

APUO Ad Hoc Committee on

**FIGHTING ANTISEMITISM AND CREATING A
SAFER AND MORE INCLUSIVE CAMPUS FOR
JEWISH MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY**

Final Report

August 2022

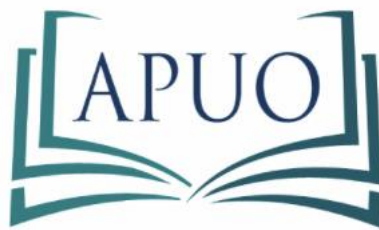


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We respectfully acknowledge that the University of Ottawa is located on the unceded ancestral territory of the Algonquin people.

OVERVIEW AND MANDATE

In late February 2022, the Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa (APUO) established the Ad Hoc Committee on Fighting Antisemitism and Creating a Safer and More Inclusive Campus for Jewish Members of the University. The Committee was tasked with consulting members of the university to identify the needs and challenges faced by Jewish students, faculty, and staff. Alongside consultations, the Committee also reviewed best practices at other Canadian postsecondary institutions. This report summarizes our observations and identifies key areas where the APUO and others in leadership positions can work to foster a more equitable and inclusive working and learning environment for Jewish students and university personnel.

These consultations were undertaken at a time of ongoing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) efforts across the university and should be understood as a part of these broader institutional initiatives. Institutional bodies across the university are engaged with numerous efforts to combat discrimination in many forms including but not limited to anti-Black racism, discrimination against Indigenous members of the community, and Islamophobia. This report should be seen as a part of those efforts to make the campus a more equitable and welcoming place for all.

Our report is split into four parts. Part one provides background and context of antisemitism and approaches other post-secondary institutions have taken to improve the campus climate for equity-seeking groups. Part two highlights the approach we undertook to fulfill our mandate as well as the limitations of our methods. Part three summarizes key points emerging from our consultations. Part four proposes recommendations for the way forward.

1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Between 2019 and 2020, hate crimes in Canada increased by 36.8%.¹ Notably, in 2020, nearly 20% of these reported crimes were motivated by religious animus² and between 2020 and 2021, hate crimes in Canada targeting religious groups (including Jewish, Muslim, and Catholic) increased an additional 67%.³

Colleges and universities are not immune from these trends. For example, a 2021 report from Statistics Canada revealed high levels of harassment and discrimination in post-secondary institutions⁴ with women 1.5 times more likely to experience harassment and discrimination than men.⁵ People with disabilities as well as sexual minority groups are the most likely to be targeted.⁶ Physical violence accounted for less than five percent of reported incidents.⁷ The majority of discrimination and harassment in post-secondary institutions is non-physical, extending beyond one-on-one interactions to incidents such as offensive comments overheard in hallways, graffiti in washrooms, and posts on social media.

It is within this context that the work of our committee took place. In addition to deliberate and targeted attacks, seemingly neutral institutional policies and cultures also have the potential to foster an environment where subtle forms of non-physical harms can flourish. Antisemitism – anti-

¹ See, “Police-reported hate crime, by type of motivation, Canada (selected police services)” (27 July 2021), online: *Statistics Canada* <www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=3510006601>.

² *Ibid.*

³ Statistics Canada. (2 August 2022). Police-reported crime statistics in Canada, 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00013-eng.pdf?st=Zsn7PR11>

⁴ See, generally, Darcy Hango, “Harassment and Discrimination among Faculty and Researchers in Canada’s Postsecondary Institutions” (16 July 2021), online (pdf): *Statistics Canada* <www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2021001/article/00006-eng.htm>.

⁵ *Ibid* at 1.

⁶ *Ibid* at 1.

⁷ *Ibid* at 3, Chart 1.

Jewish beliefs, attitudes, actions, and institutional structures - on campuses often reflects these more subtle forms of discrimination as well.

1.1 ANTISEMITISM IN CANADA

The most recent data from Statistics Canada shows that hate-crime incidents targeting the Jewish community rose 47% since 2020 and 59% since 2019. Although Jewish Canadians represent less than 1% of the population, members of the Jewish community were the targets of 14% of all reported hate crimes in 2021.⁸ A 2018 survey of the Jewish Canadian community found that 21% of the 2,335 respondents had experienced discrimination based on their religion. 36% of those respondents were within the 18-29 demographic group.⁹ While only 10% of survey respondents had been called offensive names because they identified as Jewish, 22% of those respondents were once again within the 18-29 demographic group.¹⁰ This is an important finding since the majority of students in the post-secondary environment are within this age group.¹¹ Most importantly, 37% of the survey respondents stated that they consciously withhold their Jewish identity in order to avoid dealing with any expressions of antisemitism.¹² In terms of general perceptions of the Jewish community among Canadians, data from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) collected in 2019 found that 8% of Canadian participants responded “probably true” to a variety of antisemitic stereotypes captured in their survey—such as the Jewish community’s power in international financial markets or the “business world.” According to the ADL, approximately 2,318,748 people in Canada harbour antisemitic attitudes.¹³

1.2 ANTISEMITISM WITHIN THE OTTAWA-GATINEAU REGION

Over the past 3 years, from 2019 to 2021, 559 hate and bias motivated crimes were reported to the Ottawa Police Service. The majority (48.48%) were related to race/ethnicity, followed by religion

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ See, Robert Brym, Keith Neuman & Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada” (2018) at 49, online (pdf): *Environics Institute for Survey Research* <www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Ibid* at 51.

