



PVNC CATHOLIC ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE	
Administrative Procedure Religious and/or Creed Accommodations	Administrative Procedure Number 702
Directional Policy 700 - Equity and Inclusive Education	

Title of Administrative Procedure:

Religious and/or Creed Accommodations

Date Received:

June 23, 2026

Projected Review Date:

2031

Directional Policy Alignment:

This Administrative Procedure aligns with the Equity and Inclusive Education Directional Policy - 700 by acknowledging that freedom of religion is an individual right and a collective responsibility. The Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board commits to work with the community it serves to foster an inclusive learning environment that promotes acceptance and protects individuals from discrimination and harassment on the basis of their religion and/or creed, consistent with the exercise of PVNC Catholic’s denominational rights under section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1867, and as recognized in section 19 of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

As Pope Leo XIV recently emphasized, “the right to religious freedom is not optional but essential. Rooted in the dignity of the human person, created in God’s image and

endowed with reason and free will, religious freedom allows individuals and communities to seek the truth, to live it freely and to bear witness to it openly. It is therefore a cornerstone of any just society, for it safeguards the moral space in which conscience may be formed and exercised.” (Pope Leo XIV, 10 October 2025, Speech to members of the pontifical foundation Aid to the Church in Need).

PVNC Catholic is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and free of barriers. Accommodation will be provided in accordance with the principles of the [Equity and Inclusive Education Policy 700](#) and in a spirit of respect with all partners in the accommodation process.

Alignment with Multi-Year Strategic Plan:

The Religious Accommodation Administrative Procedure supports PVNC Catholic’s Multi-Year Strategic Plan ‘Connect’ pillar goal to advance equity and inclusion by upholding human dignity, celebrating diversity, and building school communities where every student and staff member feels seen, safe, and valued.

[PVNCCDSB Board Vision, Mission and Strategic Priorities](#)

Action Required:

PVNC Catholic is committed to the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviours based on religion and will take all reasonable steps to provide religious accommodations within the legal rights afforded to the Catholic school system, as per section 93 of the Constitution Act of 1867. Such accommodations will be provided to staff, students and their families.

1.0 Introduction

PVNC Catholic believes in the dignity of all people and their equality as children of God. We recognize the importance of freedom of religion and strive to recognize, value and honour the many customs, practices, traditions, beliefs and observances that make up the Catholic community.

Freedom of religion is an individual right and a collective responsibility. PVNC Catholic commits to work with the community it serves to foster an inclusive learning environment that promotes acceptance and protects individuals from discrimination and harassment on the basis of their religion.

In accordance with the Catholic Church's teachings, PVNC Catholic will provide, in all its operations, an educational environment which promotes and supports diversity within its Catholic community as well as the equal attainment of life opportunities for all students, staff, parents and other members of that community.

2.0 Legislative and Policy Context

All school boards exist within a broader context of law and public policy that protect and defend human rights. At PVNC Catholic, a number of policy statements have been developed that reinforce both federal and provincial legislation, and also help ensure that the freedoms they set out are protected within the school system.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 2(a) and Section 15) guarantees freedom of religion. The Ontario Human Rights Code (The Code) protects an individual's freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviours based on religion and/or creed. Consistent with this legislation is The Education Act, its Regulations and policies governing Equity and Inclusion in Schools:

- PPM No. 108, "Opening or Closing Exercises in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools", R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 298, "Operation of School-General" s 27-29, under the heading "Religion in Schools."
- PPM No. 119, "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools".

PVNC Catholic and its staff are committed to the elimination of discrimination as outlined in this Federal and Provincial legislation in a manner which is consistent with the exercise of its denominational rights under section 93 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and as recognized in section 19 of the Ontario Human Rights Code ("the Code").

PVNC Catholic recognizes, and is committed to, the values of freedom of religion and freedom from discriminatory or harassing behaviour based on religion through its human rights and equity and inclusive education policy, the safe schools policy and various curriculum documents. All of these will be informed by, and interpreted in accordance with the principles of the Code.

3.0 Accommodation Guidelines

The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that all Board staff, students, parents and other members of the school community are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Code with respect to religious and/or creed accommodation. It also sets out PVNC Catholic's procedures for accommodation and the responsibilities of each of the parties to the accommodation process. In accordance with the Equity Strategy, the Code and OHRC's Guidelines on Developing Human Rights Policies and Procedures, it is intended that the accommodation process, as well as the accommodation itself, be effective and respectful of the dignity of accommodation seekers.

