

The logo for the Canadian Jewish Association (CIJA), consisting of the letters 'CIJA' in a bold, sans-serif font with a small six-pointed star to the right of the 'A'.

CIJA

Canadian.
Jewish.
Advocacy.

Priority Issues for Quebec's Jewish Community

2022



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Priority Issues for Quebec's Jewish Community 2022

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Quebec's Jewish community

A few numbers...

- The Jewish community has been present in Quebec for over 250 years and is a historic minority.
- It comprises more than 90,000.
- One in five families lives below the poverty line. Many of these depend on government subsidies.
- 70% of Jewish Quebecers were born in Quebec and another 10% have lived here more than 25 years.
- 25% of Jewish Quebecers are francophone (mostly from Morocco and France). The majority of Jewish Quebecers are bilingual.
- The Jewish community in Quebec is diverse in its origins, socio-economic situation, opinions, and the way in which each individual practices his or her Judaism: Conservative, Reform or Hasidic (the latter representing only 15% of the community).

The schools of the institutional Jewish community in Quebec

- Quebec's Jewish community schools are accomplished and recognized educational institutions in Quebec, having been in operation for over a century.
- Teaching the Department of Education's curriculum, these schools offer a rich combination of unique study programs.
- Quebec's Jewish schools provide young people with access to the culture they experience daily as Quebec citizens and the culture that grounds them in their Jewish identity. (90% of students go on to university.) These schools are essential to the vitality of the Jewish community in Quebec.

The Jewish community and Quebec: shared values

- The Jewish community shares the values that underpin Quebec society: protection of rights and freedoms of the individual, gender equality, freedom of conscience and opinion, and neutrality of the State in religious matters.
- Our community has contributed significantly to the cultural and political life as well as to the scientific and economic development of Quebec.
- We are proud to count several Grand Officers, Officers, and Knights of the *Ordre national du Québec* as well as several recipients of the Scientific Prize and the Cultural Prize. Several Quebecers of Jewish descent have also received a Nobel Prize.

Public Safety

Although most Quebecers reject all forms of hate, antisemitism is a phenomenon that persists in Quebec, as it does elsewhere.

The conflict between Israel and Hamas in May 2021 led to a dangerous surge in antisemitic incidents in Quebec, in Canada, and around the world, with incidents increasing in frequency and severity, resulting in greater security needs for our community.

The January 15, 2022, hostage crisis at a Texas synagogue, where the perpetrator, Malik Faisal Akram, had published antisemitic and anti-Israel messages before his crime, demonstrated once again the unfortunate necessity for synagogues and other community institutions to have improved access to security resources.

Although federal programs exist to improve security of at-risk communities, recent incidents prove the greater need for provincial security funding and for more dedicated provincial resources.

Reported incidents in just the last two years are numerous and include:

- Hateful and antisemitic language on placards at anti-Israel demonstrations
- Vandalism on the building housing the Israeli Consulate
- Seizure of weapons at anti-Israel demonstrations
- An antisemitic attack against Congregation Shaar Hashomayim in Montreal where a man painted several swastikas on the doors of the synagogue. He also had in his possession an incendiary device and was apprehended thanks to the presence of a security guard
- Projectiles were tossed at peaceful demonstrators at a pro-Israel rally
- Students at several schools were victims of antisemitic acts and intimidation
- Convoys of anti-Israel gangs drove through predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods hurling antisemitic insults and threats
- A proliferation of messages on social media threatening Jews with physical violence, including death threats, and inciting hate
- Numerous threats over the internet targeting Jewish institutions

These acts not only target Jews but also constitute attacks on the fundamental values of Quebec.



Recommendations

The organized Jewish community takes its role of providing security seriously, and we make significant investments in infrastructure, security equipment, and personnel, always working closely with authorities, helping all Quebecers live in a peaceful society. To sustain these efforts, we offer the following recommendations:

1- Creation of a grant program for securing communities.

We propose the creation of a community grant program similar to the Ontario government's Safer and Vital Community Grant. This program would allow the Government of Quebec, in partnership with communities most at risk of being victims of crime or targets of hate, to finance infrastructure to improve security of community buildings and / or provide security personnel training.

