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Chair: Ms. Lena Metlege Diab



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• (0815)

[English]

The Chair (Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 105 of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on March 21, 2024, the committee is commencing its study on anti-Semitism.

Before we begin, I'd like to remind all members and other meeting participants in the room of the following important preventative measures.

To prevent disruptive and potentially harmful audio feedback incidents that can cause injuries, all in-person participants are reminded to keep their earpieces away from all microphones at all times.

As indicated in the communiqué from the Speaker to all members on Monday, April 29, the following measures have been taken to help prevent audio feedback incidents. All earpieces have been replaced by a model that greatly reduces the probability of audio feedback. The new earpieces are black in colour, whereas the former earpieces were grey. Please only use a black, approved earpiece. By default, all unused earpieces will be unplugged at the start of the meeting. When you're not using your earpiece, please place it face down on the middle of the sticker for this purpose that you will find on the table. Please consult the cards on the table for guidelines.

These measures are in place so that we can conduct our business without interruption and to protect the health and safety of all participants, including the interpreters. Thank you all for your co-operation.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format.

In accordance with the committee's routine motion concerning connection tests for witnesses, because we have witnesses today appearing in person and by video conference, I am informing the committee that I've been informed that all witnesses have completed the required connection tests in advance of the meeting.

For the benefit of the members and the witnesses, please wait until I recognize you by name before speaking.

Before we begin our study, I have one quick business note. The clerk has circulated the budget for the study in the amount of \$25,250, and I would seek approval from the committee.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): I move to approve.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Madam Gladu.

Are all in favour?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now continue. I will introduce our witnesses today.

For our first panel, we have Ms. Deborah Lyons, special envoy on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting anti-Semitism. From B'nai Brith Canada, we have Richard Robertson, director, research and advocacy. From the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, we have Richard Marceau, vice-president, external affairs and general counsel. From the Simon Wiesenthal Center Canada, we have Jaime Kirzner-Roberts, senior director, policy and advocacy, who is appearing by video conference.

Thank you very much, and welcome to you all.

[Translation]

To our esteemed witnesses in attendance, you may speak in French or English, as you wish.

You have five minutes each.

[English]

You each have five minutes for your opening remarks, after which we will proceed with the rounds of questions. I will ask Ms. Lyons to please commence her five minutes.

Thank you very much.

• (0820)

Ms. Deborah Lyons (Special Envoy for Preserving Holocaust Remembrance & Combatting Antisemitism, As an Individual): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the committee for your attention to this important subject.

[Translation]

Thank you for this opportunity to examine a topic that might be one of the most important issues our country is facing right now.

[English]

I also thank you for the opportunity to share a panel with respected colleagues. It is an honour to work closely with them to fight for a better Canada.

As everyone in this room knows, anti-Semitism is a non-partisan issue that impacts all of us, whether Jewish or non-Jewish Canadians. It is well known that anti-Semitism erodes democracy and, as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has recently concluded, it is a clear threat to national and international security.

My mandate, as many of you know, is to combat anti-Semitism and preserve Holocaust remembrance. It is both a domestic and an international mandate. My mandate does not—

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): I'm sorry to interrupt, Ms. Lyons.

Madam Chair, the interpretation isn't working. The information should be validated. I didn't want to interrupt the witness unnecessarily, but what she is saying is important and I would like everyone to hear it.

Is it possible to check to see what the problem is with the interpretation?

The Chair: Yes, we will check.

I am told that the interpretation is working now.

[English]

Ms. Lyons, we will not deduct any of that time. Please rest assured. Feel free to continue wherever you feel you need to.

If you feel you need to restart, please go ahead.

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Thank you. I think it would be best if I restart, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Absolutely. We will restart the clock.

I neglected to say this, but just so everybody realizes, I will raise this when we're at 30 seconds, and this when the time is up. I'll be a bit lenient if it's a couple of seconds. Otherwise, if I interrupt, don't take it personally. It's sort of the chair's job.

Thank you.

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Once again, thank you, Madam Chair and committee, for your attention this morning.

[Translation]

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss a topic that in my opinion is one of the most important issues our country is facing.

[English]

I thank you for the opportunity to share a panel with respected colleagues. It is an honour to work closely with them to fight for a better Canada.

As everyone in this room knows, anti-Semitism should be a non-partisan issue that impacts us all, whether Jewish or non-Jewish Canadians. It is well known that anti-Semitism erodes democracy,

and as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE, has recently concluded, it is a clear threat to national and international security.

My mandate is to combat anti-Semitism and preserve Holocaust remembrance. It is both a domestic and an international mandate. It does not have a geopolitical focus.

Madam Chair, there is so much hard work in front of us to be done on a wide range of issues, but we are here today to focus on university campuses. It is there, at our centres of learning, our sources of new knowledge and civil discourse, that I felt the greatest concern as I travelled across Canada.

Campuses cannot be considered places of learning or bastions of free expression as long as any students and faculties are not safe. Today, Jewish students and faculties are experiencing targeting, intimidation and anti-Jewish hate. Jewish students, particularly those who self-identify as Zionists, as I do, are facing a tsunami of anti-Semitism.

Let me quote here the Prime Minister's recent remarks. He said, "In a country like Canada, it should be and it must be safe to declare oneself a Zionist. Jewish or not, Zionism is not a dirty word or something anyone should be targeted for agreeing with".

I have heard from students, faculty and staff about serious issues as I travelled across Canada, ranging from the glorification of Hamas, a known terrorist group, and professors singling out Jewish students in classes and at protests, to Jewish students being harassed and physical threats. There were chants that all Zionists are racists or perverts, "go back to Europe" and "long live October 7", as well as outside agitators setting up camp on university property and blocking freedom of movement and the ability to learn.

Hate speech and workplace harassment are not consistent with free expression or academic freedom. Worse still is hearing that, when these issues are brought to the attention of university administrations, responses are frequently delayed or non-existent. Codes of conduct at most of our universities exist but are not being implemented.

Capitulation to those engaging in hate-filled activities corrodes the very values on which institutions of higher education are built and where all students must be able to learn without fear.

Since October 16, my office has met with Jewish communities across Canada—with Hillels, with Jewish students, with faculty, university presidents and administrations, and with provincial ministers of advanced education, who have direct responsibilities for universities. We will continue to work with all partners over the coming summer months to ensure a healthy campus environment for the return in September.

Based on these meetings, let me close with a few recommendations. First, anti-Semitism training is badly needed. This training should be tailored to university administrations, legal counsels and, most particularly, heads of EDI or DEI offices, security personnel and student-life professionals. Clearly defining anti-Semitism and understanding its many manifestations are crucial in combatting it.

We must also assist and encourage—second recommendation—post-secondary institutions and their leadership to implement their own policies. What we have seen is a reluctance to implement their own codes of conduct even when they relate to safety issues. The tools exist, and post-secondary institutions have a duty to act.

In closing, Madam Chair, when our Jewish citizens are targeted, it threatens the democratic ideals of equality and justice for all Canadians. We pride ourselves on being a diverse and inclusive multicultural society. In this moment, we are being put to the test. It is not an overreach to say that our shared humanity is at stake.

● (0825)

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Robertson.

● (0830)

Mr. Richard Robertson (Director, Research and Advocacy, B'nai Brith Canada): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am here on behalf of B'nai Brith Canada. B'nai Brith is Canada's oldest human rights organization and the voice of Canada's grassroots Jewish community. Our organization, which was established in 1875, is dedicated to eradicating racism, anti-Semitism and hatred in all its forms, as well as championing the rights of the marginalized.

B'nai Brith's submission to this honourable committee comes at a time when Canada's Jewish community is in crisis. In 2023, there was an alarming rise in anti-Semitism across Canada. B'nai Brith's annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents recorded an over 109.1% increase in anti-Semitism in comparison to the previous year. Our audit also noted that campuses across the country are increasingly becoming the setting for anti-Semitic acts. The situation for Jewish Canadian post-secondary students has become untenable.

The purpose of B'nai Brith's submission is to aid the committee in ensuring that its report contains recommendations that can be utilized by the federal government to effectively respond to the pressing needs of the nation's Jewish post-secondary students. It is essential that Canadian leaders work to ensure the continued safety and well-being of Canada's Jewish post-secondary students. For our democracy to continue to thrive, our campuses must remain environments conducive of the academic success of all our nation's students.

Members of this esteemed committee have the opportunity to contribute to the fight against anti-Semitism and to preserve the sanctity of Canada's post-secondary campuses by endorsing the following recommendations in their forthcoming report.

Our first recommendation is that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry work with Canada's federal research funding

agencies to amend their funding agreements with institutions to include as a component of the agreements a provision that all activities funded by the agencies are conducted in consultation with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of anti-Semitism as well as its illustrative examples.

The federal government adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism in 2019. In 2021, the federal government pledged to continue to enhance the adoption and implementation of IHRA's working definition of anti-Semitism and to encourage mainstreaming and implementation of the IHRA definition to dovetail with the Canadian adoption of the IHRA definition in June of 2019 as part of Canada's federal anti-racism strategy. B'nai Brith Canada's recommendation would bring the agreement between Canada's federal research funding agencies and post-secondary institutions in line with these commitments.

The funding agreements utilized by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada already contain the requirement that the institution receiving funding shall commit to develop and implement effective and equitable policies. It is the submission of B'nai Brith Canada that a provision requiring consultation with the IHRA definition and its illustrative examples is in the spirit of the existing agreements and with the guiding principles enumerated by the federal government in its anti-racism strategy.

