

# Marit Stiles

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LEADER OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION  
CHEF DE L'OPPOSITION OFFICIELLE  
MPP/DÉPUTÉE DAVENPORT

April 12, 2024

**Hon. Ted Arnott, MPP**  
**Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario**  
**Room 180, Main Legislative Building**  
**Queen's Park**  
**Toronto, ON M7A 1A2**

*Delivered via e-mail*

Dear Speaker:

**Re: Keffiyehs in the precinct**

It has come to my attention that legislative security has recently begun prohibiting the wearing of keffiyehs in the legislative precinct by Members, staff and the public. I want to express my disappointment in this development and urge you to reconsider the directive.

The Assembly has always permitted Members, staff and guests to openly celebrate their culture, including wearing traditional clothing that represents their history, culture or faith, and I don't believe it is your intention to change that precedent.

Members of Provincial Parliament have worn kilts, kirpans, vyshyvankas and chubas in the Ontario Legislature. Each of these clothing items have national and cultural associations, and each have, at times, been banned or considered as political symbols in need of suppression.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous Members have also dressed in traditional regalia and symbols in the Assembly, and the cultural meaning of these items cannot be separated from their historical and political significance.

The wearing of these important cultural and national clothing items in our Assembly is something we should be proud of. It is part of the story of who we are as a province. Palestinians are part of that story, and the keffiyeh is a traditional clothing item that is significant not only to them but to many members of Arab and Muslim

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communities. That includes members of my staff who have been asked to remove their keffiyehs in order to come to work. This is unacceptable.

Furthermore, the fact that the House of Commons and other provincial legislatures have allowed the wearing of keffiyehs in the chamber and in the precinct makes the Ontario Legislature an outlier.

I am therefore asking you to reconsider this interpretation, and to make clear to everyone who works in and visits our provincial legislature that all cultures will be treated with equal respect.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Marit Stiles', with a stylized, flowing script.

MPP Marit Stiles, Leader of the Official Opposition