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Quebec

# Mouvement laïque québécois turns to crowdfunding to defend secularism law

The MLQ is seeking financial help from the public to support Quebec's secularism law and avoid a "mismatched" court battle.



Presse Canadienne  
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Sep 14, 2020 • Last Updated 16 hours ago • 2 minute read

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A pro-secularism protest in 2013. PHOTO BY PETER MCCABE /Montreal Gazette files

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financing through court challenge programs at the federal and provincial level have failed, so it is asking the public to donate through its "Je donne 21" website (jedonne21.ca).

The campaign hopes to raise \$200,000, but that goal could increase if the challenge reaches the Court of Appeal or Supreme Court, the MLQ says.

Its intervention seeks to defend "the fundamental rights of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children without the interference of the state, a right guaranteed by the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms."

The group plans to have parents testify why they oppose the wearing of religious symbols in elementary and high schools "to ensure their children receive an education consistent with their convictions rather than those of their teachers," said Luc Alarie, one of the MLQ's lawyers.

Without the MLQ, parents will be completely absent from the debate, he added.

The challenge to the law will be heard in Montreal as of Nov. 2 and should last five weeks.



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The Mouvement laïque québécois is seeking financial help from the public to support Quebec's secularism law and avoid a "mismatched" court battle.

The law, passed as Bill 21 by the National Assembly in June 2019, forbids the wearing of religious symbols by public servants in positions of authority, including police officers, prosecutors and public school teachers.



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It is being challenged before the courts by 11 groups and seven other parties that argue it discriminates against religious minorities, including Muslim women.

The non-profit MLQ, which says it is the only organization representing the rights of students in this fight, wants the law maintained and will support the Quebec government in court. It has obtained intervenor status, which authorizes it to present arguments during the proceeding.

Their opponents "are represented by 15 lawyers who will present eight experts. And they are funded by public and private funds," MLQ president Lucie Jobin said at a news conference Monday on the steps of the Montreal courthouse.

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