It is B'nai Brith's further submission that such a provision will only serve an ameliorative purpose and ensure that Canada's inter-agency research funding is in line with its anti-racism strategy.

Our second recommendation is that the federal government include funding in its 2025 budget to develop a five-year program to enhance the IHRA literacy of post-secondary students. The federal government in its 2024 statement on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combatting anti-Semitism indicated that it strongly supports and encourages the wide adoption and implementation of the IHRA's non-legally binding working definition on anti-Semitism and illustrative examples.

It is the submission of B'nai Brith that efforts to ensure the wide application of the IHRA definition and its illustrative examples requires the federal government to invest in ensuring Canada's future leaders are familiar with the nuances of the definition and how its examples can function as a tool and guide.

B'nai Brith, as a partner in the Department of Canadian Heritage's community support, multiculturalism and anti-racism initiatives, or CSMARI, funding, held a round table discussion with grassroots community leaders across the country. A recurring theme in the feedback was the need for greater understanding of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. This mirrors comments B'nai Brith has received from Jewish students across the country.

• (0835)

The five-year program could be administered by the Department of Canadian Heritage, could utilize the resources of our special envoy's handbook and could be in the best interest of all Canadians.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Marceau, go ahead, please.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Vice-President, External Affairs and General Counsel, Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am here on behalf of CIJA, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

I'll be frank and direct: There is a crisis of antisemitism in Canada.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister called the recent rise of anti-Semitism "terrifying", and he's right.

Since October 7, we've seen in Toronto a 93% rise in hate crimes, the majority of which are directed at the Jewish community. In Vancouver, reports of anti-Semitism rose by 62% in 2023, and 70% of those occurred after October 7.

In Ottawa, the number of hate-related crimes and incidents rose in 2023 by 20%. In Ottawa, 1.4% of the population is Jewish, and Jews were the target of 27% of those crimes and incidents.

[*Translation*]

In Montreal, shots were fired at Jewish schools. Molotov cocktails were thrown at Montreal synagogues and community centres.

[*English*]

Bomb threats target Jewish schools in Toronto. Synagogues are picketed. Demonstrations take place around Jewish neighbourhoods for the sole purpose of intimidating their residents. Jewish-owned businesses are vandalized.

[*Translation*]

In our streets and on our campuses, we hear the apology of terrorism and violence.

[*English*]

On Parliament Hill, the very heart of Canadian democracy, on April 18, we heard praises for October 7, such as "Our resistance attacks are proof that we are almost free," and "Oct. 7 is proof that

we are almost free. Long live Oct. 7, long live the resistance, long live the intefadeh, long live every form of resistance."

This was on Parliament Hill.

[*Translation*]

On October 28, in Montreal, a controversial imam was given the microphone. In Arabic, he declared: "Allah, take care of these Zionist aggressors. Allah, deal with the enemies of the people of Gaza. Allah, identify them all, then exterminate them. And spare none of them."

Last week, we learned that he would not be charged.

[*English*]

Still in Montreal, yells of "death to the Jews" were heard in front of a Jewish school. It got so bad, the authorities were so passive, that the only solution the community found was to go to court to get injunctions to protect its institution. Let that sink in. An extraordinary recourse, those injunctions were granted and then extended and extended again.

[*Translation*]

The situation on university campuses is very bad. You heard certain things last week. You will hear more from the next group of witnesses. I will simply say the following.

[*English*]

The situation is so bad on campus that CIJA's legal task force is supporting a student at Toronto Metropolitan University for fostering a poisoned anti-Semitic environment. We are suing TMU. TMU breached its contract with her, breached its duties of care to her and discriminated against her by failing to apply its own policies and procedures explicitly designed to protect students like her from anti-Semitic environments.

We are putting universities on notice. There are and will be consequences for allowing anti-Semitism to take root on campus.

[*Translation*]

I could tell you about the situation in unions. I could tell you about the situation in the country's schools, where we have often had to protect students.

Since I don't have much time though, I will simply make eight recommendations.

[*English*]

One, political leaders must lead. That means there are laws on the books to deal with the current situation, but those are not applied. The justice minister must give clear direction that laws already on the books must be applied. Better training for courts, for police and legal systems is desperately needed.

[Translation]

Secondly, ban the Vancouver-based Samidoun group for its direct and open links with terrorist groups.

[English]

Three, create safe access legislation, also known as bubbles legislation. There is a role for Ottawa to play here.

[Translation]

Fourth, we have to combat online hate. That is something we will be discussing often.

• (0840)

[English]

Five, introduce the new anti-racism strategy and ensure no government funding goes to those promoting or platforming hate. In other words, no more Laith Marouf.

[Translation]

Sixth, ban the display of symbols of terrorist organizations that are listed under Canadian law.

[English]

Seven, list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. You voted twice for this. Now it's time to do it.

[Translation]

Eighth, improve the collection of data related to all of this.

[English]

I'll finish with this, Madam Chair. There's a crisis of anti-Semitism in this country. Words are not enough. We need action from you now.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Ms. Kirzner-Roberts, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

Ms. Jaime Kirzner-Roberts (Senior Director, Policy and Advocacy, Simon Wiesenthal Center Canada): Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

My name is Jaime Kirzner-Roberts, and I'm the senior director of policy and advocacy at the Simon Wiesenthal Center, based in Toronto.

I feel very privileged to be here today, to have the opportunity to speak to this room of esteemed lawmakers, alongside some truly fantastic community advocates like Mr. Marceau, Mr. Robertson and Special Envoy Lyons. Thank you for having me.

Since October 7, we have seen in our country an explosion of anti-Semitic hate, the likes of which we have not seen before. At ground zero of this problem are our nation's universities, which have served as fertile grounds for the mobilization and recruitment of anti-Semitic hate groups, where students, faculty and staff have been able to engage in the ugliest of hate speech and glorification

of violence and terrorism against Jews, without any fear whatsoever of consequences.

Jewish students have increasingly found themselves targeted by abuse from their peers, singled out by their professors, subjected to harassment and discrimination, and fearful that they will be discriminated against when it comes to grading. Students in some cases no longer feel safe physically even crossing their own campuses, as they know they will have to pass by protest encampments and demonstrations, which are perpetrating hateful rhetoric.

With respect to university administrations, we have seen, unfortunately, for the most part that they have leaned into political cowardice. We have seen an abject failure to hold accountable students, faculty and staff who have perpetrated the most ugly of hatreds, who have glorified the most ugly of terrorist acts. We have seen an effect on our campuses of a failure to make the strategic decisions to ensure that campuses remain safe for Jewish students, a failure of university leadership.

This is not the first time in the long history of Jewish people that we have seen universities become a breeding ground for the vilest anti-Semitism, a breeding ground for anti-Semitic hate groups. We have seen this all before in our long history, and we know where it leads. This is why we know that the time for action is now.

Simon Wiesenthal, the namesake of my organization, is a holocaust survivor who dedicated his life to justice. He said that freedom is not a gift from heaven; it is something we need to fight for every day.

I thank you all for joining me here today as we work together to fight for freedom for all students on our campuses, including Jewish students.

• (0845)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now begin with our round of questioning.

We will start with Madam Lantsman.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for joining us today, all of you, and for spending some time on this issue.

Ms. Lyons, I'm just going to start by asking a couple of questions with some examples that I have here.

The Canadian Foreign Service Institute either produces or shares with the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development what I see here as about 80 pages of training materials on anti-racism.

I'll start specifically with Global Affairs Canada. I know that you have a long, esteemed career at foreign affairs. However, in 80 pages of anti-racism, with all of the terms you can imagine and all of the sort of myths and facts—which, frankly, in my opinion, in some cases, invert history—there is not a single mention of anti-Semitism in any of these documents.

Do you really think that the Government of Canada can combat anti-Semitism if it fails to mention it in its own anti-racism training documents?

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Thank you very much for that question.

Look, I think one of the things that has become obvious, particularly since October 7—frankly, I felt it was obvious before I took the job—is that there's a lot of hard work to be done everywhere in our public service—federally, provincially, municipally—in businesses, in civil society and most certainly in the universities, as we've heard this morning and as you heard previously, to make sure that people understand anti-Semitism.

We need to make sure that the right training is in place and that the IHRA definition is better understood and implemented. That is exactly what we're working on doing right now, both in my office and within the Department of Canadian Heritage. In every one of the ministries, we are looking at the training that they have in place. We are working with the Canada School of Public Service on ensuring that we have those training programs.

You're quite right to point out that what we have now is sorely inadequate and has to change dramatically. I believe, sincerely, that we have the commitment of all ministers to make that happen. I can assure you we will, if we don't.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I'll talk about another piece.

This is a participant handbook called “Anti-Racism: Let's Talk”. I use this example because it's about 64 pages. It's still offered by Treasury Board as a training manual. This participant handbook, up until well after October 7, had no mention of anti-Semitism.

Now, it currently does have a mention of anti-Semitism—it was put in after October 7—but the definition of it is not an agreed-upon one. In fact, it's a definition provided by a fringe organization that wouldn't even be invited to a committee like this one to speak about anti-Semitism. There are changes being made, but they are the wrong changes.

In some cases, on things like the definition of racial trauma, which can be found on page 26 of this “Anti-Racism: Let's Talk”—which is not anti-racism at all—it talks about the experiences of Black people, indigenous people and people of colour. The definition just leaves out any mention of Jews, of Bosnians, of Armenians, of anybody who potentially experienced intergenerational trauma, something that the definition was probably based on when it came to fruition. Even the changes that are being made in government are the wrong changes.