¹¹ See, for example, Prairie Research Associates, “2019 First Year Students Survey Master Report” (June 2019) at 6, online (pdf): *Canadian University Survey Consortium* <cusc-creu.ca/wordpress/?download=523>.

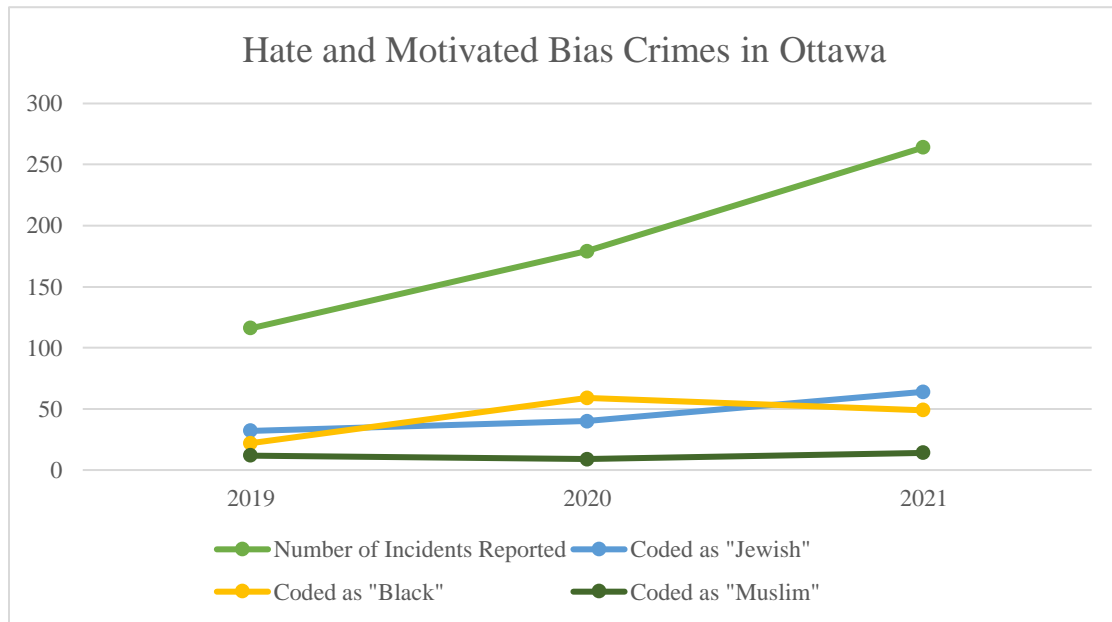
¹² See, Robert Brym, Keith Neuman & Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada” (2018) at 53, online (pdf): *Environics Institute for Survey Research* <www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>.

¹³ See, “ADL Global 100 Index: Canada” (2019), online: *Anti-Defamation League* <global100.adl.org/country/canada/2019>.

at 39.18%. The publicly available data also noted the primary motivation of the incident. While the dataset does not offer sufficient information to infer the circumstances surrounding each incident, it provides an important picture about what is occurring within the national capital region. 24.33% of the reported crimes were coded as “Jewish” being the primary motivation — in contrast to 23.26% coded as “Black” and 6.26% as “Muslim”. Figure 1, below, plots this data in relation to the yearly frequency of hate and bias motivated crimes.

The majority of incidents (56%) were coded as “mischief” under section 430 of the *Criminal Code*.¹⁴ The remaining 44% of the data includes a variety of offenses under the *Criminal Code*, but never accounting for more than 10% of reported hate-crimes between 2019-2021.¹⁵ The majority of hate crimes are related to graffiti. During the 2022 winter truck “convoy” presence in the downtown region, there were five antisemitic incidents reported to the Ottawa Police Service. The actual number of incidents is likely much higher because of underreporting.

Figure 1



Source: Open Ottawa Data (2019-2021).

¹⁴ Mischief under the *Criminal Code* can include a wide range of activities, see: *Criminal Code*, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 430 <laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/section-430.html>.

¹⁵ For the complete dataset see, “Hate and Bias Motivated Crime” (24 June 2022), online: *Open Ottawa* <open.ottawa.ca/documents/ottawa::hate-and-bias-motivated-crime/about>.

1.3 INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO THE NEEDS OF EQUITY-SEEKING GROUPS

Recognizing rising incidents of hate crimes and the concerns of equity-seeking groups, a number of Canadian post-secondary institutions have commissioned reports over the past several years to identify the challenges and propose recommendations to make universities safer and more inclusive. To better understand the broader context in which our work is situated, we reviewed 35 of these reports. These reports ranged in scope from broad concerns about equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) to targeted efforts to address anti-Black and Indigenous racism and discrimination or antisemitism. 43% focused specifically on racism, often anti-Black racism; 46% engaged with EDI broadly; and 8.6% engaged with antisemitism on university campuses. As Table 1 highlights, a striking feature was the increase in number of reports published in 2021. 10 of the 35 reports either referenced or alluded to the mass protests in the spring and summer of 2020 and what some have called the “racial reckoning of 2020”.¹⁶

Table 1

Year of Publication	Number of Reports Published
2010	1
2011	0
2012	0
2013	0
2014	0
2015	0
2016	0
2017	1
2018	2
2019	4
2020	5

¹⁶ For more on the events of the spring and summer of 2020, see, for example, Ailsa Chang, Rachel Martin & Eric Marrapodi, “Summer of Racial Reckoning” (16 August 2020), online: *NPR* <www.npr.org/2020/08/16/902179773/summer-of-racial-reckoning-the-match-lit>.

