

Toronto Police Service Board  
40 College Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 2J3

**Re: TPSB Consultation on Public Order**

Dear Chair Morgan and Board members,

The Jewish Educators and Family Association of Canada (JEFA) is a registered not-for-profit corporation that was born out of necessity to represent Jewish educators, students and their families, in the K-12 school system. Its founding members represent licensed educators, parents and education experts who felt compelled to respond to the precipitous increase in antisemitism in our education system. For more information, please go to [www.JEFA.ca](http://www.JEFA.ca).

The submission herein is in support of the ALCCA submission to TPS, which enumerates the comprehensive policy and legal bases for the role that TPS should be playing regarding protests and encampments. We call on TPS to act on these essential recommendations. As advocates for students, parents and teachers in K-12, our focus in this submission is on the impact of the absence of a zero tolerance policy on hate on schools.

Laws need to be enforced, period. When they're not, it creates a permissive environment where they are no longer deemed relevant or mandatory, and our social fabric erodes, creating an unsafe environment where hate proliferates, escalates and becomes normalized. This is not a future state - we are there.

The reality of the last 10 months is one in which masked mobs regularly gather in public spaces or swarm Jewish events or places of education or worship to call for the violent destruction of a democratic country (Israel), the elimination of a people (Jews), and to incite hatred through both acts and threats of violence. Ironically, this is with police presence, which by its apparent tolerance for hate appears to condone this unlawful behavior. Our laws are not being upheld, and the impact is disproportionately felt by the Jewish community.

Sadly, Jews are used to requiring security or police presence to gather in Canada. Police and private security are always present at synagogues during services and are a fixture at Hebrew Day Schools, which are Canada's top target of domestic terrorism. However, the obligation of TPS and the need of the Jewish community is not just to stand between us and those who seek to cause us harm, which TPS does valiantly, but also to uphold the laws that are intended to deter hateful speech and acts from proliferating, escalating, and becoming normalized.

Urgent action is needed by TPS to repair the damage done in the last ten months and prevent further erosion of our city. You are essential to our social fabric.

A permissive environment where hate is tolerated impacts our education system in three primary ways, enumerated below.

### **De facto adoption of permissive criminal standard by school boards for hate and discrimination**

School board decisions about how to address instances of racism or hate are heavily influenced by incorrect application by TPS of relevant laws, in particular, hate crimes. This effectively eliminates the protection of those laws and as a result, of school policies that effectively rely on them, for Jewish students experiencing unprecedented hate and discrimination on a daily basis. While the school boards have relevant policies in place that do not require, for example, the criminal threshold of a hate crime to compel disciplinary or other appropriate action to protect teachers, students and parents, the overwhelming evidence is that boards are unwilling to take any action absent clarity from the police that a hate crime has been committed. Their lack of moral leadership to adhere to their own equity and human rights policies puts even more weight on the role of TPS in upholding a culture that has zero tolerance for hate. These issues are further compounded by the fact that TPS does not enter schools to investigate hate crimes without permission of the relevant school board, a process which leaves undue discretion to enforce criminal laws with untrained education staff.

### **Unchecked hate in the city permeates schoolyards, classrooms and staff rooms**

Hate unchecked in encampments and at “protests” doesn’t stay there, ending at the physical boundary of the events; it permeates our culture and has arrived in our schoolyards and classrooms. Coupled with inaction by school boards, this emerging culture of hate means that Jewish students, teachers and families do not feel safe, and in many cases, they aren’t safe. Here are just a few examples:

- This spring, 300 people came together to walk a Jewish child to school, after months of relentless bullying and inaction by the relevant school board;
- A freedom of information request obtained by JEFA revealed that “around 40 students swarmed” a child shouting “Jews deserve to die” in the Peel District School Board;
- A TDSB parent spent her days at protests and encampments, and intentionally wore her keffiyeh, Palestinian flag accessories, and a t-shirt proclaiming “Israel is a garbage country that’s only loved by garbage people. It was founded on ethnic cleansing, apartheid, and settler colonialism. Its flag is a symbol of white supremacy,” and on the back “All Zionists are Racists, Every single one.” She declared that she was wearing it to educate the Israeli and Jewish children and their “Zios” parents, at pick up and drop off.
- An Israeli student was repeatedly bullied, told that they will do to him “what Hamas did to Israel”.

The Jewish community no longer knows what is safe, because our risk barometer has been reset by the allowance of more unfettered hate and violence than we expected to be tolerated, and certainly more than would ever be permitted against another group.

### **Radicalization of school age children sows division and fear in schools**

Children as young as elementary and junior high are mimicking the behavior they see normalized in our city, or worse, are becoming radicalized by participation in them. This manifests blatantly, as “protests” are being emulated by student walkouts. Students miss time at school, mass absences are disruptive for students who attend school, and the proliferation of unchecked hate creates a divisive environment in schools. It also shows up as a source of fear and intimidation inside the classroom, where Jewish students are increasingly “othered” by classmates who spend weekends steeped in misinformation and hate.

