

Legislation Text

File #: 20-A-084, Version: 1

DEPUTATION CONCERNING MOTION 20-G-139, ADOPTION OF INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE (IHRA) DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

The following Deputations were provided concerning motion 20-G-139, Adoption of International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism:

1. Rabbi Audrey Kaufman on behalf of the Am Shalom Congregation advised she feels that that the IHRA's definition is important to the local Jewish Community. Rabbi Kaufmann commented that the IHRA motion being accepted by the City of Barrie is at a time 75 years ago was the Holocaust and discussed her observations of the overt acts of antisemitism being on the rise and associated concerns of the Jewish community. Rabbi Kaufmann acknowledged that some forms of antisemitism are not always easy to identify and noted that she felt that IHRA's definition provides clarity in this regard. She further acknowledged that the definition is not associated with politics and is not pro or anti against different groups and is a perception of the meaning of antisemitism being expressed as a hatred toward Jews, with no other political motives or biases and is not a legally binding statement. Rabbi Kaufmann advised that the Jewish Community of Barrie believes that the adoption of the IHRA motion is an important tool in the fight against antisemitism especially when the Jewish population of Barrie is increasing, so she noted that she felt it is important to know that the local government supports them. She advised that this motion is being considered during the holiest time of Jewish year, the Ten Days of Repentance between the Rosh Hashanah and their New Year to Yom Kippur the Day of Atonement..

2. Marshall Green commented on his personal and emotional attachment to the motion. Mr. Green advised that he and his wife move to Barrie in 1973, and that Barrie's Population i 26,000 people, eight of whom were Jewish. He commented that Barrie has come a long way since 1973 including a significant increase in population that include various ethnic communities, different religions, a variety ethnic restaurants, and immigrants which he also noted he has observed this being reflected in our Medical and other professional communities. Mr. Green questioned why the IHRA definition is opposed by some in particular the independent Jewish voices that the two main objections have been the definition is too vague and all-encompassing and that it will stifle legitimate criticism of Israel and its political policies. He provided his opinion that any definition that attempts to capture the essence of 2,000 years of discrimination and prejudice should never be specifically targeted. Mr. Green provided examples in history such as the Holocaust, the difficulties of being Jewish and entering Law School and of Jewish people being banned from purchasing land in Innisfil in the 1950's.

Mr. Green commented that he felt the definition should not be so specific and that the term antisemitism allows itself to be adapted to other forms of prejudice such as other religions and ethnic groups. He noted that a number of municipalities, the Government of Canada, other Governments and the United Nations have all adopted this IHRA as a working definition. Mr. Green expressed the importance of the IHRA definition to Barrie's Jewish community and that this is a way for the Council of this City to publicly announced that they respect us and protect the principles, needs and interests of those people. In conclusion, Mr. Green noted that the City will flourish by promoting the diversity, showing respect and its

willingness to protect people of all different races at the groups and religions.

3. **Michael Speers** advised that he was speaking against Council adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism. He commented that antisemitism is a horrible blight on our society and our City and that recently it has been on the rise with more white supremacy and whether it's attacks on the Jewish community or the attacks in Nova Scotia against indigenous. Mr. Speers thanked members of Council for taking this seriously, however he advised that the strategy to adopt the IHRA working definition is not in the best interests of Barrie citizens, and noted that he believes the definition adds nothing to the anti-racism conversation. Mr. Speers provided his opinion associated to IHRA definition, Jewish Community controversy, including the IHRA definition not being inclusive of other groups, along with worldwide examples of antisemitism. Mr. Speers urged members of Council to not approve the motion on antisemitism as he noted he feels that it is a step backwards from solidarity with all struggles for equality and human rights.

Councillor Morales asked questions to Mr. Speers and received a response.

4. **Dan Freeman-Maloy** provided his background and thoughts associated to antisemitism. He advised that he is opposed to the motion and that he believes it's not a step forward, but that these are important issues that are a combination of emptiness and the examples associated with them are counterproductive. Mr. Freeman-Maloy provided his opinion on matters related to racism and he mentioned the murder of George Floyd and political walk of life laying claim to anti-racist principles, the City of Barrie opening Council meeting with the Land Acknowledgement and Canada sharing values of indigenous land which noted that he felt could be called racist to other individuals. He advised that he believes the IHRA definition suggests that it's racist to have those discussions and that's very dangerous not only in silence and Palestinians were there ongoing expression also in lending a legitimacy to antisemitism. Mr. Freeman-Maloy asked that Council to place this motion aside in order to have further discussions.

5. **Noah Shack** provided his comments related to the IHRA definition and advised that anti-semitic hate crimes take place on average once every 24 hours. He advised of the Jewish Community's considerable fear about what will happen if left unchecked and not having the support and friendship of their non-Jewish neighbours and in many ways more exposed of our society as a whole to the detriment of Jews and non-Jews alike. Mr. Shack advised that he felt this is the first step towards effectively addressing anti-semitism and he acknowledged Council in bringing this too important initiative and requested that this matter not be sidelined or sidetracked with those with an alternate agenda. He commended Council for their leadership and bringing this important motion forward.