

NDP RESPONSES: B'NAI BRITH CANADA ELECTION ISSUES QUESTIONS

Combatting Antisemitism

In 2018, B'nai Brith Canada published an ['Eight Point Plan to Tackle Antisemitism'](#). This Plan was updated in 2019 and remains a cornerstone of our work. We called for a national action plan to combat antisemitism, under federal lead. B'nai Brith Canada has called for creation of a special envoy on antisemitism, to coordinate national efforts in a domestic framework and to contribute to a global campaign against antisemitism.

In our [op-ed of November 5, 2018, in the National Post](#), we argued that a Canadian government apology over the tragic 1939 events of the *MS St. Louis* would be more meaningful if combined with actions to address contemporary antisemitism.

- **Do you accept the need for a national plan to combat antisemitism and the key elements it should contain, as proposed by B'nai Brith Canada?**

The rise in antisemitism we see here in Canada and in other countries is deeply disturbing. We should all be united in condemning this hatred and take meaningful steps to ensure we put a stop to it. New Democrats will always stand up against all forms of hate, including antisemitism, and this is why we wholeheartedly accept the need for a national plan to combat antisemitism. We have to be unequivocal in our condemnation of this bigotry. It has no place in Canada, and we must all work together put an end to it.

- **Do you support the creation of a national coordinator/special envoy to combat antisemitism, with both a domestic and international mandate?**

Yes, we support this idea. Discrimination based on religion has no place in Canada or abroad, and it must be tackled head on.

- **Do you accept that Canada should lead a global effort to highlight the continuing scourge of antisemitism and that this issue, together with freedom of religion generally, should be raised in human rights dialogues with other countries?**

Yes. Canada has a responsibility to play internationally to tackle head on the scourge of antisemitism around the world, and it should be raised in human rights dialogues with other countries as appropriate.

- **Do you support the concept that Global Affairs Canada with its missions abroad, should be required to report annually on steps taken to combat antisemitism internationally and on developments in other countries?**

We support this concept. We believe the government as a whole must be transparent on what steps it is taking to combat antisemitism, here in Canada and around the world.

- **Do you support action to combat the increasing security threat to religious institutions such as synagogues and mosques. What specifically would your party do to address this threat?**

Yes. We must ensure the Security Infrastructure Program is well-funded to ensure that Canadians feel safe when they go pray in places of worship, such as synagogues and mosques. We will also begin work immediately to ensure that all major cities have dedicated hate crime units within local police forces, and to convene a national working group to counter online hate.

Confronting Hate Crimes and Hate Speech

B'nai Brith Canada is concerned with the steady and alarming increase in hate crimes and hate incidents that are motivated by antisemitism and are directed at both individuals of the Jewish faith and Canadian institutions and society generally. It is essential that law enforcement not only capture and report key data related to antisemitic hate crimes but that they also record incidents of an antisemitic nature that fall short of a criminal threshold, and refer victims to organizations such as B'nai Brith Canada.

- **Do you accept that Statistics Canada and law enforcement agencies should have a clear definition of antisemitic hate crime as a measure for recording and reporting on such crimes in the Uniform Crime Reporting system?**

Yes.

- **Do you accept that Statistics Canada and law enforcement agencies should undertake to record and report antisemitic and other forms of hate incidents, to accurately gauge the state of hateful acts in Canada?**

Yes.

- **Do you endorse a call for law enforcement agencies at the provincial and municipal level to have dedicated hate crimes units where population size warrants or specific strategies – and the necessary resources and training - to deal with recording hate crimes and responding to them effectively?**

Yes.

Holocaust Commemoration and Education

B'nai Brith Canada views as a fundamental national and global interest the development of policies and global partnerships geared toward the prevention and ending of mass atrocities and, more particularly, prevention and punishment of genocide. We endorse Canada's recognition of several acts of genocide in the world but remain concerned that 'memory' of the Holocaust deserves special attention.