All students registered in PVNC Catholic schools acknowledge that the school community proclaims, celebrates and cherishes its Catholic identity and traditions and that staff will teach the curriculum from a Catholic perspective. In respect of religious and/or creed accommodation, we acknowledge that all students, in accordance with what the Catholic Church offers in its social teachings and reflective practice, are entitled to their rights and responsibilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

PVNC Catholic is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and that is free of barriers based on creed or religion. Accommodation will be provided according to the principles of dignity, individualization, and inclusion. PVNC Catholic will work cooperatively and in a spirit of respect with all partners in the accommodation process.

3.1 Accommodation Based on Request

- 3.1.1 PVNC Catholic will take all reasonable steps to provide accommodation to individual members of a religious group or belief system to facilitate their religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices. All accommodation requests will be taken seriously. No person will be penalized for making an accommodation request.
- 3.1.2 PVNC Catholic will base its decision to accommodate by applying the Code's criteria of undue hardship, PVNC Catholic's ability to fulfill its duties under Board policies and the Education Act.
- 3.1.3 When concerns related to beliefs and practices arise in schools, collaboration among school, student, family, community and/or religious community is needed in order to develop appropriate accommodation. It is the role of PVNC Catholic and its staff to ensure equity and respect for the diverse religious beliefs and practices of students and their families and other staff in the

school system. However, school administrators should not be placed in the position of monitoring a child's compliance with a religious obligation, and enforcing such practices, for example, ensuring a head covering is worn is not a responsibility.

4.0 General Procedures for Religious and/or Creed Accommodation

4.1 Staff

The person requesting accommodation should advise the administration at the beginning of the school year, to the extent possible. If September notice is not feasible, the person should make the request as early as possible. The absence of employees due to religious and/or creed observances should be granted as determined by this policy and the appropriate collective agreement.

4.2 Students

Students must present verbal or written notice from their parents/guardians specifying their accommodation needs relating to religious and/or creed observances, including holy days on which they will be absent from school. This notice should be made enough in advance (preferably at the beginning of each school year) to ensure that scheduling of major evaluations, such as tests, assignments or examinations, takes the religious observances into consideration.

Student handbooks and parent newsletters should include information about the procedure to follow to request an accommodation for religious and/or creed observances and/or holy days. Such procedures shall be easy for staff, students and parents to understand.

5.0 Areas of Accommodation

5.1 For many students and staff of PVNC Catholic, there are a number of areas where the practice of their religion and/or creed will result in a request for accommodation on the part of the school and/or PVNC Catholic. These areas include, but are not limited to the following:

- 5.1.1 School opening and closing exercises;
- 5.1.2 Leave of Absence for Religious Holy Days
- 5.1.3 Leave of Absence for Cultural/Spiritual Ceremonial Events
- 5.1.4 Prayer;
- 5.1.5 Dietary requirements;
- 5.1.6 Fasting;
- 5.1.7 Religious or Ceremonial dress;

- 5.1.8 Modesty requirements in physical education; and
- 5.1.9 Participation in daily activities and curriculum.

6.0 General Guidelines and Procedures

6.1 School Opening and Closing Ceremonies

Pursuant to the Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 108 (“Memorandum No. 108”), if a student or parent/guardian objects to all or part of the opening or closing exercises due to religious beliefs and/or creed, the student will be exempted and given the option not to participate and to remain in class or in an agreed upon location through the duration of the exercise.

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 108 states the following:

- 6.1.1 All public elementary and secondary schools in Ontario must be opened or closed each day with the national anthem. “God Save the Queen / King” may also be included.
 - 6.1.2 The inclusion of any content beyond “O Canada” in opening or closing exercises is to be optional for public school boards.
 - 6.1.3 Where public school boards resolve to include, in the opening or closing exercises in their schools, anything in addition to the content set out in item 1 above, it must be composed of either or both of the following:
 - One or more readings that impart social, moral, or spiritual values and that are representative of our multicultural society. Readings may be chosen from both scriptural writings, including prayers, and secular Writings;
 - A period of silence.
 - 6.1.4 Parents who object to part or all of the exercises may apply to the Principal to have their children exempted. Students who are adults may also exercise such a right. These requirements will be interpreted in accordance with the Code, and PVNC Catholic will consider other requests for accommodation as may be made.
- ### 6.2 Absence for Religious Holy Days or Cultural/Spiritual Ceremonial Events
- PVNC Catholic affirms and values the faith diversity in our Catholic secondary schools. Section 21(2) (g) of the Education Act provides that a person is excused from school attendance in observance of a “holy day by the Church or religious denomination to which he/she belongs.”