Again, I ask, how on earth does a committee like this make recommendations to the Government of Canada if the Government of Canada, in fact, has a problem within that is being corrected with bigger problems?

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Thank you very much for the question from the esteemed member.

Again, I emphasize that we have a lot of hard work to do. We in no way have it right in terms of ensuring that the IHRA definition, which the Canadian Parliament and all parties approved and which is accepted by most of our provincial governments....

Thank you for the question because it gives me the opportunity to talk about the handbook on the IHRA definition that we hope to be releasing in June. There will be a clear explanation and interpretation of how the IHRA definition needs to be used to underpin all of our anti-Semitism training. You're quite correct to point out that, even as some of our people try to make adjustments and improvements, we are still not where we need to be. Again, there's hard work that needs to be done.

I believe the commitment is there. I know that the new anti-racism strategy 2.0 will be launched soon. We know that the government is looking at announcing their action plan combatting hate. All of these provide an opportunity for an intensive campaign, not just across the federal government but provincially and municipally, to ensure that anti-Semitism well understood.

What better time than now?

● (0850)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I want to put on record that—when this committee is making recommendations—some of the Canadian anti-racism materials that are cited as additional reading come from workbooks. One of them is entitled “Dismantling Racism”, and this is what it says. It does mention Jews, but only as a quick aside to say that Jews have opted to become white in order to benefit from white supremacy: “Becoming white involves giving up [parts] of your original culture in order to get the advantages and privileges of [belonging to a] white group.” This is the stuff that is cited by the Government of Canada in teaching people about racism. I cannot stress enough that this committee has no business making recommendations when the training in the Government of Canada is racist in itself.

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Madam Chair, may I respond?

The Chair: Yes, you have 10 seconds. Go ahead.

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Okay. I wasn't sure if your signal was for me or for the member.

Thank you very much, again, for pointing this out. I think that there is no question that some of the material—much of the material—needs further reworking. That is what my office is going to be doing, working with the public service right across our network. I think that what—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Ms. Lyons. Why don't we leave the rest?

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Okay. We'll let it go and come back to it.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Mr. Mendicino, you have the floor for six minutes.

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for appearing and for the roles that you are playing in combatting anti-Semitism. We need your leadership now more than ever because anti-Semitism has never been more pervasive in Canada.

Indeed, as we recently saw, B'nai Brith published its annual audit, reporting 5,791 anti-Semitic incidents committed in 2023, more than double the year prior, and those trends have only accelerated since October 7. The fact is that Jewish hatred is running rampant in Canada—in government, in business, in labour, in universities, in schools, in places of worship, in our neighbourhoods, everywhere.

Last time, the committee heard from a number of very brave Jewish students, and their stories were distressing. In universities around the country, young Jews are being marginalized, threatened and assaulted on campus, almost always without any recourse or enforcement of their own schools' codes of conduct. Just last week, my colleague Anthony Housefather and I went to UBC, and we saw for ourselves the illegal encampment there. We saw banners calling explicitly for the eradication of Israel and violence against Jews. We toured Emily Carr and saw a Jewish student's artwork vandalized with Jewish hatred. We spoke with Jewish professors and union members who've experienced anti-Semitism and who've seen no action, leading some—like Dr. Ted Rosenberg, who this committee will hear from shortly—to resign from their faculties.

The truth is that universities in Canada are not safe for Jewish students. We are, indeed, in a crisis. Many universities have diversity, equity and inclusion policies that make no reference whatsoever to anti-Semitism, which is shocking.

My question is for the government's special envoy, Ms. Lyons.

In my view, it's impossible to promote safe and inclusive campuses for everyone if DEI policies are completely silent on one of the most deeply entrenched forms of hatred and discrimination towards an identifiable group. Ms. Lyons, you spoke about your experiences with universities. Should universities update their DEI policies to make specific reference to anti-Semitism? Should they be engaging Jewish faculty, Jewish employees and Jewish students in doing so?

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Again, I just want to reiterate how important it is for this committee to be examining this issue and making recommendations. Our office is very much looking forward to not just the recommendations but also any research that you may have done in preparation for this committee that would help us to move forward in our work.

Absolutely, there is no question that EDI is failing Jews in this country. EDI is failing anti-Semitism. It focuses on a very narrow description of marginalized, racialized or equity-seeking groups, and it does not address anti-Semitism at all. That has to change. We have seen this over and over again, which is why we're working with EDI heads, and it's why, when we talk about working with university administrations, we focus particularly on EDI units. However, again, I would say that it's not just at universities. We also have to look at this in business environments and in our own government environments.

• (0855)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: I look forward to seeing that recommendation materialize in this committee's final report.

Second, I want to branch out on the need for greater training of law enforcement within this country when it comes to the prosecution of anti-Semitic hate speech, because the trends are deeply alarming. We've heard and seen demonstrators say things like, "All the Zionists are racists," "All the Zionists are terrorists," and, "Long live October 7," which was the single worst day of casualties to the Jewish people since the Holocaust during the Second World War.

The case of Adil Charakoui is perhaps one of the most egregious offences that I have seen, certainly since October 7. In the aftermath of October 7, he took to the streets in Montreal, denounced Zionists and called for the enemies of Gaza to be killed. He said, "spare none of them." As a former prosecutor, I found the decision not to pursue criminal charges incomprehensible and deeply problematic. Zionists are an identifiable group on racial, religious, national and/or ethnic grounds for the purposes of sections 318 and 319 of the Criminal Code.

My question is for anyone who wants to take it. I see Monsieur Marceau in the room. I know Ms. Kirzner-Roberts is also on the line.

Do we need greater training for law enforcement, including police and prosecutors, to help them understand what anti-Semitic hate speech is and to ensure that, in the application of our existing laws, we are keeping our communities safe?

Monsieur Marceau.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau: Thank you, sir.

[*English*]

In a word, yes, we need better training. I mentioned this. Judges need to be better trained. Law enforcement needs to be better trained. The entire system needs to be better trained. There is a lack of understanding of what anti-Semitism is and how pervasive it is.

I am with you. I am flabbergasted by the decision not to prosecute the imam you talked about. I was blown away that he was not prosecuted. I was blown away that the organizer of that demonstration gave him the microphone, knowing who this person is.

What we heard on Parliament Hill, the heart of Canadian democracy, on April 18 is unacceptable. I understand that the OPS, the Ottawa Police Service, is still investigating. It shouldn't be that hard. We heard what they said.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Thank you for that. That's my time.

The Chair: Yes, your time is up. Thank you very much.

I will now go to Monsieur Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Go ahead, Mr. Fortin.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Marceau, Ms. Lyons, Mr. Robertson and Ms. Kirzner-Roberts, thank you for being here with us today. I think this is an important study, as Ms. Lyons noted at the outset. It is among the most important topics that our committee will be studying this year, and we have to approach it seriously.

I listened carefully to my colleagues and to the witnesses, and I too am very concerned by what Mr. Adil Charkaoui said last fall. I also have trouble explaining the decision by Quebec's director of criminal and penal prosecutions not to go after Mr. Charkaoui. I am not questioning his decision and I'm sure he had good reasons for making it, as he does with all of his decisions. I do have questions though about our role as federal legislators. Isn't there something wrong here? Isn't there something we could do?

That is why my party introduced a bill recently that seeks to abolish the religious exceptions in the Criminal Code.

Under section 319 currently, it is prohibited to wilfully promote hatred, to publicly incite hatred or wilfully promote antisemitism. I will not read out the entire section, but it also stipulates defences, including if a person accused of such offences has in good faith expressed an opinion on a religious topic or an opinion based on a belief in a religious text, or attempted to establish an argument.

In our opinion, the Criminal Code should not include that kind of exception. We believe that the Criminal Code should apply to all citizens equally and that the rules for living in harmony right across Canada should be the same for everyone, regardless of religion or beliefs, and if a religion should happen to allow or advocate hatred or violence, that religion has no place in Quebec or Canada, in our humble opinion.

Ms. Lyons, do you think this kind of religious exception should be eliminated, which allows people to do something that would otherwise be considered a crime, simply by virtue of belief in a religious text?

• (0900)

[*English*]

Ms. Deborah Lyons: I would have to say that I was very impressed with the recommendation that came forward from your party on this.

We have seen with this recent case in Quebec the implications of using a religious defence. Certainly I think it's something we have to continue to examine. I'm discussing it right now with the Department of Justice and with others.

At this stage of the game, I'm not going to offer a final conclusion, but I am very interested in exploring this as an option. We are seeing it used in this country and in other places as a defence that, frankly, does not stand the ground in these very difficult times.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Lyons.

Mr. Marceau, I would also like to hear your thoughts on this.

Mr. Richard Marceau: Thank you, Mr. Fortin.

Religion is not an acceptable defence for inciting hatred and should never be, period. If I were an MP, as I was 25 years ago, I would vote for this bill.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Marceau.

What are your thoughts, Mr. Roberston?

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Robertson: It's the submission of B'nai Brith that what's at issue here is the scope in which the current law is being applied. The fact that this individual was given an exception to a speech that was being made outside of the church and that was not based in scripture is the problem. It's the current law. We have it on the books, as Mr. Marceau alluded to during his testimony, and it needs to be applied as rigorously as possible to ensure the safety of all Canadians, including Jewish Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Mr. Robertson.

Ms. Kirzner-Roberts, I will now turn to you at last, but not because your testimony is less important. I would like to hear your opinion on this.

[*English*]

Ms. Jaime Kirzner-Roberts: Thank you so much to the member for that question.

Look, I agree with you. Every Canadian has to be subject to the same laws and standards, and nobody's religion should excuse them for engaging in any kind of hate speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Since I have just a few seconds left, I want to thank you again for being here today. I hope we can make progress on this important battle against anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred, regardless of their basis.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

[*English*]

Now we'll go to Mr. MacGregor for the last six minutes of the first round.

• (0905)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to echo my colleagues in thanking all of the witnesses for being here to help inform this committee's study.

I found, in the opening statements from all of you, a common thread regarding the need for education and training, particularly with respect to Canada's post-secondary institutions. I want to see if we can turn the committee's attention to students before they get to post-secondary systems.

I had a pretty unique childhood in the 1980s in that I got to live in both Germany and Israel. I lived in Germany from 1982 to 1985. Some of my neighbours were former soldiers in the Wehrmacht, and I came to understand, from a very young age, the country's collective guilt for its role in the Holocaust. Later on, I spent a year living in Israel and, of course, came to know a few Holocaust survivors. I visited the memorial at Yad Vashem. Those two experiences had a profound impact on my life from a very young age and helped me understand the Holocaust and the collective experiences of Jewish people around the world.

Ms. Lyons, I know education is under provincial jurisdiction. However, do you think there is anything this committee could recommend to the federal government about partnering with provincial governments to equip students with the necessary knowledge before they reach post-secondary education institutions, so they may be less susceptible to the hatred that has been so clearly outlined here?

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Thank you so much for that very important question. Let me mention a few things in the opening.

We now have the majority of provinces, through their ministers of education, committing to mandatory Holocaust education in K-to-12 schools, which is to be implemented in the fall of 2025. We have an enormous opportunity here with the attention in our environment—unfortunately—right now around the issue of anti-Semitism. We have attention on the issue. We have a commitment from provincial ministers of education. In the recent budget, the federal government committed an additional \$5 million for the next five years, with \$2 million ongoing for Holocaust education. We have excellent commitment and tools in front of us now to get the job done of really allowing our children in K to 12 the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust.

Additionally, for this committee, we also need to ensure this is being tied to a better understanding of modern-day anti-Semitism and how these are connected, and do so in a way that also educates—I must admit—teachers and school boards about modern-day anti-Semitism.

I think, from this committee's perspective, if we could look at making sure that, as this education curriculum rolls out, it also applies to connecting to what hate environments do and the experience we're facing right now of modern-day anti-Semitism.

Thank you.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you.

Mr. Marceau, I'd like to turn to you for my next question.

One of my regular committees is the public safety committee. In 2022, I enjoyed a good working relationship with Mr. Mendicino when he was minister. One of our first reports was on the rise of ideologically motivated violent extremism. I took note in your opening comments about how police and security services were not

really acting on the laws already on the books, and about the fear many Jewish students are facing every time they go to a post-secondary institution.

One of our recommendations in that report was with regard to the security infrastructure program. We asked that it be more effective, accessible and responsive to community needs, including through expanded eligibility criteria and a simplified application process.

I know the 2024 budget increases the funding for that program, but is there anything you would like to see this committee recommend with respect to that program and how it may be tailored to address some of the things you've outlined so clearly?

Mr. Richard Marceau: Thank you, Mr. MacGregor.

Think about it. For many Jews, going to synagogue is like going through the airport. There's security at the door. Imagine your church or your temple having to go through that level of security. It is very expensive for members of the Jewish community, when they belong to a synagogue, to have to pay for this. Therefore, we're grateful that this program was put in place by the Conservative government. We are grateful that it has been bona fide under this current government. We are grateful that it seems to have support from every political party, but it can be better.

One of the things that I would suggest this committee look at is the Community Security Trust. That's the British model that creates a synergy between the Jewish community and law enforcement to make sure the security is dynamic and it's not simply helping institutions.

I'll close with this: We need training for prosecutors and not just police officers, because prosecutors—and Mr. Mendicino knows about this—have an important role and a crucial role to play in our justice system.

● (0910)

The Chair: Thank you.

Our time is tight. What I could do is shorten the second round a little bit and go with Mr. Morantz for three minutes, followed by three minutes, one and a half minutes and one and a half minutes.

Mr. Morantz, the floor is yours.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Thank you.

Mr. Marceau you said earlier that political leaders must lead. I would argue that the Prime Minister is leading but in the wrong way.

Since October 7, they have voted for a one-sided, anti-Israel motion at the United Nations, and a motion that was passed in the House of Commons punished Israel and rewarded Hamas. It punished Israel by blocking arms sales and rewarded Hamas by reinstating funding for UNRWA, which I know you are currently suing the federal government over. As well, they failed to unequivocally condemn the frivolous genocide convention claim launched in South Africa

If leadership comes from the top, this is exactly the wrong kind of leadership we need in the face of a B'nai Brith report that shows that anti-Semitism since October 7 has spiked by 208%. Wouldn't you agree?

Mr. Richard Marceau: Thank you, Mr. Morantz, for your question.

Our disagreement with the government on some of its decisions regarding the current Hamas-Israel conflict is well known, and we're public about that. Our disappointment with and our condemnation of the vote at the UN was public, and when we had to disagree with the government, we disagreed. We were talking—I don't remember if you were there, I apologize—at the Holocaust Memorial Day service in January. I was asked to speak. It was a big honour for me. One of the things I mentioned—and I tie it to Mr. MacGregor's question regarding the Holocaust—was that Holocaust education is important. It is central.

However, I'm reminded of that amazing book, which I invite you to read if you haven't. I'm sure you have. It's called *People Love Dead Jews*. Holocaust education is important. Remembering what happened and knowing more about the education regarding what happened is important. Let me close with this—

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Marceau, my time is limited.

Mr. Richard Marceau: I understand, but I just want to say—

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Robertson, what do you think of my question?

Mr. Richard Marceau: Please let me finish—

Mr. Marty Morantz: It is my time, Mr. Marceau.

Mr. Robertson, would you respond to my question?

Mr. Richard Robertson: I most certainly will.

B'nai Brith has been frustrated by some of what has been transpiring in some of the messaging we've heard from the federal government. We believe the federal government has put in place some strong precedents in terms of their commitment, such as the 2024 commitment to preserving Holocaust remembrance and to combating anti-Semitism. However, now more than ever we need action on this.

As Mr. Marceau said in his remarks, words are small. We need action, and the Jewish community needs a strong response from all members of Parliament. Fighting anti-Semitism cannot be a partisan issue.

Thank you.

The Chair: We will now go to three minutes for Ms. Dabrusin, please.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): The first question I have is for anyone who can answer. Are any universities in North America, be it Canada or the United States, getting it right? Are there examples that we should be looking at with universities that have good DEI policies?

Mr. Robertson.

• (0915)

Mr. Richard Robertson: I'm happy to answer that question.

There are universities in the United States that have shown great leadership by adopting the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. I think the better example to look at, though, is actually the United Kingdom, where the vast majority of educational institutions in the United Kingdom, including world-leading institutions like Oxford, Cambridge and Durham, have all adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. We need Canadian universities to follow the lead of these American, British and German institutions and to adopt the IHRA definition.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Okay. I don't have much time, so I'm going to ask anyone, if you have examples, to submit them to us in writing so that we have those as examples.

In this budget, we have committed to providing support to police colleges to increase training on handling hate crimes. Do any of you have suggestions as to what you would like to see in that training to make sure anti-Semitism is included?

Ms. Deborah Lyons: I'll mention just a few and pass to my colleagues.

First of all, we really appreciate all of the good support in the budget. It's excellent. It really was wind in our sails, particularly with regard to law enforcement, money for training and the work that CRRF is doing in terms of delivering training, but it has to be specific to anti-Semitism and it has to incorporate the IHRA definition. That is critical, and this committee should make that one of its recommendations, please. It's critical that we have that. The money to be well spent must incorporate the IHRA definition and training.

Second, as important an issue as it is, we have special prosecutors for auto theft. We have no special prosecutors for anti-Semitism or with a focus on hate crimes. I think this is a recommendation. Although I know it's provincial jurisdiction, it is necessary. I'll leave those two with you.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: If I can go to the next ones, it's going to be the same question, but just because I'm short on time, I'm also asking that if anyone has suggestions to put them in writing.

There was also funding starting this year for specialized training for crown prosecutors at the Department of Justice to raise awareness in the judiciary about the unique dynamics of hate crimes. If there are any suggestions on that, I have half a minute.

Monsieur Marceau.

Mr. Richard Marceau: In terms of police, a lot of police forces say that they don't really have the resources or the expertise to train their people well. I think there's a role to play for the federal government to basically have a turnkey program for prosecutors and for police forces to say, "You know what, police force? For this city, you don't have to do it. We're going to come in. We're going to train you. We're going to do it. It's a free service for you." In that way, you also ensure that there's consistency across the country.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Since I have just a minute and a half, you will forgive me for going quickly.

There is something I would like to know. We know there is a war being fought right now on the Gaza Strip. I will not attempt to summarize the news or offer a critique, but we know that international opinion is divided. Today we are talking about anti-Semitism in Canada and the fear expressed by the Jewish community in Canada.

Ms. Lyons, in your opinion, are events in Israel and Gaza having an impact on the events we are witnessing in Canada?

[English]

Ms. Deborah Lyons: Unfortunately, I think the answer is yes. It does have an impact.

Again, I would say that conflicts that happen in many parts of the world—and I have been present for a number of those—need not end up in our backyard with us fighting with one another. That is not what Canadian values suggest, nor is that who Canadians are.

Finally, I would say that we have not had our brains shrunk, either by COVID or by social media. We are capable of holding two thoughts in our mind and soul at the same time. It is possible to be pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian at the same time. Canadians have that capacity.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Ms. Lyons.

