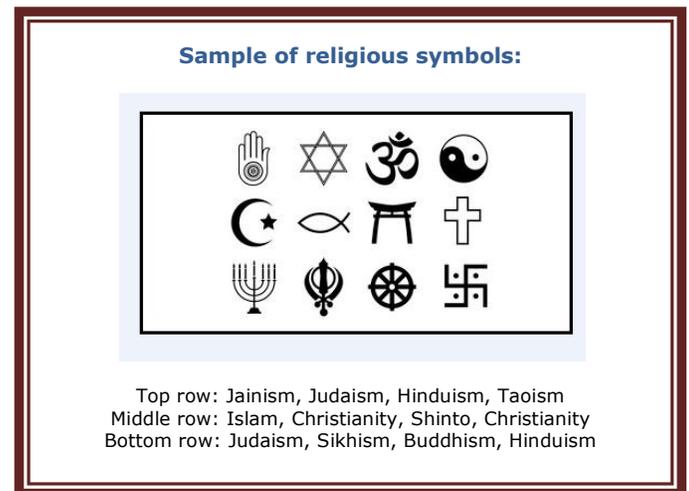


# WE ARE ALL RELIGIONS

At The City of Calgary, we are aware that our employees represent a diverse range of religious and spiritual traditions which form their views of the world. We wish to cultivate a positive work environment where all employees are understood and respected regardless of their different religious or spiritual traditions.

## Religion and Spirituality at Work

An individual's religion, spirituality and faith can be a key part of one's identity and being. Creating a workplace that recognizes and supports this understanding brings dignity and respect to employees. All employees at The City of Calgary should feel comfortable to observe the requirements of their religious or spiritual traditions in the workplace. The City is committed to supporting employees wherever possible within the constraints of the job, the workplace environment and human rights legislation. It is also important that employees understand the similarities and differences between traditions to develop a greater appreciation for the diversity of religion and spirituality in many people's lives.



**What is religion?** At its most broad definition, it may be any specific system of beliefs about a deity, often involving rituals, a code of ethics and a philosophy of life. There is a variety of different religious groups with their own rituals and practices, symbols, language, holy days or days of observance.

**What is spirituality?** Spirituality may be part of a religious life, but it also may encompass beliefs outside of a religious tradition that include a sense of interconnectedness with all living creatures, and a goal to find a meaning and purpose in life that is not linked or informed by traditional religion. As an example, many Aboriginal people practice a spiritual tradition that honours the fundamental interconnectedness of all forms of life and Mother Earth.

There are individuals who identify with secular humanism, a philosophy of life that is focused on humanity and human needs. Secular humanism often seeks a meaning and purpose in life that is not rooted in traditional religious doctrines or structures.

**What is faith?** Faith means a "belief" in something that does not have to be based on proof. It is usually associated with a sense of hope and may or may not be a part of one's religion or spirituality.

For more guidelines on different religions and spiritualities, please refer to the "More information" section.

### Canadian Statistics on Religion:

The last survey done by Statistics Canada on religious affiliation was in 2001. The table below illustrates a comparison of various forms of religions in Calgary and Alberta.

Characteristics	Calgary Total	Alberta Total
<b>Religion</b>		
<b>Total - Religion</b>	943,310	2,941,150
<b>Catholic</b>	248,520	786,365
<b>Protestant</b>	331,910	1,145,455
<b>Christian Orthodox</b>	11,260	44,475
<b>Christian, other</b>	40,605	123,140
<b>Muslim</b>	25,920	49,045
<b>Jewish</b>	6,530	11,085
<b>Buddhist</b>	16,635	33,410
<b>Hindu</b>	7,260	15,965
<b>Sikh</b>	13,325	23,470
<b>Eastern religions</b>	1,365	3,335
<b>Other religions</b>	2,410	10,565
<b>No religious affiliation</b>	237,575	694,840

Source: Statistics Canada's (2001)

## Supporting Religion and Spirituality

At the City of Calgary, we are committed to creating, providing and maintaining a positive, respectful, and safe work environment for all employees regardless of their religion or spirituality. Respecting religious and spiritual beliefs and creating dialogue with your employees, manager or colleagues are important steps in creating a supportive environment. There are many benefits of creating an inclusive workplace including:

- Increased employee morale
- Higher levels of trust and respect
- Increased motivation and productivity
- Increased organizational performance
- Better staff coverage during holidays in the workplace (e.g. some religions prohibit working certain days, while others may not)

## Tips for Inclusive Behaviours

Remember that people can bring different religious and spiritual beliefs to the workplace which can affect how they view the world. Here are some tips for understanding and supporting all employees regardless of religious and spiritual beliefs:

### Employees and leadership:

- Respect diversity, listen with an open mind, and find common ground with your employees and colleagues.
- Talk to your employees or colleagues as a way to understand and respect religious dress codes and daily prayer observances. All traditions have people who move on a continuum from very observant to more secular.
- Don't make assumptions that someone from a particular race, country or background must necessarily be religious or observant. When in doubt, ask.
- If you are in emergency services or on 24-7 work schedules, explore how the interfaith accommodations in your work unit might be of benefit during holidays and days of observance.

- Be aware of [The Alberta Human Rights Act](#) which prohibits discrimination in the area of employment based on religious beliefs, including Aboriginal spirituality.
- If accommodation is required based on your religious practices or beliefs, be sure to speak with your supervisor to discuss alternatives and potential solutions, such as flexible work options.
- Religion, spirituality and faith are complex and dynamic. If you are interested in learning more about any of these, we encourage you to explore the resources below, speak to someone who identifies as religious and/or spiritual, read a book on the subject or visit a religious and/or spiritual community.

### **Managers or supervisors:**

- If you are a manager or supervisor, create a positive and comfortable work environment where all employees feel supported, regardless of their religion or spirituality in the workplace. Be approachable and willing to take meaningful measures and consider alternatives if necessary to accommodate an employee's needs. Small accommodations like finding a quiet room or other appropriate space where employees can go for prayer, relaxation or meditation should be considered. For example, allowing employees to book a meeting room for a brief period of time for prayer; letting employees quietly meditate at their desks, etc.

## **More information?**

### **City of Calgary links:**

[City of Calgary Accommodation Guidelines and Policy](#) – identifies the tips and steps to consider with the Duty to Accommodate

### **Guidelines:**

[Religion Index](#) – an overview of major world religions, including religious holidays or days of observance

### **External Resources:**

[Business News Daily](#) – benefits of spirituality and religion in the workplace

Alberta Human Rights Commission - [Religious Beliefs](#)

Alberta Human Rights Commission- [Interpretive Bulletin – Duty to Accommodate](#)