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Jewish.
Advocacy.

August 27, 2024

The Toronto Police Service Board
ATTN: Ann Morgan – Chair
40 College Street
Toronto ON M5G 2J3

Dear Members of the Toronto Police Service Board,

On behalf of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) and the broader Jewish community in Toronto, we are writing to provide our input regarding the review of public order policies. CIJA is the advocacy agent of Jewish Federations of Canada-UJA, representing Jewish Federations across Canada and the diverse perspectives and concerns of more than 150,000 Jewish Canadians affiliated with their local Jewish Federation.

Following the terror attack in Israel committed by Hamas on October 7, 2023, we have seen an alarming increase in hate crimes in the city with Toronto's Jewish community singled out in protests and in many antisemitic, and often violent, acts. In total, the increased demand for policing has amounted to 16,200 hours of staff time.

Recent campus occupations and public demonstrations in Toronto have highlighted a troubling rise in antisemitic rhetoric and actions, which poses a significant threat to our community's safety and well-being, leading to a pervasive feeling in the community that, whether at work, school, or play, it is no longer safe to be identifiably Jewish in public.

To respond to these concerns, Toronto Police must be equipped with the skills, training, and support to manage these demonstrations properly and ensure that they do not become covers for illegal activity, further driving up our city's hate crime rate and stoking fear and anxiety among many.

This rise in antisemitism and associated violence is a matter of deep concern for our community, but the consequences of an inconsistent response to the rise of crimes against a targeted group speak to a larger problem that has a deep impact on the entire civic community.

CIJA appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the Board on our key concerns, and we provide proposed solutions for your consideration, which we hope to see integrated into your updated public order policy.

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KEY CONCERNS

1. Increase in Antisemitic Incidents

As expressed in Police Chief Myron Demkiw's [remarks](#) to the TPSB in July 2024, antisemitism continues to account for more reported hate crimes than any other category. Of the 273 hate crimes reported so far in 2024, 45 percent were antisemitic. We applaud the newly unveiled [TPSB Hate Crimes Dashboard](#), which includes all verified hate crime occurrences by date and allows for a retrospective analysis of hate crime data. Indeed, the Dashboard's data present a concerning trend of antisemitism in Toronto: as of the [last report](#) (July 30, 2024), hate crimes pertaining to religious bias represented an 86% increase over the previous year.

Reports within the bias category "Jewish" are far greater than other bias categories, with a total of 130 reported cases in 2023. With the use of slogans and symbols, such as the red triangle to signify targets for violence, and chants that glorify terrorism and violence toward Jews (e.g.: "River to the Sea," or "globalize the intifada,") and those evoking expulsion (e.g.: "Go back to Poland"), recent public demonstrations and campus encampments have created a hostile and exclusionary environment for Jewish and Israeli-Canadians. These events have engendered a climate of fear and intimidation within our community, many of whom have been frustrated by a lack of action on the part of police in enforcing existing hate laws.

2. Safety and Security

Since the horrific events of October 7, the Jewish community in Toronto has been consistently targeted with vandalism, demonstrations, intimidation, and violence within their own neighbourhoods and at places of worship, schools, and community centres.

Demonstrations and public gatherings have indeed impacted the safety and security of Toronto Jewish community members. Some public gatherings have turned hostile, and some, such as the shooting at the Bais Chaya school or the fire-bombing of a Jewish deli, led to outright violence. According to the [Toronto Police Service 2023 Annual report](#), under Project Resolute, a city-wide community engagement campaign, TPS has managed or overseen more than 700 protests, demonstrations, and events. Police Chiefs themselves have noted that protests are "increasingly escalating from peaceful demonstrations to more high-risk situations, posing an increased threat to officer and public safety" creating an "unsustainable demand on police services and operations."¹

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¹ The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police's (CACP) 119th Annual Summit in Halifax



On many occasions, rallies and demonstrations have blocked major intersections and roadways, creating a community safety risk. Such events have also achieved their intent to intimidate Jewish and Israeli-Canadians by using slogans, symbols and chants that glorify terrorism and violence targeting Jews. Those committing criminal acts during demonstrations must be held accountable; otherwise, the number and size of demonstrations that target the Jewish community will certainly increase. With anticipated demonstrations expected now and well into the future, a more robust and proactive approach to ensuring our safety is required. A failure to take these threats seriously will result in greater community suffering and may well lead to an increase in incidents that police are unable to manage safely.

3. Protection of Rights

While we fully support the right to peaceful protest, it is imperative that this right not infringe upon the safety and security of marginalized groups, including the Jewish community. Calls for violence when stated as “legal resistance” or “intifada” is not protected speech. These are often combined with marches in Jewish neighbourhoods or outside of Jewish institutions. These crosses the line of protected speech to incitement of hate, intimidation and constitutes an unlawful assembly. *These are crimes.*

Public order policies must strike a balance between maintaining public order and protecting vulnerable communities from hate speech and violence. This is especially the case when a minority community is targeted and intimidated in a misplaced effort to protest the actions of a foreign government, a situation that would not be acceptable for any other minority group, and yet, by the Toronto Police Service’s current approach, is being tacitly encouraged.

PUBLIC ORDER POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhanced Monitoring and Response

The Toronto Police Service should establish, without exception, *zero tolerance at public demonstrations of ANY form of hate speech or violence*. This will require training officers to recognize antisemitic / hate symbols and rhetoric and entail the implementation of more rigorous monitoring of public demonstrations for antisemitic or hate-motivated activities to and ensure a swift, effective response to any such incidents.

