THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF

GANANOQUE

Canadian Gateway to the 1000 Islands

14 October 2026

The Municipal Councils of Ontario

Request for Endorsement - Declaration Against Religious Violence

Colleagues,

I write to you today knowing that we are all aware of the horrible trend of religiously based violence in Canada over the last few years in which people of many faiths and their places worship have been targeted. In light of this, and following recent tragic events at the Sons of Jacob synagogue in Belleville I drafted, put forward and signed the attached Declaration Against Religious Violence at the October 7th meeting of the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Gananoque.

As a 30-year veteran of the Canadian Forces with service all across Canada, in Europe, as a UN Peacekeeper in the Middle East, and service in Afghanistan, I have witnessed what happens when intolerance and "othering" are allowed to take root and grow.

I believe that the importance of publicly stating the fundamental principles for which we stand, that we refuse to compromise and will defend, and the kinds of behaviour we oppose and will stand against, cannot be overstated. Central to this is the defence of the fundamental principle that all persons are equal and share the same fundamental rights and dignity as persons.

Therefore, and on behalf of the Council of Gananoque, we invite you to join us by endorsing the attached Declaration Against Religious Violence and ask if you would please forward to us a copy of your endorsement with cc Minister Graham McGregor, Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism of the Province of Ontario.

Thank you for your consideration,

John S. Beddows

John S. Beddows, CD1, MPA
Mayor
The Corporation of the Town of Gananoque
30 King St. E., Gananoque ON, K7G 1E9
613-382-2149 Ext. 1119
Fax: 613-382-8587

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CC

Minister Graham McGregor
Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism
14th Floor
56 Wellesley St. W
Toronto, ON M7A 2E7
graham.mcgregor@ontario.ca

MPP Steve Clark
Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes
9 Broad St., Unit 305
Brockville, ON K6V 6Z4
steve.clark@pc.ola.org

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Declaration

In light of, and having reflected on the tragic trend of religiously based violence in Canada over the last few years in which people of many faiths and their places worship have been targeted, I am writing today as the Mayor of Gananoque to publicly articulate a simple message of what I believe we stand for in our Town, and what we stand against.

Here in Gananoque we stand for community, understanding, communication, caring, supporting our neighbours, courtesy, kindness, the value of hard work, the fact that respect must be earned by the way we comport ourselves and conduct our lives as individuals and a simple and unshakable belief that a stranger is a friend you haven't met yet.

We believe that all people share, at core, the same hopes and aspirations. We all want our children to be able to attend school, move freely, live, play and congregate without fear or concern. We want our children to have the same opportunities or better ones than we had to grow, learn, love, laugh, experience, travel, work and succeed on their own terms and as they define success. We all want security of place, security from hunger, security of our persons and security of our property. We believe in building bridges, not fences. We believe in the power of debate, that facts matter, and of understanding. We believe in providing help to those who need it and in doing our best to ensure that everyone has a place to find help, warmth and hope when they need it, without judgement.

We believe that faith is a personal choice and that the individual and collective quest for truth brings hope and light into a world which need them very badly.

We assert and we will stand and defend the fundamental principle that all persons are equal and share the same fundamental rights and dignity as persons.

The other side of the coin. Here is what Gananoque stands against.

We stand against "othering". We stand against the objectification of people. We stand against any person or group that denies that all persons are equal in rights, dignity and freedoms. We stand against any person or group that seeks to use or that uses violence or intimidation as tools to target persons or groups or to try to change our society, our way of life and who we are as Canadians.

Here in Gananoque when a neighbour's house is on fire, we run towards the flames and not away. This will not change.

Hate has no home here.

Signed and dated this 7th day of October, 2026.

John S. Beddows, Mayor