2021	18
2022	4

Source: Authors

Taken together, the major challenge each report sought to address was how to attend to the needs of equity-seeking groups in a post-secondary community in a way that is consistent with the many other values that underpin the post-secondary environment. For instance, the University of Toronto’s Anti-Semitism Working Group recommended that any work related to antisemitism on campus should be aligned with other institutional EDI activities and principles academic freedom. In their view, the very nature of a post-secondary institution requires not prioritizing any one set of core values over another.¹⁷ Many reports similarly highlighted the intersectional nature of this challenge.¹⁸

1.3.1 Recommendations from Canadian Post-Secondary Institutional Reports

Each of the 35 reports analyzed was written within the context of a particular post-secondary institution. No matter the focus, each report recommended three interrelated types of changes: (1) institutional structure; (2) institutional procedures; or (3) institutional experience.

Structural recommendations focused on the institution’s formal bureaucracy. All reports highlighted the importance of creating a dedicated leader and/or office charged with overseeing the implementation of proposed changes at the institution. For example, at the University of Manitoba, this was the designation of a respected senior leader who would serve as a “Champion of EDI.”¹⁹ At George Brown College, the recommendation was to create an entire office that would report to the VP-Academic along with the President.²⁰

¹⁷ See, “Report of the University of Toronto Anti-Semitism Working Group” (December 2021), online (pdf): *University of Toronto* <people.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Report-of-the-Anti-Semitism-Working-Group.pdf>

¹⁸ See, for example, “54 Steps on the Pathway to an Anti-Racist and Inclusively Excellent UBC” (January 2022) at 12-14, online (pdf): *University of British Columbia* <antiracism.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2022/04/00-UBC-Master-UBC.0847-ARIE-TF-Digital-9-complete-reduced6.pdf>.

¹⁹ See, Donna J Miller & Helga D Van Iderstine, “Responding to Sexual Violence, Harassment & Discrimination at the University of Manitoba: A Path Forward” (August 2019) at 93-94, online (pdf): *uManitoba* <news.umanitoba.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/um-sexual-violence-report-2019.pdf>.

²⁰ See, Nicole Bernhardt et al., “Review of George Brown College Truth and Reconciliation and Anti-Racism/Diversity” (September 2019), online (pdf): *George Brown College* <www.georgebrown.ca/sites/default/files/2020-

In addition to structural changes, many reports also provided specific procedural recommendations. These sought to empower the newly created positions to actually be able to effect change. It bears noting that many of these procedural recommendations did not necessarily target specific policies, as was the case for Thompson Rivers University. In the 2021, the Provost's Anti-Racism Taskforce Report recommended, "establishing a reliable and consistent EDI semi-decentralized governance system that embraces anti-racism as a major pillar."²¹ In contrast, McGill's 2018 report recommended a dedicated "Realizing McGill's Mission Day" where the campus community would come together to review existing policies and procedures in order to pinpoint recommendations for improvement.²² A handful of reports did make pointed policy-specific recommendations, such as Acadia University calling for the provost and vice-president academic to review the recruitment policies of resident assistants and senior resident assistants to "eliminate barriers to hiring involving socio-economic class, race, and international student status."²³

Experiential recommendations centred on improving interactions between members of the campus community. These recommendations included a broad range of activities, from improving the relationships between students on campus, to the classroom experience, to how all members of the university community interacted with the institutions numerous offices and bureaucracy. Experiential recommendations routinely included some form of training about EDI or anti-racism — either across the entire institution or for specific departments within the university.²⁴ The most common recommendation under this category was centred on improving intra-faculty

07/Review%20of%20GBC%20truth%20and%20reconciliation%20and%20anti-racism%20and%20diversity%202019-10-08.pdf>.

²¹ See, Rani Srivastava & Monica J Sanchez-Flores, "TRU Provost's Anti-Racism Taskforce Report" (31 March 2021) at 9, online (pdf): *TRU* <www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/anti-racism-task-force-report53615.pdf>.

²² See, "Principal's Task Force on Respect & Inclusion in Campus Life" (April 2018) at 13, online: *McGill* <www.mcgill.ca/principal/files/principal/task_force_report_final_rev.pdf>.

²³ See, "President's Anti-Racism Task Force: Recommendations" (30 June 2021) at 6, online (pdf): <www2.acadiau.ca/files/files/President%27s%20Office/2021-12-23-2%20PART%20Recommendations.pdf>.

