



END FORCED RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

A FREEDOM PARTY OF ONTARIO 2011 ELECTION PLANK

In 1888, a meeting of Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists led to the formation of the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada. In 1906, thanks largely to their efforts, a petition with 100,000 signatures was sent to the federal Parliament in Ottawa. The result was the passage, in 1907, of new federal Legislation called the *Lord's Day Act*. The *Lord's Day Act* prohibited the sale of any goods on a Sunday. However, no person could be prosecuted under the Act except with the expressed permission of the Attorney General of the Province in which the person was conducting business. So, in the decades after the *Lord's Day Act* was passed, the Lord's Day Alliance lobbied the government to press charges against various offenders.

The Lord's Day Alliance managed to have a man in Cobourg charged for showing a motion picture on a Sunday. On another occasion, the Alliance prevented an international bowling competition from being completed, because the final game would have ended 1/2 hour past midnight on a Saturday.

In 1953, the City of Toronto declared an 8-day period to be "Jerusalem Week". The purpose of the declaration was to assist in the sale of State of Israel bonds. The Alliance immediately objected, saying that the sale of the bonds during that period would break the law twice because the period contained two Sundays.

On yet another occasion, the Alliance attempted to have Toronto market gardeners convicted for tending to their gardens on Sundays.

The *Lord's Day Act* effectively permitted the provinces to pass laws which would override the *Act*. So, in 1975, the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario - responding to the Alliance and other Christian groups attempting to maintain a special status for Christianity - passed the *Retail Business Holidays Act*. It introduced a prohibition preventing most retail stores from conducting business on Sundays, and on major Christian holy days including Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Christmas.

The pretext for passing the law was that it would provide retail workers with a "common day of pause": a purportedly secular purpose. However, that was a cover-story. The *Lord's Day Act* was already providing retail workers with a common day of pause. The key difference was that, under the province's *Retail Business Holidays Act*, a person could be charged and convicted without the requirement of first getting leave from the Attorney General. If the police found a retail store open on a Sunday, or other designated Christian holy day, contrary to the *Retail Business Holidays Act*, they could immediately lay a charge. And, with increasing frequency, they did.

Several Ontario business people were offended by the law, and opened their stores on prohibited days. The government crushed such people. Toronto furrier Paul Magder was fined hundreds of times for opening his fur store on Sundays. Ultimately, the province bankrupted him. And London book seller Marc Emery spent 4 days in jail for opening his bookstore in contravention of the ban.

Freedom Party of Ontario campaigned against the shopping ban from 1986 through 1992. All other Ontario political parties supported the Progressive Conservatives' ban. However, by 1992, thanks largely to the efforts of Freedom Party, public opinion had shifted. Ontarians wanted to be free to choose whether or not to shop on Sundays. In response, Bob Rae's NDP government (which had campaigned in 1990 on making the ban even tougher) repealed the ban on Sunday shopping, but left the parts of the *Retail Business Holidays Act* that banned shopping on various other Christian holy days. To this day, it remains illegal to open most retail stores on such holy days as Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

In 2011, Ontarians observe hundreds of religious holy days. The law does not force Ontarians to observe Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu and other religious holy days. Just Christian ones. The government should not be in the business of playing favourites with religion. Whether or not you choose to observe a religious holy day should be a matter of

personal choice.

A Freedom government will eliminate the Progressive Conservatives' shopping ban. You will no longer be *forced* by law to observe any religion's holy days.

For more information, contact:

FREEDOM PARTY OF ONTARIO
240 Commissioners Road West
London, Ontario
CANADA N6J 1Y1

Telephone: 519-681-3999

Toll free: 1-800-830-3301