Mr. Marceau, we have a few seconds left. In your opinion, should a distinction be made between criticizing the state of Israel and anti-Semitism and its consequences?

The Chair: Your time is up, Mr. Fortin, but I invite Mr. Marceau to provide a written answer.

[English]

Mr. MacGregor, you have the final one and a half minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think that good government policy, no matter what department, depends on solid data.

Mr. Robertson, I'd like to turn to you and B'nai Brith.

Your organization provides an annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents, but if your organization and you were to look at the Government of Canada and Statistics Canada and the way they collect data,

are there any recommendations you would like to see in this committee's report on the quality, the quantity and the frequency? Do you have anything that you'd like to see this committee recommend?

• (0920)

Mr. Richard Robertson: For the most part, Statistics Canada's data has been similar to ours and, to me, I believe that indicates that Statistics Canada is on the right track.

What I would like to see, and what I believe would be helpful specifically when it comes to fighting anti-Semitism on campuses, is the further collection of data, both qualitative and quantitative, about Jewish experiences specifically on campuses. I think that is something that's lacking, and I think that funding to enable an organization or the federal government to do that will help us to really understand just how critical the situation is on campuses across Canada.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Marceau, I saw your hand.

Mr. Richard Marceau: Very quickly, Statistics Canada, yes, gets good data, but it's always a year behind. When you talk with the U.S., France and Britain, they basically can get the information if not in a weekly way, at least in a monthly way. This helps everybody, including decision-makers, and that is something that Canada should be able to do.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you very much to our witnesses. This concludes this panel.

I want to thank all of you for coming today and for providing us specific recommendations that will help us. Again, if there is anything that you feel you have not been able to share with us, please send it to us in writing. Thank you very much.

I'll suspend for two minutes in order to allow our panellists for the second round either to be tested or to come to the front.

Thank you very much.

• (0920)

(Pause)

• (0925)

The Chair: Everybody, welcome back to our second panel.

I am informed that the sound test is done for the witness who is appearing by video conference. I would ask the witnesses who are in the room to please take their seats. Thank you very much.

Welcome to our witnesses for the second panel. We have with us today, as an individual, Dr. James A. Diamond, Joseph and Wolf Lebovic chair of Jewish studies, University of Waterloo, by video conference. We also have Dr. Ted Rosenberg, doctor, in his own capacity. We have, from the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics, Dr. Deidre Butler, associate professor; and Dr. Cary Kogan, professor.

I will ask each of the three—the two individuals and the one organization—to speak for up to five minutes. I will raise a card when there are 30 seconds left, and I will let you know, gently, that time is up.

We will commence right now with the first person I have on my document, who is appearing with us by video conference. The sound has been tested, and all is okay.

Dr. Diamond, the floor is yours for up to five minutes. Thank you.

Dr. James A. Diamond (Joseph & Wolf Lebovic Chair of Jewish Studies, University of Waterloo, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair.

I really am honoured to address the committee. Thank you for inviting me to these very important deliberations on anti-Semitism.

I'll begin with my own personal encounter with one of these encampments at the University of Toronto. I sent you, and I hope you have, the letter that I penned to the administration of the University of Toronto. It was quite a shocking encounter I had. If you'll notice, my letter does not contain one single word about Jews, about Israel, about Gaza—nothing like that. I tried to actually pen a critique to the university about behaviour, general behaviour.

I must add that the only reason I could offer for having had that very shocking, insulting and humiliating encounter was that I was visibly Jewish. That is, I was wearing a yarmulke, or kippah, on my head. I had come from a conference between members of different faiths at the pontifical institute. The level of conversation could not have been more distinct—from the sublime to the obscene, I would say.

That's a bit about my encounter and about what's been going on there. I think what's happening is that many different causes, what people might call “progressive” causes, are being conflated with the situation in Israel and the current conflict. This is nothing new, by the way. This has gone on for decades. I'm showing my age, but I was an undergrad in 1973 at the University of Toronto. The same things were happening, except now I think you would add the toxic ingredient of social media. That's another factor that hopefully you'll take into consideration when you address problems of anti-Semitism.

What's happened now is that anti-Semitism has always operated under different guises—whether it was anti-Judaism, for instance, in its beginnings; whether it was racism, anti-race, which anti-Semitism really culminated in during the Second World War during the Holocaust; or whether it was economics. Marx himself penned a treatise on Jews and money, an obscene treatise that Jews have been suffering from ever since. It cuts across all spectrums: left, right, it doesn't matter. I wouldn't use the term “racism” here. I think it is a unique form of discrimination.

The way I see it, what's happening in the academy and what's happening with these encampments is that anti-Semitism has now taken the form of anti-Israel, anti-Zionism, and it's been legitimized that way. That's not to say that you can't critique a government. You certainly can critique Israel, but the obsessive-compulsive disorder, as you can see, that is solely focused on this particular conflict is

for me inexplicable without that dimension. The dimension that distinguishes the State of Israel from all other states is its Jewish dimension. I can't explain this single-minded focus as opposed to far greater humanitarian crises—in the Sudan, for instance, happening now. By orders of magnitude, that gets nothing.

For me, as an academic, this is another form. I think the vice-chair, Mr. Fortin, asked this question at the end of the last session. It certainly is very inextricably tied. I just want the committee to be attuned to what the IHRA definition brings to the fore, that this is another guise of anti-Semitism—not all of it, not all critiques, but I think it explains a lot of what's going on.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

● (0930)

The Chair: Thank you very much for your opening comments. We are checking on the letter you referred to. Once it's translated, it will be submitted to all members of the committee.

Dr. James A. Diamond: Thank you.

The Chair: Dr. Rosenberg, please proceed.

Dr. Ted Rosenberg (Doctor, As an Individual): Thank you, Madam Chair. I truly feel honoured to be here today.

I feel the weight of Jewish physicians and health care workers across Canada, who feel attacked and marginalized in our universities and hospitals. I feel the weight of the majority of Canadian Jews, who have been shocked by the unprecedented outbreak of anti-Semitic Jew hatred and are demoralized by the inadequate response from our leaders. I feel the weight of thousands of Canadians, who are appalled by the blatant hatred, harassment and violence that have drowned out civil discourse and taken over our universities, streets, theatres and shops.

In January 2024, I resigned as an assistant professor from the UBC faculty of medicine because I believe UBC, like most medical schools and universities across the country, allowed naked Jew hatred to creep in, which has now become systemic.

I'm a physician who's been privileged to study and practise medicine for over 40 years. I have worked in remote indigenous communities and in public health and research, and I have spent the past 20 years doing house calls for frail seniors. I love teaching and mentoring.

Now, according to students and colleagues, like any supporter of Israel, I am falsely labelled a racist who supports the white, European, settler-colonial apartheid and genocidal regime that deliberately starves and ethnically cleanses populations and murders women and children. Can you think of anything more odious? How can any person of good conscience feel anything but contempt and hatred for any person who supports such a loathsome regime? That is who they say I am.

In November 2023, demonizing accusations about the so-called Israeli settler-colonial regime occupying and murdering Gazans for 75 years were circulated in a petition signed by one-third of the UBC medical school class. Similar false accusations of genocide were echoed by Gem Newman in his valedictorian speech at the U of M, my alma mater, to a standing ovation.

In addition to accusations about murdering 35,000 Gazan women and babies, he also included accusations of intentionally bombing hospitals and the deliberate murder of physicians and journalists. These were shared as facts, despite the al-Ahli hospital bombing being discredited and the tragic civilian casualty figure being downgraded by 50% by the UN the week before his speech. Sadly, facts have become irrelevant, even in faculties of medicine, which used to pride themselves on being evidence-based and scientific.

UBC medical professors and senior residents posted blood libels about organ trafficking, Christ killing and anti-Semitic conspiracies with impunity. They reposted that Zionist physicians, Jews like me, are racist and demanded that they be removed from the selection process for postgraduate resident positions.

These are not innocuous political differences. How are Jewish physicians supposed to teach students who hold us in such contempt? Will Jewish patients be safe with physicians who call to wipe Israel off the map? Will physicians who despise Israel and call for an academic boycott be willing to collaborate with Jewish colleagues over research, or even patient care?

I doubt I would be admitted to medical school in 2024. Do you want a health care system that prioritizes ideology and decentred and decolonized medicine over individual patient care?

There were 284 physicians who wrote a letter to the president and dean, Dermot Kelleher, expressing concerns about harassment, blatant anti-Semitism and a toxic, hyperpoliticized environment. He refused to meet with us.

We found out that anti-Semitism or Jew hatred is not officially recognized in the DEI search engine for vulnerable groups. This is despite a Canadian government 2023 document warning about the surge of anti-Semitic hate crimes on Canadian campuses.

In addition to the administration's tolerance of demonization, our concerns about Jew hatred were illegitimate. In fact, the faculty of medicine refused to acknowledge in their poster for International Holocaust Remembrance Day that the Holocaust was the anti-Semitic murder of six million Jews by the Nazis. Our concerns were illegitimate. We were told it was a universal lesson, not particular to the Jews. The poster was changed only after threats from donors.

We are also subjected to a double standard. There is, rightly, zero tolerance for homophobia, Islamophobia, misogyny or anti-Black and anti-indigenous discrimination. Every other group can define what they experience as systemic hatred, but for some reason, the Jews can't. Somehow, it's more complicated, just like the Ivy League presidents indicated. Calls for genocide against the Jews on campus can be acceptable. It's contextual. What about calls for genocide against Black or indigenous people? Are they also contextual?

