

Politics

Jordan Peterson agrees to social media coaching after Supreme Court declines free speech case

College of Psychologists of Ontario called commentator's social media posts 'degrading'

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Jordan Peterson speaks to a crowd during a stop in Sherwood Park, Alta., on Feb. 11, 2018. (Jason Franson/The Canadian Press)

Polarizing psychologist Jordan Peterson now says he will attend the social media training he was ordered to undergo by his professional body after Canada's top court refused to hear his appeal, according to his lawyer.

In 2022, the governing body for Ontario's psychologists told Peterson — who has gained international fame with his views on women, masculinity and gender identity — to undergo a social media training program or risk losing his licence to practise.

The College of Psychologists of Ontario said some of his social media posts may be "degrading," raise questions about his abilities as a psychologist and risk bringing the profession into disrepute.

Peterson — who has been a registered member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario since 1999 but stopped seeing patients in 2017 — said his statements were not made in his capacity as a clinical psychologist.

In one of the social media posts in question, Peterson refers to a then-city councillor who uses they/them pronouns as an "appalling, self-righteous, moralizing thing."



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The college's complaints committee noted that during an appearance on *The Joe Rogan Experience* podcast, Peterson identified himself as a clinical psychologist before demeaning a former client.

Last summer, [an Ontario court ruled against Peterson](#) and upheld the regulatory body's order for him to undergo training on professionalism in public statements. That decision was affirmed by a panel of three judges with the Ontario Court of Appeal [earlier this year](#).

As usual, the Supreme Court of Canada did not explain why it won't hear Peterson's case. It was dismissed with costs.

Peterson says the 'gloves are off'

Peterson's lawyer, Howard Levitt, called the decision "a tragic day for Canada."

"It seems ironic, even tragic, that he, one of the most adept persons in social media in this country and beyond, is going to attend 're-education' from people inherently less skilled and knowledgeable than he is himself," Levitt wrote in an email to CBC News.

"The decision is a tragedy for freedom of speech in this country."

Levitt, an employment lawyer, said the decision will have a "chilling" impact on Canadians who are members of regulated trades and professions.

"They now have to concern themselves with political and other enemies making complaints to their regulatory bodies over their political comments, with the risk of their ability to practice their trade. Most simply will avoid debate entirely," he wrote.

Peterson posted on the social media platform X that he's "bereft of options on the legal front in Canada."

"This is a hill that's worth not so much dying on as retaking and now boys and girls the gloves are off," [he wrote](#).

Egale Canada, which had intervenor status in the case, celebrated Thursday's Supreme Court decision. It said 2SLGBTQ+ communities can face discrimination in accessing health care.

"This is why a clinical psychologist making transphobic, discriminatory and false claims is particularly harmful and directly interferes with trans people's safety and autonomy," said the national advocacy group's legal director, Bennett Jensen, in a media statement.

"Psychologists belong to the group of professions that act as gatekeepers to gender-affirming health care, and they must be held accountable to specific standards of professionalism."

Case raised freedom of expression issues

The years-long case has raised broader questions about freedom of expression and whether the college is overstepping its authority by penalizing the controversial psychologist over how he expressed his opinions.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) intervened at the Ontario court level, saying that while it doesn't endorse Peterson's views, it feels professional regulatory bodies shouldn't be policing speech that is not directly connected to professional practice.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has posted in support of Peterson, who rose to prominence through controversial YouTube videos critiquing liberal culture and self-help books. Poilievre took to X the day after the Supreme Court's decision to criticize the ruling.

"Another government bureaucracy threatens to ban a Canadian from practicing his profession because he expressed political opinions the state doesn't like," [he posted Friday](#).

"Now they force him to undergo a political 're-education.'"

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