All staff and students who observe religious holidays in accordance with section 21(2) (g) of the Education Act may be excused from attendance, subject to the particular request for religious leave process.

PVNC Catholic will encourage members of diverse groups to identify their religious holy days and creed-related observances at the beginning of each school year. PVNC Catholic will make reasonable efforts to acknowledge the different observances of the entire community when planning programs and events, such as Board-wide tests and examinations. To the extent possible, conferences, meetings, workshops, co-curricular activities and exams/tests, will not be scheduled on these significant faith days:

(Examples of) Holy Days/Days of Significance and Creed-Related Observances	
Religion/Spirituality	Holy Day
Bahai	Ridvan
Buddhist	Lunar New Year/Chinese
Western Christian	Good Friday Easter Sunday
Eastern Christian	Christmas Holy Friday
Hindu	Diwali
Jewish	Rosh Hashanah (2 days) Yom Kippur Passover (first day)
Muslim	Eid-ul-Fitr Eid-ul-adha
Sikh	Baisakhi

<p>Indigenous</p>	<p>A ceremony marking a big life moment A Spiritual Ceremony A Day of Significance OHRC Guideline for Indigenous Spirituality Days of Significance pg.113.</p>
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Please visit the following [MultiFaith ecalendar](#) link which denotes a variety of Holy Days, Days of Significance.

6.2.1 Guidelines for Administrators

All staff and students who request to observe a religious holy or spiritual day should be allowed this right without having to undergo any unnecessary hardship.

Staff requesting a leave should advise the school administration at, or as close as possible to, the beginning of the school year and leave should be granted in accordance with the terms of the appropriate collective agreement.

Students requesting a leave should give verbal or written notice from their parent/guardian to the school at, or as close as possible to, the beginning of the school year. Such procedures should be easy to understand and follow.

Student agendas, school newsletters and announcements should include information about the procedures for requesting leaves.

All staff members acting on behalf of/representing PVNC Catholic on other organizations, which in partnership with PVNC Catholic are planning events or activities that involve students and/or staff of Board schools, have the responsibility to bring this procedure to the attention of these organizations.

For consultation or further clarification of questions, administrators and managers should contact the office of the Superintendent responsible for Equity and Inclusive Education.

6.2.2 Unresolved Requests

Despite PVNC Catholic's commitment to accommodate, an individual may feel that discrimination based on religion or creed has occurred. PVNC Catholic will take reasonable and timely steps to address the unresolved issues raised by the affected person which could include dispute resolution mechanisms.

In the event that, after an employee's consultation with the Superintendent of Education, unresolved issues remain, then the matter will be referred to the Superintendent of Human Resources.

In the event that a student maintains that his or her rights under PVNC Catholic's religious and creed accommodation policy have been compromised, then the matter will be referred to the appropriate Superintendent of Education.

6.3 Prayer

PVNC Catholic recognizes the significance of prayer in religious practice. Board schools will make reasonable efforts to accommodate individuals' requirement for daily prayer by providing an appropriate location within the building for students and staff to participate in prayer. This may mean a quiet space in the library, an empty room, or wherever it is mutually satisfactory for the school and the student or staff member requesting the accommodation. Adult presence should be for supervision purposes only.

6.4 Dietary Restrictions

PVNC Catholic is sensitive to the different dietary restrictions of various religious groups. Such sensitivity includes attending to issues related to the menus provided by catering companies, snacks in elementary schools, and food provided within schools, at school-sponsored activities and community events.

Breakfast and lunch programs in both secondary and elementary schools will consider relevant dietary restrictions in their menu planning. Availability of vegetarian options is recommended as a form of inclusive design.

Special attention needs to be given to overnight outdoor education activities, as well as field trips that extend over a mealtime period.

6.5 Fasting

PVNC Catholic is sensitive to religious and spiritual periods of fasting. Schools will endeavour to provide appropriate space, other than cafeterias or lunchrooms, for individuals who are fasting in religious observance. PVNC Catholic recognizes that students who are fasting may need exemptions from certain physical education classes and Board schools should make reasonable efforts to provide appropriate accommodations.