We recommend the program's criteria be established as follows:

- For the first year, a pilot-project funded by a budget of \$1.7M, as in Ontario.
- Only community institutions would be eligible.
- Those requesting funding should provide documentation of a history of threats against the group in question.
- The grants will be used to improve existing or add new security infrastructure and may also be used for training programs to keep security personnel up to date.
- The maximum grant would be \$75,000, and no grant could cover more than 75% of a project. The remaining 25% should be funded by the community institution in question.
- The criteria used to prioritize requests should be community support and documentation of concrete threats to the building or community in question.
- The program could also cover improvements to digital security infrastructure to help organizations protect themselves against cyber-attacks. We recommend, however, that this be the goal of a separate program run by the Department of Cybersecurity and Digital Affairs (*Ministère de la Cybersécurité et du numérique*).



2- Collaboration between *Sûreté du Québec (SQ)* and the *Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM)* on hate crimes and hate-related incidents.

As has been done on other important issues, we would like to see a collaboration between the SQ and the SPVM in the fight against hate crimes and hate-related incidents. This collaboration would allow the SQ to support the limited manpower of the SPVM and target both physical hate crimes and hate-related incidents, as well as monitoring online hate, which, all too often, is a precursor to real-world violence.

- The SQ should make its cyber-surveillance resources available to the SPVM in the fight against online hate, which will increase the interventions made by the SPVM's hate crime unit.
- An organized and systematic collaboration should lead to more charges laid and, consequently, a more effective fight against this kind of crime.
- The SQ should create and maintain a database of police-reported incidents of hate crime across the province. The collection of data should be standardized and, in cases of antisemitism, refer to the IHRA definition of antisemitism, as adopted by the Government of Quebec in June 2021.

3- Strengthen the City of Montreal's hate crime unit and set up similar units in major cities in Quebec.

Several police services in Canada's largest cities have specialized hate crime units comprising police officers and / or civilians specially trained in hate-motivated crime, who help police in the field, investigate suspected hate crimes, educate other police officers and the community, and raise awareness in affected communities.

In June 2022, the Montreal Police Service's Hate Crime Unit comprises a lieutenant-detective, two sergeant-detectives, and two specialist advisory officers.

- Montreal's Hate Crime Unit should be adequately staffed and the staff should:
 - Have extensive training in identifying, recording, and investigating hate crimes to meet the needs of victims
 - Help reinforce public confidence in the police
 - Facilitate reporting of incidents by victims and ensure they are better documented
 - Ensure that dedicated liaison officers are assigned to every targeted community
- Create similar units in other large Quebec cities such as Laval, Quebec City, and Sherbrooke. These units would be responsible for:
 - Taking all appropriate and necessary measures to ensure evidence of hateful motive is documented and submitted to courts for prosecution and that hate crime victims are fully informed of their rights and the judicial process
 - Ensuring that dedicated liaison officers are assigned to each target community
 - Providing enhanced training for officers in the identification, recording, and investigation of hate crimes, including antisemitism, in line with the requirements of the Criminal Code
 - This training would help officers recognize antisemitism in all its forms, as described by the definition of antisemitism adopted by the Government of Quebec in 2021



Antisemitism

History teaches us that hate crimes against a targeted group can be the precursor of more serious problems. Antisemitism often serves as a canary in the coalmine and an indicator of radicalization of some elements of society. **The fight against antisemitism certainly helps protect not only the Jewish community but also Quebec's broader social fabric.** The recent surge in antisemitism represents a disturbing new trend.

The West has seen a **troubling resurgence of antisemitism over the past few years**, mostly resulting from the rise in Islamist radicalization in Europe and elsewhere and of the crisis of legitimacy facing many Western democracies. In Quebec, as is the case elsewhere, the phenomenon has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and by the conflict in May 2021 between Hamas and Israel. We have seen yet another unfortunate example of it with the hostage crisis at a Texas synagogue in January 2022.

We have also seen, over the last year, Jewish students in some Quebec schools be the victims of antisemitic incidents of intimidation, vandalism, and hateful comments targeting their Jewish identity and, in some cases, Holocaust denial.

Examination of Statistics Canada figures on hate crime over the past few years reveals that the Jewish community is still the most targeted group for religiously motivated hate crimes. These figures are especially troubling because **the Jewish community, which represents only 1% of the Canadian population, is the target of 13% of the hate crimes reported by police. Additionally, Jews accounted for 62% of religiously motivated hate crimes in 2020.**

According to the SPVM, Jews were the target of 34 hate crimes in 2019 and 42 in 2020. This represents an increase of almost 24%. It has already risen to 37 in the first six months of 2021.

