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Members of Toronto City Council,

Toronto City Council is presently debating a proposal to give merchants the option of opening all stores in Toronto on any day, including Christmas and Good Friday.

I strongly oppose this proposal.

Our whole community is made poorer when times sacred to the human spirit are sacrificed so that the last drop of profit may be extracted. It is important that people of all faiths be able to celebrate their holy days without pressure being put upon employees and their families. It is surely not unreasonable to expect that the city should show respect for the most holy days of the nearly two-thirds of the population who are Christians.

I completely support the statement made by the Catholic Civil Rights League, which notes that while it is impossible to predict how many would avail themselves of the option to remain open on any day, “the move to end the very few common holidays still permitted to retail employees should be opposed. We have already seen how Sunday shopping moved from a limited option to an almost universal practice, disrupting religious and family time.” In practice, when a common policy on holidays is abandoned, employees, and businesses as well, are left with little choice.

The pursuit of economic advantage at the expense of human and spiritual values, and of the sanctity of the family, is foolish. It erodes the quality of life in our city.

Not only do I urge the council to reject this proposal, but I suggest that it might more profitably serve our whole community by examining how we might become a healthier city, with stronger families and with a more humane and civilized way of life, by increasing the freedom of employees to have more time to be with their families and to develop their human and spiritual potential.

+ Thomas Collins

Thomas Collins,
Archbishop of Toronto