November 3, 2026

BY EMAIL

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

Re: Declaration Against Religious Violence

At its Regular Council Meeting held on November 2, 2026, Council supported the enclosed correspondence from the Town of Gananoque.

Council accordingly passed the following resolution:

R26-11-514
Moved By Deputy Mayor Shepley
Seconded By Councillor Verbeek

That the correspondence from the Town of Gananoque regarding Declaration Against Religious Violence, be received and supported; and

That a letter from the Town of Essex be sent to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, MPP Anthony Leardi and local municipalities.

Carried

I trust you will find this satisfactory. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact the undersigned.

Yours truly,

33 Talbot Street South
Essex, Ontario N8M 1A8
www.essex.ca
t 519 776 7336
f 519 776 8811

Joseph Malandruccolo
Director, Legal and Legislative Services/Clerk
jmalandruccolo@essex.ca

cc. Essex MPP, Anthony Leardi anthony.leardi@pc.ola.org
Town of Amherstburg clerk@amherstburg.ca
Town of Kingsville atoole@kingsville.ca
Municipality of Lakeshore clerk@lakeshore.ca
Town of LaSalle jastrologo@lasalle.ca
Municipality of Leamington clerks@leamington.ca
Town of Tecumseh jalexander@tecumseh.ca
Town of Gananoque deputyclerk@gananoque.ca

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
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THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF

GANANOQUE

Canadian Gateway to the 1000 Islands

CC

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

MPP Steve Clark
Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes
9 Broad St., Unit 305
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THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF

GANANOQUE

Canadian Gateway to the 1000 Islands

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