6.6 Religious Dress and Ceremonial Dress

“Dress Code” is the appropriate dress policy established by a school, and may include a school uniform. PVNC Catholic recognizes that there are certain religious and spiritual communities that require specific items of ceremonial dress. PVNC Catholic understands that some religious attire, which is a requirement of religious observance, may not conform to a school’s Dress Code. Schools will reasonably accommodate students with regard to religious attire. Religious attire is not cultural dress; it is a requirement of religious or ceremonial observation.

Religious or ceremonial attire that should be reasonably accommodated in Board schools includes, but is not limited to:

6.6.1 Head covers: Yarmulkes, turbans, Rastafarian headdress, hijabs

6.6.2 Crucifixes, Stars of David, etc.

6.6.3 Items of ceremonial dress

Where uniforms are worn, administrators may ask the student to wear religious or ceremonial attire in the same colour as the uniform (e.g. the head scarves for females); however, there may be religious requirements of colour that cannot be modified.

Special attention must be given to accommodations necessary for a student to participate in physical education and school organized sports. Where possible, these should be incorporated into Board policies as part of an inclusive design process.

PVNC Catholic seeks to foster an atmosphere of cultural understanding in order to be proactive in addressing potential harassment about religious or ceremonial attire. Schools should be aware that harassment about religious or ceremonial attire is one of the most common types of harassment and bullying. PVNC Catholic and its schools will not tolerate any teasing directed at, or inappropriate actions taken against, an

individual's religious or ceremonial attire and there will be appropriate consequences for individuals who violate this rule.

There are religious communities that require specific items of ceremonial dress which may be commonly perceived as contravening Board policies, for example the use of the Kirpan by Khalsa Sikh students. For specific guidelines on the accommodation of Khalsa Sikh students wishing to carry a Kirpan, please see the guideline at this [link](#).

6.7 Modesty Requirements for Dress in Physical Education Classes

PVNC Catholic recognizes that some religious communities observe strict modesty attire in respect of their religion. This can become a matter of concern when students are asked to wear the clothing used in physical education activities. Such policies should be designed inclusively, taking into account common religious needs that may exist.

If a family has concerns that cannot be addressed through inclusive design, the school should discuss the modesty requirements with them, and, taking into consideration the Ministry of Education's mandated expectations in the physical education curriculum, and provide reasonable accommodation. The curriculum requirements should be explained to the family so that it has sufficient information to understand the physical education curriculum and to select available curriculum alternatives.

6.8 Participation in Daily Activities and Curriculum

PVNC Catholic will seek to reasonably accommodate students where there is a demonstrated conflict between a specific class or curriculum and a religious requirement or observance. Where academic accommodation is requested, the school should have an informed discussion with the student's parents/guardians to understand the nature and extent of the conflict.

The school should make it clear during the discussion that its role is to protect students and staff from harassment and discrimination because of their religion and cultural practices. Where these conflict with the school routines, activities or curriculum, the school should consider accommodation. It cannot, however, accommodate religious values and beliefs that clearly conflict with mandated Ministry of Education and PVNC Catholic policies.

It is important to note that when an individual requests an accommodation related to the curriculum, the accommodation applies to the individual in question and not to the whole class or to classroom practices in general [Ed. Act. 42 (13)].

The Ministry of Education recommends substitutions when there are exemptions requested related to specific curriculum (Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9-12, Program and Diploma Requirements). In general, PVNC Catholic recommends an informed, common-sense approach to questions of religion and curriculum. Hopefully, these questions can be solved by an open discussion between the teacher, the student and their family.

7.0 Indigenous Spiritual Practices

7.1 Legislation

The Ontario Human Rights Code, Canadian Human Rights Act, Canadian Constitution, Charter of Rights and Freedoms and United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples include legal protections for the fundamental right of Indigenous peoples to freely practice their religious and spiritual traditions, and to be treated equally and with dignity. ([Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed \(2015\) pg.5](#)). The inclusion of Indigenous cultures and practices in our schools play a powerful role in supporting and engaging Indigenous students and families as well as educating all students about Indigenous cultural beliefs and practices.

