



January 19, 2024

Anthony Housefather, MP, Mount Royal
Hon. David Lametti, PC, MP, LaSalle-Émard-Verdun
Ben Carr, MP, Winnipeg South Centre
Hon. Marco Mendicino, PC, MP, Eglinton-Lawrence
Anna Gainey, MP, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce–Westmount

Dear Members of the House of Commons:

Thank you for your letter of December 13, which raises very important issues. This continues to be a troubling and difficult time for many in our community – including those who have suffered personal loss or are deeply worried for the safety of their loved ones.

Against this stark reality, it is especially painful to know that antisemitic incidents and hate-based crimes are sharply on the rise in Canada, as your letter underscores. The University of Toronto is staunchly opposed to antisemitism. We continue to take action to combat it, and to ensure that our campuses are places where Jewish members of our community feel safe, included, and respected.

Since your letter focuses on antisemitism, our response adopts a similar focus. However, I wish to emphasize that we also remain acutely mindful of Islamophobia and hate-related incidents directed against Palestinian community members. We are committed to combatting these forms of racism as well, and many of the initiatives described below have relevance to our efforts to address them.

The University of Toronto affirms unequivocally that threats of harm to others and inciting violence, **including calls for genocide against the Jewish people** – or any other group – are violations of University of Toronto policy and an offence under Canadian law.

Our **efforts to combat antisemitism**, whether directed at Jewish **students, faculty, librarians, or staff**, are comprehensive and multi-faceted. This work is rooted in our longstanding commitment to oppose all forms of racism and discrimination, but we have intensified our work **since October 7**. We have consistently condemned antisemitism, and have taken firm actions, some of which are outlined below:

- We convened a University-wide Antisemitism Working Group, consisting of colleagues with specialized expertise, to examine the challenge of antisemitism in our midst. We accepted all the recommendations from the Working Group's 2021 [Report](#), as outlined below.
- The University's Equity Office has broadened its mandate and scope explicitly to recognize antisemitism as a form of discrimination requiring concerted action.
- We require all equity staff at the University to undergo antisemitism training.
- We are working to improve the process of reporting hate-related incidents, enhancing clarity, accountability, and timeliness of response when such incidents are reported.
- We have appointed our first-ever Assistant Director, Faith and Anti-Racism, to strengthen our ability to combat antisemitism and other forms of discrimination. Dr. Shari Golberg began her work this month, with a mandate to improve our processes for responding to such incidents, to foster dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect, and to advance other measures to combat antisemitism.

- Our University Counsel is helping leaders across the University to understand the limits to freedom of speech, the identification of hate speech as set forth in Canadian jurisprudence, and our collective obligations under University and government statutes, regulations, codes, and policies.
- In 2022, the Temerty Faculty of Medicine and leaders of our affiliated hospitals apologized for their practice of imposing quotas for Jewish medical students and hospital trainees from the 1940s to the 1960s, sponsoring a research project that sheds light on this shameful historical practice. The Faculty has recently introduced a new unit on antisemitism and anti-racism as part of its professional training, and now consults regularly with Jewish learners to ensure they are properly supported.

Since October 7, my senior team has met with members of our community – including Jewish faculty, staff and students – to hear their concerns about hate-related incidents and racism, direct them to helpful resources on our campuses, and seek their advice about how we can better support them.

As I stated in my [letter to the community](#) on October 18, 2023, universities are places where competing views engage with one another, ideally in ways that are evidence-based and grounded in disciplinary expertise. The University’s foundational commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression co-exists with our collective duty to ensure that members of our community do not promote hate, harassment, or intimidation. We have robust processes in place to address such matters, including our **code of student conduct**, and we do not hesitate to act quickly when required, as shown by the **arrest of a student** in October 2023.

We also ensure that **student organizations** operate in an open, accessible, and democratic manner. Our [policy](#) has proven effective in holding student organizations to account. In recent weeks, we have asked two student unions to explain how they will ensure that none of their members are marginalized or discriminated against based on nationality, ethnicity, or religion. If they fail to do so, we will hold them accountable, as we have done with student groups that have marginalized or discriminated against Jewish students in the past.

Ultimately, the most effective way to respond to the current crisis is to focus on our core mission of education. To that end, various academic units across the University will be hosting public seminars and discussions in the coming months in which scholarly [expertise](#) is shared more widely. We have also recently announced a new University-wide [initiative](#) to promote civil discourse on our campuses.

Let me conclude by reaffirming the University of Toronto’s steadfast opposition to antisemitism and our unwavering commitment to providing an environment for work and study that is free of discrimination, hatred, intimidation, and fear for all members of our community. We acknowledge that our work in this regard is far from over, but we remain committed to further improvement.

Sincerely,



Meric S. Gertler
President