²⁴ See, for example, "President's Task Force on Anti-Black Racism: Preliminary Recommendations" (November 2021) at 9 & 11, online (pdf): *Concordia University* <www.concordia.ca/content/dam/concordia/offices/provost/docs/reports/T22-75031-PROV-task-force-report-to-provost-Nov2021.pdf>.

communication. Effective communication was the first step to improving a person’s experience at an institution.²⁵

2 OUR APPROACH

Our consultations with members of the University of Ottawa community took several forms. At the beginning of June, an email was circulated to all members of the APUO, informing them of our committee’s mandate and inviting any interested party to write to us to share their views about Jewish life and/or antisemitism at the University of Ottawa. A dedicated email account was created for this purpose (apuocas@gmail.com). The committee also asked other university groups to share our invitation on their listservs. These included: the Association of Part-Time Professors of the University of Ottawa (APTUO), the University of Ottawa Student’ Union (UOSU), the Graduate Student’s Association des étudiant.es diplômé.es (GSAÉD), the Union of Student Workers at the University of Ottawa (SCFP-2626-CUPE) and the association for Support Staff at the University of Ottawa (SSUO).

We also invited specific stakeholders to join our committee for 30-minute virtual meetings to better understand the reality of what Jewish members of the university community experience. This included representatives of Chabad, Hillel, Vered Jewish Canadian Studies, and three of the University of Ottawa’s special advisors to the president—the Special Advisor on EDI, the Special Advisor on Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence, and the University Advisor on Mental Health and Wellness.

In addition, we sent requests to the Ottawa Police to obtain information about antisemitic hate crimes in Ottawa and the following University of Ottawa offices to gather data on reported incidents of antisemitism on campus: University Human Rights Office; Protection Services; Ombudsperson; Housing & Residence Life; Counselling Services; Student Support; and UoSatisfACTION.

Finally, in September 2022, we convened a meeting with US Ambassador and Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism Deborah Lipstadt. We invited stakeholders in the university community including all those who responded to our requests for comment described above as

²⁵ See, for example, “University of Toronto: Faculty of Music Climate and Culture Review” (4 May 2022) at 21-22, online (pdf): *UofT* <music.utoronto.ca/docs/university_of_toronto___faculty_of_music___c_c_executive_summary.pdf>.

well as other community members who had specific interests in antisemitism on university campuses.

2.1 LIMITATIONS

Although our mandate was to consult members of the university community to better understand the experiences of students, faculty and staff, our work was limited by the timing of the committee's work. Our committee was formed in late February 2022 and had approximately four months to conduct our preliminary research, consult with the community, and draft our report. It quickly became evident that in-person townhalls or focus groups in March/April would not be possible, given the ongoing nature of online learning as well as the overlap with the exam period. In addition, an overwhelming sense of Zoom fatigue and collective burnout led our committee to believe that virtual town halls or focus groups scheduled would be poorly attended. As a result, the committee decided to circulate an email to as many members of the university community as possible and invite anyone who wanted to share their thoughts to do so via email submissions. The initial call for individual submissions went out in late May. At this point, the academic year was over, and the response was understandably limited. Indeed, accessing effective communication channels to engage with the campus community proved difficult. Students, staff, and faculty are all associated with different listservs. Committee members had to send reminders to several associations to forward our call. Getting the message out to undergraduate students proved particularly difficult at this time of year. While some students did reach out to us to share their experiences, it is likely that many more perspectives would have been heard if the call had gone out earlier. Any future consultations in this area must be mindful of how the time of year influences attempts at engagement and of how much is needed to allow *all* members of the campus community to be reached.

3 WHAT WE HEARD

3.1 DOCUMENTED REPORTS OF ANTISEMITISM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

Section 7 of the University of Ottawa's policy on the prevention of harassment and discrimination (Policy 67A) states that "The University is committed to maintaining a learning and work environment that promotes the understanding and respect for dignity of the person as part of the

University community and one that is free from harassment and discrimination.” Section 6 of the policy provides that the University’s obligations are the same as those “...set out in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* with respect to harassment and discrimination and under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* with respect to workplace harassment.”²⁶ Incorporating the definitions and principles of Ontario’s *Human Rights Code* means that protected grounds at the University of Ottawa include race, ancestry, ethnic origin, place of origin, and creed. When a student or employee believes they have experienced discrimination or harassment, they can report the incident to the Human Rights Office as well as any other appropriate channel.²⁷

We reviewed reports about antisemitic incidents from the University of Ottawa’s Human Rights Office and from Protection Services. Based on information obtained, since 2016, the Human Rights Office has received ten complaints about antisemitism on campus as outlined in Table 2. In addition, uOttawa Protection Services has received four reports involving antisemitism since January 1, 2020. Of those incidents, none have caused physical harm

Table 2.

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Frequency of Complaints	1	0	2	2	1	2	2
Source: Director of University of Ottawa Human Rights Office							

These are the reports of incidents that were recorded through formal institutional channels alone. Therefore, they might not provide a complete picture of how antisemitism is experienced at the University of Ottawa. In fact, in a survey of the Jewish Canadian community in 2018, 37% of respondents explicitly stated that they consciously minimize outward signs of their Jewish identity avoid dealing with any expressions of antisemitism.²⁸ Moreover, when incidents do occur, not

²⁶ See, *Policy 67a: Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination* [hyperlink to: www2.uottawa.ca/about-us/policies-regulations/policy-67a-prevention-harassment-and-discrimination] as well as *Human Rights Code*, RSO 1990, c H.19.