7.2 Ceremonial Practices and Customs

Organizations under provincial jurisdiction have a duty to accommodate Indigenous peoples' spiritual beliefs and practices – including ceremonies and sacred customs – under the Code, where rules, practices, standards, or requirements negatively impact these in employment, services, housing, contracts, unions or professional or vocational associations. ([Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed \(2015\) pg. 109](#)).

7.2.1 Smudging

In accordance with the [Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017](#), PVNC Catholic will permit smudging and the use of sacred medicines in connection with Indigenous cultural practices at cultural and educational events, meetings, and relevant classroom presentations. Smudging is the burning of sage and other sacred

medicines such as sweet grass, cedar and tobacco and is meant to purify, cleanse, and protect physical, emotional, and spiritual spaces and create harmony and balance.

Smudging is a common practice among many Indigenous people and therefore it is important for schools to accommodate those who wish to participate in this practice. Considerations for the practice of smudging may include:

- the most appropriate location (i.e. classrooms, gyms, atriums, teachers' lounge, offices, outdoor spaces, etc.).
- the location of fire alarms and smoke detectors as well as HVAC systems. (i.e. Fire alarms should not be a deterrent for smudging).
- participation in smudging is completely voluntary. (i.e. it is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that they do not wish to participate in a smudge. That person may choose to stay in the room and refrain from smudging or leave the room during the smudge).
- respect for all as the guiding principle in any Indigenous tradition.

8.0 Limitations to Religious Accommodation

PVNC Catholic supports freedom of religion and an individual's right to manifest their religious beliefs, spiritual practices and observances. The right to freedom of religion, however, is not absolute and religious accommodation in PVNC Catholic is carried out in the larger context of the Catholic education system and denominational rights of Catholic schools.

PVNC Catholic, at all times, will seek to accommodate an individual's right to freedom of religion in a manner that not only respects the individual's beliefs but the principles of the Catholic Church.

8.1 Chapels

Chapels in Catholic schools are specifically designed and furnished for prayer and liturgy within the Catholic tradition and are not to be considered multi-faith chapels. Following the general custom of the Church, non-Catholics are welcome to join in prayer services and liturgical celebrations of the Catholic Church community (keeping in mind some restrictions such as sharing in Holy Communion). Such a chapel is open

to all people for individual silent prayer or meditation. However, it is not appropriate that non-Catholic liturgies or group prayers be held in this setting.

8.1.1 It is therefore required:

- that school administrators designate another appropriate space or classroom, other than the chapel, for religious celebrations celebrated by other Christian denominations or faith traditions; and,
- that Catholic school boards consult with their respective local Ordinary on such accommodations.

Responsibilities:

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- ensuring alignment with the Equity and Inclusive Education directional policy; and
- reviewing the Religious and Creed Accommodation Procedure as part of its regular policy and procedures review cycle.

The Director of Education is responsible for:

- designating resources for ensuring the implementation of and compliance with this Administrative Procedure.

Superintendents of Schools and System Portfolios are responsible for:

- reviewing and revising this administrative procedure as necessary;
- reviewing all submitted requests for their family of schools.

Principals and Vice-Principals are responsible for:

- implementing school wide practices to ensure religious and creed accommodations are taken into account;
- investigating all complaints related to religious accommodations and reporting these to the appropriate FOS Superintendent;
- implementing processes as outlined in the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board Equity and Inclusive Education Policy,

Staff are responsible for:

- implementing the school wide practices into their classroom/practices to ensure religious accommodations are taken into account;
- investigating all complaints related to religious accommodations and reporting these to the Principal;
- implementing processes as outlined in the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board Equity and Inclusive Education Policy;
- communicating (in writing) any specific religious holidays or attire they will need to be accommodated in or before September. If September notice is not feasible, the person should make the request as early as possible.

Students are responsible for:

- implementing the school wide practices into their daily routines to ensure the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board Equity and Inclusive Education Policy directives are followed;
- report any behaviour that goes against the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board Equity and Inclusive Education Policy to their teacher or administrators;
- communicating with parental consent (written notice) any specific religious holidays or attire they will need to be accommodated in or before September. If September notice is not feasible, the person should make the request as early as possible.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

- supporting the school wide practices to ensure the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board Equity and Inclusive Education Policy directives are followed;
- report any behaviour that goes against the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington Catholic District School Board Equity and Inclusive Education Policy to staff or administrators;
- communicating (in writing) any specific religious holidays or attire they will need to be accommodated in or before September. If September notice is not feasible, the person should make the request as early as possible.

