

January 26th, 2022

Dear Members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs,

I am writing on behalf of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the advocacy agent of the Jewish Federations of Canada. I would like to thank you for allowing me to present to the committee recently to discuss how the Government of Ontario can continue to support the Jewish community.

Below you will find a summary of CIJA's key recommendation.

Security Funding for Vulnerable Institutions

More than a decade of Statistics Canada data consistently shows Jews – who are less than 1% of Canada's population – to be the most frequent or second most frequent target of hate crime. This is particularly concerning in communities like Toronto, where police reported a 50% increase in hate crime in 2020, the last year for which data is available. 34% of hate crime in the city targeted Jews, despite the Jewish community only being 3.4% of the population.

The recent hostage taking at the Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas has once again sent shockwaves throughout Jewish communities across this province. This accumulates on top of recent attacks on synagogues in other U.S. and European cities like our own and a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents here in Canada over the last year. Across this province, synagogues, Jewish community centres, Jewish daycares and schools live with a reality of physical security requirements to allow communities to gather and worship safely. These measures are not unique to the Jewish community and affect many other vulnerable groups in Ontario such as the Black, Indigenous, Muslim, Asian and LGBTQ2S+ communities.

The recent incident in Texas is a critical reminder of the importance of security planning, infrastructure, personnel, and training to keep people safe. It was training that the Rabbi received from law enforcement and community organizations that likely saved the hostages lives.

The last Ontario budget allocated approximately \$2.6 million over two years for the Safer and Vital Communities Grant to help communities combat hate-motivated crime. The program was designed to help 26 community-based, not-for-profit organizations and First Nations Chiefs and Band Councils, in collaboration with police partners, implement local projects that tackle discrimination, foster greater inclusiveness, and address the increase of police-reported hate crime.

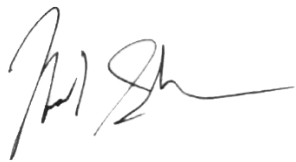
This Grant program has been a lifeline for several Jewish community institutions across the province. There is a need to continue this support and extend it to other priority institutions in need across the province. Unfortunately, the recent announcement by the Government of Ontario that the Safer and Vital Communities Grant will be focused on "Preventing Cybercrime through

Community Collaboration” leaves a gap in support for physical safety and security at a time when it is of growing concern.

Recommendation: The Government of Ontario’s upcoming budget should include funding to support the physical security of at-risk community institutions, specifically for safety training. Houses of worship, community centres, and childcare facilities need to be safe places for individuals and families, and the government has a duty to ensure they are supported in the face of increasing physical threats.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing support of the Jewish community. We would welcome an opportunity to discuss these important initiatives in greater detail at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noah Shack', with a stylized, flowing script.

Noah Shack
Vice-President, GTA
Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs