

traditions which lie at the foundation of our Canadian identity.

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On the other hand, we have welcomed into our country people of various ethnic origins who have come to Canada to establish a better life for themselves and their children. Those of Sikh origin who choose to follow the tenets of the Sikh faith are required to observe a number of religious practices. Part of the Sikh religious tradition includes a series of symbols known as the five Ks, namely, the kes or unshorn hair and beard; the kanga or comb; the kara or steel bracelet; the kirpan or sword; and the kachha or undershorts.

Each of these objects has a religious significance for practising Sikhs. Together with the turban they form part of the Sikh uniform. The question then becomes, can we reconcile the RCMP dress code with the dress code of religious Sikhs?

The need to attract more members from visible minorities is an issue being faced by police forces across Canada, not just the RCMP. It is important to note that a number of these police forces have adopted policies to accommodate religious Sikhs. By the same token, while the experience of other police forces is instructive in looking at the issue of turbans in the RCMP, it is by no means prescriptive. The issue must be decided on its own specific merits in the context of the RCMP's unique role as Canada's national police force.

A number of years ago the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force amended its dress code to permit practising members of the Sikh religion to wear a turban made of issued fabric in place of the standard head-dress issued to other police officers. The unshorn hair must be concealed under the turban and beards and moustaches are to be worn in a neat fashion. In addition, the other religious symbols are allowed.

It is interesting to note that in respect to the kirpan or sword the dress regulations provide for the wearing of a small replica of the sword in the form of a pin. It is to be worn under the police uniform and cannot exceed three and a half inches in length.

The Sikh member is also requested to sign a form acknowledging that he cannot be permitted to perform certain duties where the wearing of a special head-dress

or special safety equipment, for example, helmets and hard hats, respiratory equipment is required by statute or is necessary for safety reasons.

#### *Private Members' Business*

I understand that both the Peel Regional Police Force and the Halton Regional Police Force have dress regulations for Sikh officers similar to those of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force. Similarly, the Edmonton Police Force has adopted dress regulations which permit adherents of the Sikh religion to wear a police blue turban with a cap badge centred and secured midway on the front of the turban. Hair and beard may remain uncut provided that a member's safety is not put into jeopardy when required to wear operational equipment.

Finally, my understanding is that while the Ottawa Police Force does not have regulations in place on turbans, a statement was issued a few years ago by the force to the effect that the need to wear a turban for religious reasons would not bar an applicant from being considered as a candidate.

My objective in canvassing the policies of the above noted police departments is simply to illustrate the pairing of a police uniform with a turban in Canada is not without precedent.

In fact the Department of National Defence has adopted a dress policy which allows members of the Canadian forces who are adherents to the Sikh religion to wear an issue turban as well as the other required religious symbols. These items must be modified or removed if they interfere with safety or operational requirements. Also, the hair and beard must be worn uncut, provided the member's safety is not jeopardized by the need to wear occupational or operational equipment.

This is not to suggest that the solution for the RCMP will be a straightforward one, or that it should simply follow what a small number of other police forces have done. It goes without saying that there are many more police forces that have not addressed the issue of turbans in their dress code.

Perhaps this question is simply not relevant given the needs of their particular communities. Others may be of the view that changing the dress code to accommodate any religious group is not advisable because the distinction would hinder the assimilation of the member into the force; if one group is accommodated, equal consider-