Progress Indicators:

- The Religious and/or Creed Accommodations Administrative Procedure is applied consistently within all PVNC Catholic educational settings;
- All employees report serious student incidents to the respective principal as soon as reasonably possible;
- School-based discipline data reflects positive trends in student behaviour;
- School climate, staff census and student census surveys indicate that staff and students feel accepted and safe in their respective learning and work environments.

Definitions:

- **Accommodation:** School boards, under the Code, have a legal duty to accommodate people's sincerely held creed beliefs and practices to the point of undue hardship (Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed, Ontario Human Rights Commission, September 17, 2015 pg. 5). The most appropriate accommodation is the one that most:
 - Respects dignity (including autonomy, comfort and confidentiality);
 - Responds to an individual's individualized needs; and Allows for integration and full participation.

The duty to accommodate is about more than providing the most appropriate accommodation in the circumstances (the substantive component). It is also about engaging in a meaningful, good-faith process to assess needs and find appropriate solutions (the procedural component).

Everyone involved in the accommodation process has a duty to cooperate to the best of their ability. While PVNC Catholic is ultimately responsible for putting in place solutions and leading the process, individuals requesting religious accommodation must cooperate in the process. The OHRC's Policy also recognizes that there are limits on rights based on creed, as there are on all grounds protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Limits can, for example, arise if creed rights interfere with the human rights of others.

- **Creed:** Creed may include religious beliefs and spiritual practices. The revised and updated Ontario Human Rights Commission's 2015 [Policy on Discrimination Based on Creed](#) finds that "Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life".

The following characteristics are relevant when considering if a belief system is a creed under the Code. A creed:

- Is sincerely, freely and deeply held,

- Is integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfilment,
- Addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a creator and/or a higher or different order of existence,
- Has some "nexus" or connection to an organization or community that professes a shared system of belief.

Religion or creed includes the spiritual beliefs and practices of Indigenous cultures.

Creed does not include secular, moral, or ethical beliefs or political convictions. This

administrative procedure and its accompanying policy, Equity and Inclusive Education,

does not extend to practices and observances that are hateful or incite hatred or violence against other individuals or groups, or contravene criminal law (Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Creed, Ontario Human Rights Commission, September 17, 2015 pg. 6). Exemption from religious studies due to creed will be made in accordance with procedures outlined in the Education Act 42 (13).

- **Undue Hardship:** Accommodation will be provided to the point of undue hardship, as defined by the OHRC (for example in the [Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate](#)). A determination regarding undue hardship will be based on an assessment of costs, outside sources of funding, and health and safety. It will be based on objective evidence.

A determination that an accommodation will create undue hardship carries with it significant liability for PVNC Catholic. It should be made only with the approval of the Director of Education.

Where a determination is made that an accommodation would create undue hardship, the person requesting accommodation will be given written notice, including the reasons for the decision and the objective evidence relied upon. Such written notice will be issued by the Superintendent responsible for Equity and Inclusive Education.

The accommodation seeker shall be informed of their recourse under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Where a determination has been made that an accommodation would cause undue hardship, PVNC Catholic will proceed to implement the next best accommodation short of undue hardship, or will consider phasing in the requested accommodation.

- **Dress Code:** It is the policy of PVNC Catholic that all schools adopt a student dress code that is consistent with our philosophy, vision statement, and Catholic social teaching. All secondary schools shall have a school dress code.

References:

- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)
- [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) Equality Rights, Chapter 15 (1), (2), 29
- [EWTN Vatican. \(2025 October 13\). Pope Leo XIV: Religious freedom essential ACN.](#)
- [The Code of Canon Law](#), Can. 793 (1), 795, 796 (1), 803 (2)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy Primer: Guide to Developing Human Rights Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on preventing discrimination based on Creed \(2015\)](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission Religious Rights Fact Sheet](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy statement on religious accommodation in schools](#)
- [PVNC Catholic Directional Policy 700: Equity and Inclusive Education](#)
- [PVNC Catholic Administrative Procedure 701: Equity and Inclusive Education](#)
- [PVNC Catholic Administrative Procedure 705: Indigenous Education](#)
- [PVNC Catholic Administrative Procedure 312: Dress Code - Students](#)
- [Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017](#)