We see education as fundamental; going beyond Holocaust awareness to fostering sensitivity to contemporary forms of hate. Canada is a leading member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). B'nai Brith Canada supports a strong role for Canada in IHRA and funds a member of the Canadian delegation to plenary meetings. B'nai Brith has called on Canada to formally, and at a high level, commit to endorsing and applying [the IHRA working definition of antisemitism](#).

- **Do you accept that the government of Canada should enshrine the IHRA working definition of antisemitism in national policy and promote its application at the provincial/territorial and municipal levels?**

We believe the government of Canada must have a clear definition of antisemitism so we can better gauge, report and work towards ending it. We have some concerns that the IHRA definition and its associated examples could undermine those who wish to speak out in favour of the human rights of Palestinians.

- **Do you accept that, under federal lead, Canada's provinces and territories should develop and implement a common, mandatory education curriculum to increase understanding of the Holocaust, antisemitism and genocide?**

Yes.

Anti-Israel Bias in the United Nations System and Other International Bodies

B'nai Brith Canada believes the government should clearly and publicly discourage the Palestinians or any party from directly or indirectly engaging in or supporting efforts aimed at delegitimizing Israel, including through international multilateral bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council, UNESCO, the World Health Organization, and international legal forums such as the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and the judiciary of countries that claim universal jurisdiction to prosecute Israelis.

B'nai Brith Canada has called on the Canadian government to vigorously [combat anti-Israel bias in the United Nations system](#). We are particularly concerned over the work of the UN Human Rights Council. The HRC singles out Israel for unfair attention under its regular agenda item #7; no other country is isolated in this fashion. The World Health Assembly of the WHO does so under its standing agenda item #14.

B'nai Brith Canada views with concern developments at UNESCO – in both the Executive Board and the agency's World Heritage Committee – which threaten UNESCO's credibility in areas that are supposed to be among its core competencies: historical truth and cultural preservation. Of particular concern are resolutions seeking to deny the Jewish people's historical ties to key sites such as the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, the Wailing Wall and the Temple Mount. We believe UNESCO members must speak out against, and reverse this trend.

- **Do you accept that Canada should publicly articulate its concern with the Human Rights Council's agenda item #7 and that Canada should call for its permanent removal from the agenda, joining other countries which have recently done so?**

We believe Canada must join efforts in the UN system to speak out against violators of human rights in all countries. All UN member states must be transparent and fully respect their international human rights obligations.

- **Do you accept that the World Health Assembly's agenda item #14 is politically motivated, unfairly targets Israel, and should be removed, and that Canada should advocate for this?**

There are many health challenges in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in East Jerusalem and Gaza. Canada must step up efforts to address these challenges, some of which are related the Israeli occupation.

- **Do you agree that Canada should openly denounce UNESCO resolutions and actions that are politically motivated and seek to deny the Jewish people's historical ties to key heritage sites such as those noted above?**

New Democrats will work towards a just and lasting two-state solution between Israel and Palestine that respects human rights and international law.

- **If Canada is elected to the United Nations Security Council, would you leverage that membership to counter antisemitism internationally and to condemn anti-Israel bias in the United Nations system?**

Yes. Growing antisemitism is bigotry that must be confronted and stopped in its tracks.

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

B'nai Brith Canada believes that Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is inherently antisemitic and an effort to delegitimize the Jewish State. The global BDS campaign does nothing to advance peace and calls the movement's real objectives into question. We believe the anti-Israel measures taken by the movement only reward the Palestinians for their refusal to engage in constructive dialogue with Israel and puts off the possibility of resolution on this issue.

- **Do you accept that the use of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict is an effort to reward intransigence by suggesting that international pressure can replace efforts to negotiate in good faith?**

New Democrats will work towards a just and lasting two-state solution between Israel and Palestine that respects human rights and international law. We believe Canada must speak out against human rights abuses on all sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and pressure the perpetrators of those violations. We also believe in the importance of engaging in good-faith, fair negotiations that respect human rights and international law.

- **Do you publicly commit to rejecting the BDS movement as an initiative that in no way fosters the goal of an equitable peace agreement in the Middle East?**

BDS is not NDP policy.

