



Submission to the Town of Oakville: Proposed Protest bylaw

Every community is entitled to practice their faith in designated places of worship, free from harassment, threats, or undue influence. We are optimistic that the proposed by-law will safeguard these rights for the Hindu community and all faith communities in Oakville

As the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of Canada (VHP Canada), we believe that the proposed bylaw should meet the following key prerequisites:

1. Promote peace and harmony in Oakville
2. Balance the rights of visitors to vulnerable places with the civil liberties granted under the Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms

We have reviewed similar bylaws enacted by the cities of Brampton, Vaughan, and Calgary and would like to provide the following comments for the proposed bylaw by the Town of Oakville:

1. **Definition of Demonstration or Protest:** The bylaws of Brampton and Vaughan restrict "Nuisance Demonstrations," but the definitions are complicated and subjective. In contrast, Calgary's bylaw broadly defines restricted protests and includes topics not relevant to Oakville. We request that the definition of restricted protest be clear and not as subjective as in Brampton and Vaughan, nor as broad as in Calgary.
2. **Loophole in Brampton's Bylaw:** Brampton's bylaw clause 6(b) allows peaceful protests against foreign governments at Places of Worship. This could lead to protests that result in violence, as seen during protests against visiting Indian embassy officials at Hindu Sabha Mandir. We request that such exceptions, as seen in Brampton's clause 6(b), not be included in Oakville's bylaw, similar to Vaughan's bylaw.
3. **Penalties:** The bylaws of Brampton and Vaughan have similar penalty clauses. We recommend that penalties for repeat offenses be prohibitive and clearly defined, such as setting the penalty at four times the baseline for repeat offenses.
4. **Recovery of Unpaid Fines & Penalties:** The bylaws of Brampton and Vaughan allow for unpaid penalties to be recovered as municipal taxes. However, problematic protests may involve immigrants who may not own or rent property. We suggest considering alternative methods for recovering unpaid penalties.

Please include our comments in the report to Council. Additionally, we are available to discuss our comments with you and the council at a mutually convenient date and time.