²⁷ The reporting process is governed by *Procedure 36-1* [hyperlink to: www2.uottawa.ca/about-us/policies-regulations/procedure-36-1-complaints-harassmentdiscrimination-initiated-students] and *Procedure 36-2* [hyperlink to: www2.uottawa.ca/about-us/policies-regulations/procedure-36-2-complaints-harassmentdiscrimination-initiated-employees], for students and employees, respectively.

²⁸ See, Robert Brym, Keith Neuman & Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada” (2018) at 53, online (pdf): *Environics Institute for Survey Research* <www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>.

everyone feels empowered enough to formally report and draw attention to themselves. There is a high chance that subtler forms of harassment and discrimination are unreported to avoid escalating any interpersonal conflict at the university.

3.2 WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS FROM THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY

We received 13 written submissions from members of the campus community. These submissions included views from faculty, students, and university staff. Many commentators self-identified as Jewish. Several shared that they had never personally experienced antisemitism, noting, for example, that *“I do not have personal antisemitic experiences at UO”* and *“I have never experienced antisemitism on campus”* and *“as a Jew, I have not experienced any acts of antisemitism [on campus].”* In contrast, the submissions revealed a variety of challenging experiences not directed at a person but rather deriving from encounters with broader antisemitic discourse. Some reported seeing antisemitic posters on campus or nearby. Others voiced concerns about the relationship between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, as well as ongoing debates about how to define antisemitism. Overall, three key themes emerged: 1) the need to consider antisemitism in broader discussions about equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI); 2) the challenges of disentangling antisemitic sentiments from criticism of the State of Israel; and 3) the importance of recognizing the variety of ways that individuals can identify as Jewish.

3.2.1 Antisemitism and EDI

Several respondents expressed the opinion that antisemitism is often left out of discussions about discrimination and harassment on campus. One faculty member shared his concern for students who tell him that *“they feel like everyone else thinks antisemitism is not happening—that it's a thing of the past.”* Another staff member wrote *“In my experience...the university does not necessarily think of Jews when it speaks of EDI principles.”* This staff member noted that the university responds to highly publicized incidents of discrimination that become public relations problems but less so to incidents of antisemitism. They recommended that *“the committee's work must include making the administration aware, including the president and the special adviser...that the ‘I’ in EDI entails including Jews and making them feel comfortable on*

campus.” Others noted that basic education about diversity within the Jewish community is also lacking. We elaborate on this last concern below.

3.2.2 Antisemitism and Criticism of the State of Israel

Even in our limited consultations with stakeholders, questions about the relationship between antisemitism and support for or criticism of the State of Israel were complex. We heard from some members of the university community who want the university to adopt the definition of antisemitism proposed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). We heard from others who see the definition as misguided in that it conflates antisemitism with objections to Israeli government policies towards Palestinians. We heard from some members of the University of Ottawa community who believe Jewish identity is inextricably linked to support for the state of Israel, and we heard from others who do not. It is beyond the scope of this committee’s work to adjudicate the relationship between antisemitism and criticism of the State of Israel, but we can report that there exists on campus a wide variety of opinions.

As we note above, a number of submissions to the committee drew attention to, as one faculty member wrote, the conflation of *“Israel’s self-defence choices with assumed culpability on the part of innocent Jews outside of Israel.”* These responses called for locating discussions of the Jewish experience on campus and antisemitism writ large within current events in the Middle East and around the world. They explained that for many people who identify as Jewish, part of their identity is intimately linked to the State of Israel. (The 2018 survey of the Jewish Canadian community empirically examined this relationship and found that 48% of respondents were “very attached” to Israel, 31% were “somewhat attached.”²⁹) Ignoring the relationship between Israel and the Jewish diaspora, these respondents noted, serves to further perpetuate harms to the campus Jewish community.

Similarly, a professor observed that *“There is also a lack of understanding or acceptance of how the manifestation of antisemitism has changed and morphed over time”* arguing that contemporary examples of antisemitism often target the State of Israel. This professor cited such examples as

²⁹ See, Robert Brym, Keith Neuman & Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada” (2018) at 57, online (pdf): *Environics Institute for Survey Research* <www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>.

double standards applied to perceived human rights violations by Israel and by other nation states, comparisons of Israel to Nazi Germany, and general demonization of Israel. They quote a report from the International Legal Forum stating that *“Jews face new grounds for discrimination due to their real or perceived affiliation with the State of Israel or Zionism.”*

One submission focused on the lack of consultation with Jewish members of the community when the APUO passed a motion in 2021, calling on the university to reject the IHRA definition of antisemitism. Another argued that anti-Zionism and antisemitism cannot be separated, and that *“countries around the world have embraced the IHRA, recognizing it as an important policy for asserting a norm against unjust hatred, and signing onto it.”*

A staff member wrote:

We need to...make the university aware that antisemitism, while not wholly unlike other hatreds, has its own qualities. For example, creating a caricature of ‘Zionism’ and then saying one is against ‘Zionists,’ not Jews, is antisemitism by proxy.

