Just When you thought the Church and the State were Separated...

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty thinks that it’s time to let go of the ritual recitation of the Lord's Prayer before beginning Legislature proceedings. One of the MPs of the Ontario Legislature, Garfield Dunlop, is against the idea. Their difference of opinion is what brought the relationship between religion and the state before the omnipresent media eye.

If you don't make a habit of watching the live broadcast of your provincial legislatures, you might not know that a lot of Canada’s legislatures begin proceedings by reaching up to the Lord (in one way or another). Alberta rotates through a set of non-denominational prayers; British Columbia and Nunavut allow members to select their own prayer when it is their turn; and the Yukon allows the Speaker to decide on prayer. Quebec simply allows for a moment of quiet reflection.

In Ontario, Premier McGuinty's concern is not that the prayer itself ought to be stopped, but that exclusively using a Christian prayer does not accurately reflect Canadian diversity. Given that the freedom of religion includes freedom from religion along with freedom of religion, the Premier might find some support for his cause in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Sources:

Tom Brodbeck, "Ain't Got a Prayer? Not so" Winnipeg Sun (February 15, 2008)
Keith Leslie,"Ontario Looks at Alternatives to Lord's Prayer to Open Daily Legislative Debate" Canadian Press (February 13, 2008).