- **Do you support the motions passed in Canada's House of Commons and Ontario's Legislature which condemn the BDS movement and will you call for such motions to be adopted in all provinces and territories?**

No. We believe these motions undermine the freedom of expression of Canadians, and the choice to support non-violent movements for the respect of international law.

- **Do you support the creation and implementation of legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions (including new federal legislation) aimed at preventing illegal boycott activities such as those advocated by the global BDS campaign?**

No. Having said that, we support Israel's right to exist and we are unequivocally against the use of any anti-Semitic tropes or communications that are discriminatory against the Jewish community.

- **Do you accept that no government development assistance resources should go, directly or indirectly, to non-governmental organizations or academic institutions which advocate for or support BDS?**

No. We believe this would undermine freedom of expression in Canada.

Iran's Destabilizing Influence

B'nai Brith Canada is a vocal supporter of tough sanctions against Iran as a means to stop the Tehran-based regime from advancing its nuclear weapons program. In direct meetings and official letters, we have called on nations around the world to enact the strongest possible sanctions against Iran, the largest state sponsor of global terrorism. B'nai Brith has called on Canada and its allies to ramp-up pressure on Iran as the regime continues to delay and dissemble, including designation of the entirety of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist entity and applying Magnitsky-like sanctions where warranted.

- **Do you support the view that Canada should not re-engage Iran diplomatically unless it commits to fully recognizing Israel's right to exist, to refrain from supporting destabilizing groups such as Hezbollah and to not use its diplomatic presence in Canada to frustrate the interests of the Iranian-Canadian community and Canada's Jewish community?**

The NDP believes that Canada has an important diplomatic role to play in bringing Iran back into the mainstream international community. Canadians, and New Democrats, stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Iran in their aspirations for freedom, peace, democracy and the rule of a just law. We will continue to stand with them and speak out when their voices are unfairly silenced.

Canada will have more leverage and a more positive effect if it engages in responsible diplomacy with Iran. The Canadian government should seek to restore diplomatic relations, which will provide a foundation for encouraging reforms and the finding of political solutions to address disagreements between our countries. Condemnations of the Iranian regime cannot replace strong diplomacy.

- **Do you accept that a series of benchmarks should be applied to Iran's behaviour, as proposed in recent legislative initiatives in Canada, to annually appraise Iran's intentions and actions and to guide Canada's possible reengagement?**

The NDP unequivocally condemns the threatening statements and actions of Iran against its neighbours, particularly Israel, and it condemns the human rights violations that continue to be perpetrated by its government.

- **Do you endorse the position that Canada should refrain from supporting the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCOA) unless broadened in scope and strengthened to deal with challenges posed to western security by Iran additional to its nuclear weapons program?**

The NDP supports the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to restrict Iran's nuclear program. The Canadian government should step up its diplomatic efforts to maintain and build support for this deal and for nuclear disarmament efforts worldwide.

- **Do you accept that the entirety of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps should be designated a terrorist entity?**

We strongly condemn any financial, logistical or any other support given by the Iranian government for terrorist groups, whether in Syria, Iraq or elsewhere. The list of terrorist entities is updated based on the recommendation of the Minister of Public Safety, who is supposed to make such decisions based on comprehensive criminal and security intelligence reports. New Democrats would not want to politicize this process.

- **Do you support using Canada's Magnitsky Act sanctions against Iran's human rights offenders?**

Yes.

Dealing with War Criminals and Nazi Glorification

B'nai Brith Canada believes it essential for the continual investigation and prosecution of Nazi war criminals and, where circumstances require it, to strip such war criminals of their citizenship and immediately remove them from Canada.

B'nai Brith Canada has called for greater access to Canadian historical records and files dealing with war criminals in Canada, including the records of the Deschenes Commission. We have also called for the [*immediate removal of Nazi Helmut Oberlander from Canada*](#).

B'nai Brith Canada has [openly called for Canada to condemn manifestations and parades which seek to glorify Nazi sympathizers and supporters](#) (individuals, institutions and governments) who were complicit in the deaths of Jewish community members during World War II. These calls have met with a positive response but we believe more must be done.

