



Staff Report

Community Services

Report To: COW- Admin, Corp and Finance, SI, Comm. Services
Meeting Date: April 28, 2025
Report Number: CS.25.022
Title: Follow Up Report Southern Georgian Bay Jewish Community
Prepared by: Ryan Gibbons, Director of Community Services

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report CS.25.022, entitled "Follow Up Report Southern Georgian Bay Jewish Community";

AND THAT Council selects option _____ from the analysis section as direction to staff.

B. Overview

This report is being brought forward at the direction of Council following a deputation from the Chair and Co-Founder of The Southern Georgian Bay Jewish Community for Council to consider supporting and adopting the definition of Anti-Semitism.

C. Background

This staff report is being provided to Council in response to a deputation from Rashell Feldman, Chair and Co-Founder, The Southern Georgian Bay Jewish Community. <https://pub-bluemountains.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=20130>

Re: Request for Council Support and Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association definition of Anti-Semitism

Council provided the following direction to staff:

THAT Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains receives the deputation of Rashell Feldman, Chair and Co-Founder of the Southern Georgian Bay Jewish Community for information and refers the deputation to staff for a report back to Council, for Council consideration, Carried.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) was established in 1998 as a forum that unites governments and experts to promote Holocaust education, research, and remembrance. In 2016, the IHRA developed and officially adopted a working definition of antisemitism, which includes illustrative examples. This definition has been adopted by international entities such as the United Nations, the European Union, and countries worldwide, including the Government of Canada. Moreover, Bill 168, known as the Combating

Antisemitism Act, 2020, mandates that the Government of Ontario utilizes the IHRA's working definition and its examples as a guiding framework.

The non-legally binding IHRA working definition of antisemitism is as follows:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

The concept of antisemitism is often associated with the Holocaust, yet it continues to manifest through acts such as vandalism, graffiti, hate propaganda, racist language, threats, and intimidation.

Statistics Canada data indicates that in 2021, the Jewish community was the most frequently targeted religious minority group for police-reported hate crimes in Canada. According to the 2022 Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents by B’nai Brith Canada, there were 2,769 recorded incidents of antisemitism across Canada, with a 64.8% increase in such incidents in Ontario compared to 2021. In Ontario, 1,353 incidents were recorded.

Addressing antisemitism requires collaboration from the entire community to foster understanding and create opportunities for sharing experiences and knowledge about the Jewish community. Adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism is a measure the Town can take to demonstrate its commitment to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and accessible community where all individuals are valued and respected.

The Georgian Bay Jewish Community has presented deputations in Wasaga Beach, Collingwood, Clearview, and Owen Sound. The definition has been adopted by Wasaga Beach and Collingwood, while Clearview and Owen Sound have received the deputation.

The Town’s Sustainability Plan – The Future Story - Bold Action 15

Develop a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy.

An inclusive community is built upon acceptance and understanding, making it a more welcoming place for everyone. Ensuring that diversity is welcomed and respected allows all members of The Blue Mountains community to live with dignity, building a shared sense of community needed to live our best lives and solve our biggest challenges. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada identifies 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. All levels of government and the broader community have a role to play in contributing to reconciliation in our communities.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are also healthy for our economy. The Town’s Economic Development Strategy includes an action to join the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities to improve practices and promote social inclusion within The Blue Mountains.

The development and implementation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy that provides an inclusive lens that includes Truth and Reconciliation is essential to developing and applying policies, plans and services within The Town of The Blue Mountains. Embedding a DEI Strategy into current plans and policies will create an environment of acceptance and understanding within the TBM organization and throughout the community.

The Canadian Handbook on the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism provides practical use of the IHRA definition in the Canadian context <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/canada-holocaust/antisemitism/handbook-definition-antisemitism.html>:

Government programming should help build a better, more tolerant, and more peaceful and prosperous world. Funding should not be provided to entities or individuals that engage in or promote antisemitism. Practical use of the IHRA Definition can include using the definition in vetting procedures and control mechanisms when allocating public funding and programming.

Workplaces are where most adult Canadians spend a substantial portion of their day and where they earn their livelihood. Employers have legal and moral obligations to prevent and address discrimination in the workplace, including antisemitism. In the workplace, practical use of the IHRA Definition can include using the definition for: (a) codes of conduct, discrimination and harassment policies, and EDI policies, (b) staff training and continuing professional development, and (c) identifying, recording, and intervening against instances of antisemitism in the workplace.

Civil society organizations impact all facets of Canadian society, so it is crucial that they strive to be free of hatred and discrimination. Civil society organizations can use the IHRA Definition to prevent, identify, and address antisemitic incidents: (a) within their organizations, and (b) in their work – in the provision of services and programming, and in advocacy and education. Civil society organizations with anti-hate, anti-discrimination, and anti-racism mandates can further use the IHRA Definition to: (a) support antisemitism prevention work, such as developing training manuals and facilitating workshops, (b) provide support services for victims of antisemitism, and (c) guide the collection, analysis and publication of data on antisemitic incidents and crimes, including online.”

D. Analysis

This recommendation is being provided to Council for their consideration. The focus of the effort is about education, awareness and trying to reduce conflict through these efforts.

The request of the deputation from the Georgian Bay Jewish Community does not advocate against any other group or individual.

The definition has been adopted by The Government of Canada, 2019, The Province of Ontario, 2020, The Town of Collingwood, 2024 and Town of Wasaga Beach in 2024.

Increase in antisemitism violence is documented in Canada and Ontario. By supporting education and awareness efforts this could reduce, limit or otherwise provide positive steps to reduce violence.

Options for Council to Consider:

1. Adopt the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism:

- **Advantages:**

- Aligns the Town with federal and provincial standards, supporting unified approaches against antisemitism.
- Provides a clear framework for educational and policy initiatives, aiding in tackling antisemitism specifically through awareness.
- Enhances relationships with Jewish communities, demonstrating responsiveness to concerns.
- Adoption explicitly acknowledges antisemitism as a distinct issue, rather than a subset of general hate or discrimination, ensuring it receives focused attention.

- **Challenges:**

- Requires careful implementation to avoid community division, ensuring inclusivity and understanding across all groups.
- May require further training and resources to be implemented effectively.

2. Do Not Adopt the IHRA Definition but Commit to Inclusive Education Communication:

- **Advantages:**

- Allows for customized, community-specific strategies to address antisemitism and other forms of hate.
- Can explore localized partnerships for educational programs, responsive to community needs.

- **Challenges:**

- Could be perceived as insufficient action by those advocating for the definition's adoption, impacting relations with Jewish communities.
- Lacks formal alignment with recognized international and national standards, which might affect credibility.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders

3. Community

We will protect and enhance the community feel and the character of the Town, while ensuring the responsible use of resources and restoration of nature.

4. Quality of Life

We will foster a high quality of life for full-time and part-time residents of all ages and stages, while welcoming visitors.

F. Environmental Impacts

None

G. Financial Impacts

None at this time.

H. In Consultation With

Rashell Feldman, Georgian Bay Jewish Community Chair and Co-Founder

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Ryan Gibbons, Director of Community Services directorcs@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

None

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan Gibbons
Director of Community Services

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	CS.25.022 Follow Up Report Southern Georgian Bay Jewish Community.docx
Attachments:	
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This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Ryan Gibbons - Apr 17, 2025 - 10:08 AM