### **Impact statements from the K-12 community**

The following impact statements are being provided anonymously by request of those who provided them. These give some insight into how the three trends highlighted above are experienced by Jewish students, parents and teachers in Toronto.

*"For months our child was repeatedly harassed, physically intimidated, assaulted on top of being told by students that Jews did not deserve to live. Time after time we were assured that our child was safe in the school, yet the incidents kept happening. After the second physical assault we had to pull our child from the school for their safety because it was clear that the school did not have the situation under control at all. Now my child feels that the only way to survive in our school systems is to hide their Jewish identity."*

*"I am a middle school student who has been told by many of my teachers that if there is a time that I feel afraid because of anti-Jewish rhetoric or situations at my school that there are only some safe teachers and vice-principal/principal to go to and they have told me who I cannot speak to as they will not help. In one case, my vice-principal/principal was actively involved in creating the momentum needed to have protests in the school. This has made the climate in the school horrible as a Jewish student. I feel unsafe sharing my Jewish identity in my school so I avoid doing anything where my identity might be revealed."*

*"Our experiences at our childrens' highschool has been isolating and have left our children ostracized. The student body and surrounding community are vocal about being anti-Zionist. Jew hatred is prevalent, with swastikas drawn and derogatory Antisemitic statements being voiced in the hallways, locker rooms and bathrooms. Attempts to educate the students were met with refusals to attend and protests by the student body."*

*"Since Oct 7 I've had a hard time going to school. Mentally I have had to prepare myself each morning. It started with student walkouts and books about Palestine in the library. Then another student told my friends not to trust me because I'm Jewish. Then this cultural event with all the kids wearing keffiyehs and saying that Israel doesn't exist and wearing flags and t-shirts with Israel but labeled Palestine. It's like I don't exist. If I were to wear any symbol like a Star of David I feel like I would be beat up. I can't show I'm Jewish."*

*"I am scared that while Jews are getting more hate than any other minority, we have none of the protections our nation, board, and union provides to other minorities. Children have told me proudly that hating Jews (as well as Roma and GLBTQ2S people) is their culture and therefore needs to be respected and cannot be criticized. What backup do I have to communicate that hate towards us is not a Canadian value and not tolerated in our public schools? We are a very small group, less than one thousandth of the world population, only 1.4% of the Canadian population. That means many Canadian children won't know any Jews to give a human face to the news stories and folk tales. Students have told me they think Jews are mythical creatures with evil magical powers and horns and they are surprised they really exist. But because I am afraid of false accusations and violence, my students won't know that I am a Jew. I am afraid we cannot bring our true selves to the classroom."*

*"I am afraid as a Jewish teacher to identify as a Jew in my school. Afraid of responses and reactions from students, staff and parents. I don't feel protected or safe. About 6 years ago, I was in an LTO and proudly Jewish. My students knew that I was Jewish. One day a student said in front of the entire class that "Germany should have won the war".*

*"I have experienced racial slurs and Hitler salutes. I have witnessed Jewish students, including myself, being beaten up, threatened, and harassed just for being Jewish. When we reported these incidents to teachers, the Principal, Vice Principal and the Superintendent often ignored us, made excuses for the bullies, or dismissed our experiences. This lack of action makes us feel unsafe and unvalued. And it's extremely hard to come to school."*

*"I'm in grade 4. Before October 7th, my school felt like a safe and close knit community. Everyone would respect and show kindness to one another, or at least most of the time anyway. I was always*

*excited to jump out of bed and get to school on time or even early. But after October 7th, I started seeing parents from my school wearing keffiyehs and shirts that said bad things about Israel and Jews at drop off and pick up times. People who used to play with me seemed to be ignoring me or even glaring at me, including some of my friends' parents. I think the thing that was hardest, more than losing playdates or feeling weird at drop off, is that I didn't know which parents would hurt me and which would keep me safe. I stopped feeling safe in the schoolyard. Instead of focusing on partner work in class I found myself wondering if the kid I was partnered with thought bad things about me because I'm Jewish. I felt like my sense of community was being destroyed."*

*"One day, during recess [for grades 4-6], I saw a bunch of high school kids walking past our park shouting and carrying signs, like a parade but a mean one. Everyone started running towards them and cheering. At first I had no idea what was happening, I thought it was a good thing. But then I saw one of the signs up close, it said "Free Palestine," I saw a bunch of other things about hating Jews and Israel. I felt scared and hurt, and didn't want anyone to see me crying. Some kids were laughing. The other Jewish kid in my class was crying too. I don't know how this is allowed, it is so mean and wrong and hurtful. Why is this happening? Who can stop it?"*

*"I am afraid to let anyone know I am Jewish"*

We need your leadership and urgent action, for the safety of the Jewish community and to prevent the continued erosion of the social fabric of our city.

Respectfully,  
Executive Team  
Jewish Educators and Families Association of Canada