Dear Chief of Police,

I understand that the Toronto Police service board is looking to establish a policy on police action in respect of protests, demonstrations and occupations, and that you are seeking the public’s input on the overriding principles and key elements that should be a part of this policy.

Toronto is a vibrant, diverse city that prides itself on inclusivity and mutual respect. However, recent protests have seen an alarming increase in hate speech, and specifically antisemitic remarks, which undermine the values we hold dear. Such speech not only harms targeted individuals and groups but also jeopardizes the overall safety and unity of our community.

I believe that an overriding principle of your policy needs to be a zero-tolerance stance on hate speech. While there is freedom of speech and a right to protest (and these should be protected), hate speech and calls for genocide have no place in our public spaces.

The Toronto Police Service should implement training for officers on recognizing and addressing hate speech and antisemitic language effectively. Additionally, there should be clear guidelines and communication to the public about the zero-tolerance stance, so that all participants in public demonstrations understand the boundaries of acceptable conduct.

Policing protests (especially the number of protests our city has seen in the past year) is expensive, time consuming, and takes up police personnel. I appreciate that this places strain on the police department. However, given the degree of hatred at many of these protests, the targeting of Jewish people and businesses, the blocking of people from living daily life, failing to police these protests comes at great risk to our communities and is not something we as a city can afford to do.

I believe the police should receive the training and resources necessary to do this effectively and so as not to detract from the other many important functions they play in our city.

Thank you very much for allowing the public to provide input.

Sincerely,

Noam Pratzer