

April 8, 2020

Dear York Region Councillor,

I hope you are staying safe and healthy during these challenging times.

I write to you on behalf of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA). CIJA is the advocacy agent of UJA Greater Toronto. We are a national, non-partisan, non-profit organization, representing more than 150,000 Jewish Canadians affiliated through local Federations from coast to coast, many of whom live in York Region.

We believe in Canada's foundational values of freedom, democracy, and equality. We are committed to working with the government and all like-minded groups to ensure that Canada remains a country where all citizens—irrespective of gender, race, or creed—enjoy equal protections and opportunities.

While Canada remains one of the best countries in the world for minority communities, even in a diverse and inclusive region like York Region, we are not immune from hate.

Statistics Canada reports show a significant rise in hate crimes across Canada. The Jewish community is consistently the most frequent target, with a 63% increase from 2016 to 2017. On average, an antisemitic hate crime occurs, once every 24 hours.

The alarming rise of antisemitism should evoke a deep sense of concern. History has shown that what starts with Jews, never ends with Jews. Taking a stand against antisemitism insulates our entire community from the threat of hate.

We cannot overcome antisemitism if we are unable to properly identify it.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism provides a clear, consensus definition to empower government and civil society to effectively tackle this growing scourge. The definition is supported by 34 democratic countries, including the Government of Canada, as well as the European Parliament, United Nations experts, and the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

In February, the Ontario Legislature unanimously passed **Bill 168: Combating Antisemitism** through its second reading. The Bill adopts the IHRA definition of antisemitism to protect Ontarians from discrimination and hate.

The adoption of the IHRA definition by York Region would send a powerful message of support for its vibrant Jewish community. Knowing that our elected representatives are taking action at home while antisemitism continues to rise around the world, is absolutely vital at this time.

Yours sincerely,

Jason Grossman

Senior Manager Public Affairs
the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA)