



New Brunswick Human Rights Commission

Dr. Patrick Malcolmson

The next human rights challenge

I think the right to freedom of religion is probably the right that now is one that's becoming endangered, and I would say that not just in terms of the immigrant population, but in terms of Canadians who have lived here for many generations and so on—Christians, Jews and so on and so forth—who've been sort of the traditional part of the religious orientation of the community, because religion is no longer looked on upon as favorably as it once was, and so people who still hold deeply held religious beliefs, I think, feel sometimes, well, they can't speak their minds because they're accused now of discrimination, because their religion says, well, we're not in favor of this or we're not in favor of that. So the balancing of your right to freedom of religion and to have your own personal views, over and against your obligation not to discriminate against people on the grounds that are prohibited and in the *Charter* and the *Code*. This becomes a kind of nexus of issues that I think will be hard for us to work through. And so, while we want to protect the rights of the Muslim population, the Muslim community, to their religious views, at the same time, we want to ensure non-discrimination. That's not always going to be easy. It's not going to be any easier in that case than it has been in the past in other cases. How do we allow people to hold on to these deeply held views, to practice them, to have their own communities, and at the same time, how do we prohibit discrimination? Where do we draw those lines? I think that will be a very pressing issue in the next, in the coming years.