Demonization, delegitimization and double standards—the three Ds—are excellent indicators to determine when legitimate criticism of Jews and the State of Israel crosses into hatred.

We are told by deans, presidents and politicians that the students are just expressing their right to free speech, venting their moral outrage and participating in social justice activism.

● (0935)

I'd like to remind them that after World War I, German students were also outraged by injustice and poverty. Russian students were outraged by the exploitation of workers. Chinese students were outraged by authority during the Cultural Revolution. Graduates from the Sorbonne, no less, and the Khmer Rouge were outraged by capitalism and western colonialism. Where did this end?

Now the students are outraged by Zionism.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rosenberg.

I will now ask the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics to share their five minutes however they please.

Thank you.

Dr. Deidre Butler (Associate Professor, Network of Engaged Canadian Academics): Thank you.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the committee, we thank you for the opportunity to share our insights into and expertise about the state of anti-Semitism on Canadian campuses.

My name is Deidre Butler. I am an associate professor of Jewish studies at Carleton University.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Cary Kogan (Professor, Network of Engaged Canadian Academics): Hello, Madam Chair.

My name is Cary Kogan and I am a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Ottawa.

[English]

We are the co-founders of the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics, or NECA. NECA is a non-partisan group of Jewish and non-Jewish academics who are united in our shared concerns about rising anti-Semitism on Canadian campuses. We are a Canadian network of more than 300 academics from 40 universities and colleges across all disciplines. We advocate for academic freedom, diverse perspectives and an expansive understanding of inclusion.

Anti-Semitism is flourishing on campuses. It has reached crisis levels and represents a serious threat to Canadian democracy. It should trouble us all.

Dr. Deidre Butler: We see the results of this crisis, especially since October 7.

For example, a Jewish student was called a “dirty Jew” by his lab partners. The student appealed for help. His professor instructed him to stop complaining. On one campus, graffiti depicted a Star of David on a scaffold with a swastika. On another, a Jewish student's mural that called for peace after October 7 was defaced with threats, including “I'm going to kill you”. Posters advocating the return of hostages have been repeatedly ripped down and pins stuck in the eyes of a victim. A student organization distributed stickers on campus displaying a hand tossing a Molotov cocktail. A Canada-wide student club is calling for anonymous tips to identify faculty members, instructors and courses that include “Zionist narratives” so they can “keep our campus safe from Zionist perspectives”.

Often, Jewish students aren't reporting these incidents because university policies are not being applied and officials do not recognize anti-Semitism when it happens. This hostile climate is a threat not only to Jewish people but also to the core values of Canadian society. It undermines open dialogue, diversity of ideas and the search for truth, which make our universities an essential part of a liberal democracy.

Dr. Cary Kogan: This isn't new. Its deep roots are evident in the speed, intensity and acceleration of anti-Semitic hate. Canadian campuses began convulsing with anti-Semitic activity while Hamas terrorists were still in Israel slaughtering innocent civilians, long before Israel launched its military response. Many on campuses say they're not anti-Semitic but merely anti-Zionist. You will even hear that a small minority of Jewish students and faculty share this view.

Do not be fooled. Political criticism of Israel is absolutely acceptable and appropriate. Spend time in Israel and you will hear similar criticisms. A willingness to engage in criticism is core to Jewish values. However, this is not what we're seeing. Rather, calls for the violent erasure of the only Jewish state in the world and of the long history of Jewish people in this place and claims that Israel is uniquely evil or categorically unfit to determine its own destiny are racist. We see that overt racism in the campus examples we cited earlier, and in many others.

Dr. Deidre Butler: We see the damage done to students. They say they avoid certain courses not because they cannot have hard conversations but because their perspectives are rejected and belittled. As well, they are forced to use course materials that make lurid, false claims about Jews and Israelis and that include data drawn from Hamas publications. Fellow students and their profes-

sors single them out to answer for the actions of the Israeli government.

Academic freedom is supposed to encourage the exploration of challenging ideas without fear of reprisal. This is crucial for intellectual growth, yet departments have published statements claiming that the only correct position on this conflict is one that aligns itself with the destruction of Israel. Some even justify rape and murder as tools for liberation. Departments sign one-sided statements demonizing Israel, stifling alternative viewpoints and imposing loyalty tests.

Anti-Israel activists claim they are being silenced while cynically demanding boycotts of Israeli academics. Make no mistake. Boycott and divestment are threats to academic freedom and responsible university governance. Anti-Semitism presents a serious and urgent threat to campus culture and student safety. Our leaders must acknowledge and confront its ugliness, its new and evolving forms, and the harm it poses.

Thank you.

• (0945)

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now start with our rounds. Depending on timing, we'll see what happens after that.

We'll start with our first round of six minutes with Mr. Majumdar, please.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to all of you for your excellent contributions today, and apologies for the climate in which you have to appear before this committee.

Dr. Diamond, perhaps I could start briefly with you.

I only have six minutes, so I'm looking for a quick response. You set the table about the evolution of anti-Semitism over the ages, and it strikes me that you have concluded, sir, that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism today. Just to be precise, would you agree with that?

Dr. James A. Diamond: Yes. Zionism—the definition of Zionism—is kind of a Jewish liberation movement for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. If you are anti-Zionist, then for me you are singling out the Jewish people, of all other peoples, as not having the right to a national homeland. In this case, it's perhaps one of the only indigenous peoples—it's ironic—to return to their homeland. There's always been a community of Jews—always—in Israel, so yes—

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Thank you, sir. I'm sorry to interrupt. It's just in the interest of time—

Dr. James A. Diamond: No problem.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: The State of Israel is probably the most remarkable indigenous revival on planet Earth over the last 75 years.

We saw recently, Dr. Diamond, that international courts have been weaponized against Jewish people and the State of Israel. Would you say, in your experience, that the ICJ shenanigans had a material impact on how Jewish life was impacted on Canadian campuses?

Dr. James A. Diamond: Absolutely. It's simply another kind of legitimization of this insidious form of anti-Semitism that I would call "anti-Zionism". What it does is lend credibility to this phenomenon that, for me, again, has unleashed another form of anti-Semitism, which has morphed many times over the ages.

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Over the 1990s, we saw the introduction of critical theory thinking, in which pluralism was used as a normative guise for moral relativism, for equivalencies.

In that same context was the birth of the International Criminal Court, which today we see being weaponized yet once again through its equivalencies against the democratic law-abiding State of Israel, which is capable of implementing its own decisions and jurisprudence over war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression, versus the terrorist entity that is Hamas, which is interested not in any rule of law but in the obliteration of an entire state, being backed by another state, the state of Iran.

Do you fear for how the ICC is presently being weaponized against Canadian Jews and across the Canadian academy?

Dr. James A. Diamond: Absolutely. I'll give my perspective from an academic point of view.

On the encampment that is presently active in the University of Waterloo, my administration, addressing the protesters' calls.... I'll read to you if I may, just briefly. This is a public communication. They are dialoguing with protesters about their demands for "divestment from companies...and complete severance from any academic or cultural institutional ties with Israeli institutions".

This is quite incredible to me. On freedom of expression, they're fine. I'm fine with that, but freedom of expression doesn't mean that I need to listen to your expression. To divest from Israeli academic institutions—citing what you just mentioned, things like the ICJ or the ICC—in supporting these demands would lead to suppression of academic freedom, particularly targeting Jewish academics, particularly targeting Jewish academic institutions.

• (0950)

Mr. Shuvaloy Majumdar: Thank you very much for saying that, sir, because I think that now is a time in which we should be responding, as some of your colleagues have said, with rededication to the freedom of critical thinking rather than the indoctrination of critical theory.

Perhaps I could close with this question. We're watching in the United States a bipartisan consensus emerging for sanctioning the ICC for how it is weaponizing terrorist propaganda against free-thinking people and, particularly, our treasured Jewish communities

across the western world. Do you think Canada should consider something similar?

Dr. James A. Diamond: Absolutely. I'll just mention one particular facet of this seeking of arrest warrants. You have Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor, pinning up mug shots of Yahya Sinwar, the leader of the atrocities, alongside Netanyahu. Why was that done? I mean, they could have, let's say, sought arrest warrants for Sinwar a number of months ago. The evidence was there for everybody to see. All the news media had seen this. However, of course, this was carefully orchestrated to put a democratic regime that is fighting for its survival alongside a leader of a terrorist group that committed rapes, atrocities, unimaginable.... I've actually spoken to the group that—

The Chair: Dr. Diamond, thank you very much.

I will now go to Mr. Housefather, please, for six minutes.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses. You've brought some very important testimony.

Dr. Rosenberg, on a whole, if you were to grade the universities in Canada—not singling out one university but as a whole—on how they're handling anti-Semitism since October 7, what grade would you give them?

Dr. Ted Rosenberg: I would give them an F.

I want to show you.... I have some posters here about some of the Jew hatred that is accepted in the faculty of medicine.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: I'll get to that. Get ready for that moment. Thank you very much.

Ms. Butler...? Mr. Kogan...?

Dr. Cary Kogan: I can respond.

I would say that they haven't shown up for class. They haven't turned in the assignments, so we can't even grade them. That's where we're at.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you.

Dr. Diamond.

Dr. James A. Diamond: I can speak in terms of my own institution. I think they've been trying to handle this. I wouldn't give them an F. However, as I said in my last response, to actually dialogue and consider divestment...that is quite shocking to me. On that particular issue, I would give them an F.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: Thank you.

