

It is long overdue that public order policies are revised to reflect the current state of affairs in Toronto. We live in a highly charged and volatile political environment, and a strong, reliable police service is more critical than ever. They are instrumental for enforcing laws with respect to protests, marches, and demonstrations, and acting as a deterrent for those who wish to engage in criminal behavior under the guise of “freedom of speech.”

Since October 2023, the Toronto Police have faced a difficult and unenviable position of managing large and overly aggressive demonstrations on a weekly basis – an unprecedented situation that has consumed vast police resources. At the same time, there were several incidents where police inaction contributed to a perceived climate of impunity where many protestors – some of whom openly claimed sympathy with terrorist organizations – were able to exceed the limits of free speech and expression.

Two moments come to mind: first, the police inaction when a member of a pro-Palestine protest uttered a death threat to an officer at Yorkdale mall in January 2024. The second was the time a TPS officer delivered coffee to protestors who had occupied a public bridge – posing a safety risk to drivers on the highway below. These incidents were widely publicized on social media and contributed to a perceived weakness on the part of the TPS. These incidents only served to further embolden those in a movement whose mantra is to carry-out change through violence (“globalize the intifada.”)

These two stories should create a moment of pause and deep reflection by our police service, and how the perception of weakness can result in a deteriorating security situation in our city. Police officers should never feel afraid to act or enforce laws, and politicians and other leaders should support the TPS in this respect. Being nice, or at least too nice, can be detrimental to security and send the wrong message. These lessons should inform the proposed revisions to the *Community Safety and Policing Act*.

Successful cities have a common feature: a strong, united, and supported police force. We all know there are various local and global entities who are trying to “dismantle systems.” These entities do not care for our way of life. They do not care for western liberal values. They are the ones who advocate for defunding or abolishing police forces. It is vital that we retain, augment, and further support our police forces to combat these forces, as the police are often the last line of defense on city streets. Our way of life must be defended, and that cannot be done with a weak police service.

The Criminal Code of Canada defines hate speech as any speech that advocates, “*genocide or public incitement of hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of the peace.*” (Sec 318/319) Over the last several months these laws have been broken repeatedly without punishment. Protestors have brazenly called for the extermination of the State of Israel (identifiable group) through the mantra “From the river to the sea...”

Freedom of expression is also not an inalienable and unlimited right. Section 2b in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms says that the right to free expression reaches the limit when it veers into violence, threats, or threats to safety. Freedom of expression expires when one hijacks public infrastructure like roads, bridges, and public property (such as sit-ins at major transit stations). Furthermore, criminal acts such as trespassing, vandalism, and intimidation of public officials as has been demonstrated over the last several months also null and voids any claim to protest freedom. When protests veer into hate speech, criminal

acts, or disrupt society in major ways, they must be curtailed. The police are our frontline defense against those who wish to cause such disruption.

This is a matter of immense importance. It is about maintaining security, safety, and sending a strong message of deterrence to those who wish to create havoc and instability in society. The message that they will face a swift and severe reckoning for their actions. Without a strong, resilient, and confident police force, our cohesion as a city will continue to disintegrate.

Thank you,

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