We also received a number of submissions (from self-identified Jewish professors) that supported the APUO’s motion calling for the university to reject the IHRA definition of antisemitism, specifically because included in the definition are examples that seem to conflate criticism of Israel with antisemitism. For example, one professor wrote:

I sincerely hope that your report will not allow criticism of Israel and Israeli policy to be defined as antisemitic. Local attacks on Jews for their Jewishness are dangerous, and we should make sure they don't happen. But political disagreements cannot be forbidden, even if those disagreements make some people uncomfortable.

Another person similarly highlighted that it would be dangerous to equate legitimate critiques of Israeli government policies with antisemitism. Two respondents explicitly noted that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is not antisemitism but rather advocates nonviolent responses to oppression. One of these respondents also indicated that they were not a BDS supporter but were still uncomfortable with efforts to label the BDS movement antisemitic.

Perhaps most significantly, submissions on both sides of this issue, from faculty, staff, and students, acknowledged a problem on campus that transcended specific opinions about BDS or the IHRA definition of antisemitism: the feeling of not being able to talk at all about political issues

related to Israel. One instructor noted that *“Jewish students have told me that they feel they cannot broach certain topics in class or face being cancelled from the student body.”* The instructor goes on to describe the topics as those that conflate Jewish identity with implicit support for Israel or Israeli government policies.

The challenge of working through the tensions between these different perspectives are not unique to the University of Ottawa campus. The *2021 Report of the University of Toronto Anti-Semitism Working Group* includes the following recommendation to the university community:

In situating anti-Semitism policies within its broader framework of equity, anti-racism, and cultural diversity initiatives, the University should focus on problems and issues specific to the distinctive context of the University as a place in which difficult and controversial questions are addressed. In so doing, it should not adopt any of the definitions of anti-Semitism that have recently been proposed.

Relying on principles of free speech and academic freedom, their report reasserts the importance of debate for the specific context of the university. Our consultations with members of the community of the University of Ottawa showed a similarly broad variety of opinions. Reducing such a complex and controversial issue to whether or not a particular definition is adopted misses some of the nuance. We heard that there is a need for spaces in which individuals can voice their dissent respectfully, and this reinforced the importance of fostering the free and open exchange of ideas on university campuses.

3.2.3 DIVERSITY WITHIN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

In accordance with what we detail above, submissions highlighted that “being Jewish” can mean different things to different people, not only regarding political commitments but also different degrees of religious observance. Far from a homogeneous group, members of the Jewish community have varied and intersectional identities. To begin, people who identify as Jewish may or may not observe religious practices or share the same religious beliefs. The 2018 survey of community members found that only 12% of respondents considered Judaism “mainly a matter of

religion.” Most respondents felt that their identity as Jewish Canadians was related to culture.³⁰ In addition, within the Jewish tradition, there are many denominations, including Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Secular Humanist, to name a few. Some Jewish people will strictly adhere to the rules of the Sabbath and observe all Jewish holidays. Others will observe the High Holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) without following the Sabbath. Some will keep a strict kosher diet, while others will abstain from products such as pork or shellfish without feeling the need to seek official certification for other foods.

The 2018 survey illustrates how this diversity even exists around what constitutes the essential components of being Jewish. While 58% of respondents noted that celebrating Jewish holidays with family was essential, 72% prioritized “leading an ethical and moral life.”³¹ Most importantly, 28% of respondents didn’t identify with any specific denomination or movement of Judaism, noting instead that they are “*just Jewish*”.³² Unsurprisingly, within a bureaucratic university setting, accommodating Jewish community members can be difficult when Jewish identity is complex and varied.

For some, one’s Jewish identity is closely linked with religious observance. For others, the identity has different cultural significance centered around shared values and traditions shaped by experiences at summer camps, at Jewish day schools, intergenerational trauma from family members who survived the Holocaust, or stories of historical exclusion from higher education, private clubs, and certain professions. These identities can be both sources of pride and celebration or sources of pain and insecurity. As result, depending on one’s relationship to one’s identity, some Jewish people may be more or less demonstrative of their “Jewishness” in public.

In light of this, consider, for example, the challenge of determining what amounts to reasonable accommodation of Jewish students enrolled in professional programs with clinical placements. For religiously observant students, it can be nearly impossible to coordinate a semester or year- long

³⁰ See, Robert Brym, Keith Neuman & Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada” (2018) at 15, online (pdf): *Environics Institute for Survey Research* <www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>.

³¹ See, Robert Brym, Keith Neuman & Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada” (2018) at 19, online (pdf): *Environics Institute for Survey Research* <www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>.

³² See, Robert Brym, Keith Neuman & Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada” (2018) at 23, online (pdf): *Environics Institute for Survey Research* <www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>.

rotation schedule that does not conflict with holidays and the Sabbath. On the other hand, some Jewish students, who are less observant, may only need to miss one or two rotations if they happen to coincide with the “High Holidays” (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) in September/October. Some Jewish students may observe the holidays in their own way, without attending synagogue or missing class, and others still may ignore them entirely. In practice, however, those in charge of schedules will likely only hear from the students who are the most observant and whose religious practices conflict the most with their rotation schedules. These students may find themselves in need of multiple accommodations. This raises questions about what amounts to reasonable accommodation and the extent to which departments can assist these students to meet their program requirements in the same time-frame as their peers.

