of Education; Ombudsman for Students, McGill University)
- **Paul Donovan** (Principal, Loyola High School)

Environment and climate change (Birks 205)

Moderator:

- **Dr Imam Abdul Hai Patel** (Interfaith Relations, Canadian Council of Imams)

Speakers:

- **Joe Gunn** (Director, Citizens for Public Justice)
- **Rebekah Hart** (Facilitator, Work that Reconnects)

12:00pm to 1:30pm (Lunch and Networking)

Breakout Sessions: Engaging in public discourses – PART 2

Poverty and inequality (Birks 203)

Moderator:

- **Hon David Kilgour** (Former Member of Parliament and Secretary of State)

Speakers:

- **The Reverend Dr David Pfrimmer** (Principal-Dean, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Wilfrid Laurier University)
- **Julia Beazley** (Policy Analyst, Canadian and International Poverty, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada)

Truth and Reconciliation (Birks 205)

Moderator:

- **Mike Hogeterp** (Director, Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue)

Speakers:

- **Louise Profeit-Leblanc** (Aboriginal Arts Coordinator, Canada Council for the Arts)
- **Lori Ransom** (Senior Advisor, Church and Faith Relations at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada)

Secularism in Quebec (Chapel)

Moderator:

- **Dr Victor Goldbloom** (former MNA and Cabinet Minister in Quebec, former CEO of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, former Commissioner of Languages, Companion of the Order of Canada)

Speakers:

- **The Reverend Diane Rollert** (Minister of the Unitarian Church of Montreal)
- **Father John Walsh** (former host on CJAD, lecturer at Concordia University, Roman Catholic Priest)

3:00pm to 3:15pm (Break)

Keynote Plenary

Religious freedom and Canadian foreign policy

3:15pm
to
4:30pm

Moderator:

- **Susanne Tamas** (Director of Government Relations, Baha'i Community of Canada)

Speakers:

- **Dr Andrew Bennett** (Ambassador, Office of Religious Freedom)
- **Anne Leahy** (Former Canadian Ambassador to the Holy See)

Closing Plenary

Conference summary and where do we go from here?

4:30pm
to
5:00pm

Chair:

- **Dean Ellen Aitken** (Dean of Religious Studies, McGill University)

Speaker:

- **The Reverend Dr Karen Hamilton** (General Secretary, The Canadian Council of Churches)