

As a member of Toronto's Jewish community, I am alarmed by the rise in antisemitic protests, vandalism, and targeted demonstrations that have made many of us feel unsafe in our own neighbourhoods and institutions. The Toronto Police Service Board's (TPSB) Public Order Policy consultation is a critical opportunity for our community to demand stronger protections.

We appreciate the dedication and hard work of the TPS in maintaining public safety, often under challenging circumstances. We recognize that the members of the TPS face significant obstacles, including political pressures that can sometimes limit their ability to act decisively. Despite these challenges, their commitment to protecting all communities in Toronto, including ours, does not go unnoticed. We understand that the complexities of managing protests and maintaining public order are immense, and we are grateful for their ongoing efforts to keep our city safe. However, to truly safeguard our community, we believe that additional measures must be implemented.

First, the TPS must enforce existing laws more rigorously during protests, particularly in Jewish neighborhoods. Safe access zones around synagogues, schools, and community centers are essential to protect us from harassment and threats.

Second, the line between hate speech and free speech during demonstrations is often blurred. While freedom of expression is a fundamental right, it cannot be a shield for inciting hatred or violence, particularly against the Jewish community. The use of masks to conceal identity during illegal acts, including hate speech, is also deeply troubling. The TPS must enforce strict measures against this and adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards antisemitic slogans, symbols, and language. Enhanced training in antisemitism and hate crime enforcement is crucial for officers to identify and swiftly respond to these threats, with a focus on understanding the historical context and recognizing specific symbols and language used in antisemitic propaganda.

Lastly, the issue of encampments on university campuses, which have frequently become hubs of antisemitic activity, must be addressed. These encampments are not only illegal but also create a hostile environment for Jewish students, who are often the targets of hate speech and intimidation. The TPS should be prepared to collaborate closely with campus security to ensure that these encampments are dealt with swiftly and that the safety of Jewish students is prioritized. This collaboration should include providing the necessary resources and support for campus security to manage such situations effectively.

The Jewish community's safety depends on the TPS taking decisive action. The TPS must vigorously advocate on behalf of our legitimate concerns and implement policies that make us feel secure in our city.

Thank you.