

# Westmount High School teachers protest CAQ's planned religious symbols ban



By Dan Spector  
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**A group of teachers at Westmount High School demonstrated against the CAQ's promise to ban people in positions of power from wearing religious symbols.**

A group of Westmount High School teachers held a demonstration against the CAQ plan to ban public sector workers in positions of authority from wearing religious symbols.

There were more than 40 teachers outside Westmount High School at 8 a.m. They came in early and braved the cold to tell the CAQ exactly how they feel.

"You don't get to determine what I wear in my classroom, and you don't get to tell me I'm not a good teacher because I wear a religious item," said religion and ethics teacher Sabrina Jafraie.

Protesters waved banners and held signs for about an hour at the boisterous protest.

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"It's unacceptable to render a Quebec citizen second class. That's exactly what they'd be doing with this legislation," said Westmount High teacher Robert Green.

The head of the union representing some 8,000 teachers at English schools was on hand. He went to bat for the dozens of teachers he represents who wear religious symbols like hijabs and kippas in the classroom.

"We've had no indication whatsoever or no complaints regarding the behaviour of teachers wearing religious symbols," said Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers president Sebastien Joly.

If it becomes a reality, the CAQ plan would also ban judges, prison guards, and police officers from outwardly showing their religion.

"Certainly for teachers they should be excluded from this kind of policy obviously," Joly said.

The idea of a grandfather clause was not popular among the protesters.

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Existing teachers could potentially continue to wear the symbols, but all future teachers would not be allowed.

"That's unacceptable, unequivocally, garbage," said Jafraie.

"I would say to Francois Legault: if that's what he really believes, would he be willing to come to my class and look at these brilliant young boys and young girls and tell them that they shouldn't dream to become anything they want in this

society?" said Green.

When asked about the protest, the CAQ told Global News on Wednesday they plan to move forward with their plan.

"People in position of authority with coercive power should not wear religious signs," said CAQ MNA Simon Jolin-Barrette.

The teachers said as long as the religious symbols ban is on the table, they will continue to organize more protests.

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