Dr. Diamond, I don't think everybody had exactly what you experienced at the University of Toronto, and I want to read from an email that you sent to University of Toronto about what you experienced. You said:

A large group of what can only be described as masked thugs blocked my movement and maniacally and menacingly screamed obscenities at me such as “go back to your country”; “you will never get by me”; followed by a string of vulgar expletives unworthy of repeating.

Now, Dr. Diamond, how did that make you feel? I've heard from many students and faculty members across the country that they're experiencing the same when walking around these encampments.

Dr. James A. Diamond: Obviously that was.... I'm an academic, a senior academic for many years. I've never been confronted this way. As a young man, I had various anti-Semitic incidents but never in my career as an academic. It was humiliating. However, it was also the only thing, as I said before, that could explain that kind of reaction, especially the the shouts of “go back to your country”. I was born and raised in Canada. My parents and my in-laws are survivors of the Holocaust. They came, and they worked all their lives, you know, and loved Canada for what it offered them.

When they said that to me, all that kind of came to my mind, and my thoughts were these: Is this all disintegrating? Are we reverting back to a situation that my parents perhaps faced many years ago?

• (0955)

Mr. Anthony Housefather: You know if they would have faced that.... It's hurtful, it's anti-Semitic, and it's happening across this country.

Dr. Rosenberg, the biggest-ever personal donation to the University of Manitoba—\$30 million—was given by philanthropist Ernest Rady to name the medical school after his father, Max Rady. He recently complained to the school about the speech of the valedictorian at the medical school graduation. He basically said that the “speech not only dishonoured the memory of [his] father, but also disrespected and disparaged Jewish people as a whole”. This is where the valedictorian chose to take the medical school graduation—in front of many graduates and faculty who are Jewish—and turn it into a diatribe against Israel.

How does that...? When that happens, Dr. Rosenberg—because you described very well how it made you feel as a faculty member—what happens to a Jewish faculty member or a Jewish student who is in that graduating class?

Dr. Ted Rosenberg: It's terrible. I can tell you that when the petition went around from the UBC medical students, we felt it like this massive gut punch. Worse than that, like the ovation that was heard at the University of Manitoba, was the silence from our colleagues. Not only was there silence, but there were social media attacks on students who said they wouldn't sign the petition. It was terrible for us.

I can tell you, as an academic who has spent 30 years teaching and who loves teaching, I was truly afraid of an accusation of implicit harassment by these students, just by virtue of the fact that they may have found out that I'm Jewish and that I support the State of Israel. There's no way to defend ourselves against that harassment and that accusation.

I'll make one last comment. I was in touch with physicians from Ontario yesterday. Over 110 physicians from Ontario, who are academic physicians, are almost certainly going to withdraw their affiliation with the University of Toronto because they are so ashamed.

What we're looking at is a medical system across Canada that will soon be Judenrein if this continues.

Mr. Anthony Housefather: It's even more poignant in the sense that the school is named for a Jewish donor. The Jewish community contributes so much to the medical community in Canada, yet we feel shut out by this yelling and screaming, and these epithets and comments that simply attack us for our identity as Zionists.

Ms. Butler and Mr. Kogan, do you want to comment on that?

Dr. Cary Kogan: I think we just need to point something out that's really important, which is based on actual data about what we know about Jewish Canadians. This is from Robert Brym's study that just came out last month, which tells us that 91% of Canadian Jews would say that they support the State of Israel and the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state. We know that when people are attacking people for their core identity, which is their connection with Israel, they are attacking the Jewish community.

Dr. Deidre Butler: To the point about convocations, we're about to head into convocation ceremonies across Canada and there's grave concern.

At my own university in the fall, there was a very quick burst of pro-Palestinian celebration, which was felt very differently, of course, by the Jewish community there, when it was only a few weeks after October 7. Many people came—

The Chair: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Kogan, Dr. Butler, Dr. Rosenberg and Dr. Diamond, thank you for being with us today. This is an important study, and your input is equally important.

Dr. Diamond, I would like to pick up on something you said earlier. I really like what you said about freedom of expression not necessarily requiring others to listen. I completely agree with you and I wanted to point that out right away.

Of course, I think we all agree that anti-Semitism is unacceptable. In any case, I don't know anyone who disagrees. We are here to look for ways to improve things. Otherwise, we would simply be talking for the sake of it, which is not very productive. So we are looking for ways to better protect freedom of religion and freedom of expression across Quebec and Canada. This is of concern to me and leads me to a question. If I understand what you are asking for or what the Jewish community is asking for, it is freedom of religion, respect for religious beliefs, in the same way that other religions are respected. I would like to clarify that with you, Dr. Diamond.

Is that indeed what you are asking for, that everyone should be treated the same way, or are you asking for something specific for the Jewish community?

• (1000)

[English]

Dr. James A. Diamond: I can't speak on behalf of the entire Jewish community in Canada, and what you said perfectly are just kinds of ways of looking at anti-Semitism.

I'll focus my concern on my own area in the academic community and what I see this leading to. In terms of freedom of expression and freedom of religion people, make a mistake by looking at Jews as people who just practice a religion. Jews are far more than that. They're are a nation. They're a people. They're a culture.

From an academic viewpoint, I'll just mention one thing. As a result of everything that's going on, there has been an astonishing range of discriminatory practices against Jewish academics. These include termination of scientific collaborations, cancellation of conference invitations, refusal to consider scholarly submissions to journals, rejections of promotion evaluations and withdrawals of offers for academic appointments, among many other instances.

From my kind of narrow perspective, this is really a pernicious phenomenon. It is a form of anti-Semitism that suppresses academic freedom within the academy, which will have unbelievable ramifications far beyond Jews.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Dr. Diamond.

In an ideal world, or in an ideal Quebec or Canada, and I support this, people would be able to talk about everything freely, about all religions, philosophies and ways of thinking, and no one would have to listen or agree with what was said.

In my view, when a university has theoretical discussions that people disagree on, that is not only normal but it is actually healthy. That is what we want. We want everyone to be free to practise their religion and have their beliefs.

Do you agree with that statement, Dr. Diamond?

[English]

Dr. James A. Diamond: Absolutely. You described exactly how I conduct my classes. I have only a couple of rules in my classes. You don't make your point by raising your voice. You don't make your point by sloganeering. You make your point in civil discourse and offer cogent reasoning. Those are my rules in a class. If you could do that, if you could abide by that, then we listen.

I don't listen to demands. If a student says, "I demand that you subscribe to this opinion", then I probably will tell them, "Maybe you could leave the classroom, and we'll continue our discussion."

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Dr. Diamond.

I have barely a minute left and I would like Dr. Kogan to answer my question briefly.

Dr. Cary Kogan: I completely agree with Dr. Diamond. What we are seeing on campuses is the reduction of university freedom. This is in fact happening at all Canadian universities.

It really worries me that there is only one way of looking at things in the classroom. That does not allow other people their freedom of expression.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Dr. Kogan.

Dr. Rosenberg, I have about thirty seconds left. Can you answer briefly?

Madam Chair, it seems that the interpreters are behind, so I will ask Dr. Butler to answer my question.

My apologies, Dr. Rosenberg.

[English]

Dr. Deidre Butler: I would amplify what Professor Kogan is saying.

In the university, we need to be arguing using evidence-based decision-making and using arguments that are based on reason. We don't all have to agree with each other, but we have to be able to be civil with each other. You don't have to subscribe to a belief to understand an argument. Without viewpoint diversity, we're only hearing one argument, and that's our problem right now.

• (1005)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Fortin.

[English]

Ms. Butler, thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. MacGregor, please.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'd like to thank all the witnesses for joining us today and helping inform this committee on its study into this very difficult subject.

In a perfect world, universities are a place where we should be able to have difficult conversations on a wide range of subjects. I think all of our witnesses have clearly differentiated between that and the vile hatred that exists for so many Jewish students on campuses across Canada. Thank you for that. I think your comments, coming from the academic perspective, mirror and echo what this committee has heard from students, so thank you for adding that important perspective.

I'd like to turn my first question to the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics.

We're dealing with a number of jurisdictions here, federal and provincial, and one question I have for you involves that. This is the justice committee, and we're ultimately making recommendations to the federal government.

Is there anything additional that you would like to see in how the federal government works with post-secondary education ministers of provincial governments? Is there anything missing in that relationship or anything the federal government could do to aid those ministers in the responsibilities that they have for post-secondary institutions within their respective provinces?

Dr. Deidre Butler: We have a few suggestions, of course.

The first thing I would say is that we lack really good data in terms of what's happening on our campuses. Partially, that has to do with the reporting systems that exist on our campuses across Canada, where reports aren't being taken. They aren't being heard. If they're heard, they're not seeing anti-Semitism, and they're certainly not being counted as anti-Semitism. If you speak to university presidents and administrations, and they say there's no problem. We are telling you there is a very serious problem.

We need good data, and it has to be unbiased data that everyone can accept as authentic and legitimate.

I would then go on to talk about EDI, but do you want to...?

Dr. Cary Kogan: Sure, I can speak about that.

I think we have an issue right now, and in fact, we have submitted a grant request to SSHRC, actually, to look at this issue of the way that the equity, diversity and inclusion frameworks that are on our campuses are not speaking to Jewish people, are not speaking to anti-Semitism, and in fact in some cases are using an ideological framework that divides the world into black or white, victimized or victimizer, and oppressed or oppressor.

What happens is that Jews get shoehorned into this framework inappropriately. It's an inappropriate application.

I would say that we need to strengthen these EDI frameworks and make sure that there's an inclusion of the Jewish experience, and also of anti-Semitism, in a way that actually will protect and recognize the Jewish experience.