Beyond the question of identifying what that reasonable accommodation looks like, our consultations also noted a concern that the needs of a minority of religious students can create negative perceptions among faculty and staff about *all* Jewish students being difficult to accommodate. What makes this anecdote particularly significant is that it captures a problematic distinction that can be made between so-called “good” minorities who adhere to the rules of the mainstream and “difficult” minorities who do not. While members of the Jewish community, particularly those who are secular, may resent assumptions about whether they too will be seeking accommodations, it also sends a message to more religious Jewish students that their adherence to religious requirements is problematic.

On the theme of lack of awareness about the heterogeneity of Jewish identities, one submission suggested this might be because of an association between being Jewish and being white. This is incorrect. Although the majority of Jewish people in North America are Ashkenazi (origins in Central and Eastern Europe), a significant number are Sephardic or Mizrahi (origins in the Middle East and North Africa). Moreover, the Jewish diaspora stretches around the globe such that the Jewish experience of whiteness depends on specific geographic, political and socio-economic factors. While of course there are Jewish people who experience white privilege, to generalize all Jews this way obscures the experiences of many others. According to this submission from a university instructor, the distinction between Jewish people and other visible minorities based on race means that when white Jewish students are accommodated, it can be

viewed as unjust or underserved in the context of the needs of other minority communities on campus:

I think the Jewish community at the university is in need of the same supports as any other minority group, but I sense that a lack of contextual understanding on the part of other students drives them to think of Jewish students as entirely “white” and thus catered-to if they receive supports. An understanding of Jewish history would lead other students to understand the very very long history of oppression against the community, as well as how recently this oppression remained.

Our consultations indicate that the University of Ottawa lacks a nuanced understanding of the diversity that exists within the Jewish community. In addition, there is little awareness of the ways in which Jewish identities can intersect and overlap with the concerns of other equity seeking groups (for example, around issues of gender and race). Without a clear understanding of these complex identities, it is difficult to address the problem of antisemitism on campus.

3.3 CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SPECIAL ADVISORS TO THE PRESIDENT

We were fortunate to talk to three of the university’s special advisors: the special advisor on EDI; the special advisor on anti-racism and inclusive excellence, and the special advisor on mental health and wellness. These conversations revealed that engagement with Jewish members of the university community and issues of antisemitism are not a focus of their agenda.

One reason, offered by one special advisor, was that the current demographic survey the university uses does not include religion, even though it includes race, gender, and ability/disability. The university has yet to come up with an adequate way of capturing information about the religious composition of the campus community.

Another reason for the special advisors’ low engagement could be the absence of interaction with individuals experiencing discrimination around Jewish identity. As one special advisor noted, most of the time minorities stay quiet when they encounter more subtle forms of institutional discrimination. As such, few of the special advisors had direct experience with complaints of antisemitism or issues of Jewish identity. However, one special advisor noted that many of the barriers to equal participation in university life faced by other equity-seeking groups are also faced by members of the Jewish community.

We also heard that the large number of equity-seeking groups within the university community requires navigating trade-offs to determine where initiatives would have the greatest impact. One advisor specifically highlighted that white supremacist groups on campus are a concern of many students. Another advisor emphasized that mental health forms an important component of equity, yet concrete examples of how issues of discrimination associated with antisemitism and Jewish identity are considered in mental health were not provided.

Our conversations with the special advisors reflect an experience not unfamiliar to many Jews at Canadian universities: antisemitism is not accorded high priority in the institutional structures or mechanisms designed to support efforts to ensure EDI, work against racism and discrimination, or improve mental health. The reasons for its absence, we suspect, are revealed more fully by the results of our stakeholder conversations.

3.4 STAKEHOLDER CONVERSATIONS

Our conversations with stakeholders mirrored several themes that arose from the written submissions we received. Stakeholders were representatives of various on-campus and off-campus Jewish groups in Ottawa. We heard that concerns about antisemitism at the University of Ottawa usually take more subtle forms than overt threats of violence and harm. While noting the relative absence of physical discrimination, they also explained that the university campus can feel unwelcoming and even hostile when it becomes a center for debates about Zionism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While universities are meant to be spaces where ideas and controversies can be freely discussed, the reality is that navigating the line between academic freedom and respectful debate is challenging. Since many within the Jewish community identify with the Israeli state in some form³³, vocal opposition to the policies of the Israeli government are felt by some as a personal attack. At the same time, many members of the Jewish community oppose the policies of the Israeli government while still supporting the idea of a Jewish State. For these individuals, the pressure to “pick a side” can be just as troubling, knowing that they will be seen as not doing enough or doing the wrong thing regardless of what they say. One of the stakeholders noted the

³³ See, Robert Brym, Keith Neuman & Rhonda Lenton, “2018 Survey of Jews in Canada” (2018) at 57, online (pdf): *Environics Institute for Survey Research* <www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada/2018-survey-of-jews-in-canada---final-report.pdf>.

heightened fear on campus whenever clashes erupt in the Middle East. Jewish students feel the need to self-censor out of self-preservation or to avoid being lumped into one group.