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This approach should be informed by a defined advance intelligence process that anticipates the skills and resources that a public order event will require. The Service should also adopt a multi-level management approach, a model recommended in the Ipperwash Inquiry, supporting the front-line incident commander with additional strategic resources and enhancing the Service's ability to respond as those situations unfold.

We have seen a frequency and size of demonstration that the Service has struggled to manage, often in locations targeting Toronto's Jewish community specifically. When hateful language and symbols are not dealt with, and indeed are flaunted without consequence in the presence of police, radical actors are emboldened, which leads to subsequent demonstrations featuring even more hate speech, more intimidation, and more unlawful behaviour. This climate has led – and, if not addressed, will continue to lead – to harassment, intimidation, and even violence.

Enhanced Hate Crime Education for Officers and Cadets

The TPS should make training in hate crime and antisemitism mandatory at the Ontario Police College and Toronto's own cadet education programs and require all serving officers to have updated training in both antisemitism and hate crime enforcement. This training must include content addressing the presence of antisemitism and hate crime actions as part of public demonstrations. To be effective, this training should include the historical context, meaning, and impact of antisemitic and genocidal hate speech as well as analyses of the tactics and symbols used in hate speech and propaganda (including foreign language material). Training in bias awareness should also be included.

Most importantly, officers should be trained to understand the distinction between protected free speech and hate speech and actions, the full range of law enforcement measures available to them, and the framework for making discretionary decisions at public order events.

The need for these resources is acute. Terrorist insignia banned under Canadian law are brandished and hateful rhetoric calling for violence against the Jewish community are, without consequence, openly shouted at demonstrations. Officers must be trained to identify and respond before these illegal incitements escalate. History offers many examples of tolerance of "smaller" acts of hate resulting in an increase in the number and severity of hate crime offences. Training officers with these skills will empower them to act with confidence to shut down illegal activity before it can metastasize into something far more damaging and dangerous.



Improved Protest Management

We recommend establishing a minimum standard wherein demonstrations are not permitted to prevent people from going about their everyday business or to block or obstruct the flow of traffic on roadways. Officers should proactively prevent this interference in daily activities of Toronto citizens by addressing any tactics used to intimidate individuals or groups and ensuring that existing laws (including trespassing, mischief, unlawful assembly, and noise and other bylaws) are duly enforced. Demonstrations that enter Jewish neighbourhoods represent a form of unlawful assembly. In those instances, therefore, criminal laws relating to unlawful assembly should be applied.

What has been witnessed in recent protests is, in the interests of avoiding confrontation, police officers ignoring even major breaches of the law. Public roadways have been blocked and residential neighbourhoods targeted with the express intent to intimidate the Toronto Jewish community. This is unlawful (criminal harassment / unlawful assembly) and should be dealt with accordingly. Police should be directed to enforce the law in the context of public demonstrations and not, under a misguided understanding of free speech, continue to give protestors a free pass.

Safe Access Zones

The TPS should establish protest safe access zones around places of worship as well as community and social service organizations to prevent protests from targeting specific communities rather than assembling at more appropriate locations, such as Queen's Park, City Hall, or the Israeli consulate. Since the October 7th terrorist attacks in Israel, protesters have repeatedly targeted the Canadian Jewish community as a proxy for their concerns regarding actions taken by a foreign government. This is unacceptable and would not be tolerated if it involved any other identifiable community.

In the past, governments have dealt with unlawful protests that cross into hate or intimidation and harassment by establishing safe access zones. These protections have been extended to people accessing women's health services, schools, hospitals, COVID testing and treatment sites, as well as in the case of disruptive protests targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ events.

We ask the Service to use the tools available to establish similar zones to protect community institutions and redirect protests to more appropriate venues.

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Community Liaison Officers

In addition to existing links with the Hate Crimes unit, the Police Service's policies should ensure that Division Commanders are connected to Jewish and other community organizations. These officers can serve as points of contact, ensuring that community concerns are promptly addressed and that, during public demonstrations, there is a direct line of communication.

This responsibility should be integrated with our recommendation for a multi-level management approach to public demonstrations and will support Police strategy and operational management before situations spiral out of control.

Enhanced Cooperation of Digital Communications

There needs to be closer coordination of digital communications between the Police and community organizations to help disseminate timely, accurate updates pertaining to emerging incidents and issues of concern. This direct communication is important both to help manage community expectations and prevent the spread of false information.

Given the current climate of fear and the documented increase in hate crimes, we have seen circumstances where incidents, such as the burning of a school bus or a break-in at a school, are mistakenly ascribed as hate incidents, escalating community anxiety and response unnecessarily and complicating the Police Service's own investigatory efforts.

By setting up a framework for enhanced communications cooperation, community organizations such as can improve their support of Police efforts and ensure that mobilization is reserved for circumstances where it would be most helpful to both the Police Service strategy and to the safety of the community at large.



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CONCLUSION

We believe that the review of public order policies is an essential step toward fostering a safer and more inclusive environment for all residents of Toronto. By addressing the specific needs and concerns of the Jewish community, we can work together to combat the rise of antisemitism and ensure that public spaces remain safe for everyone. This effort is also important to prevent further escalation of public order events, hate crime activity, and general lawlessness, an outcome encouraged by the Police Service's current approach to public demonstrations.

Thank you for considering our perspectives and recommendations. We look forward to continued dialogue and collaboration with the Toronto Police Service Board to discuss our concerns and recommendations in more detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Stock', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Michelle Stock
Vice-President - Ontario
The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA)