

B'nai Brith Canada Submission to The Ministerial Forum on Anti-Racism

B'nai Brith Canada is this country's oldest national Jewish organization, founded in 1875, with a long history of defending the human rights of Canadian Jews, and others, across the country. We advocate for the interests of the grassroots Jewish community in Canada and for their rights such as freedom of conscience and religion.

B'nai Brith addresses the twin challenges of antisemitism and hate speech/hate crimes, linking them to the broader threat of discrimination and human rights, a universal issue that affects all Canadians and individuals everywhere. Antisemitism is but a visible portion of the dangers inherent generally in prejudice and discrimination.

The League for Human Rights, an agency of B'nai Brith Canada, is dedicated to combating antisemitism and racism at home and around the world. The League advocates for the human rights of all Canadians by building inter-community relationships, conducting educational programs, and engaging in community action and legal/legislative interventions. We are available to furnish in-depth information on our activities for those unfamiliar with our work.

This submission builds upon views previously submitted: (1) to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage during its consideration of a report on systemic racism and religious discrimination – October 18, 2017; (2) to Canadian Heritage in preparation for Canada's 3rd Universal Periodic Review, and; (3) to the June 6, 2018, Federal/Provincial/Territorial consultations on human rights.

Our submission focuses, in particular, on two themes included in the discussion paper: (1) Social Participation – how an individual's sense of belonging to their community is impacted by, for the Jewish community, antisemitism; and (2) Justice – the serious impact of hate crimes (and hate incidents as well as hate speech) on the fabric of Canadian society.



We note that the April 23, 2018, statement issued by G7 foreign ministers in Toronto, said:

“..... We are concerned about resurgent forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination worldwide, including antisemitism and anti-Muslim sentiment. We will work individually and collectively to combat such discrimination and ensure that diversity is recognized and leveraged as a strength for humanity....”

Religious discrimination starts with hate; the responsibility to confront hatred falls on all of us. Governments bear the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety, security and equal rights of their citizens. Jewish communities deserve no less than their neighbours.

This Forum has an opportunity to study how all Canadians can face the challenges that exist for at-risk communities, those suffering from systemic racism and religious discrimination. But it must go beyond systemic issues. It must focus on the myriad ways that such communities face bias – an insidious form of racism – in everyday life.

1. We recommend that, in lieu of framing an anti-racism strategy, the government must look more holistically at the need for an anti-hate or anti-bias strategy that deals with the challenges of racism, racial and religious hatred and discrimination, and xenophobia.

This Forum’s work and its outcome must be embraced broadly by all Canadians and it must deal with those communities that are the targets of racism and discrimination, including Canadian Jews who continue to be the target of antisemitism – B’nai Brith firmly believes that antisemitism is a form of bias, or racism, that must be addressed at the national level.

Data drives policy. The starting point for addressing hate, bias and racism, is to know the nature and the magnitude of the problem. Annually, B’nai Brith prepares an *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents in Canada*, recognized domestically and internationally as an authoritative document. The latest edition was released April, 2018. Statistics Canada has just released its *Report on Police-Reported Hate Crimes for 2017*. Both documents emphasize that Jews remain the most targeted religious community in Canada for hate crimes.



2. We recommend that a uniform definition of 'hate incident' be created and that police forces should apply this to any hate-related incident that may fall short of the strict definition of police-reported hate crime. We also recommend that a uniform definition of antisemitic hate crime be created to help police forces better understand the antisemitic basis of incidents they may encounter when contacted by members of the Jewish community.

This Forum should highlight the attention paid to studies prepared by independent, credible human rights organizations like B'nai Brith, such as our [Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#) in Canada, noting that recommendations to confront antisemitism, hate crimes and hate speech are directed to all three levels of government – federal, provincial and municipal. B'nai Brith, in April, 2018, released an *Eight-Point Plan to Tackle Antisemitism*, which forms a foundation for our current efforts.

3. We recommend that a *national* action plan to combat antisemitism be developed under Federal government leadership, talking as a start-point that antisemitism is a form of bias and racism that detrimentally impacts the sense of belonging on the part of Jews to their community and that antisemitic hate incidents or hate crimes have a detrimental impact on the quality of justice experienced in Canada.
4. We emphasize the essential importance to the Canadian Jewish community of distinctively identifying antisemitism as an issue that needs to be addressed and not subsuming antisemitism under a broader basket of terminology. This can be done through creating greater awareness of the definition of antisemitism embraced by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

B'nai Brith has initiated a dialogue with the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and we have proposed a series of measures to the CACP for consideration. This Forum could support that endeavour through endorsing the following steps, based on the recommendations found in our [Eight-Point Plan to Tackle Antisemitism](#):

5. We recommend:



- a) Strengthening awareness of our annual *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents* in Canada and ensuring we have the data necessary to maintain its accuracy and relevance.
- b) Instituting dedicated hate crimes units in all major Canadian cities with common criteria, distinct from units focused on community engagement and inter-faith dialogue;
- c) Strengthening training for hate crimes officers in all major police forces, in part based upon available tools on antisemitic hate crimes already available from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and UNESCO;
- d) Developing an action plan to combat on-line hate (B'nai Brith has submitted proposals separately to Canadian ministers);

We note that in respect of the points captured in our *Eight-Point Plan*, several of these are referred to directly or indirectly in the June 1, 2018, government response to the report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage entitled "Taking Action Against systemic Racism and Religious Discrimination Including Islamophobia":

- Supporting organizations that have a shared mission to combat racism and religious discrimination, including funding capacity building for them;
- A greater effort to share information and best practices to counter racism and religious discrimination through community engagement;
- Supporting increased education to counter racism and religious discrimination;
- Obtaining better quality data on hate crimes and hate incidents;
- Recognizing that effectiveness of our hate speech laws requires strengthened training, preparedness and capacity to report by our law enforcement agencies.