We are also profoundly grateful for the rapid and meaningful action by the government in response to the incidents of May 2021 and for its determination to combat antisemitism and all forms of hate and, notably, in June 2021, its adoption of the working definition of antisemitism from the International Alliance for Holocaust Remembrance (IHRA).

Contemporary antisemitism is not limited to the fringes of the political spectrum. Manifestations of antisemitism must be exposed and denounced, whether they come from the right, the left, or Islamist groups, and they must be legally dealt with when they are in violation of the Criminal Code.



Recommendations

1- Provide targeted police training in hate crimes and antisemitism.

- CIJA is available to assist in the training of police officers, Crown Prosecutors, and others who are involved in Quebec's justice system, on how to recognize antisemitism and appropriate responses to antisemitic incidents, including the thorough investigation of hate crimes and the laying of charges.
- We commend the government's commitment to provide better training to law enforcement personnel to identify hate crime and want to reiterate the importance of including a module on antisemitism, based on the IHRA definition adopted by the Government of Quebec.
- Online hate: Provide increased resources to law enforcement, Crown Prosecutors, and judges, to ensure they receive sufficient training on how to apply existing hate crime laws and respond appropriately to threats.

2- Increased guidance from the Department of Justice in relation to hate crimes

- Establish guidelines to facilitate the work of Crown Prosecutors in obtaining required consent from the Attorney General to initiate proceedings under section 318 (advocating or promoting genocide), section 319(2) (wilfully promoting hatred against an identifiable group) and section 320 (warrant of seizure) of the Criminal Code, and thus ensure a more systematic application of these provisions.
- Assign specially trained prosecutors to handle hate crime cases. Ensure that they receive sufficient training on how to enforce existing laws and respond effectively to the ever-changing threat, and therefore have a good understanding of the different types of hate and the various forms in which it manifests. These special prosecutors would work closely with the specialized hate crime units in Quebec.

3- Request that school boards publish an annual report including data pertaining to hateful incidents or cases of discrimination reported in schools and implement training programs on the various forms of hatred.

Currently there is no systemic approach to report and respond to hateful incidents in schools. School boards are not required to assemble data and report on incidents of hate or discrimination.

- Provide increased training to school board staff and those teaching in primary and secondary schools on various forms of hatred, including antisemitism, and incidents of a hateful nature that necessitate an intervention with students.
- We must ensure that the National Student ombudsman and regional student ombudsmen provide reports to the minister of Education on the nature of hate-related incidents in schools. We must ensure antisemitism is reported correctly.
- It is also important to combat toxic content circulating online, a phenomenon particularly affecting young people.
 - We encourage a provincial digital literacy campaign to educate and raise awareness amongst Quebecers on the power of social media and the role it plays in destructive behaviours (intimidation, harassment, spreading of hateful content, direct threats, and targeting of vulnerable people).

4- Ensure that hate and racism are not inadvertently funded.

The government should be vigilant against publicly funded NGOs that organize pro-BDS / anti-Israel activities or where expressions of antisemitism are frequent and tolerated.

Such actions by some NGOs were observed to be increasing in 2021.



Poverty and Social Engagement

Affordable housing and social housing

Today, 25,000 households eligible for social housing remain on waitlists to obtain subsidized accommodation. One in five Jewish families lives in poverty, many of whom depend on government-subsidized housing. For the vast majority of low-income individuals and families, rent takes a disproportionate amount of their monthly budget, leaving them with little to cover other essential expenses.

This reality facing many Quebecers is also true for many in Quebec's Jewish community, many of whom must also deal with the additional burden of finding affordable housing in a neighbourhood where it is possible to lead a Jewish life. For many practicing Jews, it is important to live within walking distance of a synagogue as well as near shops selling kosher food.

Recommendations

- Given the pressing need, it is appropriate to increase funding of the AccèsLogis program.
- Increase funding allocated to the refurbishment of the existing community housing stock.
- Work with Jewish community organizations specializing in social housing issues to increase the supply of affordable housing units near neighbourhoods where it is possible to lead a Jewish life.