- **Do you accept that all closed Canadian records dealing with war criminals should be made publicly accessible, including files of the War Crimes Unit of the Department of Justice (except for active/potentially active cases and with exceptions for personal information about sources)?**

Yes, barring other protected information in those records.

- **Do you accept that the confidential proceedings of the 1986 Report of the Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals (the Deschenes Commission) should be made publicly accessible (except for active/potentially active cases and with exceptions for personal information about sources)?**

Yes, barring other protected information in those proceedings.

- **Do you accept that Canada must immediately proceed to remove Helmut Oberlander from Canada?**

The matter is still before the courts, but we support removing him from Canada. Canada must not be a safe haven for individuals who have committed genocide or other mass atrocity crimes.

- **Do you endorse the call for Canada to speak out vigorously against events that serve to glorify individuals, military units and governments who sympathized with or supported the goals of Nazi Germany against the Jewish communities during World War II?**

Yes.

Jewish Refugees from Arab and Muslim Countries

[B'nai Brith Canada has played a pivotal role](#) in highlighting the plight of the nearly one million Jews displaced from their homes in Arab and Muslim nations as a result of the 1948 Middle East conflict and subsequently.

B'nai Brith Canada supports the key conclusions in the November, 2013, report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, ["Recognizing Jewish Refugees from the Middle East and North Africa"](#), including the recommendation that: "the Government of Canada officially recognize the experience of Jewish refugees who were displaced from states in the Middle East and North Africa after 1948".

B'nai Brith Canada believes that there is a legal basis, in international law and jurisprudence, for pursuing rights and redress for the losses suffered by Jews displaced from Arab and Muslim countries.

- **Do you endorse the call contained in the 2013 Standing Committee report that the plight of Jewish refugees from Arab and Muslim countries should be recognized?**

Yes.

- **Do you accept that Global Affairs Canada and its overseas missions should report annually on measures it has undertaken to advance the rights of these Jewish refugee populations, who have been largely abandoned by the international community?**

Yes.

- **Do you accept the principle that Jews forcibly removed from Arab and Muslim countries should have a right to claim compensation for losses of their homes, belongs and businesses?**

Yes.

Canada-Israel Relations

B'nai Brith Canada believes we have a moral and humanitarian imperative to strengthen the Canada–Israel relationship. Israel is the sovereign homeland of the Jewish people, providing both a refuge from persecution and the sole opportunity for Jewish national self-determination.

B'nai Brith Canada believes that Israel is a vibrant, fully functioning democracy, where diverse opinions compete actively in the marketplace of ideas. Our role is not to judge the outcome of such debates nor favour particular voices in them, but rather to ensure Israel remains safe so its people can make the often-tough decisions about peace and security.

B'nai Brith Canada believes that an undivided Jerusalem should be recognized as Israel's capital and that the Canadian embassy should be relocated there.

B'nai Brith Canada believes that the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, recently modernized, provides an essential underpinning to the bilateral relationship, supporting as it does the [Canada-Israel Strategic Partnership Memorandum of Understanding](#).

- **Do you accept the concept and content of the need for a close bilateral relationship with Israel, as set out in the Strategic Partnership MOU?**

Yes.

- **Do you accept that the modernized Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement should be implemented fully and completely?**

The NDP has concerns about the negative impacts of this trade agreement on the path towards peace between Israel and Palestine.

- **Do you accept that no discriminatory distinction should be made between goods and services trade with Israel, including those involving firms operating in territories controlled by Israel since 1967?**

The NDP believes that we must uphold international law and UN resolutions by distinguishing between products made in Israel, and products made on occupied territories.

- **Do you support Canada's recognition of an undivided Jerusalem as Israel's capital and that the Canadian Embassy in Israel should be moved to Jerusalem?**

No, we believe this would be detrimental to international law and peace, as East Jerusalem is occupied Palestinian territory.

- **Do you endorse Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights?**

No. The Golan Heights are occupied Syrian territory.

- **Would members of your party freely be permitted to become members of the Canada-Israel Interparliamentary Group?**

Yes.

