



Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of June 13th, 2024
(time sensitive)

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 3rd, 2024
From: Councillor Gardiner
Subject: City of Victoria response to on-going antisemitic actions

BACKGROUND

Discrimination is a global problem which challenges governments at every level.

Canada has experienced a significant rise in antisemitism since the beginning of the Hamas-Israel war in October of 2023. The growth of antisemitism was noted in the 2019 census with hate crimes against Jewish people accounting for the highest number of religious-based hate crimes. Since then, antisemitism has increased each year from 20% to doubling from 2022 to 2023. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service has warned Canada of the more recent spike in violent rhetoric from extremists that has led to violence.

Referring to the antisemitism experienced this year, Prime Minister Trudeau stated "*disturbing increase in antisemitism to a scale we have not witnessed for generations*", while Premier Eby stated "*This issue exists in schools, in civil society, within private employers, and I believe that people have had antisemitic experiences within the government B.C. public service*".

In Victoria, we have seen hate expressed on our streets. In addition to weekly marches in the city during which those nearby have been assailed with hateful words, we may also be experiencing spill-over from the encampments at the University of Victoria.

While the City promptly removes antisemitic slogans/graffiti in public spaces, antisemitic actions have become commonplace in other ways.

Recently, Council has received communications asserting that city funding has supported, albeit indirectly, antisemitic hate speech. Antisemitic graffiti on private property has also been brought to the attention of Council. While the Property Maintenance Bylaw (No. 07-050 Section 6) requires property owners to remove graffiti, we have now seen graffiti on private property where the owners may not have been aware of it.

Given the communications received alleging indirect financial support for antisemitic actions, this Council must take steps to assure the public that the City is not supporting antisemitic actions.

The City of Victoria must separate itself from antisemitic activity.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to respond promptly to communications from the public regarding antisemitism by:

1) assessing communications from the public which assert City funding support or otherwise links the City to organizations which advocate for antisemitic action to

(a) determine if any grant or other city funding is used directly or indirectly to support antisemitic actions.

(b) recommend continuing or altering City financial support for an organization involved with antisemitic actions.

2) prioritizing the removal of antisemitic graffiti by

(a) removing graffiti on City public property.

(b) promptly notifying property owners of graffiti on their property and their obligation to remove graffiti.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized, circular scribble followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Councillor Gardiner