As with the written submissions received, another recurring theme in our consultations was the perceived “whiteness” of Jewish people. A Ph.D. student wrote, for example:

I sense that a lack of contextual understanding on the part of other students drives them to think of Jewish students as entirely “white” and thus catered-to if they receive supports.

This, it was explained, is a barrier to understanding how members of the Jewish community experience discrimination and oppression even when they are not visible minorities. It is also a perception that perpetuates a problematic erasure of the experience of non-white Jewish people.

All stakeholders recommended distinct educational campaigns that raise awareness of the issues and the nuances that underpin the experiences of Jewish members of our community as a way to combat harmful behaviour on campus. In practical terms, this can include small actions to give Jewish students recognition — such as including a greeting in Hebrew on the multi-lingual sign on campus. A rabbi summarized the needs of the Jewish community well: *“we don’t all need to love each other, we just need to be civil.”*

3.5 MEETING WITH US AMBASSADOR AND SPECIAL ENVOY TO MONITOR AND COMBAT ANTISEMITISM DEBORAH LIPSTADT

On September 14, 2022, we convened a private virtual meeting with US Ambassador and Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism Deborah Lipstadt. Approximately twenty-five faculty, students, staff, and interested community members attended. During the hour-long meeting, Ambassador Lipstadt shared reflections on her work in North America and around the world on combatting antisemitism. She also fielded questions and discussion on antisemitism both broadly and specifically on North American university campuses. The discussion promoted further reflection for all those attending on the challenges of antisemitism on university campuses and the multiple perspectives held by members of our community.

Among several issues raised in the discussion were the questions of what universities can do to further understanding of antisemitism in both subtle and overt forms and whether Universities should adopt the definition of antisemitism suggested by the International Holocaust

Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Ambassador Lipstadt acknowledged the different perspectives and tensions they entail highlighting many of the same complexities we report in section 3.2.2, above.

Feedback from this session was universally positive with attendees noting that it was a “*powerful conversation*”, appreciating the “*opportunity to engage with these issues across the community*”, and hoping for “*further educational opportunities*” with Ambassador Lipstadt and others with similar prominence in working to combat antisemitism worldwide.

4 THE WAY FORWARD

There is a familiar joke about a Jewish man who is shipwrecked on a desert island where he is stranded for years. Using materials he finds on the island, he builds everything he needs to survive. When he is finally rescued by a passing ship, the sailors ask why he built two synagogues. He points to one and says that one is *his* synagogue. The rescuers ask him about the other synagogue he built. “That one?” he replies, “I would never set foot in *that* synagogue!” This is just one of many jokes about a healthy love for debate and differing opinions within the Jewish community. Although shared in jest, it also serves to highlight the heterogeneity of Jewish identity. For example, if for a majority of Jewish people, Israel occupies an important place, for others it does not. The nature of this relationship will vary tremendously and people can hold conflicting and contradictory feelings about the country. At the same time, Jewish identity involves significantly more than the question of how one relates to Israel. Moreover, Jewish identities are not necessarily, or even mostly, religious in nature. Even when they are, degrees of observance vary. And for many Jewish students, faculty, and staff, Jewish identity is primarily cultural, rooted in family, community, traditions, and history. This means that efforts to make the University campus more welcoming and safer cannot be reduced to discussions about either Israel or religious accommodation.

The work of this committee was limited in both time and scope. What we have captured in our report is best seen as a first step towards understanding the experiences of antisemitism by Jewish students, faculty, and staff at the University and, equally, serving as a launching pad for

continuing efforts by the APUO and the University community more broadly to assess and combat antisemitism.

In this context, we recommend that:

1. The university explicitly acknowledge the existence of antisemitism on campus.
2. The university recognize the multi-dimensional ways in which antisemitism is experienced, and revise its policies and strategies on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), anti-racism, and mental wellness to include antisemitism (as well as Islamophobia and other forms of religious and ethnic discrimination).
3. The university consider campus-wide educational opportunities could also be extended to raise awareness about the diversity of religious, cultural, ethnic practices and political positions that comprise the Jewish community on campus and in Canada.
4. Following best practices already in place at other Canadian universities, the university modify its governance structure and create a new Vice-President position (in addition to the current five positions) with a mandate to oversee all equity matters, including antisemitism.
5. The university and all departments circulate to faculty and staff before the start of each term a multicultural and interfaith calendar in general - with highlighted dates where academic accommodations or campus services accommodations may be required. Faculty and staff should be informed about the differences between major and more minor holidays to avoid scheduling mandatory events or evaluations on these dates to the extent possible.
6. The university ensure that kosher food options are available on campus and on student meal plans. The university should also reduce the amount of meat and dairy served on campus and increase plant-based options where possible. Such a change would serve the dual purpose of contributing to sustainability targets while also making food options more inclusive for students with a variety of religious or ethical dietary restrictions.
7. The APUO work collaboratively with other unions and associations at uOttawa to improve the current climate of intellectual debate on campus to ensure that *all* members of the university community feel confident and safe to respectfully express dissenting opinions.

In conclusion, our committee is grateful to the APUO for initiating an important discussion on a topic that is relevant not only to APUO membership but very clearly the university community as a whole. While we were tasked to identify the needs and challenges faced by Jewish students, faculty, and staff, much of what we learned and what we recommend could also apply to members of others religious and ethnic groups.

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