The Jewish People and Israel's Relations with the Palestinians

B'nai Brith Canada believes the Jewish people have historical rights to the land of Israel and are indigenous to it, in accordance with the criteria for indigeneity established in the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

B'nai Brith Canada affirms its support for two independent, democratic and economically viable states — the Jewish State of Israel and a State of Palestine — living side-by-side in peace and security. We note, with sorrow, that Israel's repeated offers to establish "two democratic states living side by side in peace and security," have been met, time after time, by violence, incitement and terror.

B'nai Brith Canada believes that Israelis, Palestinians and the countries of the region should negotiate directly with each other to find both short- and long-term solutions to conflict, recognizing each other as essential partners in a future peace.

B'nai Brith Canada rejects any effort, under the banner of the "right of return," to force Israel to accept hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, a claim which has no legitimacy and is nothing more than a formula for Israel's destruction.

B'nai Brith Canada believes the Canadian government should vigorously encourage the Palestinians to engage in direct negotiations with Israel without preconditions. Canada and the international community should stress that for there to be lasting peace in the Middle East, peace, not hate, must be taught. Therefore, the Palestinian people should be urged to prepare their young people to accept the concept of Palestinians living in peace with Israel in schools and through television, internet and other mass-media programming.

- **Do you acknowledge that the Jewish people are indigenous to the Land of Israel, pursuant to the UNDRIP definition?**

We believe in Israel's right to exist, as well as in full respect for the human rights of Israelis and Palestinians.

- **Do you endorse a call by the Canadian government for the Palestinian Authority and its constituent members, and Hamas in Gaza, to immediately end all its official media messages denying Israel's right to exist and should instead begin preparing its people for peaceful coexistence with its neighbor Israel as the Homeland of the Jewish people?**

We condemn any communications that deny Israel's right to exist. We believe in a two-state solution where Israelis and Palestinians live in peaceful coexistence.

- **Do you accept that Canadian funding for UNRWA should be conditioned on UNRWA schools refusing to implement a curriculum that inculcates a sense of hate towards Israel and the Jewish people?**

We condemn any bigotry or discrimination against the Jewish community. Canadian public funds should never support programs that encourage a sense of hatred against the Jewish community.

- **Do you accept that greater transparency is required in Canada's 'enhanced due diligence' process with a parallel undertaking that Global Affairs Canada will publicly report annually on measures it has taken, with regional governments, the Palestinians, and UNRWA to ensure documented hate content is removed from schools?**

We believe Canada should take strong steps to ensure the protection and best interest of children in the occupied Palestinian territories, including by supporting UNRWA schools. We reject any school curricula that encourage hate in the classroom.

- **In the long-term, do you accept the proposal that United Nations member states should engage in a conversation about planning the transition of UNRWA services to host governments, or to other international or local nongovernmental organizations, as appropriate?**

We believe we have to uphold the human rights of Palestinians, as well the essential services that they rely on and that UNRWA provides.

Social Services and Environment

B'nai Brith Canada is an important provider of sustainable, affordable housing in Canada. We began our Affordable Housing Program in 1979 in an effort to provide and maintain affordable, secure and welcoming housing for low to moderate income and disabled residents. B'nai Brith Canada's Affordable Housing Residences, provide seniors, community members and persons with disabilities an opportunity to live with independence and dignity while still residing in their communities close to family and friends.

B'nai Brith Canada has long believed that Jewish social service agencies are critical to the delivery of many of the programs and services provided by the federal government. These include addiction services, seniors care, and disability services.

B'nai Brith Canada takes seriously its obligation to be a responsible steward of the environment. To that end, we have engaged in recycling and waste diversion programs, such as the collection and distribution of gently used clothing from those who might otherwise dispose of it in landfills.

- **Would you integrate the local views of Jewish organizations in your approach to the delivery of social services – for example, when revisions are considered to regulations governing the charitable sector?**

Yes.

- **Would you ensure that providers of affordable housing – such as B'nai Brith Canada – have a voice in developing and implementing a housing strategy emerging from your government?**

Yes.

- **Will you support social and environmental initiatives such as those undertaken by B'nai Brith Canada through its clothing bins donation program?**

Yes.