Dr. Ted Rosenberg: Thank you. I would just like to make two comments.

First of all, anti-Semitism is not recognized at UBC's faculty of medicine. If you go on their search engine, it doesn't exist. How can you say there's a problem if it doesn't exist? If you feel discrimination, make a complaint that you're discriminated against, but don't say you're Jewish or that it's Jew hatred or anti-Semitic.

There was a survey that went around UBC this week for all the faculty of medicine asking what group they considered themselves in. They had every single group except Jews.

The second point I want to make is about DEI. It's not just that this is a very narrow definition of your Marvel universe of oppressors and oppressed, oppressors who could do no good and oppressed people who could do no wrong. It's also that as Jews, we have been cast as white, privileged and also, worst of all, the apex oppressor in support of settler colonialism, which right now is the worst possible epithet that you could say against anyone in Canada.

That's where Jews stand right now.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you for that.

I went to university. My undergrad was at the University of Victoria and I did my master's degree at Royal Roads, both on Vancouver Island. I guess the big difference then, especially in my undergrad days, was that we didn't have social media. It is an incredibly different environment now on campuses with social media—the fact that anyone could have their face livestreamed out in public and immediately their image is shared through social media accounts.

There has been a lot of discussion at various federal committees on taking social media companies to task, making them accountable for their standards, for the algorithms that push people into these dark corners. I know this intimately because I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. We have delved deeply into ideologically motivated violent extremism. We have had expert testimony on how social media companies make money off of algorithms pushing people.

Can you just talk a little bit about it from your perspectives as academics? Is there anything more you would like to see this committee recommend with respect to how we make sure social media companies are accountable for the terms and conditions on their platforms? We have to remember that these are not public spaces. They are private spaces, and they are in the ownership of a company that is trying to make money.

● (1010)

Dr. Deidre Butler: A very quick answer is to pay attention to the ways in which the problems we're seeing on campuses around anti-Semitism are coordinated, and they're coordinated through social media. The messages and the chants that we are finding so egregious and frightening as Jews in our community are coming across social media and circulating.

I know we're running out of time, but that's the issue really—it becomes a place to amplify hate.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I am going to do a second round, and we're going to go to three minutes, three minutes, one and a half minutes, and one and a half minutes. I will be strict on time as much as I can.

We will begin with Ms. Lantsman, please.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Thanks.

First of all, thank you, everybody, for your testimony. If you have any documents, please share them with the committee.

Dr. Rosenberg, you said something about DEI. There have been some victories against DEI, let's say, at MIT, where statements are no longer required in hiring practices.

Do you believe this is salvageable at university or not? I have a follow-up question, given that you also practise as well as teach.

Dr. Ted Rosenberg: First of all, I'd say that, historically and presently, there has been and is discrimination against very vulnerable groups: indigenous people, people of colour, homophobia, etc. That is real.

The question is this: Is DEI the answer? In what I've seen with my experience with DEI, it's been more divisive than it has united people. I think all people in Canada agree that we want to eradicate discrimination and hatred against groups. Personally, I feel that DEI has oversimplified everything and increased divisions.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Look, I couldn't agree more. Frankly, I think it's an embarrassment for the universities and their presidents, governing councils and everybody associated with the governance of those institutions to allow what is happening right now on those campuses. I would be embarrassed as a student or as an alumna of the institution I went to.

I have a question specifically about meritocracy.

Given that you practise medicine as well as teach it, do you think that, with the perversion of DEI in all of our institutions, you're getting the right medical students into schools and that patients are being served accordingly, given the DEI structures imposed on universities over the last 20 years?

Dr. Ted Rosenberg: Okay. I want to add one more thing about DEI. You know, one of the problems with the DEI and the identity politics is intersectionality, which causes the piling on. It causes the social media epidemics and amplification. That's what we're seeing.

In terms of whether we're able to select appropriate candidates right now, the University of British Columbia says there are certain groups of people who are preferentially going to be accepted: people of colour, indigenous people, LGBTQ, etc. They preferentially get into medical schools. They also take people based on their social justice experience. Can you imagine if I said my social justice experience was volunteering on a kibbutz or with Magen David Adom, or spending grade 10 in an agricultural school? There is no way I would get into UBC today.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: I have a quick follow-up....

Are we getting the best doctors and, as a result, the best patient care? Just give a yes or no.

The Chair: If you want to say yes or no, go ahead. Otherwise, I would love it if you would submit that in writing.

Dr. Ted Rosenberg: I will say one line.

I would refer you to Dr. Philip Berger's article in the Toronto Star, which says we're making a huge mistake. We're selecting people based on identity rather than qualification.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Rosenberg.

Ms. Dabrusin, go ahead, please.

• (1015)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Thank you.

I'm going to pick up on intersectionality, because Dr. Rosenberg just referred to it. I'm curious about raising this issue with Dr. Butler, if I may.

There is a bit of a perception that Jewish people are all one homogenous group—one and the same. However, there are some groups on campus that may be experiencing anti-Semitism in different ways, particularly queer youth, for example.

Can you talk a bit about what that experience might be and what we need to do to better protect students with intersectional identities?

Dr. Deidre Butler: I'm a Jewish woman. I'm a feminist professor. I have an intersectional identity, too. It's something that's very important to my work. It's a tool like any other. It isn't a demonic tool. It can be a very powerful one. Think about LGBTQ+ students on campus. What's happening, if they're Jewish, is that they have their Jewish identity, but they also have their queer identity. Those things should work beautifully together, and there should be places where they can strengthen each together.

What's happened is that they're excluded from progressive spaces. You're forced into a loyalty test of declaring you're not a Zionist and that you repudiate the State of Israel. We know these are the students who are facing real challenges in terms of their social integration and mental health. They are some very vulnerable students. They need all the support they can get. Their exclusion from those spaces is particularly painful and egregious.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I don't have much time. I also want to quickly speak to either Dr. Kogan or Dr. Butler.

As part of the Network of Engaged Canadian Academics, you put out a REACT model for universities. I understand this means "Reach out to Jewish students, faculty, and staff", "Engage: With the diversity of Jewish life", "Act: Systematically to address anti-Semitism", "Call out: Antisemitism" and "Teach: about the history [and] legacy".

First of all, please submit any materials you have on that. Also, in the final minute, could you speak about why you think this is important?

Dr. Deidre Butler: We will be happy to submit it. I think we may have already, actually.

This was actually developed by Professor Lilach Marom, who is a member of NECA, as part of her presentation on EDI that she did earlier this year to educate NECA members.

The point of that is to think about how EDI can be strengthened to better include Jews and anti-Semitism. It is a framework that's designed to support people who are vulnerable and who are equity-seeking groups. How do we deal with those groups? How do we include Jews when they're not included?

If you look at EDI policies across Canada at universities, "Jew", "anti-Semitism" and "Judaism" are not even in the paperwork.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin, you have the floor.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Since I have just a minute and a half, I would like each of you to answer my question in 10 seconds.

We are the federal legislative body. We enact federal legislation. Clearly, we are not on the front lines. So what do you expect from us, in two or three sentences?

Dr. Kogan, you may answer first.

[English]

Dr. Cary Kogan: We need to strengthen academic freedom by ensuring that there is actually a diverse set of voices on our campuses. That's one thing that needs to happen.

We need to strengthen EDI. We just heard about how we can include that.

We need training. We need training on anti-Semitism. We need to make sure that our deans, our provosts and our chairs actually understand what it is.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you.

Dr. Butler, go ahead.

[English]

Dr. Deidre Butler: I would add to all of that also to take seriously the policies and procedures that already exist. There are laws that exist in our country and in our provinces that can address these issues but which have not been applied.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you.

Dr. Rosenberg, go ahead.

[English]

Dr. Ted Rosenberg: I think that all our leaders need to speak out against demonizing speech all the time. I think they need to model behaviour that is compassionate and empathetic, and recognize that there are always two parties when there's a conflict.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you.

Go ahead, Dr. Diamond.

[English]

Dr. James A. Diamond: I would echo the previous comments and I would just say that, if the federal government has any input into divestment policies of universities, they should really ensure that they're not discriminatory.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Thank you, Dr. Diamond.

Thank you all.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: I vote for equality between all religions and all ways of thinking. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

[English]

Mr. MacGregor, go ahead, please, for the final one and a half minutes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's obvious that every Canadian student, no matter what their background, needs to enjoy the right to feel safe in a safe and welcoming learning environment, where they can go about unobstructed and enjoy that academic freedom. I think so many witnesses have underlined that this is so important to our democracy as a whole.

Out of this committee's studies and what we've heard from witnesses, there are obviously going to be some short-term, medium-term and long-term recommendations to the government.

In the immediate term, given that the security is so absent for so many Jewish students and academics, what would you like to see to try to bolster the security for Jewish students presently? Is there anything that you'd like to see us recommend to the federal government?

• (1020)

Dr. Deidre Butler: Thank you.

I interview Holocaust survivors. One of the survivors I interviewed many years ago was David Shentow. He said that when people say they're going to kill you and they hate you, believe them.

I would ask anyone who has any authority and leadership to lead on this issue. When you're hearing things in our universities that are hateful and that are threatening to our students, faculty and staff, believe them, take them seriously and act with whatever ability you have to act.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Thank you to all our witnesses. Your testimony has been critical for our study. If you feel you needed to say something that you were not able to, you have our apologies, but send it in writing. We will have weeks prior to completing our report.

Thank you very much to the witnesses and thank you to our members.

This concludes this session for today. Thank you very much and we'll see you next week.

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