Immigration

With regard to immigration, it is important for new Quebecers to be able to lead a fulfilling Jewish life. For a good number of practicing Jews, it is important to be located near Jewish community institutions.

Recommendations

- Take into account the above-mentioned specific requirements when allocating funds to support the settlement and integration of newcomers.



Combating online hate

We welcomed the October 2021 announcement of a plan to combat hate directed at municipal politicians by the minister of Municipal Affairs.

- We encourage the Quebec government to collaborate with the federal government, which is in the process of developing its Proposed Approach to Combating Harmful Content Online. We have also called on the government of Canada to launch a cross-Canada campaign addressing digital literacy and education to raise awareness among Canadians about the powerful role social media plays in assaults, harassment, intimidation, and the spreading of hatred and threats.
- The government of Quebec should launch its own strategy across the province to combat online hate and radicalization.

General Recommendations

- The *Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires* (PSOC) as well as *Services Québec* are vital to maintain efficient function of social agencies. Many affect the Jewish community, of which Ometz, Cummings Centre, the CSUQ, Auberge Shalom, and Project Genesis are examples.
 - Funding of these organizations is vital, and we believe it is time to consider increased funding for these agencies.
 - Financing received via the PSOC by these community organizations should be allocated based on a three-year period, to allow improved long-term planning.
- Physical and cultural activities for seniors are essential factors in their wellbeing and contribute to breaking their isolation and improving their physical and mental health.
 - Increasing the tax credit for seniors' activities is paramount. It should be brought into line with the child tax credit and the maximum moved from \$40 to \$500.



Quebec-Israel Relations

Like Quebec, the State of Israel is a well-established, robust democracy. The only true democracy in the Middle East is characterized by its free and fair elections, protection of individual rights, equality under the law for all citizens regardless of race or religion, an independent judiciary, freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, gender equality, respect for the rights of LGBTQ2+, and a well-developed national public education system. Israel has also developed a substantial francophone culture, thanks to French immigration.

Economic Opportunities

Bilateral cooperation between the two societies is solidly established. Israel is known as the 'Start-up Nation' because it has nourished the largest concentration of young, innovative technological enterprises outside Silicon Valley. Quebec also boasts a large number of young, innovative start-ups in the tech sector. Israel and Quebec are both centres of research in artificial intelligence, green technologies, and the fields of medicine and agri-food.

The normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab countries (UAE and Bahrain) since the signing of the Abraham Accords in September 2020 and the renewal of diplomatic relations between Israel and Morocco in December 2020 has had a significant impact on the entire region. It has confirmed Israel's unquestioned role as the economic point of entry to the Middle East.

Recommendations

- Opening a permanent Quebec representation in Israel and appointing a person to the role.
- Training diplomats working in the Middle East sphere in antisemitism targeting the State of Israel, as specified in the IHRA definition, as this form of modern antisemitism has a direct impact on the geopolitics of the region.
 - We welcome the launch of the Institut de la diplomatie.
- Continuing to support Quebec-Israel relations and pursuing research opportunities of benefit to both partners.
- Setting up new trade missions to Israel, including fact-finding trips for the premier and senior government officials.



2021 Accomplishments

- ✓ In June 2021, the Government of Quebec joined dozens of other jurisdictions around the world in adopting the working definition of antisemitism issued by the International Alliance for Holocaust Remembrance (IHRA). This step demonstrates the government's appreciation that the recent surge in Jew-hatred must be taken seriously and that concrete actions are needed to put an end to it. We salute the government for its leadership in the fight against Jew-hatred, which is a problem affecting all Quebecers.
- ✓ The Montreal Holocaust Museum will acquire a larger, more central location to raise awareness more effectively among the public regarding antisemitism, racism, and genocide. The new building, which should open in 2025, will be on Saint-Laurent Boulevard, at the heart of the historic Jewish quarter. We thank the Government of Quebec for their financial support of \$20M dedicated to this important project.
- ✓ Thanks to the work of the Foundation for the Study of Genocide, the Department of Education is in the process of creating a pedagogical guide for teaching secondary school students about genocide and the Holocaust. The Foundation is responsible for teacher training and promotional videos. We support this initiative and are pleased by the progress to date.
- ✓ Following several antisemitic activities targeting the Jewish community in May 2021, the National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion condemning antisemitism. We salute the speed with which all parties took action to denounce the hateful incidents.



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